

TITLE PAGE

The Book of Acts

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OUTLINE

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

LESSON ONE. An Introduction to the Book of Acts

LESSON TWO. Christ Establishes His Church in Jerusalem

LESSON THREE. The Rise of Persecution Against the Church

LESSON FOUR. The Expansion of the Church in Judea and Samaria

LESSON FIVE. Paul's Mission to Galatia (First Mission Journey)

LESSON SIX. Paul's Mission to Macedonia- Achaea (Second Mission Journey)

LESSON SEVEN. Paul's Mission to Asia/Ephesus (Third Mission Journey)

LESSON EIGHT. Paul's Arrest, Defense, Journey to and Arrival in Rome

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is for students to grow in their knowledge of the Scriptures and in particular the book of Acts. The book of Acts follows from the Gospel of Luke and focuses upon the growth and triumph of the church. Acts is the historical book of the New Testament and a bridge to understanding the letters of Paul.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into 8 lessons. It traces the story of Acts from the beginning of the church until Paul's first Roman imprisonment. The first half focuses on the expansion of the gospel from Jerusalem to Samaria, mainly through Peter. The second half develops the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, mainly through Paul.

COURSE MATERIALS

The lecture notes are a full exposition for this course. The students are required to read them thoroughly along with the Scriptures. Students are also required to read Marshall, *Acts*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To study Acts with other students;

To acquire a detailed knowledge of the history and lessons of Acts;

To develop a deeper understanding of God's work in this world;

To grow in knowledge of how God deals with His children;

To master the book of Acts in order to use it in preaching, teaching and pastoral counseling;

To master the book of Acts to gain an understanding of the historical background of Paul's letters

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

This course has been organized into eight consecutive lessons. The lessons follow the book of Acts; and therefore, should be studied in order.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participate in 15 hours of common teaching time.
2. Complete the Bible study exercises as contained in the 8 lessons.
3. Read the book of Acts and *The Message of Acts* by Dennis Johnson.
4. Write a sermon or study lesson plan on a theme from Acts of no more than 7 pages at the Bachelor's level and 12 pages at the Master's level.
5. Complete the 2 Exams on Acts which are based upon the questions at the end of the lessons.

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Student Participation (15%): One point may be given for each class hour attended.
2. Student Homework (40%): Five points will be given for completing the questions at the end of each lesson.
3. Student Readings (10%): Students will be given credit for completing the required reading.
4. Student Paper (15%): Students will prepare exegetical notes for a sermon/teaching.
5. Student Exam (20%): Students will be examined by two exams drawn from the questions at the end of each lesson.

BENEFITS OF THIS COURSE

The course will ground students in the New Testament. It will show them the history of the triumph of the gospel in and through opposition and suffering. Students will be shown the way that God works in this world.

Lesson One. An Introduction to the Church

1. An Introduction to the book of Acts (Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-3)

We begin our study by looking at the Prologue (Introduction) to both Luke and Acts.

Luke 1:1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Acts 1:1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

In the early church Luke and Acts originally circulated together. At a certain point Luke was joined to the other Gospels and Acts became its own document, acting as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul. Since Luke and Acts have the same author, and originally circulated together, Luke-Acts is an extended single narrative in two installments (Bruce Acts 3). Both prologues can be an aid to why Acts was written. The first focuses upon the life of Jesus, and the second focuses upon the establishment of the kingdom. Bruce says Acts is “God’s action offering salvation through Jesus Christ to both Jews and Gentiles and thereby creating a new people” (Acts 16). He notes that it is God’s action that is stressed throughout the narrative (20), Acts 1:8 being a theme verse: “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” It is God who will bring this plan to fruition through the acts of the Holy Spirit, angels and miracles. These acts are divine necessity, done in fulfillment of the Scriptures (Witness to the Gospels, 22).¹

The book of Acts is both an historical and a theological document. The historical information indicates it was written in the first century. Luke was a thorough and detailed historian and Bruce and Carson both agree that “Acts denoted a recognized genre or subgenre in the ancient world, characterizing books that described the great deeds of people or of cities” (285). The book of Acts covers a thirty-year period from Christ’s death and ascension to about Ad 62 (Carson 285).

Luke used a range of sources. He said he followed all things closely for some time and that he had access to eyewitness accounts, “those who were from the beginning

¹ The name Witness to the Gospels will be shortened to WtG from this point.

eyewitnesses and ministers” (Luke 1:1-4). Also Luke personally witnessed many of the events. There are three “we” sections in Acts, 16:10-17; 20:5-21; 27:1-28, which indicate that Luke was with Paul at those times.

Although there have been many challenges to the historical validity of Luke’s account, no one has proved that the history of Acts is incorrect. Luke recorded the events of Acts with the most scrupulous detail in describing names, dates and events. Luke is an accurate historical account, drawn from his own witness and from other sources.

Luke-Acts was written to Theophilus. We don’t know who he was. We can say he was culturally Greek and probably an important Roman. He was called “Most excellent Theophilus” in Luke’s prologue and “O Theophilus” in Acts.

When Acts was part of a single-joint document with Luke, Acts did not have its own name. The need to name Acts occurred when the documents were split. The name, “Acts of the Apostles” is both non-inspired and unfortunate. The name was chosen after the church had been in conflict with a second century heretic, Marcion (c144), who tried to found a rival church (Ferguson 685-686).² One error that Marcion asserted was that Paul was the only apostle (Bruce, Acts 5). In response, the church gave the name of the book the “Acts of the Apostles”, stressing the plural, *Apostles*. The name is not a good one as only Peter and Paul played any significant apostolic role; furthermore, Luke was far more concerned with the work of God in and through the Holy Spirit in the church than the apostles’ actions. Luke’s opening words “What Jesus continued to do and teach” (Luke 1:1) encapsulate a central theme and would have been a good title for the work.

2. Key Theological Themes

Luke was not only an accurate historian, he was also a theologian writing for a theological purpose. Luke shaped his account in order to develop three major theological themes. First, Luke stressed that God has a plan to establish Christ’s kingdom unto the ends of the earth. Acts shows us God working out this plan in human history. A second major theme is opposition. As the gospel goes forth into the world, God’s word, church, and messengers face opposition. Third, while the book of Acts does not minimize the opposition, Acts stresses that God’s kingdom still prevails. Opposition does not hinder God’s plan; rather, we see that God used the opposition to spread the word to the ends of the earth. At the end we see that God’s plan was fulfilled as the gospel was taken to the ends of the earth. Finally, Luke wrote Acts as a defense, an apologetic, against Jewish charges that the gospel was just a Jewish heresy and a threat to Roman rule.

We will consider each one of these theological themes in more detail.

2.1. God’s plan Was Being Worked Out³

First, it is clear that Luke described God’s work in establishing His kingdom.⁴ It was God who led and guided His apostles and prophets; they did not act on their own

³ For a detailed examination of how these themes are repeated in each section see Squires, WttG p.17-37.

⁴ (for the importance of the kingdom in Acts lesson 2 and Acts 1:3, 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23,31)

strength or initiative. The point is made in Acts 1:4-8. Here Christ commanded them to wait until the Spirit gives them power. This shows that the apostles were under God's guidance and equipped by Him in order to further Christ's work in bringing in the kingdom. Acts 1:8 is an important verse. Christ told the disciples that they were to wait for the Holy Spirit who would equip them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem and outwards. This was a testament that God had ordained that they would be His witnesses. The kingdom is God's and He will bring it to pass.

Squires (WttG 24-27) argues that Acts describes the outworking of God's plan (14:27, 15:4) according to the Scriptures (1:16). He notes that Luke said that "These are things that must come to pass" (26:22). In God's plan, Christ and His kingdom take center stage (2:22) and this plan is assisted through the help of the Spirit (1:8), angels (1:10, 10:3) and miracles (14:3). We will look at each in turn.

God's Work: Luke and the early church were conscious that the events in Acts were things that "*God accomplished amongst us*" (Luke 1:1,2). Luke believed that the events in Acts happened according to God's plan. Paul stated in Acts 14:27 "*And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*" God's plan is described as being a fulfillment of Scripture. Acts 1:16 Peter states, "*Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.*" Also in Acts 26:22 he states: "*To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass.*" The things prophesied in Scripture must be fulfilled as a divine necessity. In Acts 3:21 we are told that Jesus "must" remain in heaven until the time of restoration. Because the events of the New Testament follow God's plan, it is a divine necessity that these things take place.

The focal point of God's work is His Son Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who God raised from the dead. In Acts 2:22 Luke records: "*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.*"

Acts 1:4-8 indicates that Christ works in and through the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:8 Jesus promised that "*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" The Spirit is the major agent through which Christ rules.

The Spirit's work is assisted through the work of angels. In Acts 1:10 we read, "*And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.*" Angels released John and Peter from prison (Acts 5:19, 20). Angels released Peter from prison in Act 12:11. In Acts 10:3, Peter was told by an angel to go to Cornelius's house: "*About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an*

angel of God come in and say to him, 'Cornelius.'” Angels played an important role in assisting the church in her witness.

Finally, God bears witness to His work through miracles. In Acts 14:3 we are told, *“So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”* God used miracles to establish this new work.

These key themes in the book of Acts stress that God’s work is bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth. As you read the book of Acts, you will see that God used these means to work out His plan in each section of the book of Acts.

2.2. The Opposition to the Church

A second key theme is the opposition to the spreading of the gospel. This opposition began in Jerusalem and continued throughout the book. Opposition arose from a number of sources—the Jews opposed God’s work, the Gentiles opposed His work and even the Jewish Christians opposed the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles.

2.2.1. Jewish Opposition

The first major opposition to the message arose from the Jewish leadership. Initially, the masses in Jerusalem accepted the gospel message but the leadership was threatened by the power and popularity of the message. The Sanhedrin opposed the ministry of Peter and John in Jerusalem, imprisoning and beating them. Under Jewish leadership Stephen was stoned, and this Jewish opposition, led by Paul, scattered the Jerusalem church. In the early first days after Pentecost, the gospel and the church were supported within Judaism but rejected by the Jewish leadership, particularly the Sanhedrin.

This situation changed with the spread of the gospel into Gentile areas. Now all the Jews opposed Paul’s message. Paul was chased out of a number of towns and five times received the 40 lashes minus one. He was also stoned and left for dead in Lystra (Acts 14) and the Jews followed him constantly attacking his witness. Paul and the new churches faced great opposition throughout the remainder of Acts.

2.2.2. Opposition from Jewish Christians

Opposition also arose from Jewish Christians within the church. The spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles was seen as both an amazing and deeply troubling event to many Jewish Christians who were unsure if this spread was an aberration from Judaism or a new thing from God that needed to be embraced.

Both Peter and Paul faced this opposition. In Acts 10, Peter took the gospel to God-fearing Gentiles. This created opposition from Jewish circumcised believers. Luke recorded their opposition in Acts 11:1, *“Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ‘You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.’”*

It is unclear if the “circumcision party” was a sect within Christianity or if it refers to the whole community of Jewish Christians. In either case, it shows that there was real opposition from within the church to Gentile outreach if the Gentiles did not also become Jews. Peter was forced to defend his actions before the gathered church and then again later before the Jewish council. Even though the church at Jerusalem raised no further objections and praised God, 11:18, it did not mean that everyone in the church supported them. It is important to note that the Jerusalem church never really involved itself in Gentile mission.

Paul likewise met opposition to his work from Pharisee Christians within the church. After Paul’s first mission journey, Jewish Pharisee Christians came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. They argued that a person could not be saved unless he was circumcised (15:1). In Acts 15:5, the Pharisee Christians argued this same position at the Jerusalem council. Although the issue is resolved, Paul continued to face opposition and supposition from within the Jerusalem church. In Acts 21:21 (an event that occurred at the end of Paul’s missionary career), Luke recorded James’ warning to Paul: “*they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs.*” This reveals that even at this late stage, the Jewish Christians were distrustful and even openly hostile (244).

The Jewish-Christian opposition stemmed from misunderstandings and fear that Jewish moral standards were being watered down and that the church would be reformed by Gentile culture.

2.2.3. Gentile and General Opposition

Later when the gospel came into contact with Roman power, Rome became the major persecutor and Paul was eventually martyred under Rome. The reason for this opposition—the church challenged the sinful lifestyle of those around them, either Jew or Gentile. The Jewish priests were worried that they would lose their position. They were also jealous of the apostle’s success and worried about their nation (Acts 3, Acts 5:17:5). The Jews themselves did not like to lose their customs and tradition or their sense of privilege before God (Acts 7–Stephen, 14–Psidium Antioch, 17–Thessalonica). Paul, before his conversion, was horrified that the Law and Moses were being rejected in the supposed coming of the Messiah. The Gentiles were worried that their trade idols would be destroyed (Acts 19:23ff). The Romans worried that the gospel was a rejection of ultimate loyalty to Rome and to emperor worship. As the gospel spread, it exposed the sinfulness of man; as a result, it provoked opposition.

2.3. The Church Continued to Witness and the Plan of God Was Fulfilled

The third theme is that the church continued to witness. As an apologetic to the Jews, Luke picked up on the Pharisee leader Gamaliel’s own truth test in Acts 4 arguing that because the things that God promised had come to pass; this proved, according to Gamaliel, that this was a new work of God in Israel. To reject or to fight against the things recorded in Acts was to reject God.

Opposition to the gospel led to greater opportunities to witness. When Paul persecuted the church, it scattered and bore witness, not just in Jerusalem, but throughout

Judea and Samaria. When Paul was locked in jail in Philippi, he bore witness to the Philippian jailer; furthermore, his arrest and imprisonment in Caesarea in Acts 21ff led him to witness to the Jewish and Roman authorities. Opposition did not stop the gospel witness; instead the opposition, arrest and trial led to more opportunities to witness. Paul summarized this principle in Philippians 1:12, *“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.”* God used the enemies’ opposition to further His witness.

God’s promises are fulfilled. In Acts 1:8 Jesus promised the apostles that they would witness from Jerusalem to Rome. Acts 28 shows this was fulfilled. Likewise, the Lord promised Paul that he would bear witness of Him in Rome stating: *“But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome’ ”* (Acts 23:11). Even though the way Paul got to Rome was unexpected and convoluted, he did eventually arrive there. Through many toils, dangers and snares the gospel spread throughout the world. It began in Jerusalem and spread to Rome, the center of the empire and the known world. The last words in the book of Acts say Paul was *“preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him”* (Acts 28:31).

2.4. Luke’s Apologia and Paul to the Romans

A fourth theme in Acts is an apologia, a defense by Christians against Jewish and Roman claims that Christianity was a threat. Approximately 25 percent of the book of Acts addresses this theme. 50 percent of all of Paul’s recorded speeches in Acts are those he gives in his own defense. To the Jews, Luke stressed that the resurrection is a Jewish doctrine; it is the Jewish hope that was consistent with the teaching of the Pharisees (23:6-9). To the Romans, Luke showed that Paul was not a revolutionary seeking to overthrow the government of the day. Luke dedicated a quarter of the book of Acts to this end (18:14, 23:29, 28:17).

3. Outlines and Literary Markers in Acts

There are a number of ways to divide up the book of Acts. A clear and simple structure is offered in Acts 1:8 above, that the gospel will go from Jerusalem, (chapter 1-8), to Judea and Samaria (chapters 9-12) and to the ends of the earth (13-28). Acts can also be divided into two parts. The first part is Peter in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1-12), and the second part is Paul taking the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome (Carson 13-28).

Carson also notes that Luke used a number of key markers. In each section Luke takes the reader through distinct geographic and cultural settings and ends each section with a short summary about the growth of the Church (Acts 6.7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20) (Carson 286). These provide natural breaks in the narrative in the book of Acts.

I have also included a standard outline for the book of Acts by Hendrickson.

The Work of Jesus Christ in the extension of the Church

(1-12) I. The Extension of the Church in and from Jerusalem

(1-7) A. In Jerusalem

1. Christ's ascension. Choice of Matthias to replace Judas. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Results: (1,2)
2. Wonders and signs; particularly the cure of the lame beggar (3:1-4:31).
3. Witness bearing and voluntary sharing; also its perversion in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (4:32-5:11).
4. Winning of Souls; the rapid growth of the church, which results in persecution-imprisonment of the Twelve and martyrdom of Stephen, which in turn results in further growth (5:12-7:60).

(8-12) B. From Jerusalem, into all Judea and Samaria and the surrounding regions

1. Phillip's missionary labors (8).
2. Saul's conversion (9:1-30).
3. Peter's missionary labors (9:31-11:18).
4. Results of these labors: the further growth of the church, which results in further persecution; martyrdom of James, the son of Zebedee; imprisonment of Peter (11:19-12:25).

(13-28) II. The Extension of the Church from Antioch, Through the Labors of Paul

- A. Paul's First Missionary Journey and the Jerusalem Council (13:1-15:35).
- B. Second Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22).
- C. Third Missionary Journey (18:23-21:16).
- D. Paul in Jerusalem and Caesarea (21:17-26:32).
- E. Voyage to Rome, Arrival, and First Roman Imprisonment (27,28).

(Hendriksen 402,403)

Conclusion

The book of Acts describes how God established His church in the world. It should be an encouragement to us that God's purposes will come to pass. It also shows that God's works happen in ways we do not expect. For example, the opposition and suffering of both Paul and the church are part of His plan in growing His church. Opposition does not stop the witness of the church; God uses the opposition to further His cause.

SUMMARY

Acts is the second half of the book of Luke. Acts shows how God's plan to take the gospel to the world is fulfilled. God's work in the world was not received by all—opposition arose from both the Jewish leadership, from the Gentiles and from the church itself. Despite this opposition, the plan of God through Christ, by the power of the Spirit, and aided by miracles and angels was successful.

Lesson One Questions

1. Why is Acts called the Acts of the Apostles? Is this a good name?
2. Explain what we mean by the plan of God in Acts. Give a key verse.
3. What part does the Spirit play in God's plan?
4. Explain the rise in and nature of Jewish opposition to the gospel.
5. Were all Jewish Christians in favor of Paul and Gentile mission?
6. Why did Rome threaten Christianity?
7. How did the early church in Jerusalem respond to persecution?
8. What is Hendrickson's outline for Chapters 1-7 of Acts?
9. What is Hendrickson's outline for Chapters 8-12 of Acts?
10. What is Hendrickson's outline for Chapters 13-28 of Acts?

Lesson 2. Christ Establishes His Church in Jerusalem

1. The Risen King's Commission in Jerusalem (1:1-11)

Acts begins with Christ the Risen King commissioning His disciples.

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, "you heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked Him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when He had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven" (1:1-11).

Jesus remained with His disciples 40 days from His resurrection. He taught about the kingdom of God. His ministry inaugurated the kingdom and the disciples were instructed to continue to bear witness of that kingdom unto the ends of the earth. The whole of the book of Acts concerns the expansion of the kingdom of God. Acts begins with a discussion of the coming of the kingdom and ends with Paul in Rome, speaking of the Kingdom of God, stating in Acts 28:30: *"He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."* The kingdom is explicitly mentioned in Acts 1:3, 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23,31 and the kingdom is impliedly mentioned by noting that Jesus is called the Christ, the Messiah King.

Bruce comments on the relationship between the kingdom and preaching in Acts stating, *"The kingdom or the preaching of the kingdom is conceived as coming in the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and to proclaim these facts in the proper setting, is to preach the kingdom of God. The kingdom is already here because Christ has come and the disciples are to proclaim it.....this preaching must include the final judgment and return of Christ"* (Acts 10:42, 17:31; Phil. 2:10, 11; Matt. 6:10).

In summary, the book of Acts is the book of the witness to and the expansion of the kingdom of God (Bruce, Acts 32, 33).

Jesus commanded the disciples to wait until the Holy Spirit was given, until they were “*clothed with power from on high.*” The command to wait for the Spirit is an example of another key theme in Acts. First, the disciples were acting under Jesus and God’s direction. Second, it was only by the power of the Spirit that they could accomplish their work. They could not and must not attempt the work on their own. It was God who sent them and equipped them for success.

The outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost is parallel with Jesus’ own baptism and equipping by the Spirit in order to fulfill His ministry. Even as “Jesus had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, so His followers were to be similarly anointed and enabled to carry on His work (Bruce Acts 36). The church today must always remember that she will only have success as she is led and equipped by Christ.

Christ then ascended into the clouds. We should not think of them as rain clouds; rather, they should be seen as a manifestation of the Shekhinah glory-clouds of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself to Israel by clouds (Ex. 28:2). In the Exodus, the Israelites were led by the pillar of cloud and fire and the “glory cloud” descended upon the tabernacle, thus indicating to Moses and Israel that He was present. Later the Shekhinah glory descended upon Solomon’s temple. Clouds are mentioned on three occasions in Christ’s life. First, the Father’s presence is manifest by a bright shining cloud at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:2, 5). Here at the ascension, Jesus ascended into the clouds (Acts 1:9). Third, as in the following verse, there are frequent references to the promise that Christ will come in the clouds with His holy angels: “*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail* on account of Him. Even so. Amen*” (Rev. 1:7).

The disciples then waited in Jerusalem (1:12-14). The disciples chose Matthias as a replacement for Judas, and so the number of the disciples returned to 12. It is interesting that all twelve were named, but only Peter, James and John, together with Paul, played any significant role in the rest of the book of Acts. In the early chapters, we see Peter and John together in Acts 3 (healing of the blind man), Acts 5 (the arrest, imprisonment and preaching in the temple) and Acts 8 (going down to Jerusalem) but in each case, Peter is the key speaker. John is not mentioned again after Acts 8.

It has been suggested that Peter’s dominance should be seen as him acting on behalf of the whole group. While this might be true in the early section, in the later sections—Acts 10, Acts 15 and Galatians 2—Peter seemed to be operating independently. The Apostle John played a supporting role in Acts 5. In Luke’s account James, the Lord’s brother, played the dominant role in the Jerusalem council and in Galatians 2 Paul called him one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. Peter was hardly mentioned after Acts 12 as the church began to expand into Gentile regions.

Luke also mentioned that other non-apostles are present. In Acts 1:14 he stated the disciples were “together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his

brothers.” This is encouraging. We know that Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him when He was alive. In John 7:5 we are told, “*For not even his brothers believed in him.*” But His mother and His brothers did seem to come to faith in Him after His resurrection.

2. Pentecost: The Outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2)

Jesus’ words were fulfilled in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. The Spirit’s work was seen in three events—the rushing mighty wind, the tongues of fire and the languages given to the church to proclaim the mighty works of God (Johnson 57).

2.1. The Supernatural Intervention of God (2:1-4)

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

The feast of Pentecost was the 50th day after the harvest. In practice the 50 day period began the first Sunday after Passover. Pentecost is also called Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22a, Deut. 16:10) and Day of First Fruits (Num. 28:2).⁵ The Spirit came as a wind that “filled the house.” In the Old Testament, wind and fire both indicated a theophany, a revelation of God in the Old Testament. The fact that Luke told us that the Spirit came in this manner stresses His divinity (2 Sam. 22:16; Ezek. 13:13; Ex. 3:2-5, 19:18; Luke 3:16). The Spirit came, filled and indwelt His people; the church, began a new period in the life of God with His people. In Genesis 2, God breathed into Adam, and he was alive. God promised that He would do this again in Ezekiel 37. Acts 2 is the fulfillment of this promise. God breathed into His people through the Spirit. From this time, the people of God, the Holy Spirit, and the temple of God and the new creation are linked.

Tongues of fire fell upon the disciples (2:3). They announced the presence of God as the lightening clouds and the fire over the mountain at Sinai and over the tent of meeting during the Israelites’ journeys (Ex. 19:16, 40:34, 48). Now each believer had a tongue of fire indicating each was a temple, each was indwelt by the Spirit of Glory and of God (Johnson 59).

From this time, the Holy Spirit is the principle mover in the book of Acts. As has already been noted, the language and the placement of the baptism in Luke and Acts make a clear link between Jesus’ baptism to undertake His work and the baptism of the disciples to undertake their work. Furthermore, there is a link between the outpouring of the Spirit here and the outpouring of the Spirit upon Moses and the elders of Israel in Numbers 11:26. In Numbers, we are told that the Spirit rested upon Moses as mediator of the Old Covenant. Then to help him in his work, the Spirit that rested upon him was placed upon 70 elders (Num. 11:17). The elders then prophesied and two of the elders,

⁵ I suggest that you look up the feasts and interpret them in the light of the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Eldad and Medad who were not with Moses, also prophesied (Num.11:26). Moses commented that he wished the Spirit would rest upon all of the people (Num. 11:29), not just the elders. That event was typological; it pointed forward to and is fulfilled in Pentecost. The Spirit was upon Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant (Luke 3:22, 4:1,18). The Spirit was then placed upon His disciples. Since Christ had the Spirit without measure, the Spirit was poured out more powerfully upon the disciples and upon the whole church (2:17, 18). The *Prophet greater than Moses* has come (Deut. 18:15).

2.2. “Filled” with the Spirit

Luke recorded the disciples were “filled” with the Spirit. Luke used the word *filled* in a number of different ways. The word can indicate an initial work of God upon men. In Acts 2, this refers to an initial coming of the Spirit to the church at Pentecost. Luke mentioned that Paul was filled with the Spirit at his conversion (9:17). The term *filled* is also used when the Spirit comes upon someone in order to equip them to undertake a specific act for God. In Luke 1:5 we are told that Jesus was filled with the Spirit. Peter was filled so he could continue to bear witness (4:8, 11; 13:9). The idea of being filled with the Spirit also points to the continuous ongoing life of the Spirit in the church (Eph. 5:18) (Marshall, Acts 69).

Luke also used a number of other words to describe the way the Spirit came upon and indwelt the church. Jesus said they will be “baptized” by the Holy Spirit (1:5, 11:16). The Spirit was said to be “poured out” in Acts 2:17ff, 10:45 and “received” by the Gentiles in Acts 10:48. It is also important to note that Luke only used the word *baptism* for the initial receiving of the Spirit, never for a later filling (Marshall, Acts 69). If we are going to talk about the Spirit, it is important to be accurate as to what terms we use and what they mean. A great deal of confusion has occurred because the incorrect words were used. We will be looking at some of the other ways that Luke spoke of the Spirit in later lessons.

Initially the disciples’ *filling* enabled them to speak in tongues— tongues that could be understood by people from all over the empire. There is a great deal of debate as to the meaning of tongues and we are to note that the Scriptures do not tell us a great deal about them. In this case, we know that the tongues were human languages (2:6, 8). We are also told the purpose of tongues: God enabled them to speak in tongues in order that people from all over the empire would hear about the mighty works of God (2:11).

2.3. Pentecost Laid the Foundation of the Church (2: 7-11)⁶

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost upon the disciples laid the foundation of the church.

And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya

⁶ For a useful discussion of the biblical and theological significance of Pentecost see Johnson, *The Message of Acts*, page 53-70

belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

Although the events occurred in Jerusalem, people were present from every part of the Roman world. God’s action at Pentecost means that the apostles witnessed to Jews from Jerusalem to Rome and to every part of the Roman Empire. Pentecost and Peter’s preaching mean that the gospel witness was immediately international.⁷

2.4. Types of People in the Book of Acts

In verse 10 Luke stressed that Jews and proselytes initially witnessed to the outpouring of the Spirit. Throughout the book, Luke mentioned a number of different religious and cultural groups. They will be introduced as we go along. In verses 7-9 above, Luke spoke of Jews, proselytes, God-fearers, and later he spoke of Gentiles.

Jews refers to those who were born Jews. Proselytes were Gentiles who had become Jews and kept the whole faith. There were three things one had to do to become a proselyte—be circumcised, perform self-baptism before witnesses and offer a sacrifice in Jerusalem (Bruce 58). A third class was God-fearers, godly Gentiles who feared God but had not taken the formal step of becoming a proselyte.

3. Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost (2:14-39; 3:12-26)

3.1. A General Overview of Early Apostolic Preaching

In this section we will begin by looking at Peter’s Pentecost sermon but we should also note that although the sermon was unique as the first sermon at Pentecost, Peter’s sermon at Pentecost was one of five key sermons in the book of Acts. These are the sermons: Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter at the Temple (Acts 3), Stephen’s defense (Acts 7), Paul in Psidion Antioch (Acts 13) and Paul’s defense at Athens (Acts 17). The sermons of Peter, Paul and Stephen to the Jews followed a similar pattern. When speaking to the Jews, each used a similar structure, although the exact order of the material may vary. The similar style indicates a common method of Jewish evangelism in the book of Acts (Bruce, Acts 63).⁸

The basic structure is:

1. They claimed that the “Age of Fulfillment” had arrived.
2. A proclamation of the Ministry, Death and Triumph of Christ.
3. They claimed support from the Old Testament Scriptures.
4. They ended with a call to Faith and Repentance.

⁷ Luke mentions there were people from Rome and Luke seems to single it out as the whole book of Acts is the journey and spread of the church from Jerusalem to Rome.

⁸ For a more detailed examination of the speeches see WTTG, p. 257-354.

3.2. Peter's Preaching at Pentecost and in Jerusalem

3.2.1. Correcting the Confusion-The Declaration of the Last Day

Acts 2:14-15 *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day."*

Peter began by correcting the mocking of many who heard. Some heard and believed the great works of God (2:11), but the giving of the gift of tongues created confusion in the crowds. Peter began by correcting their thinking.⁹

Peter pointed out that the apostles were not drunk as it was not even the third hour of the day. In Jewish culture, the Jewish day began at daybreak, the third hour was about 9 a.m. our time, the sixth hour was 12 p.m. and the ninth hour was 3 p.m. Since this was the third hour, it was 9 a.m. in the morning.

Peter explained that these signs showed that God's promises were being fulfilled. In verses 16-21 he pointed out how these events fulfilled God's promises made to Joel.

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Peter quoted the Septuagint (the LXX). He modified the key phrase "in those days" to "in the last days" to stress that God's prophecy were fulfilled and the Spirit's work in signs and wonders bore witness that the last days had arrived. Joel said "my Spirit", singular, will be poured out, indicating that he was referring to the person of the Spirit who was poured out on all flesh. The Spirit had come and taken up residence in the church.

It is unclear what cosmic signs Peter referred to (the same wording used in Rev. 6:12). Jesus' death was a sign as darkness covered the earth, but in other portions of Scripture, these signs were particularly linked to the period of the end of the last days (Marshall 74).

⁹ This raises an important point. The works of God never stand alone but they must always be explained by the word of God. When God works without the word, it is easy to misinterpret what God is doing. We always need God's word to help us to understand God's actions. The word of God and the works of God must always be together. If they are separated it leads to confusion.

According to Joel's prophesy, the coming of the last days means that the Day of Judgment has come. The day of the Lord in the Old Testament was a day when God would come to judge the earth. Joel's prophecy indicated that although judgment had been announced, there was still an opportunity for repentance and mercy— "All who call upon Him will be saved." Although the last days are here, this is still a day of grace until Christ comes again a second time.

3.2.2. The Sin of Israel (23-24)

Having explained the Spirit, Peter turned to focus upon Christ and to expose the sin of Israel in rejecting their Messiah.

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (2:22-23).

Peter showed the men of Israel their sin. Even though Jesus had shown who He was by mighty signs and wonders, the Jews had deliberately rejected the Messiah. Their guilt was clear. Peter then went on to state that this rejection and Jesus' death were still within the plan of God. God proved Jesus was the Messiah by vindicating Him and raising Him up.¹⁰

3.2.3. Proof of Messiahship

Peter then proved that Jesus was the Messiah. Death could not hold Jesus back. The Scriptures clearly tell us that the Messiah would be raised from the dead. (Psalm 16:8-11; 2:32) Jesus was raised; therefore, Jesus was the Messiah (Marshall 76). Peter also argued that the outpouring of the gift of the Spirit also showed that Jesus was the Messiah (2:33-36).¹¹

3.2.4. The Titles Given to Jesus

Peter tells us of Jesus' new position by two powerful scriptural terms—"He is seated at God's right hand", indicating a position of power and supremacy and "He is given a name above every name". This last title equates Jesus with God.

In Peter's sermon and defense in Acts 3 and 4, he used a number of other important titles for Christ. We will briefly look at each.

A. His (God's) Servant Jesus (3:13, 26; 4:27, 30) This links Jesus, in His suffering death and subsequent resurrection, to the servant songs of Isaiah 52:13-53.¹²

¹⁰ The assertion that the death and resurrection of the Messiah was in accord with God's plan would become a standard apologetic to Jewish thinking that stressed that Jesus could not be the Messiah because He was shamefully crucified. Paul used this same defense in his ministry to the Jews.

¹¹ In this sermon, Peter developed the relationship between Christ and the Spirit in three ways. First, he introduced the work of the Spirit. Second, he then spoke of Christ. Third, he linked the Spirit's work with Christ by stating that it is Jesus who pours out the Spirit.

¹² For a fuller discussion of Luke's use of the servant passages see Johnson, *The Spirit and the Servant*,

B. The Holy One and the Just (3:14). The title Holy One is used in Psalm 116:6; also Aaron and Elijah are called the Holy Ones (2 Kings 4:9, Mk. 1:24). Peter used Holy One as a proper name and he also used it to show Jesus' particular relationship to the Father. "Just" might refer to Isaiah 53:11.

C. Prince of Life (3:15) (See 5:31 and Hebrews 12:2 indicting the source, originator and leader of life.)

D. A Prophet greater than Moses. This refers to the promise made in Deuteronomy 18:15 that God would raise up a prophet, greater than Moses.

E. One that "All the prophets foretold". This is a general description that the prophets looked forward to Christ.

F. The LORD (See Bruce, Paul 76). The word *Lord* is a broad, general reference to someone in authority; however, in the Septuagint the word *Lord* is used as a name of God. In this case, Peter's use of the title Lord, would ascribe divinity to Christ.

3.2.5. The Command to Israel—Repent and Be Baptized.

Peter made two demands, or one demand with two aspects. Israel was to repent of her sin and be baptized. Her sin, in particular, was the sin of rejecting the Messiah.

The second demand was to be baptized "into the name of Christ." It was, in effect, to put their faith in Jesus, something that could only be done if they believed that He was the Messiah. Paul made the link between faith and baptism in Romans 10:9 and 1 Corinthians 12:3. In these passages he linked a profession with baptism. Marshall argues that faith and baptism or repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. Calvin's position was that faith precedes and produces repentance (Marshall, 81). Israel was called to repent, believe and be baptized into Jesus as the Christ and Messiah.¹³

The promise was made to them and to their children. This should be read in the light of the broader covenant promises made to Abraham, David, and all Israel. God had never been merely God of isolated individuals; He was Israel's God and this included the generations yet to come. The promise was also not limited to just Israel, but was always for all nations (Gen. 12:1-3). Marshall sees this as referring to the promise of Isaiah 57:19 and Ephesians 2:13, 17 (81).

4. The Establishment and Nature of the Church (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37, 5:12-16)

It was both the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the preaching of Christ which led to the formation and establishment of the early church. We will first consider

pages 32-52.

¹³ In Acts 3:17 Peter told the rulers that they did it in ignorance. It is difficult to understand what this statement means. Sin committed in ignorance in the Old Testament could be forgiven. Sins committed willfully were not.

the growth of the church and then look at the nature of this new Christ-centered, Spirit-filled community. In summary, the church grew exceptionally fast and formed a distinct, new community, a community based upon Christ and the Spirit, marked by two pillars—love and holiness.

4.1. The Growth of the Church

The early church grew rapidly. Acts 2 indicates the apostles enjoyed a powerful ministry accompanied by signs and wonders (2:43, 3:1-10, 5:1-11) which led to rapid growth. Luke wrote: *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls* (2:41). Peter's preaching led to 3000 being converted. The church was quickly established, the numbers increased from 3000 (2:41-7) to 5000 (Acts 4:4). The church continued to grow in 5:14: *And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women*. These figures were more impressive as estimates for the total population of Jerusalem vary from 25 000 to 250 000. Marshall¹⁴ states the population to be between 55 000 to 95 000. If we assume the correct figure is 100 000 then one in 20 were believers.¹⁵ There were joy, power and courage and a sense of love and unity (4:32-37). A new community was quickly formed.

4.2. The Nature of the Church (2:42-47; 4:32-37, 5:1-12)¹⁶

Luke also stressed the nature of the new community created by the Spirit. We should study this with great care as it shows both what is possible, as well as, providing a model for believers and the church today.

1. Christ was forming a new community. While individual conversions were important to Luke, Luke stressed that Christ's work at Pentecost led to the formation of a new Christian community. Luke's account is a practical manifestation of the theology that Christ is head over the body; that Christians are all members of one body, joined together; that there is no sanctification outside the body; and that separating oneself from the body is to put oneself outside Christ's work in this world (Eph. 4).

2. Luke stressed the following characteristics of this new community.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (2:42-47).

Luke identified four main elements. First, the church was devoted to the apostles' teaching. Their teaching of Jesus as Messiah framed and guarded the community. The church was grounded upon theology.

¹⁴ Marshall at pg. 82 footnotes J. Jerimais, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, (London) 1969, Pg 83.

¹⁵ This is a fulfillment of the promise of John 14:12 that the disciples will do greater works than Christ.

¹⁶ For other short summaries see Acts 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, and 19:20.

A second main theme is fellowship of the community. This fellowship manifested itself in joint activities—meeting together, fellowship meals and the sharing of possessions. Fellowship was a commitment to the group. It was linked to teaching, joint meals and prayer. Fellowship was also closely linked to common giving. Luke mentioned this in Acts 2 above and we have an extended account in Acts 5. In Acts 2, we are told that the disciples had all things in common. Luke expanded on this in Acts 5. Here we see those who had would give to the disciples to be distributed to those who had need (Acts 5). There was no demand that all the goods be pooled in order to be a church member; rather, as Peter said to Ananias, each person continued to own their own goods and gave as the need arose. Marshall states “each person held their goods at the disposal of others as the need arose” (84).¹⁷ There was no need to pool the goods in order to be a part of the community (Acts 5:4). Barnabas is a good example of this practice (4:36, 37) and Ananias illustrates how this principle was corrupted (5:1-11).

A third factor is the breaking of bread (the Lord’s Supper). This would have been added to a normal meal (1 Cor. 11:17ff).

The final characteristic stressed by Luke was that the believers met together daily for prayer. This occurred either in a house or at the temple. At this stage the Christians were still accepted by the authorities and still had access to the temple. They had probably not yet realized the implication of Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament types. They met publically at the temple and in each other’s homes. They worshiped with thanksgiving and they evangelized. At this time they enjoyed the favor of all people, including the priests (Acts 6:7) and the Pharisees (Acts 15:5), many of who became believers. This peaceful state of affairs continued until Jewish persecution began.

4.3. The Holiness of the Church

The incidence with Ananias and Sapphira stresses the need for holiness in this new community.

The sin of the two church members, Ananias and Sapphira, was deceit—pretending they gave more than they actually had. Peter, by the power of the Spirit, exposed this. The spiritual nature of the event was stressed. Ananias was said to have been led by Satan and to have lied against the Holy Spirit who is God. Sapphira was said to be testing the Spirit. Bruce suggests this referred back to Israel testing the Spirit in the wilderness.

This is the first time that Luke used the word “church” in Acts. Both the wonders and signs showed the glory and seriousness of the church and God’s work. God’s works are not to be taken lightly. His church must be holy. It also reminds us that trouble and difficulties can arise from inside the church as well as outside (see Paul’s warning in Acts 20:30).

¹⁷ Contra Bruce (Acts 74) who argues that Jesus had a common purse and so set an example of this type of living. The common idea is also found in Acts 4:32, a second summary of church life in Acts.

Conclusion

Before He ascended, Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples and taught them concerning the kingdom of God. Then the Spirit was poured out upon them at Pentecost. On the same day, the Spirit equipped Peter to preach powerfully. Through the preaching of Christ and the Spirit, a new community was formed.

Summary

Luke began with Jesus' commissioning of the disciples. He commanded them to wait for the Spirit. The Spirit came and was accompanied by mighty signs and wonders. Peter preached, explaining to those in Jerusalem that the miracles were a sign that the last days had arrived. He preached that Jesus was the Messiah, proving this from Old Testament texts. He then commanded the Jews to repent and be baptized into Jesus' name. Many believed and the church grew quickly in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas.

Lesson Two Questions

Question 1. What did Jesus teach them about on His 40 days before He ascended?

Question 2. What were tongues and who heard them?

Question 3. According to Joel, what did speaking in tongues represent?

Question 4. What does it mean to be “filled with the Spirit”?

Question 5. According to Peter, what was Israel’s guilt?

Question 6. What two things did Peter command Israel to do?

Question 7. According to Peter, what proved Jesus’ Messiahship?

Question 8. What does Jesus’ title “Lord” mean?

Question 9. How effective was Peter’s preaching in Jerusalem? Give evidence.

Question 10. Name four marks of the early church.

Lesson Three. The Rise of Persecution

The rapid spread of the gospel in Jerusalem led quickly to persecution by the Jewish authorities. The apostles' early ministry at the temple (4:33; 5:12, 13) and in Jerusalem was powerful, accompanied by many signs and wonders. The witness spread throughout Jerusalem and then to the surrounding towns (5:14-16). The numbers of believers continued to increase to more than 5000. The church grew rapidly. There was awe and wonder. Jerusalem was being turned upside down.

The rapid growth of the church led to its persecution. The persecution began gradually but increased over time. Initially the Sanhedrin asked the church not to speak in Jesus' name (4:18). As the church continued to witness, persecution increased. Luke noted that the Sanhedrin imprisoned the apostles (5:18), beat the disciples (5:28), and killed Stephen (Acts 7). Saul (later called the Apostle Paul) led vicious and widespread persecution of the church in Jerusalem and Judea (8:3). In response, the church prayed for boldness to continue to bear witness. Further persecution meant that the whole church, save the apostles, was forced to scatter to Judea and Samaria (8:1ff). As the church scattered, she bore witness.

The lesson has three parts. First, we will consider the persecution of the church by the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. Then, we will look at the persecution and death of Stephen, at the synagogue of the freemen. Third, we will consider the general outbreak of persecution under Paul.

1. Early Persecution by Jewish Authorities in Jerusalem.

The gospel spread rapidly through the disciples' preaching at the temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish authorities objected to this teaching in Jesus' name. Luke identified two particular incidents. First, in Acts 3-4 they opposed Peter's teaching after he had healed the blind man. Second, in Acts 5 the authorities reacted to the powerful signs and wonders done in Jesus' name by Peter at the temple and throughout Jerusalem (5:12,13ff). We will look at each in turn.

At the ninth hour (3 p.m. our time), Peter healed a blind man at the beautiful gate of the temple. Peter explained the event, telling them that the man was healed in the name of Jesus. Peter and John were then arrested and imprisoned for the evening. The next day the Sadducees, priests and scribes questioned them. They forbade the disciples from preaching and teaching in Jesus' name. The disciples refused and challenged the high priests with these words: Judge for yourselves "*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*" (4:19,20). The disciples then left and prayed for boldness. They continued their ministry in and through Jerusalem.

As the gospel continued to spread, the high priests and Sanhedrin¹⁸ were filled with jealousy (5:17). In Acts 5 they imprisoned them, commanded them not to preach and then beat them. (The beating would be the 40 lashes minus one which the Sanhedrin or the officials of a Jewish synagogue had the right to inflict.) In the second incident, Gamaliel a leading Pharisee took a cautious wait and see approach.¹⁹

We are to note the following.

1. Persecution arose due to the clear signs and wonders and the powerful witness that greatly affected the population. The signs were clear to all, even the Sanhedrin. In Acts 4 we are told: *“they saw the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.”*
2. While signs and wonders were undeniable, the authorities rejected the message of Christ that accompanied the signs.
3. The persecution began gradually and increased over time as the church grew and threatened the existing Jewish power structures.
4. The church’s own position hardened over time. Initially Peter said to the authorities that they did it in ignorance. *“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers (3:17).* This shows great grace by God, but it also implied that there was an end to the ignorance—that at a point they would be acting in willful disobedience.

2. Stephen and the Hellenists (6:1, 8-15, 7:1-57)

The early persecution intensified and crystallized with the rise of the Hellenist Christian, Stephen. The Jews were divided between Hebrews and Hellenists and while both were Jews, the Hebrews were mainly from Jerusalem and were the stricter of the two sects. They read the Scriptures in Hebrew and spoke and worshiped in Hebrew. (Paul is an example of the stricter sect: in Philippians 3:4-7 he calls himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews.) The Hellenists were Greek speaking Jews who read, spoke and worshiped in Greek. They are first mentioned in Acts 6:1-8 in regards to the distribution for the widows. The Hellenistic Jews, coming from a different background than the Hebraist Jews, saw the implications of the gospel far more clearly than the Hebraists.

Stephen was a Hellenist Jew and was one of those chosen to help with the distribution. We are told that he was filled with the Spirit, full of “faith and power”

¹⁸ The Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish council that was composed of three groups. The elders were the lay heads of the community. The scribes were lawyers, coming from the party of the Pharisees (c.f. Gamaliel) and the rulers were drawn from the priests. The rulers were Ananias, High Priest from 6-14 AD who, although deposed by the Romans, still retained his title and his power (Luke 3:2); Caiaphas his son-in-law, High Priest from 18-36 AD; and the High Priest’s family who held other important offices in the temple. Marshall (99) notes power was concentrated in the hands of a few families.

¹⁹ The Pharisees had a general belief in the resurrection (see Acts 21). A number of commentators note that he would have been affected by the miracle of the men being taken out of jail. They also note that Saul, his then disciple, does not take the same approach.

doing “wonders and signs” and preached wisely and powerfully at the Hellenist Synagogue of the Freedmen where Jews from Cyrenia, Alexandria Cilicia and Asia worshiped.

2.1. The Situation

Luke wrote the following.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel (Acts 6:1-8).

Stephens was a powerful speaker, a clear and incisive thinker whose preaching challenged the traditional Jewish position of the day could not be repudiated.²⁰ After his teaching was rejected at the synagogue, men were induced to claim that he had blasphemed the truth. Some of the men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen also stirred up the people, set up false witnesses, and brought him before the council, the Sanhedrin, the most powerful religious court of the day.

2.2. The Charges

Although the charges were false, they did summarize the thrust of Stephen’s preaching. Stephen’s sermon highlighted the key theological issue of the time, particularly the role of the law, the temple, and Moses and the position of Israel in God’s plan. On the Law of Moses, Taylor (9) states that Stephen’s position was “the Law of Moses was to be absorbed in and superseded by a spiritual and enduring system...as a foreigner he may have understood this better than those in Jerusalem”. Conybeare (57) also notes that Stephen’s speech attacked the two most sacred parts of Jewish tradition—the law and the temple.

2.3. The Sermon

Stephen’s sermon is the longest recorded sermon in the book of Acts. The sermon is important as it helps us to understand Jewish thinking (and later even Jewish Christian in Galatians and Acts 15) opposition to the spread of Christianity to the Gentiles.

The sermon had four major arguments. First, it focused upon the idea that God’s grace had never been limited to a particular place. Stephen stressed that in the past God traveled with His people as He led them. God’s work had never been limited to one

²⁰ Taylor (11) notes that Stephen seems to have grasped the implications of the gospel in a deeper way than the other disciples.

location. This implied that this new work of God's will take Him outside of Israel. Second, building upon the first argument, he stated that God's plan for Israel was always temporary. God's greater plan was to bless the whole earth. Third, he argued that the plan was fulfilled in Christ and so a new era had begun. Fourth, he argued that throughout Israel's past, they had resisted God's will. They were doing this again in their rejection of Christianity.²¹

The sermon picked up on a number of key historical figures and moments in the history of Israel. In developing the point that Israel had always rejected God's prophets, Stephen began with Joseph, *"And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles."* He then pointed out that they also rejected Moses (7:23-29, 7:35)—*"This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush."* He then pointed out that just as they rejected Moses even so they rejected Christ (7:9).

Stephen concluded his sermon in Acts 7:51 stating, *"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."*

The argument that Israel had always rejected its leaders is important in countering the argument that Jesus could not be the Messiah. Each of the major speeches in Acts argued that the true reason why the Messiah was rejected and hung upon a cross was because the Jews rejected Him. He was the Messiah but they sinned in rejecting and crucifying Him (2:36, 4:10, 5:30, and 10:39).

Second, Stephen stressed that God was not bound by a fixed location (7:44-50). In verses 33 and 34, he had already stressed that the land upon which Moses stood was holy, and not the land of Israel. He then pointed out that the fathers first worshiped God in the tabernacle in the wilderness, not the temple in Jerusalem. Even when Solomon built a temple, God did not live in temples made with hands (47). Stephen quoted Isaiah 66:1, 2 and 1 Chronicles 16:39 to remind them that Heaven is the true throne of God, not the earthly throne in Jerusalem.

By doing this, Stephen was attacking the Jewish temple idolatry—the idea that as long as we have the temple, God is for us and it does not matter if we obey Him or not. This type of thinking had occurred before in Israel's history. In 1 Samuel 3 and Jeremiah 7:4 the prophets warned the people about trusting in idolatrous words. *"Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these' "* (Jeremiah 7:4)

²¹ For a more detailed look at this idea see (WTTG 288).

2.4. The Consequences of Stephen's Defense

The Jews responded to Stephen's message with rage and hatred. Acts 7:54 states: *When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.* As a mob they took Stephen out of the city and stoned him. The event followed Deuteronomy 17:2-7. As Stephen was stoned, Saul was present, the Jews laying their clothes at his feet.

2.5. Stephen, the First Model Martyr

Stephen's death was the first model or pattern of a martyr—one who had born faithful witness to God in the early church. We are told his face shone, a possible reference to the Shekhinah glory of His people. If this is correct, it is an affirmation that the very glory of the temple was now no longer in the temple but in the true people of God, the church. The glory had left the temple and Israel and is now dwelling in God's people, His new temple.

Luke stated that Jesus was standing, ready to receive Stephen. The standing is important as Christ is usually referred to as sitting in heaven, enthroned with His work complete. In this case; however, when His servant was martyred for Him, He stood ready to receive him.

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep (Acts 7:59, 60).

Stephen prayed. First he prayed for himself and then he prayed for his people. Although he had harsh words for them, he tenderly, sincerely and graciously desired their salvation. Both of Stephen's prayers were answered. Christ received him: "he fell asleep" in Him. As to his enemies, Paul was converted. Many commentators note that Paul's conversion came from Stephen's faithful witness and prayer. Later Paul's own preaching followed Stephen's in both method (a historical review) and content (the law and the temple do not save). Some commentators speculate that Paul may even have been Luke's source for this account. Just as in Acts 7:60, Paul used the term *falling asleep* for death in 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

2.6. The Catalyst for Greater Persecution

Stephen's death was then followed by mass outbreaks against the church. The Jerusalem church was scattered with only the apostles remaining in Jerusalem. Luke noted Paul's role in Stephen's death and his lead in the persecution of the church. In Acts 8:1-3 Luke linked the two events: *"Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church that was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."*

3. Saul as a Persecutor

In Acts 8, Saul was the focal point of Israel's persecution of Christianity. In understanding Paul's role we will consider Acts 8, 9, and 26, but we will also consider Paul's autobiographical statements as stated in Galatians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 15:9ff and 1 Timothy 1:13ff.

3.1. Paul and Stephen

Luke introduced Paul in Acts 8:1 as giving approval to Stephen's death. Bruce (*Acts* 69) argues from Deuteronomy 17:7 that this is an official and formal act. Donnelly suggests that he was more than just a passive witness. It is possible he was a supervisor on behalf of the Sanhedrin.

3.2. Paul and General Persecution

Saul was the pivot point between Acts 7 and 8. In Acts 7 we see Saul supervising Stephen's persecution. In Acts 8 Saul undertook the persecution of the whole church in Jerusalem and the cities of Judea. Luke used extreme language in describing Saul's persecution. He stated: Paul made "havoc", he entered "every house" and went into "many synagogues", he took people from their homes and committed them to prison; he breathed threats and slaughter.

Picking up on the word *ravage* in Acts 8:3, Donnelly notes that in classical Greek literature it points to the actions of a wild animal. He notes it is used in the Septuagint in Psalm 79:2 where it is applied to boars of the forest. Paul was as an animal tearing at a dead body. He wanted to do the same to all believers as he had done to Stephen.

Saul also tried to destroy their faith. He tried to get them to blaspheme. Acts 26:10: *And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.* Conybeare (65) notes the use of the Greek imperfect, I "tried to make them blaspheme", means he did not succeed.

Initially Saul's persecution was limited to Judea, but he sought to expand the scope by going to Damascus. "*But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem*" (9:1 and see also 22:4, 26:11). The a journey to Damascus was 170 miles and would have taken 12 days. Even though Damascus was a separate area, the Jewish Sanhedrin had reciprocal agreements with Damascus allowing them to exercise the power of extradition (Bruce Paul 71). Paul's fury was so great that even Ananias and other believers in Damascus knew about him (9:21).

3.3. Paul's Self-Witness to his role as a Persecutor

It is also helpful to note Paul's own testimony as to his persecution. Paul says in Galatians 1:13: *For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.*

Donnelly notes the word violently can also be rendered “Beyond measure.” It was extreme in every sense. Eadie commenting on this verse states: “His zeal pervaded every sphere of his life and labor. He could not be lukewarm, either in persecution or in study. His whole soul was ever given to the matter in hand.”

The persecution was real, hostile and something he later bitterly regretted (1 Cor. 15:9). Paul summarized and defined his conduct in three words in 1Timothy1:13, crystallizing it into three. He said, “*formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent*” of the gospel.

Saul honestly believed that he was doing the right things in his persecution. In Acts 26:9 he stated: *I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* In Philippians 3:6 he spoke of his zeal which was proved in persecuting the church. Saul looked at his persecution as proof that he was a good Jew and a follower of God. The more he attacked the church, the more he thought that he was following God.

3.3.1. Paul’s Understanding of his own Persecution

Paul stressed two issues as he reflected upon his persecution. First, he had a deep and heartfelt regret for his actions and second, he saw his conversion as an example and a pattern of grace.

3.3.2. Paul’s Regret

Paul deeply regretted the suffering he had caused. Paul expressed this in 1 Corinthians 15:9: *For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* Similarly, in Ephesians 3:8 Young’s Literal Translation states: “*to me — the less than the least of all the saints*”. This is a figure of speech but it does point us to Paul’s self-understanding. Eadie notes the Greek stresses the “I am”; it being emphatic from its position. Eadie further notes, the Greek is grammatically impossible. Paul was using a comparative, founded on the superlative “less than the least;” a form designed to express the deepest self-abasement.²²

Donnelly also makes the point that one of the reasons why Paul was so concerned with the poor and widows in Jerusalem was that he had caused many to be poor and widowed. We can also see some comparison between Paul’s regret and Peter’s shame and regret for denying Christ.

3.3.3. Paul, a Pattern or Model of God’s Grace

Paul saw his wickedness and God’s grace to him as a powerful example of God’s grace. He stated in 1 Timothy 1:16: “*But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life.*”

3.4. Reason for Paul's Hatred and Rejection of Christ and the Church

Bruce (Paul 70, 71) argues that Paul's opposition was based on two foundations.

First, he was zealous for the law and the tradition of the elders. In Galatians 1:14 Paul stated: *And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.* He expanded upon this in Philippians 3:5 stating: *as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*

Second, he was convinced that Jesus could not be the Messiah and any who affirmed Jesus was the Messiah were guilty of blasphemy. His conviction was based upon the fact that Christ's life did not seem to conform to the pattern of the Messiah and second His death certainly did not conform. To the Jews, the Messiah would be blessed of God and not cursed (Isa. 11:2) and the Scriptures teach that God curses any who die upon a tree (Deut. 21:23). Since Jesus was crucified he had to have been cursed by God, not blessed. To Saul as a Jew, the death of Jesus in such a way was a scandal. He stated in 1Corinthians 1:23: *but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.* Only later did Paul see that the glory of the Messiah was to take the sins of His people.

Conclusion

As the church expanded, persecution increased. Stephen's sermon and his death were a crucial turning point. Paul spearheaded the persecution in Judea and Samaria until his conversion.

Summary

The early church was founded in Jerusalem. The teachings of the disciples challenged the power structure in the Sanhedrin at the temple. Initial persecution was light, with threats and imprisonment but it soon escalated to beatings. Stephen was stoned and Saul then led a violent attack in order to try to destroy the church. His persecutions began in Jerusalem and Judea and spread to the surrounding regions.

INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
Explanation of important information in the text -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order 1. 2. 3.

(other)

LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

-literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc).

-how is the text related to its surrounding texts?

-how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?

ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?

DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Three Questions

1. How did the Sanhedrin respond to Peter's preaching?
2. Did trouble only come from outside the church?
3. What was a Hellenist?
4. What was Stephen's attack on the temple in Jerusalem?
5. What did Stephen say that their fathers had done to the prophets?
6. What two things did Stephen pray for on his death?
7. Was Paul at Stephen's death?
8. What role did Paul play in the early persecution of the church?
9. Did Paul regret his persecution? Give scriptural support.
10. Name two reasons for Paul's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

Lesson Four. The Expansion of the Church in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12)

This lesson focuses on the growth of the church. Stephen's martyrdom did not stop Christianity. Even though the disciples were scattered, they did not lose their faith or their testimony. These disciples traveled outwards to Judea, Samaria and as far as Antioch fulfilling God's promise in Acts 1:8: "*the gospel will go from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the earth.*" (In Acts 11:19 we are told they went as far as Phoenicia and Syria.) As they traveled, the disciples witnessed and many people were converted. The central point of is that the persecution of the church will not destroy it; rather, persecution leads to the growth and triumph of the church in the plan of God.

We will look at the expansion of the church under three headings—the expansion in Judea and Samaria, the conversion of Paul and Peter's mission activities.

1. Judea and Samaria (Acts 8)

1.1. Gospel to Samaria

Luke opened this account with Phillip the Evangelist, one of the seven chosen by the church in Acts 6 to minister to the saints (Taylor 10). Among the "scattered" upon the death of Stephen, Phillip went out preaching the word (8:4). He took the gospel to Samaria and as far as Caesarea (8:40). The Samaritans were unique as they were not Gentiles but were considered to be "the lost sheep of the tribes of Israel" (Marshall 153, citing Jervell, 113,132). Like the preaching in Jerusalem, signs and wonders accompanied this preaching—unclean spirits were removed and the lame and paralyzed were healed—and there was much joy. Many believed and were baptized.

After a report of these events went back to the disciples in Jerusalem, they sent John and Peter to investigate the matter. Luke made particular mention of a strange incident concerning the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8:14-17 he stated: *Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for He had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.*

Although Luke said they believed and were baptized (8:12), he also noted that they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was only given when the apostles came down to investigate the work.²³

Why Luke made this point is unclear. Marshall suggests that "God withheld the outpouring of the Spirit until the coming of Peter and John in order that the Samaritans might be seen to be fully incorporated into the circle of Jerusalem Christians who had

²³ The Jerusalem church seemed to make a habit of sending men to check on the work. Later Barnabas was sent to check on the church at Antioch and Peter makes a report to the church regarding his experience with Cornelius.

received the Spirit at Pentecost” (88, citing GWH Lampe 70-72). He makes the point that Peter and John did not add any new teaching, nor did they preach to them; rather, they prayed that the Holy Spirit might be given to them. Marshall argues that this was the same experience that Cornelius underwent when the Spirit fell upon him in Acts 10. In Cornelius’ case, it showed that God had accepted him, a Gentile; therefore this event also seems to indicate God’s acceptance. Luke included this event in order to stress that the Samaritans were no longer heretics and lost sheep; they were now full members of the church.

1.2. Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch is important for a number of reasons. First we see God’s sovereign control in the event. God led Phillip “through the angel”. We are also told that the Spirit led him (8:29) and after the event, the Spirit took him away (8:39). Why God used the Spirit and angel, rather than just one or the other, is not clear, but in any event these extraordinary events show the sovereign control of God in this incident. The Spirit brought Phillip to the Eunuch at the ideal moment to explain the gospel—as the Eunuch was reading about the suffering of the Servant in Isaiah 53.

The Eunuch was a proselyte, a Greek who followed the Jewish way. Luke included him as a representative, a significant Gentile figure, who God converted as the gospel was carried to the ends of the earth. The Eunuch illustrates that God blesses those who fear Him from every nation (10:34).

The conversion of the Eunuch indicated that a new order has been instigated in Christ. Although the Eunuch was a proselyte and had traveled to Jerusalem and the temple, he could not enter the temple. Eunuchs were barred from intimate worship and access to God by the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 23:1 states: *No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.* The Spirit directed Phillip, now of the true temple of God, to go to him (6:3, 8:29). The Spirit took up residence in the Eunuch in a new way. Due to the indwelling of the Spirit, he was a new temple. This is a fulfillment of Isaiah 56:3-8.²⁴ These verses are fulfilled in Christ’s coming. Instead of being barred from the temple, by God’s work in him, he became a priest in the house of the Lord (1 Peter 2:9). A new order of salvation, indwelling by the Spirit and to all men—Jews, Gentiles, the lame and deformed—had come.

Finally, Marshall makes the point that this verse parallels the incident of the two men on the Emmaus road (Luke 24). In that case, Jesus opened the disciples’ eyes to

²⁴ Is. 56:3 *Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from His people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please Me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my wall a monument and a name better than sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, to love the name of the LORD and to be His servants; everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer their burnt offerings and their sacrifice will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”*

understand the Scriptures. In this case, Phillip helped the Ethiopian to understand. The key point is Old Testament Scriptures cannot be understood without a key to unlock them. Phillip, as an evangelist, helped Ethiopian to understand the Scriptures by pointing him to Christ.

2. Paul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-31, 22:7ff, 26:14ff)

Paul's conversion was striking. Saul was traveling on his way to Damascus to persecute the church when, towards the end of his journey, he was "apprehended by Christ" (Phil. 3:12).²⁵ Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9:1-31 and referred to by Paul in Acts 22:7f and Acts 26:14ff. In looking at Paul's conversion we will also consider Galatians 1 and Ephesians 3:7-9.

2.1. Jesus' Revelation

While Paul was traveling, he was blinded by a great light and heard a voice.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one (9:3-7).

Saul heard a voice and saw a great light, two marks of divine revelation in the Old Testament (2 Cor. 4:6). Christ spoke to him in Aramaic, his Jewish religious language, and called him by his name twice—"Saul, Saul" (26:13). In Scripture it is common to repeat a name for emphasis. God called Moses at the burning bush by repeating his name. Donnelly suggests that it is actually a term of endearment like Martha, Martha. If that is so, God was lovingly calling his disciple.

Saul answered by calling him LORD. As noted in Lesson one, the name does not have to imply deity but it certainly pointed to it.

Jesus then told him: *I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting*. While there was no direct reference to deity it is clear that this is a statement that 1. Jesus had been raised by God (and so is Messiah) and 2. the "*I am*" reference passage points to divinity. This is the same form of address that God used with Moses at the burning bush. In that instance there was light, a voice and a claim of "I am", as well, as the reputation of Moses' name by God.

Paul interpreted this event as having seen the risen Lord. In 1Corinthians 9:1 he asks: "*Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?*" And in 1Corinthians 15:8 he claimed to have had Christ appear to him: "*Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*"

²⁵ For additional information see Lesson 2.3. above.

The event was clearly central to Paul's life. He could no longer deny the reality that Jesus was not cursed; rather, he now saw that the Jesus who was crucified was also the risen Messiah (26:14). He realized that in his zeal he was mistaken and that instead of defending God, he was in fact attacking God's Messiah and God's church. The resurrection showed that Jesus was vindicated. He is in heaven. He is Messiah, not anathema. He is the Blessed one.

Jesus also made a link between Himself and the church. This had both a practical and a theological importance. Saul had never seen Christ, but he was persecuting His church. Theologically this demonstrated to Paul the link between Christ and His church. Practically it showed that to persecute Christ's church was to persecute Him.

Much of Paul's theology can be traced to this event: God's love for His own while they were still sinners, the sovereign call and will of God in bringing men to faith (Gal. 1:12-16), the union between Christ and His church and the centrality of Christ in Paul thinking all seem to stem from this event. Paul's conversion was a model for the whole of his theology. At the same time, Paul also knew and was bound by the Law and Old Testament Scriptures, and so both the Scriptures and his experience guided his theology.

Paul's conversion involved a major refocusing of his thinking and theology. Bruce comments on Paul's change of thinking by noting that the event on the "Damascus Road" recentered Paul's theology. Previously everything in Paul's life had been centered on the Law, but now it was recentered around Christ. Bruce goes on to state that although these changes would have occurred in an instant, Paul would have to work through the implications of this over time. Bruce states: "it [the recentering] did not come to its fullness all at once, of course, but as Paul saw it, it was all implicit in the Damascus road revelation. Formally, all the elements in his life and thought were organized around the central focus of the law. The revelation of Jesus Christ showed him in a flash the bankruptcy of the law, that the law could not save. Inevitably it took him time to think through all that was involved in this reorganization... it would take him the remainder of his life. It was to be the magnet that drew all those elements together in a well defined pattern... the law was replaced at the center by the risen Lord, around whom Paul's life and thought were reorganized to form a new pattern" (Bruce, Paul 80).

While Paul's conversion was unique and spectacular, the same thing happens to all believers. All have sinned. All suppress the truth until Christ comes to them in power and reveals Himself as Messiah and God. This leads to their humility and a turning and recentering of their lives around Christ in new obedience.

2.2. Paul's Baptism into the Church

Paul was blind so he was led to Damascus and waited there for three days.²⁶ The Lord called the disciple Ananias to help him.²⁷ Ananias was reluctant to go due to Paul's

²⁶ His own journey from death to life, see Jonah Mints.

²⁷ We know there was already an existing community of believers, although we don't know much about it.

reputation, but he did go (9:13).²⁸ Paul's sight was restored and immediately he began to preach the gospel.

2.3 Paul's Calling to be a Missionary

In Jesus' initial meeting with Paul, Jesus called him to be an apostle. In Acts 26:17 Paul tells us that Christ said to him, "*I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.*"

God also told Ananias of Paul's commission. He said to him: "*Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.*"

Paul stayed with the Damascus disciples and then immediately went to the synagogue and preached.

2.3.1. Three Major Stages to Paul's Mission Activity

It is common to focus upon Paul's three missionary journeys but that was only part of Paul's mission activities. Paul's activities included:

1. The initial ministry in Damascus/Arabia for 3 years.
2. A ten-year period from Acts 9 until Acts 12 in which Paul was at Tarsus. These are the so called "lost years" but there is good evidence that Paul was evangelizing and teaching the Jews in this period (Donnelly).
3. The three missionary journeys in Acts and the journey to Rome.
4. His travels after his release from the first Roman imprisonment.

We must remember that the Book of Acts is not a complete life of Paul.

2.3.2. Paul's First Mission in Damascus/Arabia

In Damascus Paul preached immediately in the synagogue declaring Jesus to be the Son of God.²⁹

The Jews were amazed (ESV). The Greek verb is "to amaze or confuse, to mix together." Donnelly notes the word can refer to being "driven out of their senses" as they tried to come to terms with the idea that the one who came is now preaching the faith he tried to destroy. We are told that Paul remained there for many days. As he continued "Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ."

²⁸ Donnelly sees a comparison between Peter's reluctance in going to Cornelius in Acts 10 as a parallel. God sends but the church is reluctant to go.

²⁹ Donnelly notes that this is a uniquely Pauline phrase found in his letter but not a phrase that Luke tends to use. This shows the detail and the authenticity of the book of Acts.

2.3.3. Arabia

We are told that Paul spent three years in Arabia. In Galatians 1:17, 18 Paul said, “*nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.*” Arabia was close to Damascus and was part of the Nabataean kingdom ruled by King Aretus.

It is common to speak of this as Paul’s three years of seminary training but there is good evidence to suggest that this was not a three-year period of seclusion. We know Paul was already preaching, and Paul’s own disciples, the fruits of his preaching and teaching, smuggled him out by lowering him in a basket (Acts 9:25).³⁰ This plus the fact that his actions seemed to have stirred up the king against him, all seem to indicate that Paul was active in mission and evangelism during this time.

2.3.4. Jerusalem and the Lost Years (Acts 9:26-30) (Galatians 1: 17-18)

Luke then recorded that Paul went up to Jerusalem after three years to spend 15 days with the disciples. Initially they were afraid of him and did not believe he had been converted, but Barnabas found Saul and presented him to the disciples. Pollock suggests that Paul went up to Jerusalem to spend time with the disciples in order to find out *concerning Christ*. Whyte (49) argues that the Greek can be read that he went up to “history” Peter about Christ. It is the same Greek word for *a first hand enquiry before one writes a book*. This indicates that Paul was seeking additional historical information on Jesus’ life and ministry.

Paul preached boldly in Jerusalem. When the Hellenist Jews sought to kill him, disciples took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus (9:30). This ends Luke’s account of Paul until Barnabas again went and fetched him to help with the work in Antioch (11:22ff). Bruce suggests this is a ten year period, which Paul referred to in Galatians 1:22, 23.

3. Peter (Acts 9:32-12:25)

Luke then switched back to focus upon Peter and the spread of the Church from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Luke recorded three main events; 1. Peter’s mighty works, in Samaria (9:32), 2. Peter and Cornelius (10:1-11:18), 3. Peter’s imprisonment and escape 12:1-25.³¹

3.1. Peter’s Mighty Works (Acts 9:32-43)

Luke recorded that Peter’s ministry extended to Lydda and Joppa. He healed Aeneas, a man bedridden for eight years. Peter also healed a woman called Dorcas, a believer. These two miracles led to many believing the gospel. In Acts 9: 35, 42 we read, “*And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.*”

³⁰ Paul refers to this event in 2 Corinthians 11:33 when he notes he was smuggled out of a window in order to evade capture.

³¹ This section in Luke also includes the founding of the church in Antioch but we will deal with this in the next lesson.

And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

Luke recorded that Peter exercised the same mighty ministry in the areas of Samaria and Caesarea as he did in Jerusalem. We will also see that Paul later exercised the same sort of ministry when he went to the Gentiles.

3.2. Peter's Interaction with Cornelius

The conversion of Cornelius's household represents an important step in the progress of the gospel to the Gentiles. Until this time, the gospel had been preached to Jews and proselytes—the extension into Samaria was to the “lost sheep of Israel” and the Ethiopian eunuch was a proselyte. Cornelius was neither a Jew nor a proselyte; he was a God-fearing Gentile. This represented a major step in the *going out* of the church and we need to look at the background in order to understand it.

Jewish life was centered on the one Law and the one temple located in one place—Jerusalem. The Law and the temple were the foundation of their social and religious life and led to national isolation. Jews and Gentiles interacted in business, but socially they were separated as Jewish food and other social laws kept the families isolated and separated. Johnson says: “It was a boundary separating faithful loyalty to God from unbelieving rebellion against Him.... To be an Israelite was to be in covenant with God; to be a non-Israelite was to be amongst God's enemies” (122). The Jews lived in Gentile areas but were socially divided. The division was from the Jews and was a corresponding Gentile prejudice. Religiously and socially there was the middle wall of partition that separated Jew from Gentile (Eph. 2:14). The extent of this division is evident from Peter's response to the Lord (he does not want to eat anything unclean), from Peter's words to Cornelius when he stated that it was unlawful for Jews to eat with the Gentiles (10:28) and from the horror of those Jewish Christians who came to Peter and accused him of eating with the Gentiles (11:3). It was due to this same principle that Peter withdrew from the Gentiles when Jews from Jerusalem came down (Gal. 2:11-16).

It was only through God's direct action in Cornelius's conversion that Peter was enabled to overcome this prejudice. God prepared Peter through two visions. Just after seeing the visions, two men arrived. Cornelius, as instructed by an angel, had sent the men to find Peter. While the vision pointed to food, Peter understood that the principle applied also to men (10:28). It was only through these direct actions by God that Peter's reluctance was overcome and he understood that God had directed the people.

Peter preached and while he was preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles (10:44). We are told that they spoke in tongues, glorifying God. Many Jews who had come with Peter were astonished. Peter commanded that they be baptized into the name of the Lord, as they had received the Holy Spirit just as we (the Jews) had.

Luke stressed these events to indicate that 1. God was taking the gospel to the Gentiles, 2. The Gentiles were not to be considered unclean, 3. The food laws/ceremonial law designed to separate Israel from the Gentiles were no longer in effect, 4. That true cleanness was internal, wrought by the Spirit, 5. Any Gentile who believed was to be baptized into the name of Christ, 6. This meant that Gentiles along with the Jews were in

full and equal fellowship with God and with each other. Anything that separated Jews from Gentiles must be rejected. Now Jews and Gentiles were saved by grace, and lived and related to God and each other by grace. Peter later recounted this incident to the Jerusalem council and stated that it showed that “*we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they*” (15:11).

3.3. The Death of James and Peter’s Imprisonment

Luke began the story of Luke by speaking of King Herod. King Herod was the grandson of Herod the Great. The Romans made him king. He was not popular, but desiring to gain credit from the Jews, he attacked the church. He first attacked James, the brother of John (9:2). After seeing that this pleased the Jews (It is unclear why this pleased them), he arrested Peter, intending to kill him after the Passover.

Peter was delivered from prison the night before he was due to be executed. Luke stressed the miraculous nature of the deliverance. Although bound by two guards, Peter escaped, passed two more guards at the door and finally managed to walk out of the other main gate. The angel miraculously aided Peter and disappeared upon reaching the street. Luke says the reason for the deliverance was the fervent prayer of the church (12:5). Although the prayer was fervent, it was not perfect as the disciples did not believe that Peter had escaped (12:15). Peter went to Mary the mother of John, surnamed Mark. This John Mark was the same one who was mentioned later with Barnabas and in Paul’s epistles. Peter then sent a report to James and disappeared.

The story indicates the nature of Christian life in Jerusalem, particularly that the initial favor that the apostles had gained from the population had ended. They now lived in fear. Although the church had been scattered, it had still been possible for the apostles to remain in Jerusalem, but now even that seemed to have been removed. The Jerusalem church was still the foundation of Christianity, but it was now a church under constant threat and persecution. For some reason, James the brother of Jesus seemed to be an exception to this.

4. James, the brother of Jesus and the Jerusalem Church.

Luke wrote that when Peter got out of jail, he sent a message to James. There are two important Jameses in Acts. There was James the brother of John— both disciples—and James the brother of Jesus. James, John’s brother was killed in Acts 12:2. In Acts 12:17 James the brother of Jesus is mentioned.

James was the brother of the Lord Jesus. He saw Jesus after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7). Paul met him on his first trip to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19), and called him one of the pillars of the church (Gal. 2:9). Interestingly, it was James, not Peter, who became the leader in the church in Jerusalem. In the Jerusalem council it was James’s voice that carried the most argument and concluded the discussion (15:13ff). When Paul returned to Jerusalem after the third mission journey, he went to James (21:18). James seemed to have kept a good relationship with the Jews in Jerusalem. Bruce (239) notes that he continued at the temple and prayed for the city regularly. He was eventually killed, stoned by the order of the high Priest Ananus II in A.D. 62.

Conclusion

In this lesson we have seen that persecution of the church led to a powerful expansion of the church from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria. As signs and wonders in Jerusalem witnessed to the gospel, so these same signs and wonders accompanied the gospel as it traveled into Judea and Samaria through the ministry of Phillip and particularly Peter.

Summary

The persecution of the church led to further expansion. As Phillip and others fled, they shared the gospel. This “scattering” led to many being saved. The gospel expanded into Samaria. In the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, Luke stressed that the gospel brought in a new order. Another major step occurred with Paul’s conversion and the commissioning of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. Peter continued the witness of the church in Samaria and extended the gospel to Caesarea. Cornelius’s conversion represented the first God-fearing Gentile to be converted. He does not have to become a Jew first; rather he is saved by faith alone.

INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
Explanation of important information in the text -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order 1. 2.

3.

(other)

LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

-literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc).

-how is the text related to its surrounding texts?

-how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?

ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?

DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Four Questions

1. Why did the apostle have to lay hands upon the Samaritans in order for them to receive the Spirit?
2. Name two lessons from the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.
3. What were Jesus' words to Paul on the Damascus Road?
4. What does Bruce mean when he says that Paul's theology was recentered?
5. How does Paul's experience relate to his theological development?
6. What does Donnelly say Paul is doing for 15 days in Jerusalem?
7. Paul's "lost years" refers to what period?
8. Why were Jews not to eat with the Gentiles?
9. What happened at Cornelius's house?
10. What conclusion does Peter draw in Acts 15 from the Cornelius experience?

Lesson Five. Paul's Mission to Galatia (The First Missionary Journey)

In this lesson we begin the second half of the book of Acts. The major thrust of these sections is Paul's missionary journeys, launched from the powerful and cosmopolitan mission church in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas are chosen and commissioned by the church. They traveled through Cyprus and Galatia founding churches and then returned to Antioch. Shortly after their return, Jewish Christians (of the sect of the Pharisees) came down from Jerusalem and told the new churches that they must be circumcised. Paul and the church at Antioch disputed this and Barnabas and Paul were sent to the Jerusalem council. The council rejected the Judaizers and stated clearly that it is by faith alone that the Gentiles are to be accepted and fully integrated into the church.

The lesson has three parts: First, we will look at the Church at Antioch, second we will consider the mission journey to Galatia, and third, we will look at the challenge of the Judaizers and the Jerusalem council.

1. The Church at Antioch

The Roman city of Antioch is located in Syria. It was the third largest city in the Roman World (Pollock 62). It was a place of commerce, culture and learning. It was cosmopolitan; a place where the Eastern world met the Western world.

The church in Antioch holds a unique place in the history of the church. It was the first active mission-based church. Previous mission or expansion from Jerusalem was forced upon the early church by Stephen's persecution, but in Antioch, the mission of the church was a deliberate act. Antioch became the new center for the expansion of the church. Also, the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (11:26).

1.1. The History of the Church

Antioch had a strong Jewish community. Many Christians scattered by the Jerusalem persecution ended up there. There was also a number of Jews from Cyprus who began to speak the word to other Jews, "Hebraists". Some of the Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene then took the gospel to the Hellenists (11:19-20). These were Jews who worshiped God using Greek language and customs, rather than reading the Hebrew Scriptures and speaking Aramaic (6:1-7). The church then extended the work seeking the conversion of the Gentiles (Bruce 227). The church at Jerusalem heard of the work and sent Barnabas down as their representatives (11:22).

The new church became cosmopolitan. It was a mixture of Hebraist and Hellenists, men from Jerusalem, Barnabas and Agabus the prophet and others from Cyprus and Cyrene. For a second time, Barnabas, who was from Cyprus, sought for Paul, and finding him in Tarsus, brought him to Antioch. They ministered in Antioch for a year (11:26) and were appointed by the church as representatives to take famine relief to Jerusalem (11:26-30, 12:25).

1.2. The Character of the Church

Each church has a character. Donnelly argues that there are four particular characteristics of the Antioch church that made it suitable for mission: it was cosmopolitan, caring, growing and gifted. Each aspect contributed to their missionary vision.

1.2.1. A Cosmopolitan Church

Antioch was the provincial capital of Syria. It was a large church, founded by Greeks from Cyprus. The church was a mixture of Cypriots, Jews, and Greeks. The cosmopolitan nature of the church meant it was open to the idea of foreign, Gentile mission.

1.2.2. A Growing Church

The church was growing. In Acts 11:21 we are told: *“the Lord’s hand was with them, and a large number believed and turned to the lord.”* The Lord was blessing them for their local efforts and this led Him to use them in bigger worldwide efforts. Mission was a natural product, a natural outflow of church growth. It was not something forced on the church.

1.2.3. A Caring and Compassionate Church

Help was provided for those who needed it. In Acts 11:29-31 Agabus prophesied that there would be a famine. The church responded by collecting relief to send to Jerusalem. It was Barnabas and Paul who led that trip (Acts 11:30).

1.2.4. Gifted men

There were many gifted men at the church. Prophets and teaches are noted. (13:1). It is also worth noting that Barnabas was mentioned as a prophet before Paul, who was mentioned last.³² Because there were a good number of men, many with exceptional skills, very gifted men could be sent out without weakening the church. Acts 13:1 states: *“Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers; Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”*³³

1.3 The Mission of the Church/the Spirit and Christ’s Call: Sending of Barnabas and Saul

Under the guidance of the Spirit, the church at Antioch was the first to formally send out missionaries: *“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’ ”* (Acts 13:2). The church, the apostolic calling of God (9:15) and the Spirit all worked together. The Spirit worked in and through the church to accomplish His work. In this day we have a low view of the church, yet we see that neither Paul the Apostle nor the Holy Spirit acted independently (13:1). The same thing occurred with Timothy’s calling

³² See Conybeare 334f for an extended discussion on Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament.

³³ Pollock, page 64, argues that Simon was Simon the Cyrene, the father of Alexandria and Rufus; the same one the Romans selected to carry the cross of Jesus. His son went to Rome and Paul mentions him and his mother. This gives us some indication of the close family life in Antioch.

to the ministry in Acts 16:1, 1 Timothy 4:14, and 2 Timothy 1:14. The authority for mission comes from both the Holy Spirit and the church.

The Holy Spirit chose men who were suitable for mission. Both Paul and Barnabas were established and experienced leaders in the church (13:1). They were also from Greek and Jewish backgrounds. Paul was a Roman citizen from Tarsus, educated in Greek and Jewish thought. Paul already had mission experience from Arabia and Tarsus (9:20-25, 11:1ff). Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus with experience in both Jerusalem and the Greek world. Both men's backgrounds were suitable for the work they were to do. God prepares and chooses suitable candidates with the required skills to do His work. If we do not have those gifts, it is unlikely that we will be called to this type of mission.

2. The First Missionary Journey

The first missionary journey began with a trip to Cyprus. It then moved into Galatia curling back towards Antioch. Paul then retraced his steps. The first mission journey, although substantial, was the shortest of the three. As time went on, God led Paul further onward and outward in His mission strategy. Paul followed established roads/travel routes and focused upon cities. As God opened the door, Paul founded churches. He instructed the churches as best as he could and then, in many cases, he was forced to flee due to persecution. He later revisited the churches in order to strengthen them.

The team was Barnabas, Paul and John Mark. John Mark, who may have written Peter's account (The Gospel of Mark), was Barnabas's cousin and a witness of the events in Jerusalem. Many think that Mark was the one who followed Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane and fled naked.

2.1. Cyprus

2.1.1. The link between Antioch and Cyprus

The first mission journey began on the island of Cyprus. We are not told expressly why Cyprus is chosen but since there were close links between Antioch and Cyprus (Barnabas and many others were from Cyprus) it is an obvious first stop. They probably felt a debt to their homeland.

2.1.2. The Work and Mission in Cyprus

The party landed at Salamis on the East of Cyprus and worked west to Paphos. They began by preaching to the Jews at the synagogues.³⁴

Paul always went to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (9:20; 13:5, 14, 46; 14:1). The synagogue meeting began with a call to worship and prayers. There was then reading from the Pentateuch and the Prophets, followed by an address given by a suitable member of the congregation--the ruler of the synagogue controlled who would give the address. The congregation was a mixture of Jews and proselytes and God-fearers (See Lesson 1, 3.1.3. above) (13:16) (Bruce 252,264). Jews and proselytes were respected, but

³⁴ The plural indicates many Jews and Synagogues.

as a rule, God-fearers were tolerated but not really acknowledged. Any rabbi (Paul was a rabbi) had the right to speak at these meetings. Paul used this right as a point of contact in his missions.

In the north, they met opposition by Simon Bar Jesus, who tried to block the conversion of Sergius Paulus, an important Roman aristocrat and proconsul.³⁵ This is the first time we see Paul using his apostolic power and this is the first recorded instance of the gospel penetrating into the heart of the Roman world.

The conversion of Paulus shows God's power and the immediate success of the gospel in the highest realms of Roman society. What an encouragement it must have been to them! If God can convert such a man, he can convert anyone.³⁶

2.1.3. Saul becomes Paul, the Leader of the Mission

Cyprus and the binding of Bar-Jesus, established Paul as the pre-eminent missionary. Luke began the mission by talking of Barnabas and Saul being sent from Antioch. Luke kept this order when they arrived in Paphos, Cyprus. (13:2, 7). From this point on, Luke speaks of Paul and his party: *Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia* (13:13). This is significant for two reasons: First Paul has emerged as the leader of the group. This was Paul's calling as an apostle and so it was natural he would take precedence. It must also have reflected something of his strength and leadership ability. He took the lead role in the incident with Elymas the Sorcerer (13:6-12). We also note that Luke has changed Saul's name to Paul (see 13:9). Saul was his Jewish name, but as a Roman citizen, Paul would have had three names. Donnelly notes that Paul was his Roman surname. *Saul the Jew* became *Paul the Missionary* in a non-Jewish Roman world. This is similar to Abram becoming Abraham as he went on his great work and Simon becoming Peter as Christ builds the church upon his confession. From this time forth, Luke and Peter consistently called Saul, Paul; moreover, Paul always called himself Paul in all his epistles..

2.2. Pisidian Antioch – To the Jew First, then to the Gentile

2.2.1. Preaching in South Galatia

This was a major advance. We can surmise that the gospel had already been preached in Cyprus due to the links between Cyprus and the Antioch church, but the gospel had not yet been preached in Asia. This was dangerous frontier mission work. The area was not fully under Roman control. They would have had to walk from the coastal plains up through mountains on roads that were hard (Conybeare 129, Pollock, 76). Mark left them at the coast and returned to Jerusalem. At this stage Luke does not tell us why.

³⁵ Pollock notes he had been curator of the Tiber River. He was a proconsul, he reported to the senate. He was a noted scientist. Secular sources tell us that he had published important books on nature. He is quoted by the famous classical writer, Pliny the Elder, in *Natural History*.

³⁶ Conybeare notes that the miraculous blinding, as with Peter's actions with Ananias and Sapphira, are exceptions to the usual miracles in the New Testament. In the Old Testament miracles were often signs of judgment but in the New Testament they are usually works of mercy. In both of the exceptional cases where the gospel was being threatened by liars, hypocrites and imposters who sought to pervert, distort and deceive, God ordered these events (20).

2.2.2. Pisidian Antioch

They arrived in Pisidian Antioch—a Roman frontier town (a soldier’s town) established to stop raiding tribes in the area. When Paul arrived, it was a more settled town with a strong Roman presence.

2.2.2. Jewish Evangelism

Paul began by evangelizing the Jews. Even though he was a missionary to the Gentiles, he brought the message to the Jew first and then to the Gentiles (see Romans 1:16, 9:1-5). The event shows Paul’s typical method of Evangelism. He began by speaking to the Jews first. While some accepted him, the majority rejected his word and persecuted him. This pattern was repeated throughout Paul’s mission work.

Luke recorded Paul’s sermon in great detail (13:16-41). The sermon illustrates Paul’s approach to the Jews. Because he was preaching to those who knew the Scriptures, Paul based his argument from the Scriptures, particularly those Scriptures that spoke of Christ coming. The sermon shows that when Paul preached to the Jews, he stressed that the promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Christ.³⁷ Paul’s sermon was a model for Jewish evangelism being tailored for a Jewish audience.

The sermon divides into three parts. Paul began by stressing God’s historical dealing with the Jews (13:17-22). He then stressed that Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament (13:23-37) and finally he challenged the hearers to accept or reject the message. The key to Paul’s message is that God (from the family of David) raised up the Messianic Deliverer, and that His name was Jesus. When preaching to Jews, Paul closed the sermon with a direct application. He offered the forgiveness in Christ that was not available through the Law of Moses (38, 39). He also stressed that this gospel was now going to the nations as had been foretold. The period of Jewish exclusivism was at an end. He concluded with a warning that they should not reject the gospel (13:40, 41).

2.2.3. The Rejection and Hostility of the Jews

Although a few believed, the majority of the Jews rejected the word. Paul, it seems, remained in Antioch for a few months (Acts 13:49). When the rejection turned to persecution and expulsion from the region, Paul shook the dust off his feet (13:51). This is significant. Paul was not just personally angry—shaking the dust from his feet was a sign of a curse, that God’s judgment was upon them and that they were no longer the covenant people of God. They were excommunicated. Even the very dust upon their feet was cursed and rejected by God (Luke 9:5, 10:11, Acts 18:6). By doing this, Paul made it clear to the unbelieving Jews that they were rejected; the event made even more offensive coming from a Christian missionary. Paul’s actions were saying that God was no longer just the God of the Jews; He was now the Christian’s God and unless the Jews followed, they would be cast out.

³⁷ The sermon at Pisidian was similar to Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost. If we compare Peter’s, Stephen’s and Paul’s sermons, the similarities are striking, indicating this was a common way for the gospel to be preached to the Jews, whether by Paul or any of the apostles.

2.2.4. Turning to the Gentiles

When the Jew's rejected the gospel Paul turned to the Gentiles. Paul states: *"It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'* Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:46-48).

Conybeare (144) comments upon this verse by saying that the council of God is not frustrated by the unbelief of His chosen people. A new "Israel", a new "election" of Jew and Gentile succeed the former. When Paul was forced to leave, Luke made it clear that the new disciples were not alone. Luke recorded that they were "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

2.2.5. The True Basis of Success

Paul used this event to show the true basis of the success of the gospel— all those elected to eternal life believed. *"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region"* (Acts 13:48,49). It was those who had been appointed to eternal life who believed. If the gospel is rejected, it is rejected by those who are not appointed to eternal life.

2.3. Iconium

Paul traveled 90 miles down the Augustinian Way, a famous Roman road, to Iconium. The town was built upon a strategic road junction. Although their preaching had better results here, again the Jews rose up in opposition.

Luke summarized the ministry as follows:

"Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them" (Acts 14:1-7).

The events at Antioch were repeated at Iconium (Acts 14:1-3) and almost every other place the gospel was preached. "Local Jews, almost invariably, gave a corporate refusal to the gospel....and it was accordingly proclaimed to the Gentiles" (Bruce 266). Paul understood that this was the pattern that God had ordained for Israel and for his ministry. Acts 14:3 shows Paul's response to Jewish rejection and hostility Luke records:

“They stayed a long time speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”³⁸

In Acts 14:5 Luke indicates that Greeks and Jews made an attempt on their life; and so the Apostle continued onwards.

2.4. Lystra

2.4.1. Evangelizing those with No Jewish Background

Lystra was important as Paul and Barnabas evangelized a group with little Jewish background (there was no mention of a synagogue). The group seems to be a subgroup of the Greek culture (Luke indicated that the Gentiles there did not speak Greek as a first language). This was extreme cross-cultural ministry: Paul was reaching across both linguistic and cultural divides to a group without any biblical background (Bruce 11). Timothy came from Lystra and may have been converted on this visit (Acts 16:1).³⁹

Paul healed a man at Lystra and this was immediately misinterpreted or reinterpreted through the framework of local folk law. They ascribed Paul’s actions to local gods, rather than to the power of the gospel. At Lystra there was a legend that Zeus and Hermes had come to Lystra disguised as travelers. They were turned away until a peasant couple sheltered and fed them. The gods then showed themselves, turned the inhospitable into frogs and turned the peasant couple’s house into a golden temple (Pollock 93). They ascribed this to the missionaries, calling Barnabas “Zeus” and Paul “Hermes”. The Lystrians took the gospel signs and message and reworked them into their own cultural background. This event shows the real danger and difficulty of cross-cultural ministry. It is a warning to all missionaries, particularly those going to totally unevangelized areas. Paul realized what happened and corrected them. Luke recorded Paul’s teaching in Acts 14:14-18 as he described to the Lystrians the true nature of the Creator God. Paul’s sermon here was similar to his teaching before the Gentile audience in Athens (Acts 17:22-34). These two passages need to be studied together to understand Paul’s method of Gentile evangelism.

2.4.2. Jewish opposition intensifies

The Jews from Antioch and Iconium were not content to have Paul thrown out of their areas. They continued their pursuit of Paul, and when they caught up with him at Lystra, excited the local crowd so that they stoned him. We see the intensity of Jewish opposition—the Jewish hatred was so extreme they sought to kill him—and the fickleness of the Lystrians—Paul’s popularity soon passed. They left Paul for dead. Paul got up and left the next day for Derbe.

³⁸ Pollock, pg. 91, points out that Paul’s miracles continued the work of Christ when He was upon the earth. For a fuller look at how the Lord was bearing witness through Paul and the use of miracles in Acts, see Lesson 6, 2.5.

³⁹ Pollock argues that Timothy accompanied Paul from Antioch back to his hometown, Lystra. He bases this on the order of the towns as recorded in 2 Timothy 3:10,11 that states: But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

We need to recognize that Paul's mission was one of extreme hardship. He suffered terribly, even to the point of death (2 Cor.11:23-27). Paul's mission showed the foolishness of the kingdom even as it was revealed in Christ's own life. This may have been the time Timothy was converted.

2.5. Returning to Strengthen the Brethren

At the end of the mission road, Paul did not return home (a short hop); rather, Paul returned along the road travelled, visiting and strengthening the churches. This showed great personal courage. He had been persecuted unto death in this mission and yet he still chose to return.⁴⁰ After strengthening the churches, Paul and Barnabas then returned to Antioch to report. Acts 14:26 states: *"and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples."*

3. Opposition to Mission from Christian Jews

Paul had not been back for long before opposition to the mission occurred. A group called the Judaisers came down from Jerusalem. They were horrified at the laxness of the Antioch church, the Jews were eating with Pharisees. This would have included Peter, Galatians 2. The issue began with fellowship but went deeper. They also taught that unless you were circumcised and kept the Law of Moses, you could not be saved (Acts 15:1).

The argument was probably that Paul had told them something of the gospel, that of faith in Christ, but they were still not fully following God. In order to fully follow God they stated that one needed to be circumcised and keep the law (Gal. 3:1-3, 5:2-6). It is unclear what motivated these men. It is clear that they were confused as to the real nature of the gospel.⁴¹

The Judaisers were probably from the party of the Pharisees that we read of in Acts 15:5 (Also note that having come to Antioch, they also went out to Galatia.) Paul was forced to correct their teaching in Antioch (Gal. 2) and he wrote the epistle to the Galatians.⁴²

⁴⁰ Pollock, page 89, notes that the magistrates would have changed with the coming of a New Year.

⁴¹ The issue is complex. The Jews would have had many concerns. Socially, the taking of the gospel to the Gentiles was a new focus and if so many Gentiles joined the church, there was a fear that it would transform the church from a Jewish, Aramaic, Jerusalem-centered institution to a socially and culturally Gentile church by stressing circumcision and the law. The danger of this would be reduced. Also there would have been a fear that by downplaying the role of the law, holiness in religion would be threatened. Many of the Jews from Jerusalem would not have thought through the full theological implications. It took a mind like the Apostle Paul's to make those implications clear. We are to note that these issues are similar to the ones the Jews faced in Stephen's speech concerning the Law and the temple. The Jews rejected Stephen's claims, but now the Christians, Jews and gentiles had to face the issue within the church.

⁴² There are many dates for Paul's letter to the Galatians, (see appendix 1) but the early date is most probable.

The theological issue can be put as follows: Was faith enough for the Gentiles to be converted or did they also need to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses?

4. The Jerusalem Council

The issue came to a head at Antioch. In response, Paul wrote Galatians and the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, the location of the mother church, the source of trouble and the location of the greatest number of Christian disciples. The debate in Jerusalem set the course for the whole of the church.

The elders and apostles came together to decide the issue. The group of believing Pharisees opened the discussion: “But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the Law of Moses’” (Acts 15:5). There was some debate and then Luke focused upon the three leading speeches—the speeches of Peter, Barnabas and Paul, and James.

Peter responded. He argued that the true test of acceptance is God’s acceptance. Cornelius was converted and accepted by God directly, he did not need to fulfill the Law. This proved that God accepted the Gentiles by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon them and cleansing their hearts, all by faith alone. Peter was arguing by implication that since God had accepted the Gentiles without the law, Jewish Christians should also do so. Peter then developed a second argument. Peter pointed out that the Jews had been under the yoke of the Law for a long time and it did not bring holiness. They all knew that most Israelites had rejected Christ. Stressing the law had failed to bring blessing.

Barnabas and Paul then spoke. Donnelly notes the tact in this order. Barnabas was known and had a dominant place in the Jerusalem church while Paul was still under suspicion. They spoke especially of the signs and wonders of God to validate their claim.

James the brother of Jesus, an elder, spoke last and his argument was decisive. James argued from the book of Amos that the spread of Christianity and the inclusion of the gentiles was the fulfillment of Judaism. In Amos, God had promised to restore broken Israel (as He had done at Pentecost) and then from Israel the gospel would go to all mankind (15:16,17). James stated that the acceptance of the gentiles by faith was the fulfillment of God’s word to David that his house would be rebuilt. He went on to say that in light of what had happened with Simon (using Peter’s Jewish name), there was no need to impose the law on the returning Gentiles.

4.1. The Decision

The council rejected the need for the new convert to be circumcised and follow the law. It decided that the Gentiles could be included in the church without needing to follow the Jewish law and customs. To facilitate fellowship, the council requested the Gentiles to abstain from things that were particularly offensive to the Jews and addressed matters that were particular gentile sins, idolatry, immorality and meat that still contained its blood. The Jerusalem council’s decision was a major step forwards in the mission of the church. The church was now free to go into the entire world unhampered by Jewish cultural requirements and both Jews and Gentiles were seen as equal in Christ in the church.

Paul and Barnabas along with the prophets Judas and Silas all returned to Antioch to report the council's findings.

Conclusion

The church began its Gentile mission from Antioch. The door of faith was opened to the Gentiles through Paul and Barnabas. They evangelized Galatia. The Jerusalem council affirmed the mission and made no additional demands upon the Gentiles. It did ask that the Gentiles respect certain Jewish traditions to assist in fellowship.

Summary

The church at Antioch began the first formal mission. The church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles. Paul became the leader and he preached first to the Jews and then to the Greeks. He was successful but suffered extreme Jewish persecution. Paul and Barnabas founded churches and then returned to their sending church. The mission caused opposition from within the church and Paul resisted it. To clarify matters, the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. The council found in their favor and they returned to Antioch to give the news.

INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

(other)
LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts? -how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?
ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?
DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Five Questions

1. What was the name of the first formal mission church?
2. Name four characteristics of the church.
3. Explain the relationship between mission, the Holy Spirit and the Church.
4. How does Paul's Antioch sermon relate to Peter's and Stephen's preachings?
5. Explain how and by whom Paul was persecuted.
6. Paul revisited the churches: True or False?
7. Who were the Judaisers?
8. What was the problem of Gentile mission?
9. What council was called to address the issue?
10. What did the council agree on?

Lesson Six. Paul's Mission to Macedonia (The Second Missionary Journey)

This lesson covers Paul's second missionary journey of 49-52 AD. In this mission Paul traveled further than any other mission. Paul traveled through Galatia and entered Macedonia and Greece in present day Europe. Paul evangelized three Roman provinces. As we will see, the Macedonian mission was particularly difficult. He could only stay for a short period in various cities as he was forced to leave new or fledgling works due to persecution. Luke also gives us an extended look at Paul's ministry in Athens and then Corinth. Paul wrote First and Second Thessalonians from Corinth.

The lecture has three parts. We begin by looking at some of the distinctive marks of Paul's mission. Then we will focus on the evangelization in Macedonia and lastly, we will consider his extended stays at Athens and Corinth.

1. Paul Revisited the Churches

The third mission journey began with Paul in Antioch. Paul wants to return to strengthen the churches he founded in the first missionary journey. In Acts 15:36 we read *"And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.'"*

Returning to visit the churches was a deliberate part of Paul's mission strategy. At the end of the first missionary journey Paul could simply have returned home as it was a short hop from Derbe to Tarsus (Paul's home) and it was a further short hop from Tarsus to Antioch. Instead Paul went back along the dangerous mission road to Pisidian Antioch before returning to Antioch (Acts 14:21). That was a dangerous as Jews from Pisidian Antioch had stoned him in Derbe. It was also a substantial trip. Paul returned to this area a third time on his third mission journey to Asia and Ephesus. Paul passed through this area 4 times that we know of and maybe even once or twice again after he left from his first Roman imprisonment.

Paul's actions show that he was concerned to see the church continue to grow and develop and that he believed that he had an ongoing responsibility to the churches.

2. Changes in the Mission Team

The trip began with controversy and changes to the mission team. The original team had been Paul, Barnabas and his cousin Mark. In the first mission John Mark returned after Cyprus, as they landed on Asia. Mark then returned to Jerusalem. They met again at the Jerusalem council and John Mark returned with them to Antioch. As they began the next mission journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them, but Paul said no. Luke recorded the disagreement in Acts 15:39-41: *"And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord."*

The disagreement was sharp—the Greek word indicating a personal and deep confrontation. This caused Paul and Barnabas to split. Luke made no mention of whose fault it was but many commentators suggest that the church favored Paul’s position as Luke simply notes, Barnabas departed while Paul and Silas were “commended by the brothers to the grace of God.”

There are a number of points about the split.

1. Mission and Ministry and any major work do create great stress upon men. Mission takes wisdom, clarity of vision and strength of conviction. Paul had these abilities and he did not compromise. At this stage, Paul was concerned that Mark was not ready and so he did not want to take him with them. Barnabas was the *son of encouragement*. He encouraged Paul. He introduced him to the apostle in Jerusalem and he also brought him to Antioch. Barnabas was an encourager and I am sure this was his attitude to Mark. In some cases, the encourager type is not a good thing as they lack the ability to say no when they should do so.

2. They separated over an important but not a theologically key event (Donnelly). There is no suggestion that Barnabas went off into sin.

3. It was regrettable, but in certain circumstances it is better that believers separate rather than continue in an unhappy partnership.

4. Even though they separated, there was no mention of a vendetta or bad blood between them. If we are forced to separate, we must do so in the best possible way. Although Luke never mentioned Barnabas again, Paul referred to him in his letters where he praised him. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he stated: “*Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living*” (1Cor. 9:6)? Paul was also reconciled to Mark. He mentioned Mark in his letters during his first Roman imprisonment, Colossians 4: 10, and again in one of his last letters. In 2 Timothy 4:11 he states: “*Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.*” If the relationship between Mark and Paul was broken, they were later reconciled to each other and Mark was helpful to Paul in his latter ministry.

The two groups split. Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus. Paul took Silas and went to Galatia.

2.2. Paul and Silas

Following the missionary principle of going in twos, Paul took Silas. Silas was a leading man and as a delegate of the Jerusalem church brought the decision concerning circumcision to the church at Antioch (15:22). He was a Roman citizen (16:37)—his Roman name was Silvanus (2 Cor. 1:19, 1 Thess. 1:1, 2; 2: 1). He is referred to as a New Testament prophet. His last recorded act in the Scriptures was as the bearer of Peter’s letter to the Gentile churches (1 Peter 5:12) mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1 “*to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*” He was a man of experience, Spirit-filled, with a Roman background and a good reputation in the church.

2.3. Paul and Timothy

Another important companion in this trip and for the rest of Paul's life was Timothy. On the first leg of the journey Paul went through Lystra where Timothy joined him. Timothy was taught the Scriptures from his earliest time and in 1 Timothy 1:2 Paul called him "my true son in the faith" (see also 2 Tim. 2:1). This indicated that Timothy was brought up in a Jewish home but was converted through Paul's ministry to him. If this was so, Timothy would have been converted on Paul's first trip to Lystra (see Pollock who suggests that Timothy followed Paul down from Pisidian Antioch). We know Timothy witnessed Paul's suffering. In 2 Timothy 3:10,11 Paul says "*But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all, the Lord delivered me.*" Timothy remained with Paul until his death. Paul commended Timothy in Philippians 2:19-22: "*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.*"

As Timothy prepared for service, we are told that the church set him aside. Paul said to him in 1 Timothy 4:14 "*Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.*" This seems to refer to his original call, but even if it was later, it shows Luke's and Paul's high regard for the power of the church. Paul did not simply commission Timothy as a minister (2 Tim. 1:6). The validation of his call came not from Paul as the apostle; rather his call and authority came from the church, through the laying on of hands of the elders.

Paul circumcised Timothy. We need to understand this was done for mission purposes. Paul did not believe that circumcision was necessary for Timothy's salvation. Paul wrote Galatians 1:8 in which he said that if anyone is circumcised he is an anathema and Christ will profit him nothing. Paul believed that if the issue was one of salvation or any demand that one had to do it in order to be saved, it was sin. Paul refused to have Titus, a Greek convert, circumcised for this reason (Gal. 2:3). On the other hand, since we are free in Christ, what we do to the body makes no difference. Since it would help the mission, Timothy was circumcised so as not to be a stumbling block to the Jews. In matters where Paul could afford to be flexible (Timothy's acceptance on the mission field), he did so. In matters where there was an important principle at stake—circumcision is not required for God to accept the Gentiles—Paul was inflexible. This shows great wisdom on Paul's part.

2.4. Paul and Luke (the three "we" sections)

The fourth important person on this journey is Luke, the author of Acts. Luke, the beloved physician, (Col. 4:14) continued with Paul throughout his life. Luke joined Paul in Acts 16:10 at Troas, the first of the three "we" sections. Pollock (122) notes that there was a famous medical center, the Shrine of Antiochene, at nearby Pergamum. Luke left his medical task to join Paul as a fellow worker. Luke remained a help to Paul in Paul's second Roman imprisonment: "*Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers*"

Philemon 24. Luke was a careful medical scholar, offering an accurate and detailed record.

3. The Leading of God in Acts

Another prominent feature of the second journey was the direct leading of God. We see the first instance of this as they tried to go from west to north into Asia, “*they are forbidden by the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 16:6). They then tried to go due west to Bithynia and were forbidden “*by the Spirit of Jesus*” (Acts 16:7). We are not told why the Spirit was given these two names—the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus—but by looking at each together we see that the Holy Spirit was linked to Christ and He rules through the Spirit. In both instances, Luke recorded that the apostle was blocked from going north and west so they went northwest to Troas.

Donnelly notes that it is comforting to us to see that the Apostle Paul, God’s mighty apostle, did not always know what to do and needed to be led and directed by the Spirit. As in Paul’s life, there are times when we do not know the right thing to do and God blocks us. In such circumstances, the apostle waited for God to open another door. Luke joined them at Troas, maybe this was the reason why God sent him there. We need to remember that we are always operating on incomplete information. We make decisions based upon our best information, but God has all the facts; thus, He leads in the right way.

Later Paul received other direct guidance and support from the Spirit. In Corinth Paul was having a hard time and we are told “*And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.’ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them*” (Acts 18:9, 11).

Luke joined them at Troas. It was at Troas that they received the Macedonian vision—the call to go over to Macedonia to help. Luke recorded: “*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them*” (Acts 16:9, 10). Donnelly notes that Paul and the church responded to this cry by going to preach the gospel to them. This makes the point that the primary work of the missionary and the church is to preach the word.

4. Macedonian Section, Asia (16:6-17:14)

In this section, Paul and his companions traveled from Asia to Greece. Although the gospel had already been in Greece and even as far as Rome (see 2:7-11), this was the first time Paul and his companions reached Greece.

4.1. Philippi (16:11-40)

The town was named after Philip of Macedonia, Alexander the Great’s father. It was an important Roman military colony and commercial center. Luke recorded three

important incidents: the conversion of Lydia, the silencing of the slave girl and the conversion of the Philippian Jailer.

4.1.1. Lydia- The First Convert

Philippi did not have a strong Jewish population or a synagogue. We know this because to have as synagogue 10 or more Jewish males were needed and since there was no synagogue, it was unlikely that 10 males were there. The few Jews, which included some woman, met unofficially at the river. One of these was Lydia. She was a middle class business owner from Thyatira, Asia (see Rev. 1:11, 2:18, 2:24). Luke stressed the sovereignty of God in her conversion. The Lord opened her heart to hear the things spoken by Paul (16:14, 15). We are told that she and her household, which would include children and slaves, were baptized (see 16:15, 33; 18:8 for household baptisms). As a rule Paul did not stay with converts—lest he be seen to be taking from them—but in this case he did stay in Lydia’s house.

4.1.2. Slave Girl

This slave girl was owned by a syndicate (16:16 uses the word “masters” indicting many). She was under demonic control, had the ability to prophecy the future and was a valuable commodity. We are told that she followed Paul around day-by-day crying out *“These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.”* Paul eventually acted, commanding the demon in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

Donnelly suggests that it was not a case of Paul not wanting her to speak; rather, he did want her to speak incorrectly about the way of salvation. The Greek is indefinite and should be read, “a” (non exclusive) way of salvation. Paul was not pronouncing “a” way of salvation as many translations have it, but Paul was speaking about “the” way, the exclusive one and only way of salvation. If the girl was talking about “a” way of salvation, then she was misrepresenting the truth. Paul needed to stop her deceit. The owners stirred up the mob and false accusations were laid up against them before the magistrate. They were beaten without a trial and put in jail for the night.

4.1.3. Philippian Jailer

In jail, Paul and Silas bore witness to their suffering through prayer and praise. As they were singing, there was an earthquake—small ones were common in Macedonia and were usually understood to be judgment of the local gods. In this case, the earthquake was specific to this jail.

In addition, the prison doors were opened. According to Roman law, the guard guaranteed the life of the prisoners with his own life. If the prisoners had escaped, he would be put to death. In this case the guard took the noble route and was about to kill himself. Paul stopped him by telling him all the prisoners were still there. Having seen this event, as well as having heard of the miracles with Paul and the slave girl and the singing of praise to God, the jailer asked what he could do to be saved. He believed, was converted, and he and his household were baptized.

Donnelly makes two points about the ministry in Philippi. Although Paul was expelled from the city, he made a major public statement, which was a threat to the

authorities. This would have the effect of protecting the existing Christians. Note: we are to use the law for our own sake and for the sake of others. When Paul's life was threatened in Caesarea later, he appealed to Caesar.

Second, Donnelly notes how we see both God's secret working and his working through men and evangelists in people's conversions. In Lydia's case, Luke stressed that God opened her heart, emphasizing the divine portion of God's work. In the story of the Philippian jailer, the divine side can be seen in the healing of the slave girl and the earthquake. Luke also stressed the missionary's part: Paul's praise and thanksgiving when in prison and his love for the jailer as he calls out to him, "Do thyself no harm."

The work was small and Paul had to move on. The "we" sections end and Luke seemed to stay behind with this new church work at Philippi while Paul, Silas and Timothy continued on. Paul continued to have a good relationship with the church. She partnered with him in the gospel, sending him on with funds. In Philippians 1:5 he speaks of "*their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*" Maybe the wealth of Lydia and others allowed them freedom to do this.

4.2. Thessalonica

Thessalonica, a city 90 miles south of Philippi on a major road called the Via Egnatia, or the Egnatian Way, was a prosperous city with much trade. Paul preached there for three Sabbaths and had great success. In Acts 17:4 we are told, "*And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.*" Jason's house became a center for the church. The early church often met in houses as there was nowhere else to meet. Thessalonica was also the home of a Jew called Aristarchus, who later traveled with Paul (see 19:29, 20:4, 27:2, Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24).

The Jews then became jealous (17:5). They recruited evil men from the marketplace to attack the missionaries in a mob at Jason's house. They were also clever. When they couldn't deal with Paul by raising a mob, they went to the rulers of the city and made a skillfully worded charge. Their attacks were well done and unrelenting. (We will see this later as they chased Paul to Beroea from where he had to flee.) The rulers rejected the charge but they took a middle ground and put Jason on bail, releasing him.

These attacks were severe. They threatened Paul, the mission and the new church. Paul was forced to leave a new work. He was worried about the young church, so he traveled only as far as Beroea, a nearby town. It is implied that he stopped there awaiting a chance to return to Thessalonica as soon as he could. The ongoing threat against the church continued to affect Paul for the rest of the Greek mission. Paul was left concerned and worried until he received good news in Corinth.

4.3. Beroea

The disciples fled to the nearby town of Beroea, a small holiday town on the side of the mountains. It was likely that Paul wanted to return to Thessalonica and therefore stopped in Beroea. The synagogue accepted them and gave them a fair hearing. Many were saved. Paul might have settled in Beroea for a time but the Jews from Thessalonica heard

he was there and chased him out. Leaving Timothy and Silas behind, Paul was taken by the brethren to Athens for safety.

5. Athens – Preach the Gospel to the Greeks (17:15-34)

5.1. The History of Athens

Paul reached Athens alone. Luke's account indicated that he was not intending to evangelize there. Athens was a major city, the heart and cultural capital of the ancient world. Its cultural high point was in 480-323 BC, the classical period under the leadership of Pericles. Greece was organized around city-states and although Athens had been defeated by Sparta, it still retained important culture significance. Rome allowed it to be a free self-governing city. We should also note that Greek culture, which included Athens, was totally immoral, filled with divorce, pornography, homosexuality and idolatry.

The importance of the book of Acts is that Paul was now bearing witness to the intellectual elite of the world. Athens presented the high point of culture, philosophy and learning. As Paul said, the Greeks seek after wisdom.

Paul began in the synagogue but had little result. We are not told any church was founded at Athens. He then went to the Agora, the market place. Here he met local philosophers Epicurean and Stoic. The former believed in getting the best out of this life, a philosophy that was reduced to *eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die*. The latter believed man should "strive, unafraid and proud, to accept the law of the universe, however harsh, and should work towards a world state founded upon reason" (Pollock 150).

By the first century, most philosophies were reduced to a mere intellectual exercise, something that was personal, private and did not affect life. This is much like America and the West today.

Paul was then taken to the Areopagus to give a formal defense. The Areopagus was the first and formal legal port in Athens. The court controlled religion and morals in the city. We will look at the sermon in some detail as it was the prime example of Paul's preaching to an audience that was completely Gentile.

5.2. Paul's Preaching in the Areopagus

Paul started with a point of contact. He pointed to the statute of the unknown God and from there he developed a foundation of the true God. He began with God as Creator, the One who made the world and everything in it, the Lord of heaven and earth (He echoes Gen. 14:19-23, Ps. 24:1).

Having noted God's creation, Paul then turned to the spirituality of God. God is not worshiped in temples made with hands (Isa. 66:1). He is also self-sufficient, needing nothing. Paul then proclaimed the power and absolute control of God—He controls men, the times and boundaries of their habitation. Paul said that God acts in this way that men might find Him. Paul concluded with a call to repentance and a statement of Jesus and the resurrection.

We are to note the following.

1. This is the key text to understand Paul's Gentile Evangelism. Another similar text is Acts 14:8-18.
2. Paul did not quote the Scriptures, but he did quote the content of the Scriptures and the same scriptural doctrines. Since the Greeks had no scriptural background, he did not base his arguments upon the Scriptures; rather, he focused upon what they did have, namely general revelation.
3. In the same vain, the Gentiles' lack of scriptural knowledge meant that he could not stress the fulfillment of the Scriptures in his sermon to them as was his custom in Jewish evangelism. By contrasting Antioch with Athens we see that Paul used different methods of evangelism in different circumstances.
4. The lack of scriptural background also meant that Paul must begin with the basics—the nature of God and creation—before he could go on to deeper things. Paul's theology of God in Athens was the same as in Romans 1-3. In Athens he takes a more conciliatory tone. The reason for the change in tone was that in the book of Romans he was writing to the church to explain the true state of man, while in Athens he was preaching this truth to unbelievers.
5. There was a call to repentance when preaching to both Jews and Greeks because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
6. Paul did mention the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This was a new concept in the Gentile world. They believed that the soul continued after death in some form for a period, but they did not believe that there was a physical resurrection.⁴³

5.3. Paul's Limited Success in Athens

Paul's ministry had very little success in Athens. Most rejected the message as foolishness, particularly the teaching of the resurrection. We note that a few wanted to hear more, but as already noted, his work in the synagogue and his work with the Greeks led to no church being founded and no baptisms. (1 Cor.16:15). Paul left Athens with no fruit.

5.4. Paul and the Wisdom of the Greeks

I will end this section by noting both Paul's intellect and his relationship to the wisdom of the Greeks. Paul alluded to his Greek learning in the Areopagus speech. Pollock (153) notes that Paul used rare words from the poet Eumenides in his address. This indicates that Paul was thoroughly versed in Greek literature and thinking. Paul also echoed a reference by Plato when referring to God's sovereignty and finally he quoted directly from the Cretan poet Epimenides. Donnelly, a classical scholar, notes that the quotes are perfect for the occasion. Paul's quotes were exactly fitted for the occasion, a fact that indicates that Paul had a great intellect and was well read in classical learning. We also see that Paul did not rely upon this learning; he only used the learning when it fitted the biblical model. His core presentation of the gospel, his theology and call to repentance

⁴³ (For a fuller treatment of the Greek understanding of the resurrection see Wright 33-84)

remained the same. Paul's attitude was summarized by the following principle: Although Paul knows the wisdom of the Greeks, Paul does not rely upon the wisdom of the Greeks.

6. Corinth (Acts 18:1-18)

Paul arrived in Corinth, an important commercial and military city that was both wealthy and decadent. Paul ministered there for a year and 6 months (18:11) and wrote two important letters to the church from Corinth, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and would later write two letters to the Corinthian church.

6.1. Paul Struggled at Corinth

Paul was at low ebb when he reached Corinth. At this stage Paul had followed the Macedonian call from Troas to Corinth. The ministry had been difficult. Paul had been chased out of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He then was alone in Athens and had only limited success. He arrived in Corinth alone and faced opposition. Donnelly notes this is a low point for Paul in his work. Paul summarized how he came and the nature of his ministry in 1 Corinthians 2:2: *“And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”*

Although weak and fearful, Paul continued in the ministry. Silas and Timothy caught up with him in Corinth and the Lord Himself who spoke to Paul in a vision encouraged him. Luke records this event—the Lord told him, *“Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people”* (18:10,11). These verses imply that Paul was afraid and he needed encouragement to continue. The ministry to the church at Corinth continued to be a difficult one for Paul as revealed to us from the two letters Paul wrote later to this church on his third mission journey. In summary, the ministry to the church in Corinth was not easy.

6.2. Priscilla and Aquila

Paul meets an important couple, Priscilla and Aquila at Corinth. We are told:

“And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade” (18:1-3).

Priscilla and Aquila were Christians and tentmakers like Paul. They had been in Rome, but were forced to leave. The couple was always talked of together with Priscilla's name always mentioned first. They remained at Corinth until Paul left; then they left with him (18:18). When Paul went home, he left them at Ephesus. Later he met them there on the third mission journey.

6.3. Paul Writes the Letters to the Thessalonians

As noted, Paul's companions Timothy and Silas caught up with him. They had been left behind at Berea. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (1 and 2 Thessalonians) to

answer their questions. They may have come with a gift, freeing Paul up for full time ministry. He must have been encouraged to have them with him.

6.4. Paul's Ministry in Corinth

Initially Paul worked and taught in the synagogue. When Silas and Timothy arrived, he devoted himself "exclusively" (NIV) to preaching, testifying that Jesus was the Christ. The head of the synagogue and his family were converted, but, as in all other occasions, Paul's ministry to the Jews led to direct opposition. Paul was forced to leave the synagogue, excommunicating them: *"And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'"* (18:6).

Paul's ministry continued in the house of Titus Justus, a worshiper of God who lived next to the synagogue. A number of Gentiles were converted and a church was formed. As opposition increased, God comforted Paul and promised that He had many people in this city. He remained a year and 6 months.

6.5. The Plot against Paul

In Corinth there was a Jewish plot against Paul. This is important for two reasons. First, because Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, was mentioned and the dates of his appointment are known, we have a fixed point of reference in the New Testament. Secondly, Gallio's legal decision concerning Christianity formally established it as a legitimate religion in the Roman Empire. This is an important part of Luke's apologetic.

The incident is recorded in Acts 19:12-17

But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law." But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

Secular sources tell us that Gallio took the procouncilship in July 51 AD. The Jews must have brought their charge within a few days. From this date we can work backwards and forwards to date the book of Acts.

The judgment is an important Apologetic fact for Luke. The Jews charged Paul and Christians with worshiping God contrary to the Law. Gallio realized that the charge did not depend upon and issues of Roman law and government but rather that it was an internal Jewish matter. The word "judge" by Gallio seems to have a formal legal meaning, indicating that it had the weight of an official Roman ruling that no Roman statutes had been broken and so he would not try the matter. This formal proconsul ruling would have created a Roman precedent that Christianity was not illegal and it was not breaking Roman Law. This means that at this time Rome was officially a protector of

Christianity against the Jews. The judgment allowed Paul to remain in Corinth until he chose to leave.

6.6. Paul leaves Corinth for Jerusalem.

In Spring 52 AD Paul left Corinth to return to Jerusalem to fulfill a Nasserite vow. He sailed back to Ephesus. He spoke at the synagogue and was well received. He promised to return to them. After leaving Priscilla and Aquila there, he then sailed back to Caesarea, the Jerusalem mother church, and returned to Antioch.

Conclusion

Paul began by revisiting the churches founded on the first mission journey to Galatia. The Spirit led Paul on to Macedonia. Here he evangelized and started church plants along the eastern coast until he reached Athens and Corinth. Paul defended the gospel in the Areopagus, the highest Athenian court. Paul then continued to Corinth and in July 51 AD Gallio defended Paul and pronounced that Christianity broke no Roman laws.

Summary

Paul's next mission was longer and further than the second mission. It began with Paul and Barnabas separating over John Mark. Paul traveled with Silas. They traveled through Galatia until they were blocked from entering Asia. They entered Macedonia, taking the gospel to Greece. They evangelized Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Paul was forced to flee. They then entered and evangelized the two major Greek cities of Athens and Corinth. After returning to Jerusalem to pay a vow, Paul then went back to Antioch.

INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

(other)

LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

-literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc).

-how is the text related to its surrounding texts?

-how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?

ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?

DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Six Questions

1. Who went with Paul on the second missionary journey?
2. How do we know Luke traveled with Paul?
3. Briefly explain how God led Paul to Macedonia. Was this Paul's plan?
4. Name three incidents that occurred at Philippi?
5. What happened at Thessalonica? How did it affect the rest of Paul's mission?
6. What was the Areopagus? What was its significance?
7. Outline Paul's approach to Gentile evangelism in the Areopagus.
8. What was Paul's mental state in Corinth? Explain your answer.
9. Who were Priscilla and Aquila? Give a full explanation of where they were from and where we will meet them again.
10. Explain two significant things we learn from Luke's mention of Gallio's judgment.

Lesson Seven. Paul's Mission to Asia (The Third Mission Journey)

1. The Purpose of the Third Missionary Journey

Paul had three aims. Paul wanted to return to strengthen the churches, to spend time in Ephesus (he had only been able to stay for a short while at the close of the second mission journey) and He desired to take a collection from the Gentile churches to the Jewish church in Jerusalem.

Unlike the other journeys, Luke does not tell us who Paul's companions were. If we look at the epistles written at the time, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans, we see Timothy was with him. And in 2 Corinthians we note that Titus was with him in Ephesus and Corinth. Barnabas is not mentioned and Silas seems to have remained in Jerusalem at the end of the second journey.

2. Ephesus

Paul traveled through Galatia to Ephesus. On the second journey God did not want Paul to go to Ephesus—the Spirit blocked him and led him to Macedonia but on this occasion it was God's will for him to go to Ephesus. Paul had a long and powerful ministry there.

2.1. Background to Paul's Work in Ephesus

Paul visited Ephesus at the close of the second mission journey (18:19-21). He taught at the synagogue where he was well received and was asked to stay. Although he refused saying he must go to Jerusalem, he promised to return to them. The situation was promising as Ephesus was a large town with a friendly synagogue. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila there and they provided a base, preparing for Paul's return. Paul did return with a group of companions.

2.2. The City

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province. It was a free city—the Romans left it to the Ephesians to govern their own affairs as long as they were consistent with Rome. It was a major commercial center as well as an important religious, tourist city. The statue of Dianne of the Ephesians (this was the Greek name, the Roman name was Artemus; see Acts 19:24) was found here. Dianne was supposed to have come from heaven—subsequent examination shows that the statute was a shiny meteorite that had landed in the area in the rough form of a woman. The importance of religious tourism can be seen in the incident with Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis. The shrines brought no little business to the craftsmen (19:23). This was also a very superstitious area where magic was practiced (19:11-20). Ephesus was a focal point of the area, linked by commerce and religion to a number of other cities.

Paul's ministry also radiated outward from Ephesus. Paul began by teaching in the synagogue for three months. Paul then ministered to the Gentiles at the school of

Tyrannus. His work affected the whole of the city. The gospel then spread from Ephesus into the surrounding regions. Ephesus was at the center of the letters to the 7 churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

2.3. Various Groups in Ephesus

There are a number of important groups that Paul encountered in Ephesus

2.3.1. The Jewish Synagogue

As usual, Paul began by preaching at the Jewish synagogue. After he returned, some of the Jews, being stubborn, spoke evil of *the way*. Because they continued in unbelief, Paul withdrew. His relationship with these Jews seemed to be better than with many Jews at other synagogues.

2.3.2. Priscilla and Aquila

The couple remained in Ephesus after Paul left. They were a great blessing to the church, strengthening it. An example of their ministry was the way they corrected Apollos, which they did with wisdom and tact. They had heard him at the synagogue and knew his skill and faithfulness to the text, but at the same time, they knew he did not yet have a full grasp of the gospel. Instead of publically correcting him, they invited him home and instructed him privately. He received their testimony and began to preach Christ, blessing many by his ministry (Taylor 301). Priscilla and Aquila remained in Ephesus until Paul departed; then they went to Rome. Later, Paul greeted them in his letter to Rome written from Corinth (Romans 16:3). It is probable that Paul stayed with them again as he did in Acts 18:2.

2.3.3. Apollos

At Ephesus Luke introduces us to an important Jew from Alexandria, Apollos. He arrived in Ephesus after Paul had left at the end of his second mission journey and he left for Corinth before Paul returned at the beginning of this third mission journey. Paul would have met him at Corinth on his short trip to the city when he was based for 2 years at Ephesus. Paul referred to him in 1 Corinthians.

Alexandria, an important center of learning, was influenced by Jewish, Greek and oriental thinking (Taylor 301). Apollos was a learned man, a good speaker and mighty in the Scriptures. We are told that he taught *the way of God* accurately; however, at the time he came to Ephesus, he only knew the baptism of John. He seemed to be in the same position as the other 12 Johannine disciples who knew the baptism of John, but not that it had been fulfilled in Christ. Apollos met Aquila and Priscilla, who wisely invited him to their home (19:26) (Taylor 301). He was humbled and received their teaching. Taylor notes: “those who are waking up to the light are ready to welcome more light when it appears” (302). He continued to teach in Ephesus and then he desired to go to Corinth to help the work there. We are told “the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him.” Apollos went to Corinth and had great influence (1 Cor. 3:6).

2.3.4. John the Baptist’s Disciples and another Pentecost (Acts 19:1-6)

The first group that Paul met on entering Ephesus was a group of 12 disciples of John. When Paul met them, they knew only the baptism of John (19:2) (namely a baptism of repentance, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit). Exactly what they knew is difficult to discern. They said, “*we have not yet heard that there is a Holy Spirit*” (19:2). Since John spoke of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that would occur with Christ, it cannot mean that they had not been told of the Holy Spirit. Most likely, they did not know that the things which John spoke of had been fulfilled in Jesus’ coming, dying, and rising again and that as a fruit of that work, the Spirit had been poured out at Pentecost. Either way, Paul explained that John’s baptism pointed to its fulfillment in Christ, and then spoke of Christ and His work. The disciples were then baptized into Christ’s baptism. Paul laid hands upon them and the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Luke set up a deliberate parallel with Pentecost indicating that another mini-Pentecost had occurred in Asia.⁴⁴ The Spirit was confirming the work of Christ as the gospel went out to all the nations.⁴⁵

2.4. Paul’s Ministry Model in Ephesus

Paul spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31), the longest time he spent in any single place. He said in 1 Corinthians 19:6, written from Ephesus, that a great door had been opened to him. The events in Ephesus offer us insight into Paul’s model of pastoral ministry as distinct from his mission principles. We will be focusing upon Acts 19 and Acts 20:17-38. In this latter section, Paul summarized his ministry as he departed with the Ephesian elders.

After spending three months in the synagogue, Paul left. Then he taught for 3 months in the synagogue and later teaches publically in the school of Tyrannus, meeting daily. Donnelly notes the following marks of Paul’s life.

First, in Acts 20, he modeled an exemplary lifestyle. In Acts 20:18-19 he states: “*You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;*” Paul stressed that his life, whether in mission or pastoral ministry, was open, transparent, and an example to the flock. He modeled the doctrines he preached.

He was particularly careful about money and covetousness as there were many travelling religious teachers who taught for money. Paul said, “*I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’*”

Second, he also said that he did not count his life as valuable, but gave all for his service to Christ: “*But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if*

⁴⁴ Luke notes 4 major outpourings of the Spirit. One was in Jerusalem to the Jews, followed by one in Samaria to the lost Sheep of the house of Israel. The third event occurred in Caesarea with Cornelius, a God fearing Gentile, and finally, here in Asia as the gospel is established in the heart of the Gentile world.

⁴⁵ See appendix 2 for a fuller description of this phenomenon.

only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (20: 24). His teaching life was one of self-sacrifice.

Third, Paul focused upon biblical teaching. He taught at the synagogue for three months and then taught at the school of Tyrannus. He preached the kingdom of God, the name of Jesus, and all things helpful for them. This was more than basic doctrine. They had a full understanding of every major doctrine of the Scriptures because Paul focused on more than the basic themes. As a result, when he left them he could say that he had taught them the whole council of God (20:27).

Fourth, he ministered to them in a personal and practical way. Paul pointed to how *“I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house.”* Not content to minister to them only publically, Paul went to their houses to ensure the doctrine he taught was applied at home. This required courage. He said, *“I did not shrink from going from house to house.”* Paul desired that the doctrine they heard was the doctrine they applied in their daily lives.

Fifth, he did this in love. He spoke of his warning and tears. His love for them and their love for him were evident in his final address: they wept with him at his parting.

Sixth, Paul was under a great deal of stress and pressure. In verse 19 he wrote of tears and trials and the plots of the Jews. This is not hyperbole—Paul shed real tears and underwent severe trials. The Jews plotted against him, wanting to do him harm. If he wrote Galatians from here, he had trials about the faithfulness of the churches. We will see that he also had trials with the church at Corinth. The ministry cost Paul. It was not easy.

Finally, Paul trained others to take his place when he left. His final address to the elders was an example of this. He knew he must leave. He knew that he was not indispensable to the church. When he departed, he left behind a group of trained and faithful elders to oversee the work. Paul was doing the very thing he later commanded Timothy: *“and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2: 2).*

Pastoral oversight is vital to a ministry. In Acts 20:28 Paul says, *“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood.”* The elders are present by the will of God and by the appointment of the Holy Spirit who gifted them for the office. They are appointed to rule over God’s church that He purchased with the blood of His Son. The church is precious to God and elders have a position of stewardship in his house. They will be held accountable.

2.5. The Powerful Witness to the Gospel at Ephesus

The gospel witness at Ephesus was powerful. We will consider this witness under two heads: First, Paul’s witness in the power of the Spirit and second, Paul’s witness within and outside of Ephesus.

2.5.1. The Powerful Works of God in and through Paul

God's powerful witness in the Spirit accompanied Paul's ministry in Ephesus. Initially the Spirit was poured out mightily upon the 12 Ephesian disciples. Luke records, *"And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them"* (19:11). Taylor develops the theme of the sovereignty of God in these areas arguing that Paul's gifts were not something under his own control; rather, he was enabled to do these things from time to time (see Acts 14:3 for similar wording and Taylor 99, 101, 132, 307).⁴⁶

God's method, or way of working, always fits the situation His people were in. Paul was given extraordinary power as he worked in and countered the culture of magic that surrounded him in Ephesus. As with Moses and Pharaoh, the power of God was clearly superior to any other power. The extent of the powerful works can be seen as many tried to copy him. In Acts 19, Luke recorded how the itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to use the name of Jesus. They went to a demon possessed man and attempted to make the demon leave. They were rejected and overpowered by the demon possessed man and fled naked. In Acts 19:17 it is recorded, *"this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled."*

Many magicians rejected their old ways, burning their magic scrolls. The current value of the scrolls is unclear but estimates place it in at millions of dollars. A major social, religious and economic change occurred through Paul's ministry. This is illustrated by the riot at Ephesus. Demetrius, a silversmith saw the economic effect upon his silver business and stirred up the craftsmen in his trades and in related trades. They filled the city with confusion, grabbed two of Paul's travelling companions and ran to the theater. Their riot in the theater lasted for 2 hours—until they were quieted by the city magistrate. This event was one of the triggers for Paul leaving. Having already considered leaving (19:21, 22), he now leaves to go to Macedonia.

2.5.2. Paul's Witness within and beyond Ephesus

As noted above, Paul's ministry affected the whole city of Ephesus. Paul began in the synagogue and then lectured in the school of Tyrannus, affecting the whole city. The gospel spread from Ephesus outwards—a number of Paul's converts took the gospel to surrounding cities. Many commentators argue that the churches of Smyrna, Pergamum and Thyatira that are mentioned in the book of Revelation were founded at this time. The principle is that Paul was led to begin in a major city and then the gospel radiated outwards.

⁴⁶ Taylor, pg.100 states: "the Savior's supernatural power was at His own will. He performed His miracles when, where and how He pleased. His ability to do such a work was not a delegated thing, but inherent in His own divine personality; but it was quite otherwise with His official representatives. They are wrought only at His suggestion; so the working of miracles by them was subservient not to their own pleasure but to His wisdom. Paul could perform supernatural signs only as he was specially directed by the Holy Ghost to do so. He had no prerogative of doing such things when he pleased."

2.5.3. The Trails of Ephesus

In the midst of God's power, work and witness, there were also great trials. Luke only referred to two incidents—the Jews ousting Paul from the synagogue and the disturbance by Demetrius the silversmith—however, from Paul's letters written to the church at Corinth, we can see that he faced a number of other hardships. First there was the trial with the church at Corinth. At one stage this church rejected Paul and followed other so-called apostles. Paul wrote a number of letters to them and he even paid a short visit to them in Ephesus.

Second, in 1 Corinthians 15:32 the ESV states: "What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" The NIV and Young's rendering indicate that this might not have been a figure of speech. Paul clearly faced some difficult trials at Ephesus not recorded by Luke.

Third, in 2 Corinthians 1:8 he spoke of the hardship he suffered in Asia (Ephesus).

Finally in Romans 16:3,4, written later from Corinth (his next stop), he referred to a situation in Ephesus in which Priscilla and Aquila saved him: "*.... who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.*"

Paul's ministry was both extraordinary successful and very difficult. Paul gave the reason for this in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11:

"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many."

2.6. The Close of Paul's Ephesus Ministry

Paul was a missionary, not a church pastor, and so after three years he moved on to continue his mission work. In Acts 19:21 we are told: "*Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'*" He sent Timothy and Erastus before him into Macedonia. According to 1 Corinthians he had already sent Titus before him to Corinth.

3. Corinth and the Corinthian Correspondence

As we have already noted, while Paul was at Ephesus, trouble brewed in Corinth. In order to deal with this, Paul wrote the Corinthians and also paid them a short visit. This caused Paul great distress, so much so that it is likely that he left his profitable

Ephesians ministry to take a short trip to Corinth. He then returned to Ephesus. Paul visited Corinth again after leaving Ephesus and remained there 3 months.

Isolating the situation and even the number of letters that were written to the church is difficult. We know of one lost letter, but there may have been others. One possible sequence of events is that Paul sent an original letter to Corinth which was now lost. That letter was misunderstood (1 Cor. 5:9-11).

The Corinthians sent a reply asking for clarification and advice (1 Cor. 7:1). This was brought by Cleo's household (1 Cor. 1:11) who also reported that there was party strife and immorality in the church.

In response, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. He then visited (2 Cor. 2:1) but his visit was not well received and he returned to Corinth humiliated (2 Cor. 10:10). He then wrote another letter, referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:4, 9; 7:4, 8. This could have been his second letter, or it could have been a new letter.

After Paul left Troas, Titus met him in Macedonian. He then wrote 2 Corinthians. He finally went to Corinth and stayed there for 3 months.

4. The Collection for the Saints

One of Paul's aims on this journey was to make a collection for the saints in Jerusalem. In Acts and the Epistles we read that Paul gathered representatives from all the Gentile churches in order that they could make an offering to the church in Jerusalem. This would bless them and consolidate Jewish and Gentile Christians.

The original foundation for relief to the poor of Jerusalem was laid in Paul's first visit to Jerusalem. In Galatians 2:9, 10 Paul wrote: *".....that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."*

Paul and the church in Antioch made a trip with funds: *"Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul"* (Acts 11:27-30).

There were a number of reasons for the trips. Famine, drought and persecution of the Jews in Judea meant the Jerusalem church was suffering. Paul seemed to be using this as a means of healing the rift between Jewish and Gentile Christians that was still evident. The Gentiles benefited from the spread of the gospel and could show their thankfulness by giving financial help to the needy in the Jewish church.

Taylor notes that the list of names shows that Paul envisaged a general offering brought by representatives from all the Gentiles. The list included Philippi, Beria, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus and the Galatian churches (1 Cor. 16:1).

The principle for the collection is laid down in 2 Corinthian 8 and, in particular, 16. In 1 Cor. 16:1 he stated: *“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.”*

This offering was to be a voluntary offering. It was to be done in love and thankfulness (1 Cor. 8:1ff). Collections were to be done in private, every week, and the proceeds were to be distributed by appointees from the churches, who would travel with Paul (1 Cor. 16:3). The last requirement safeguarded Paul from any accusation of dishonesty. Taylor notes that here we see Paul as practical, loving and caring in his approach to the church (342-345).

Conclusion

Paul's third mission journey had three aims: it was to strengthen the churches, to minister in Ephesus and Asia and to take a collection from the Gentile churches for the poor in Jerusalem.

Summary

Paul traveled through Galatia to Ephesus. In Ephesus he had a long and powerful ministry and God blessed him with many signs and wonders. The church grew and the gospel affected the whole city and the surrounding regions. Many churches were founded there. This was Paul's longest stay and shows us his method of pastoral care for the flock. Paul then went to Macedonia and Corinth making the collection before returning to Jerusalem.

INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes
<p>EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

(other)

LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

-literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc).

-how is the text related to its surrounding texts?

-how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?

ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?

DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Seven Questions

1. What was the purpose of Paul's third mission journey?
2. Who was Apollos?
3. Explain the incident with Paul and the 12 disciples.
4. How long did Paul stay in Ephesus?
5. How did the Holy Spirit accompany Paul's ministry there?
6. How were churches founded from Paul's ministry in Ephesus? Name them.
7. What was going on in Corinth when Paul was at Ephesus?
8. Why is the Corinthian correspondence complicated?
9. What was the great collection? How was it done?
10. Who went with Paul to deliver the collection to the churches and why?

Lesson Eight. Paul's Arrest, Defense, Journey and Arrival in Rome

This lesson has three main parts. In the first part Luke stresses Paul's defense, "apologia", before both Jew and Gentile. Paul was the representative figure for Jewish Christians and Luke shows that Paul was neither a Jewish heretic—he was still fully within the Jewish religion—nor was he guilty of any crime under Roman authority. The defense speeches total 50% of all of Paul's sermons and teachings in Acts.

The second section stresses Paul's journey to Rome. God has promised Paul that he would preach in Rome and he does, but in an unexpected manner.

The third section focuses upon the nature of Paul's mission Roman mission.

Rome. The lesson ends with two short sections to tie in Paul's prison epistles and also raises the issue of what happened after the two-year imprisonment was over.

1. Paul's Return and Arrest in Jerusalem

In the preceding chapters, Luke traced Paul's three missions. Luke completes his work by focusing upon the history of Paul's arrest and the defense of his mission before the Jews and Gentiles. The account shows that Paul's actions were perfectly consistent with Jewish religion and were not a threat to the Romans. These twin aims were important to Luke as he was writing to Theophilus, a Roman, and he wanted to stress that Paul is both an orthodox Jew, a Pharisee and a faithful Roman Citizen.

As we consider Paul's defense, it is important to that there was not just one single strand of Judaism. The Jews recognized a number of different strands within Judaism. Initially Jewish Christians were just another strand and accepted within Jewish society. In Jerusalem, the Jews saw Christianity as a sect within Judaism. This continued until after the destruction of the temple in AD 70. It was at that stage that the many strands were reduced to one test for orthodoxy and the Jews formally rejected Christianity.

Paul's defense consisted of a number of speeches before the Jews and the Roman authorities (namely before Felix, Festus, and Festus and Herod Agrippa). Since Paul was the key person bringing the Christian gospel to the Gentiles, Luke wants us to have a clear understanding of the history behind Paul's arrest and the defense that Paul gave for his actions before the Jews and Gentiles.

We begin by considering whether Paul should have returned to Jerusalem. After a short summary of the historical circumstances of Paul's arrest and detention, we will look at Paul's defense before the Jews. Finally, we will look at his three defenses before the Roman authorities. As there is significant overlap in the defenses we will not look at each in turn; rather, we will draw out the major themes from all three.

1.1. Should Paul Have Returned?

A number of commentators raise the issue of the wisdom of Paul returning to Jerusalem, as the prophets and the Holy Spirit warned Paul repeatedly that if he went back he would be bound and arrested. Due to this many of his brethren did not want him to return. In Acts 21:3, 4 and Acts 21:10 we are told:

“... And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem” (21:3, 4).

“While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, “This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’ ” When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem” (21:10).

Given these warning, was Paul right to return?

Donnelly suggests that Paul was right and notes that Paul seemed to be under a sense of divine compulsion to go to Jerusalem. In Acts 20:22 Paul clearly states: *“And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there.”*

Paul was also clearly aware of the danger and yet he still felt compelled or constrained to go. In Acts 21:13 he replied to the disciples, *“What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

The Agabus prophecy is often misread. Agabus did not tell Paul that he was not to go, rather Agabus told him that if he went he would be bound and delivered. The distinction is crucial.

Luke’s stress upon the danger and the almost inevitable prison as a result of Paul’s going to Jerusalem’s is a parallel of Christ going to Jerusalem—Christ set his face to go to Jerusalem, even as Peter sought to dissuade him. Here Paul, His great apostle, also set his face to go to Jerusalem, despite the brethren seeking to discourage him. What happened to Paul in Jerusalem was part of a pattern that happened to him in every city. If we combine these three considerations we see that Paul was not wrong in going to Jerusalem.

1.2. A Summary of Paul’s Return and Arrest

Paul returned to Jerusalem after his third mission journey. The gentiel deputies from the great collection accompanied him. Even at this late stage, there was still a great deal of suspicion about Paul’s actions in the Jerusalem church. The primary accusation was that Paul did not care about Jewish customs (21:19-21). In to rebut this, the Jerusalem elders spoke to him and suggested that he speak to the church council (21:22) and that he offer to pay the expenses of some Christian men under a Nasserite vow (21:22-25). Paul agreed. He paid their expenses and joined the temple rituals and kept the fast. When he was at the temple, some Jews from Asia saw him and brought false accusations that he had rejected the law and defiled the temple by bringing a Gentile

within the walls. (21:27-29) (He had been traveling with Trophimus, an Ephesian, but he was not with Paul in the temple). A riot broke out and the Jewish mob sought to injure him, but a Roman centurion saved him. The centurion wanted to examine him under scourging fearing that he was the leader of a rebellion; however, Paul claimed his Roman citizenship in order to protect himself.

These two allegations, the Jewish claim that he rejected the law and the temple and the Roman one that Paul was leading an insurrection had to be dealt with.

Lysias, the Commander (24:7) then brought him before the chief priest and the council to find out why Paul was arrested. Paul argued that he was on trial because of the resurrection. The council was split between Pharisees and Sadducees and the trial was adjourned. Fearing assassination, Paul was sent to Caesarea for his own protection. Luke notes very clearly in Acts 23:29 that the Roman position was that the issues that the Jews brought to them concerned internal Jewish laws alone. Paul had never broken a Roman law.

Paul was brought before a number of Roman governors in Caesarea. He appeared first before Felix, who found Paul innocent, but delayed releasing him, seeking a bribe from Paul. He also wanted to do the Jews a favor (24:26). After being dismissed in disgrace some time later, Felix was succeeded by Festus in July 59. Festus examined Paul a second time and decided that Paul should go back to Jerusalem to be tried. Paul, knowing that he would be killed, offered to go back to be tried formally.

Since Paul knew that he would be assassinated if he was sent back, he made a formal appeal to Caesar. Paul was then examined a third time before Festus, Herod Agrippa and Bernice. They wanted to clarify the issue before sending him to Caesar. Although he was declared innocent by all of them and should have been released; he could not be because he had appealed to Caesar.

1.3. Paul's Witness and Defense to Jews and Roman Authorities (Acts 23:10-26:32)

The temple arrest brought two formal allegations. The Jews alleged that Paul was no longer a Jew, that he had defiled the temple and rejected Judaism Acts 21:28: *"This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."* The Romans asserted that Paul was leading a rebellion against Rome: *"Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness"* (21:38)?

These two allegations are central to Luke's defense. If Paul was an heretical Jew, then Christianity and the Gentile mission were also in error. If Christianity was a valid fulfillment of Judaism, then it is true. From the Roman side, if Christianity was the fulfillment of Judaism, it was protected as a legal religion under the Romans (Bloomberg 19). Luke also stresses that Paul had committed no crime under Roman law. Paul was a good, loyal Roman citizen.

1.3.1. Paul before the Jews

In looking at Paul's defense before the Jews, we will focus on Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin. In section 3.1 we will look at Paul's defense to the Christians in Rome.

In the trial before the Sanhedrin, Paul focused upon the resurrection. In Luke Acts 23:6-9 we are told, *"Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.' And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, 'We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?'"*

These verses show the Pharisees, who still considered him an orthodox Jew, vindicated Paul.

The stress on the resurrection of Christ is found in all of Paul's defenses. In each defense, the resurrection is Paul's bridge to link Judaism with Christianity. Paul argued that the reason he was a Christian was that the Jewish prophecies had been fulfilled in Christ.

1.3.2. Paul before the Roman Authorities

In his defense to the Romans Luke constantly stressed that Paul was a law-abiding citizen of Rome, not a revolutionary. In each case, and particularly before Gallio, and Festus, Luke stressed the Jewish nature of the allegation and that no issue of breaking Roman law arose (320).

Acts 18:14: *"But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.'"*

Acts 23:29: *"I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment."*

Acts 28:17: *"Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death."*

King Agrippa is an important test case. Bruce states: "Agrippa was presented as one Roman official who clearly understood the intricacies of the Jewish religion and on the basis of that knowledge emphatically declared Paul's innocence. "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar (26:32).

In conclusion, the defense speeches validated Paul mission before the Jews and Gentiles and they would have been of great assistance to Jewish Christians who were threatened by their Jewish neighbors and Roman authorities because of Paul. Paul was not a criminal or an apostle; he was a faithful teacher in Israel and a respected Roman citizen. Paul was a faithful witness of the resurrection, one personally commissioned by him.

2. Paul's Journey to Italy (Acts 27:1-28:16)

This section focus' upon Paul's travel to Rome. Paul and others, were sent to Rome under guard. They were placed under the authority of Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Cohort. Julius was either a special courier, one with special escort duties who would also have looked after prisoners (Donnelly, Ramsey) or he was involved in the organization for transport of grain to Rome from Alexandria, Egypt, a vital part of the supply line (Bruce 368). Either way he was a centurion with wide powers.

2.1. Shipwreck

The party left Caesura in autumn to go to Rome in late October. They began on a small coastal hopper to Myra where they picked up a ship carrying corn and people from Alexandria to go to Rome. It was a large ship of 500 tons and 276 people.

They set out and immediately they were delayed. They went south to Crete, stopping at Fair Haven. The winter season had begun and sailing was now unsafe. They debated as to whether to continue. Paul was involved in the discussion and suggested that they stop at Fair Havens. The Captain and the Centurion decided to press on. Almost immediately after leaving, they were caught by a strong wind that threatened the ship. The clouds make navigation impossible. The whole ship, including Paul, despaired of life. Luke records *"Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up"* (27:20).

To strengthen him and those on the ship, God appeared to Paul and revealed to him that although they would be shipwrecked, they would not drown.

But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island" (27:21).

As was revealed, they ran aground at Malta. First Paul stopped a number of men from leaving the boat; consequently, if they had left, the lives of all of them would have been threatened: *"And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul*

said to the centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.' Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off" (27: 30).

Second, when they had run aground, we are told in Acts 27:42-44 *"And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land."*

Both of these examples show that God's word was fulfilled. No one was lost. It illustrates how God used Paul to fulfill His plan. The lessons in this section of the book of Acts mirror those from other sections, being particularly vivid. Luke stressed the providence of God, the way it was worked out, and the wisdom of God in the way he ordered events. The vision shows that God was still with them, that the storm cannot stop God's plans, and the need for human responsibility; Paul had to take action to stop men from leaving so that God's will was fulfilled. Finally, God's purposes did come to fruition. The whole narrative shows us how God brought them to Rome in his won strange way.

2.2. Malta

The shipwrecked men were pitied upon swimming ashore at Malta. Paul was bitten by a snake leading the locals to believe that he must have been wicked and therefore had to die. When Paul did not die, the local population said that he was a God (28:3). Paul later performed a miracle upon a leading citizen of the area. Luke states: *"In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary" (28:7-10).*

The Roman voyage highlights the nature of Paul's life. He was a practical man, a traveler, knowledgeable about world events. Paul had a forceful personality and natural leadership abilities, and he quickly emerged as the leader. These abilities were strengthened and assisted by the power of the Holy Spirit.

They remained in Malta for three months then took a ship to Italy.

2.3. Reaching Italy

They reached Italy in early spring. They then began to travel up the road to Rome. The Roman church was expecting Paul and they met him on the Via Apia, the major southbound road from Rome. A second delegation from the church in Rome met him closer to Rome, at the Three Inns.

3. Paul's Mission and First Roman Imprisonment

The title above is deliberate. Luke's account of Paul continues the pattern of evangelizing the Jews first and then turning to the Gentiles. Paul did not plant a church in Rome; the Roman church was already in existence at this time.⁴⁷ The book of Acts is a missionary book, one that focuses upon the spread of the gospel. This was Luke's final chance to show Paul's focus of evangelism to the Jews first and then the Gentiles.

Luke recorded two occasions when Paul spoke to the Jews in Rome.

3.1. To the Jew First

In normal circumstances, Paul would go to the Jewish synagogue but due to his arrest, he was not able. Instead, he asked the Jews to come to him. After summoning the leaders of the Jews, he enquired as to what they may have heard and they profess to no nothing about the sect. He states that he has nothing against the Jewish people, but that he was handed over by the Jews to the Romans. He stressed that the Romans wished to release him but since his life was in danger he had to appeal to Caesar. The Jews said that they had heard nothing of this and they desired that Paul tell them about these things. Paul and the Jewish leaders then arranged a suitable day to discuss the issues.

In Acts 28:23-24 Luke records the second meeting.

“When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.”

In these two verses, Paul reaffirmed Christ initial comments in Acts 1:3-8. He explained the kingdom of God and convinced them concerning Jesus from Moses and the Prophets. Luke's stress on the kingdom of God in the beginning of the work and here again at the end show this is a major theme.

The section ends with Paul's warning to the Jews. In Acts 28:26-28 we read: *“The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ‘Go to this people and say, ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’ For this people's heart has grown dull and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”*

Paul quoted from Isaiah, the most frequently quoted verse in the New Testament.⁴⁸ He argued that just as the Jews responded in Isaiah's day, so they continued to respond now (Isaiah 6:9). They are told they hear and see, but do not understand or perceive, because they hardened their own hearts to the truth. They refused the word and now they

⁴⁷ We know this from Acts 2:10, Priscilla and Aquila are from here, Paul had written to the church at Rome from Corinth in Ad 57 and Luke notes that he was met by two delegated from the roman church on there way to Rome.

⁴⁸ This verse is also quoted in Luke 8:10, Matt 13:13-15 (fully quoted), Mark 4:12, John 12:39ff

were not able to hear it. Paul's actions indicate that he had finished his witness to the Jews and would now turn to the Gentiles (See Romans 11:25-32). If the message was a failure to the Jews, the mission continued to be a success to the Gentiles.

3.2. Paul Mission to the Gentiles

Paul continued to preach and minister to the Gentiles in Rome for a full two years. The final verses indicate a sustained successful and profitable time of ministry. In this period, Paul preached and modeled the gospel as a faithful witness, a man in chains for Christ. His example illustrated to the church what a faithful witness was, particularly a faithful witness in trial and suffering, something they would later need when the great persecution of the Christians under Nero broke out. Paul's letters, written at this time, tell us of his ministry. He had many converts. In Philippians 10 he states: *"I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment."* Onesimus was one example of the fruit of Paul's preaching. Many of Paul's associates visited him in Rome, taking instructions and messages to the churches.

Paul's use of Timothy was an example of how he continued his ministry to the churches while in Rome. *"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also"* (Phil. 2:19-24).⁴⁹

4. Paul's First Prison Epistles

It is not certain but it is likely that Paul wrote the so called Prison Epistles from Rome, namely Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon and Colossians.

5. Rome and Beyond

Acts 28:30: *"Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."*

Luke concluded his book by noting Paul spent two years in a private house. Paul was waiting for his accusers to come and bring formal charges. Luke does not tell us what happened in Paul's defense or even if the Jews did come and formally accuse him. If he offered a defense, it would have been the same as that of Caesarea.

It is most likely that Paul was set free before July A.D. 64 as this is when Nero falsely accused the Christians of setting fire to Rome and falsely arrested them. Paul

would then have travelled for another 2 years before his last imprisonment and martyrdom.

The last verses summarize a major theme of the book. Paul was in prison. He was suffering for the gospel but the word of God continued to go out. Acts ends with the word “unhindered”.

Conclusion

The last third of the book of Acts concerns Paul’s ministry in Jerusalem and the travel to Rome. Although God had promised Paul he would get to Rome, he got there through many troubles, toils and snares. Acts ends with Paul in prison in Rome bearing testimony to the gospel.

Summary

Although warned that if he returned to Jerusalem he would suffer, Paul returned with the collection from the Gentile churches. Paul was arrested at the temple and gave his defense before the Sanhedrin. They are divided. Paul then gave his defense before Felix, Festus and Herod Agrippa and on each occasion they agreed that he had broken no Roman law. Paul was not a heretic or a Roman troublemaker. Paul then traveled to Rome. When reaching Rome, Paul evangelized the Jews and after being rejected, turned to the Gentiles. The book of Acts leaves us with Paul under arrest in Rome.

INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of the text? 1.1. (etc.)
Explanation of important information in the text -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions? What are they?

- human author. How do we know?
- what occasion prompted human author to write?
- original audience for reading. Why would they read the text?
- geographical context:
- cultural, social context:
- historical context:
- religious context:
- in your own words, what does the text say and mean?

Commentary notes

EXPOSITIONAL EXPLANATION. Identify the main teachings of the text under study in chronological order

1.

2.

3.

(other)

LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

-literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc).

-how is the text related to its surrounding texts?

-how does the text relate to the theme of the chapter and book it's in?

ANALYTICAL METHOD. What are the main thesis, antithesis, synthesis and syncretism in the text?

DEVOTIONAL METHOD OF STUDY. How does the text help you to adore God, confession your sins, give thanks to Him and serve Him?

Lesson Eight Questions

1. Why did Paul return to Jerusalem?
2. Why did Paul go to the temple?
3. Was Paul wrong in returning to Jerusalem? Give scriptural support for your answer.
4. What was Paul's defense to the Sanhedrin? Why did Luke include this in the book of Acts?
5. Was Paul guilty of anything under Roman rule?
6. What Old Testament verse does Paul quote at the end of the book of Acts?
7. Why is it significant that Luke mentioned that Paul preached the kingdom of God?
8. How long was Paul in Rome?
9. Describe Paul's influence in Rome.
10. What is the last word in the book of Acts? Describe its significance.

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Appendix 1 Outline and Chronology of Paul's life

Paul is a central figure in the book of Acts and his life helps us to date the book. The following is taken from a helpful article "The Life and Epistles of Paul" by John A Battle Th.D. of Western Reformed Seminary (www.wrs.edu). The article is presented in full, but I have changed the formatting.

In order to understand and appreciate Paul's life, we must be familiar with its general outline, and with the dates of the important events. The following outline is taken from Frank J. Goodwin, *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul*. There are changes in the dates, based on the evidence that will follow; and the date of the writing of Galatians is adjusted. Students should be familiar with this outline.

Events of Pauline Chronology

1. Paul's early life to his first missionary journey

Conversion, A.D. 36

In Damascus and Arabia, A.D. 36-38

Escape from Damascus, first visit to Jerusalem, A.D. 38

In Tarsus and the regions of Syria and Cilicia, A.D. 38-45

A year in Antioch with Barnabas, A.D. 45-46

Second journey to Jerusalem with alms (the "famine visit"), A.D. 46 summer/fall

2. First missionary journey, A.D. 47 spring/summer – A.D. 48 summer/fall

In Antioch "a long time," A.D. 48 fall – A.D. 49 spring/summer

(Perhaps Galatians written at Antioch, A.D. 49 [early date])

3. Third visit to Jerusalem, the Council, A.D. 49 summer

4. Second missionary journey, A.D. 49 summer – A.D. 51 summer

1 Thessalonians written from Corinth, A.D. 50

2 Thessalonians written from Corinth, A.D. 50

(Perhaps Galatians written from Corinth, A.D. 50 [middle date])

Fourth visit to Jerusalem

5. Third missionary journey, A.D. 51 fall – A.D. 54 spring
Galatians written from Ephesus, sometime A.D. 51-53 [late date; traditional]
1 Corinthians written from Ephesus, A.D. 53
2 Corinthians written from Macedonia, A.D. 53 fall
(Perhaps Galatians written from Corinth, A.D. 54 winter/spring [latest date])
Romans written from Corinth, A.D. 54 winter/spring
6. Fifth visit to Jerusalem, Paul seized in the temple, A.D. 54 summer
7. Imprisonment at Caesarea, A.D. 54 summer – A.D. 56 summer
8. Journey to Rome, A.D. 56 fall – A.D. 57 spring
9. First Roman imprisonment, A.D. 57 spring – A.D. 59 spring
Ephesians written, A.D. 57 or 58
Colossians written, A.D. 57 or 58
Philemon written, A.D. 57 or 58
Philippians written, A.D. 58 or 59
10. Between the first and second Roman imprisonments, ca. A.D. 59 - ca. A.D. 64 or 67
1 Timothy written from Macedonia
Titus written from Ephesus
11. Second Roman imprisonment, ca. A.D. 64 or 67
2 Timothy written from Rome, A.D. 64 or 67
12. Paul's death, ca. A.D. 64 or 67

Keys to the Pauline Chronology

In order to figure out when the various events in Paul's life occurred, we must correlate the times mentioned in the Acts and epistles, the amount of time required for the various journeys, the seasons when sailing was possible, and the time synchronisms found in secular history and archaeology. There are three primary links between Paul's life and secular history that enable us to outline his chronology. These three synchronisms provide the framework by which the chronology of Paul's life can be worked out. Even so, some of the dates are approximate, and others are uncertain.

Roman emperors: Augustus 30 B.C. – A.D. 14, Tiberius A.D. 14-37, Caligula A.D. 37-41, Claudius A.D. 41-54, Nero A.D. 54-68

1. Paul's flight from Damascus, A.D. 37-40 (Acts 9:19-25)

Aretas was king of Damascus (2 Cor. 11:32-33) Aretas IV, the ethnarch, was king of the Nabateans 9 B.C. – ca. A.D. 40. Damascus had been directly under Roman control since 62 B.C.; probably it was given to Aretas by the emperor.

1.4 Caligula in A.D. 37. While coins of Augustus, Tiberius, and Nero are there, there is none of Caligula or Claudius. Thus Aretas had control of Damascus A.D. 37 – ca. 40.

Paul's flight was three years after his conversion (Gal. 1:18).

2. Proconsulship of Gallio in Achaia, A.D. 51-52 (Acts 18:12-17)

In A.D. 44 the emperor Claudius gave Achaia back to the Senate, who administered the province through a propraetor with the title proconsul. The proconsuls would rule only for a one-year term.

It is likely that Gallio held this position in A.D. 49 or later, since his brother Seneca was in better favor by that time.

The Delphi Inscription pins down the date more exactly. It mentions Gallio as procurator in the 26th proclamation of Claudius as emperor, which would have been in the first half of A.D. 52. Thus Gallio might have been in that office the year of A.D. 51-52 or of A.D. 52-53.

For detailed discussion of this inscription see Adolph Deissmann, *Paul*, App. 1,

“The Procuratorship of L. Junius Gallio,” pp. 261-86, esp. p. 276; also Kirsopp Lake, *Beginnings of Christianity*, 5:460-64.

Paul had already been in Corinth on his second missionary journey ca. 1½ years (Acts 18:11).

3. Accession of Festus as procurator of Judaea, A.D. 56 (Acts 24:27)

The previous procurator, Felix, had been appointed by Claudius in A.D. 52. After Nero became emperor in A.D. 54 Felix fell into disfavor and was tried by Nero in Rome. His powerful brother Pallas helped him temporarily (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20:8:9).

A little later Nero removed him from office and replaced him with Festus (cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2:22:1).

For a summary of the careers of Felix and Festus, see F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, pp. 343-47.

Newly discovered evidence pins down the date. A coin of Nero's 5th year has the names of the consuls for the year A.D. 58, with a note that this was the third year of Festus.

Therefore, the first year of Festus would have been A.D. 56. Paul had been imprisoned in Caesarea two years by this time (Acts 24:27).

1.5 See Jack Finegan, "Chronology of the NT," New ISBE, 1:691a. He mentions this coin as "new 'micrographic' evidence discovered by J. Vardaman." Note that F. F. Bruce (NT History 345-346) notes the coin from A.D. 59, but says it marked the change of coinage, with Festus still beginning in A.D. 59.

Appendix 2: The Holy Spirit in Redemptive History and Acts

The work of the Holy Spirit in Acts is often misunderstood. It is also often claimed that the Spirit's work in Acts is normative for the church today.

Throughout the scriptures, when God reveals himself in any new way, God authenticates the prophets and their message with signs and wonders. These signs and wonders both reflect the new message and bear witness to it.

We see this in God's deliverance of Israel through Moses. In this deliverance he revealed himself to Egypt and the nations with mighty signs in the 10 plagues. At Sinai He revealed himself and gave the law, to Israel. His revelation was matched by thunder and lightening. The sign also matched the nature of the revelation, the law, which brings a curse was accompanied by darkness and terror.

After Israel enters the land, God's work no longer needs authentication and so the frequency and the nature of the signs die down.

New signs occurred with the coming of the prophets, a new stage in redemptive history. God authenticated Elijah and Elisha prophetic ministry through miracles. Once the line of the prophets has been established, the signs begin to disappear again.

The next great revelation occurred with Christ's coming and the establishing of the kingdom. Jesus ministry was accompanied by any signs, which signs were in keeping with the nature of His ministry. Jesus healed, he forgave, he resurrected, all pointing to the coming of the kingdom in grace and mercy.

The apostles were the final stage in revelation. As Christ continues to reveal and establish his kingdom through them, the Spirit witnesses to the truth of God's work. the revelation of God in this age is complete with the death of the final apostle.

At the present time the canon is closed, there is no fresh revelation, and so the spectacular works of the spirit have ended. While the Spirit is still at work in His church, (conversion is his greatest work), He is no longer working in such an outward/visible form. This period will end when Christ comes the second time.

At the time of Jesus' second coming, God will again reveal himself to men. In this final work, his revelation of the his son will be joined with his final signs, the destruction of the old heaven and earth and the making of the new heavens and the new earth.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

LESSON ONE ANSWERS

Question 1: Luke and Acts were originally one document; Acts did not have a separate name. Because the church was in conflict with Marcion, who believed that there was only one apostle, the church named Acts The Acts of the Apostles to show that there were many apostles, not just one. It is not a good name as the book is really about the extension of the kingdom.

Question 2: Everything that happens in Acts is according to God's plan. He is fully in control. Acts 14:27,15:4

Question 3: The Spirit empowers and strengthens the disciples to witness to the kingdom.

Question 4: Explain in detail the rise and nature of Jewish opposition to the gospel.

Initially the Jews allowed the Apostles' preaching of Jesus in Jerusalem, but when it began to threaten the position of the leaders, they opposed the Apostles. When Stephen's preaching rejected the temple and Israel as central to God's plan, Paul and others fiercely persecuted the church.

Question 5: No, many were not as they saw it as a weakening of Jewish nationalism.

Question 6: Christianity claimed that Christ was lord, not Caesar.

Question 7: The church was forced to scatter but it continued to grow.

Question 8: The Extension of the Church in and from Jerusalem

Christ's ascension. Choice of Matthias to replace Judas. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Results: (1,2)

Wonders and signs; particularly the cure of the lame beggar. (3:1-4:31)

Witness bearing and voluntary sharing; also its perversion in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. (4:32-5:11)

Winning of Souls; the rapid growth of the church, which results in persecution-imprisonment of the Twelve and martyrdom of Stephen, which in turn results in further growth. (5:12-7:60)

Question 9: From Jerusalem, into all Judea and Samaria and the surrounding regions

Phillip's missionary labors. (8)

Saul's conversion. (9:1-30)

Peter's missionary labors. (9:31-11:18)

Results of these labors: the further growth of the church, which results in further persecution; martyrdom of James, the son of Zebedee; imprisonment of Peter. (11:19-12:25)

Question 10: The extension of the church from Antioch, through the labors of Paul

Paul's First Missionary Journey and the Jerusalem Council. (13:1-15:35)

Second Missionary Journey. (15:36-18:22)

Third Missionary Journey. (18:23-21:16)

Paul in Jerusalem and Caesarea. (21:17-26:32)

Voyage to and arrival in Rome, and first Roman imprisonment. (27,28)

LESSON TWO ANSWERS

Question 1: About the kingdom.

Question 2: We are not told much about them; we are told that they are human languages. People from all over the Roman Empire heard them

Question 3: The beginning of the last days, the coming of the Day of Judgment.

Question 4: The word is used in a number of ways. It can mean initial filling, it can mean God came upon them to strengthen them. It also points to the basis of the ongoing life of the church.

Question 5: They had rejected the Messiah.

Question 6. Repent and be baptized.

Question 7: His resurrection from the dead.

Question 8. It is a general claim to authority and in the Septuagint it is a particular claim to being God.

Question 9: Very, 3000 were saved.

Question 10. They followed the apostles' teaching, they formed a community, they celebrated the sacraments, and they met together daily for prayer.

LESSON THREE ANSWERS

Question 1: The authorities objected to teaching in Jesus' name.

Question 2: No, trouble came from both inside and outside the church.

Question 3: A Greek-speaking Jew.

Question 4: He notes that God is not limited to one physical location.

Question 5: They had killed them.

Question 6: He prays for himself and for those persecuting him.

Question 7: Yes

Question 8: He led the early persecution.

Question 9: Yes, he later called himself the chief of sinners.

Question 10: He loved the law, and to him, Christ's life and death did not conform to the pattern of the elders.

LESSON FOUR ANSWERS

Question 1: God withheld the outpouring of the Spirit until the coming of Peter and John in order that the Samaria might be seen to be fully incorporated to the Jerusalem Christians who had received the Spirit at Pentecost.

Question 2: He was a proselyte, and a new order has begun.

Question 3: Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Question 4: Paul's focus had been the Law, now he is refocused on Christ.

Question 5: Paul's conversion is a dramatic picture of the theology of the gospel.

Question 6: He went up to make first hand enquiry about Christ

Question 7: The period when Paul went to Tarsus for 10 years.

Question 8: The Law kept the Jews from eating and socializing with the Gentiles.

Question 9: The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles, without them having to be first circumcised.

Question 10: God had granted the Gentiles repentance by faith alone, without them having to be circumcised.

LESSON FIVE ANSWERS

Question 1: Antioch

Question 2: Cosmopolitan, Growing, Caring, had gifted men

Question 3: The Holy Spirit sent missionaries, by means of or through the local church.

Question 4: Paul preached to the Jews in the same way that Peter did.

Question 5: Paul was persecuted by unbelieving Jews as well as believing Jews who did not understand the full implications of the gospel.

Question 6: True

Question 7: Jewish Christians who still believed that the law must be kept

Question 8: The church was quickly becoming more Gentile than Jewish.

Question 9: Jerusalem Council

Question 10: That the Gentiles who believed in Christ did not have to be circumcised and keep the law

LESSON SIX ANSWERS

Question 1: Silas, later Timothy

Question 2: There are three 'we' sections in Acts.

Question 3: He was blocked from going north or west; the Spirit then gave him a vision to go to Macedonia.

Question 4: Lydia's conversion, the exorcism of the slave girl and the jailer's conversion.

Question 5: He was chased from the city by the Jews, who then followed him to Berea. He was always concerned about this new church

Question 6: It was a formal legal court in Athens. It was a place of intellectual and philosophical debate.

Question 7: Paul preached about God as creator, called them to repentance and proclaimed Jesus will judge all men.

Question 8: Paul was tired and depressed. He was worried about the churches.

Question 9: They were two Roman Christians; they joined Paul in Corinth and then traveled with him to Ephesus.

Question 10: It gives us a fixed date in the Acts 51 AD; it also shows that formally, Christianity was not a threat to Roman authority.

LESSON SEVEN ANSWERS

Question 1: to strengthen the church, to go to Ephesus and to collect money for the Jerusalem church.

Question 2: A Jew from Alexandria, Apollos. He is taught of Christ by Priscilla and Aquila and is a powerful speaker, blessing Ephesus and Corinth.

Question 3: The disciples only knew John's baptism; they did not yet know that Christ had come. Paul told them of Christ and baptized them.

Question 4: Three years

Question 5: Mightily and powerfully, with many signs and wonders.

Question 6: The seven churches of John's revelation were probably founded there.

Question 7: The church was in a bad spiritual state, with division, licentiousness and a wrong emphasis on gifts.

Question 8: We do not know how many letters Paul wrote to them and we do not know the nature of the visits.

Question 9: It was a collection for the poor in the church in Jerusalem. All the Gentile churches collected.

Question 10: Each church sent a representative. Paul did this so he could not be charged with collecting or stealing money for his own use.

LESSON EIGHT ANSWERS

Question 1: He wanted to promote unity between the Gentiles and the Jews.

Question 2: James encouraged him to, to show he respected Jewish customs.

Question 3: No, Acts 20:22; 21:10, 13,

Question 4: He points out that Jewish theology always believed in the resurrection.

Question 5: No, Festus says Paul is not guilty but he has appealed to Rome and so he must go.

Question 6: Isaiah 6:9

Question 7: Luke begins with the kingdom of God and ends with the kingdom of God. The book of Acts is about the kingdom of God.

Question 8: Two years

Question 9: Many people came to his house, and he sent out many people to aid the churches. He was free to teach and preach.

Question 10: No one forbidding him, or unhindered.

EXAM

The exam is administered in week 3 and in the final week. It is comprised of two exams of 20 questions taken from the questions at the end of each lesson. Students should be told that the exam will be based upon those questions. One point is given for each correct answer.

ACTS EXAM 1. LESSONS 1-4

1. Why is Acts called the Acts of the Apostles? Is this a good name?
2. Explain what we mean by the plan of God in Acts. Give a key verse.
3. What did Jesus teach them about for 40 days before He ascended?

4. What does it mean to be “filled with the Spirit”?
5. How effective was Peter’s preaching in Jerusalem? Give evidence.
6. Name four marks of the early church.
7. What was Stephen’s attack on the temple in Jerusalem?
8. Name two reasons for Paul’s rejecting Jesus as Messiah.
9. What were Jesus’ words to Paul on the Damascus Road?
10. What conclusion does Peter draw in Acts 15 from the Cornelius experience?

ACTS EXAM 2. LESSON 5-8

1. What was the name of the first formal mission church?
2. Name four characteristics of the church at Antioch.
3. Who were the Judaisers?
4. How do we know Luke traveled with Paul?
5. What was Paul’s mental state in Corinth?
6. Explain why. Explain two significant things we learn from Luke’s mention of Gallio’s judgment.
7. Who was Apollos?
8. What churches were founded from Paul’s ministry in Ephesus? How were they founded?
9. What was the great collection? How was it done?
10. What was Paul’s defense to the Sanhedrin? Why does Luke include this in the book of Acts?

READING

Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts*