

Lesson 1

The Early Church

Acts 1-8

As you read through Acts 1-8, Highlight Peter in YELLOW.... It will be helpful to you.

Acts 1

Context:

After the Resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples teaching and preparing them for His departure to Heaven. At the end of Matthew, Jesus gave the disciples some final instructions.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

¹⁹ ***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*** ²⁰ ***teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

Read Genesis 12:1-3, 17:1-8, and 22:15-18.... What do you notice?

The book of Acts begins with the disciples gathered after the Ascension of Christ. They are in Jerusalem just before Pentecost (Pentecost is 50 days after Passover, Jesus ascended into heaven after 40 days (**Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 26**)). Since the disciples had been able to walk, talk and taught by Jesus for the weeks between Passover and Pentecost, they were excited to go tell the world about Him. Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He told them to wait in Jerusalem because God would send a helper to equip them for the task of making disciples and teaching about Him.

Read Acts 1:1-26

Summarize verses 1-3

In Acts 1, they have some questions for Jesus

V6 “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

How does Jesus answer?

In verse 8, Jesus tells the disciples what their purpose is now ... what is it?

Jesus ascends 40 days after the resurrection and 10 days before Pentecost, how did the disciples respond? And what happened?

Acts 1:12-14 Notice who is in this room and what they are doing. How does this instruct us concerning prayer?

Acts 2

Background: **Pentecost is called several things in the Old Testament**

FEAST OF WEEKS ---Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10

FEAST OF HARVEST---Ex. 23:16

DAY OF FIRSTFRUITS--- Num. 28:26

Besides the sacrifices prescribed for the occasion, everyone was to bring to the Lord his "tribute of a free-will offering" (Deut. 16:9-11). The purpose of this feast was to commemorate the completion of the grain harvest. Its distinguishing feature was the offering of "two leavened loaves" made from the new corn of the completed harvest, which, with two lambs, were waved before the Lord as a thank offering.—Easton's Bible Dictionary

Because of this feast, thousands of people would have come to Jerusalem to bring their offerings and celebrate God's provision for them.

In Acts 2:1-3 the disciples are gathered together and something strange happens....
Explain

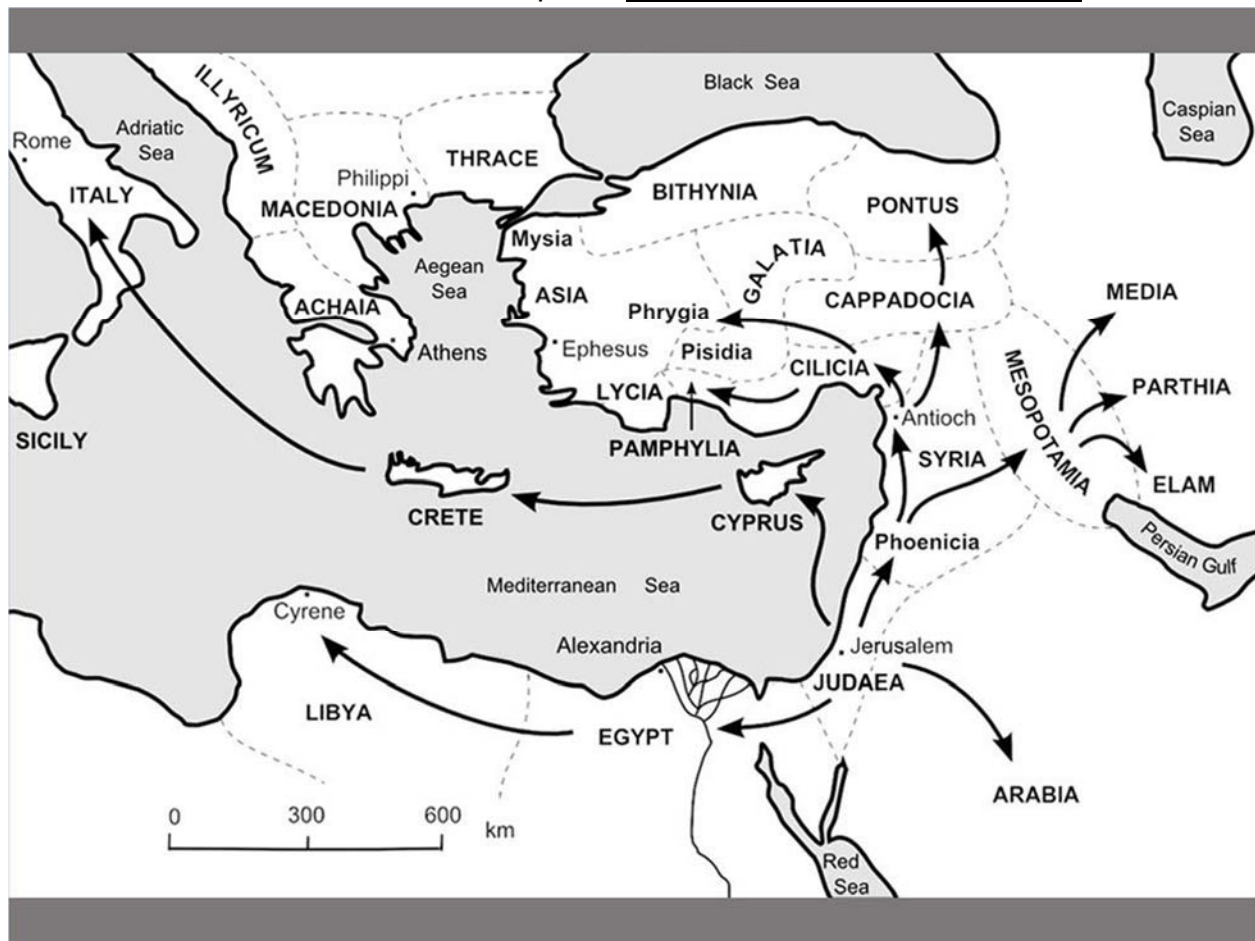
God frequently appears as fire in the Old Testament. Look at Genesis 15:17 Exodus 3:2, 13:21-22, Exodus 19:18, Exodus 24:17, Exodus 40:38

How does this relate to Acts 2:1-3? (Notably Ex. 40:38)

When the Holy Spirit came, where would God's Temple be?

Old Testament prophecy reference: Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

Read Acts 2:5-11 then look at the map and **color areas mentioned in RED.**



Now, let's go back to the Old Testament again.... To Genesis 11

Read Genesis 11:1-9 and contrast this event with Acts 2:5-11

Remember that God's plan was always to use the offspring of Abraham to bless the whole world...they were chosen to be a kingdom of priests and a Holy nation. Here is His Holy Spirit coming to dwell in the hearts of believers, with tongues of fire to tell the world.

All is well, right? Read Acts 2:12-13 ... Hmmm.

But Peter preaches.... Acts 2:14-36

Write down key truths from Peter's sermon:

What was the result of Peter's sermon? Acts 2:37-41

Note: John MacArthur—Acts: The Spread of the Gospel.

In an effort to appeal to people's interest, the church today emphasizes many different programs, methods, and approaches. "Culturally relevant" worship services emphasizing music and drama have become increasingly popular. Secular psychology, management techniques, and advertising strategies have all made significant inroads into the life of the church. Seminars on everything from how to have a good marriage to how to handle money abound. Not all of those things may be harmful. Some, in their place, may even be helpful. But what has too often been sacrificed in the flurry of activities and programs is the priority of preaching. The first event of church history, following the coming of the Spirit, was Peter's sermon. It led to three thousand conversions and launched the church. The book of Acts is largely the record of apostolic preaching. Preaching has always remained central to the church's mission.

This event was the beginning of the Church and the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that through him, all families of the earth will be blessed.

Look back at the question of the disciples in Acts 1:6 ...

In a perfect world, everyone would have believed. So...what happens next?

Acts 3 and 4

The Jewish leaders were concerned about people who would come into the temple and speak falsely about God. They had good reasons for being skeptical of this new movement from a group of misfits known as the disciples of Jesus. Corruption had infiltrated the Temple before and had led to misery among God's people, exile, scattering, slavery, famine, wars, etc. ... They were trying to protect the teaching of God, the Law, and the tendency to believe false doctrine. (Are we as protective of the truth of the Gospel?)

Radical things began to happen.

Note what happens in the following verses: quickly mark the event in GREEN and the response of people and/or Jewish leaders in ORANGE.

Event	Response
3:1-8	3:9-11
3:12-26	4:1-3, and then 4

As Peter and John speak and God performs miracles through them, the Jewish leaders continue to be concerned. Look at their questions for Peter and John and how the disciples answer?

Q: Acts 4:5-7 _____

A: Acts 4:8-12

In Acts 4:13-18 what were the Jewish leaders concerned about? And what did they decide to do?

How do Peter and John respond in Acts 4:19-20

Why did they let Peter and John go? Acts 4:21-22

In Acts 4:23-30, Peter speaks again ... Look carefully at verses 29-30, what three things does Peter pray for?

What happened in Acts 4:31?

In Acts 4:32-35

How should this inform us? What can we do, as a body of believers, to make us more like the believers in Acts 4?

Acts 5

Note what happened in **Acts 5:1-10**

What was the result in **Acts 5:11-16**?

How did the Jewish leaders respond in **Acts 5:17-18**?

We see in Acts 5:19-28 how the Jewish leaders are concerned about what is happening. In 5:29-32, Peter speaks boldly about Jesus. The leaders are furious and want to kill them.

Notice who speaks up in Acts 5:34 _____

What does he say?

There is punishment from the Jewish leaders, but what is the attitude of the Apostles?
Acts 5:41-42

Read again Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8. What is the primary purpose of the Church?

Acts 6

Acts 6:1-8

As the church began to grow, the needs of the people increased also. The church in Jerusalem appointed deacons to help with the needs of the congregation (sound familiar?) One of the men chosen as a deacon was a man named Stephen.

Verse 7 tells us that the church multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and Stephen is mentioned as standing out as one of the deacons. Of course, this drew opposition from some leaders in the Synagogue. Acts 6:9-15

Acts 7

We know the story of Stephen, and his sermon is worth reading to see how he reviews for the people what God had done and continues to do. Acts 7

Look for persecution, rejection, and idol worship, and resistance of God in verses 35-53

Look closely at 7:48-53... What is Stephen accusing the Jewish leaders of?

Read 7:54-60 and note similarities between Stephen and Jesus.

In Acts 8:1-3 we see a bystander ... Approving of persecution. Who is he?

What happened to believers that were in Jerusalem?

Go back and read Acts 1:8.

Extra credit:

Read Acts 5:33-39 note who is speaking and what he says.

Now, read Acts 21:39-22:3.

What do you notice?

Compare the teacher's advice to the action taken by the student.

Lesson 2

The Early Church

Acts 9-15

First, let's recap what we have learned.

God had always chosen to use the descendants of Abraham to bless the world and to use them as a kingdom of priests and holy nation. Through the exiles, scattering, and growth of the Roman Empire, a remnant of the Jewish people had maintained their heritage as believers in One True God. In cultures that were largely polytheistic, this must have been difficult.

Jesus came to earth, began His ministry, and showed Himself to be the promised Messiah. However, the Roman government and some Jewish leaders opposed Him because He claimed to be the King of the World and King of the Jews... and He suffered greatly and was crucified..... **All part of God's plan to give His Son as atonement for sin and suffer because of our desire to have our own way and inability to keep God's standard of obedience (sin!).** However, Jesus rose from the dead, because He did not die for His own sin.... He spent more time teaching.

Jesus ascended to Heaven 40 days after His resurrection. He had spent the past 6 weeks appearing to many people, teaching, and getting His disciples ready for His departure. Thousands of people were gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost from all over the world. The disciples were together for Pentecost and the Holy Spirit came to them as a rushing wind and fire. They spoke of Jesus in languages they did not know before so that people from all nations could understand that Jesus was the one true King of the world. (Reversal of Babel)

Thousands of people heard about Jesus and joined the church. The Holy Spirit equipped the Apostles do miracles, signs, and wonders so that more and more people believed that Jesus was the Messiah, promised by God centuries before. However, the Jewish leaders were concerned and did what they could to stop the movement. Gamaliel, a Jewish teacher told them to proceed cautiously because if it was from God, there was nothing they could to stop it and if it wasn't, it would die on its own.

Peter spoke boldly and often about who Jesus was and how he had been rejected and crucified. Peter also preached the gospel and told the people they could follow Him and be forgiven of sin.

As people often do, the new believers were united as they faced tragedy together when persecution began. The church grew; the people all lived in community, helped each other, shared meals together, and just did life as they served the True King of the world. They had some growing pains, but appointed deacons to help manage the needs of the church.

One deacon was Stephen; He spoke boldly about Jesus and how God had sent many deliverers to the Israelites, but they were rejected. Stephen was stoned to death by the opposition as Saul of Tarsus watched and approved of Stephen's death.

The Bible tells us that Saul was a zealous persecutor of people following The Way. He approved of the stoning of Stephen and proceeded to drag men and women believers out of their homes to attempt to wipe out the Christian movement. The new believers scattered to Judea and Samaria to escape prison and/or death. Remember Acts 1:8?

God had a plan for Saul... and He had equipped him perfectly for His purpose.

Acts 8:4—After Stephen's death, the new believers were in danger, so they left Jerusalem. Where did the new believers go?

As these new believers scattered, they told everyone about Jesus! Let's look at the new converts that Luke tells us about.---crazy!

First of all, Samaria was an ancient enemy to the Jews. They were basically a half-breed with Assyria since the judgment on the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722BC. Some Samaritans had attempted to stop the Jewish exiles from rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 4:1-2, 8) Then they accused Nehemiah of trying to become King (Nehemiah 6). This is why the story of the good Samaritan would have been so impactful to the people listening to Jesus.... It was scandalous!

Philip was one of the first people who Luke tells us about. Where does he go and who believes?

1) In Acts 8:5-24

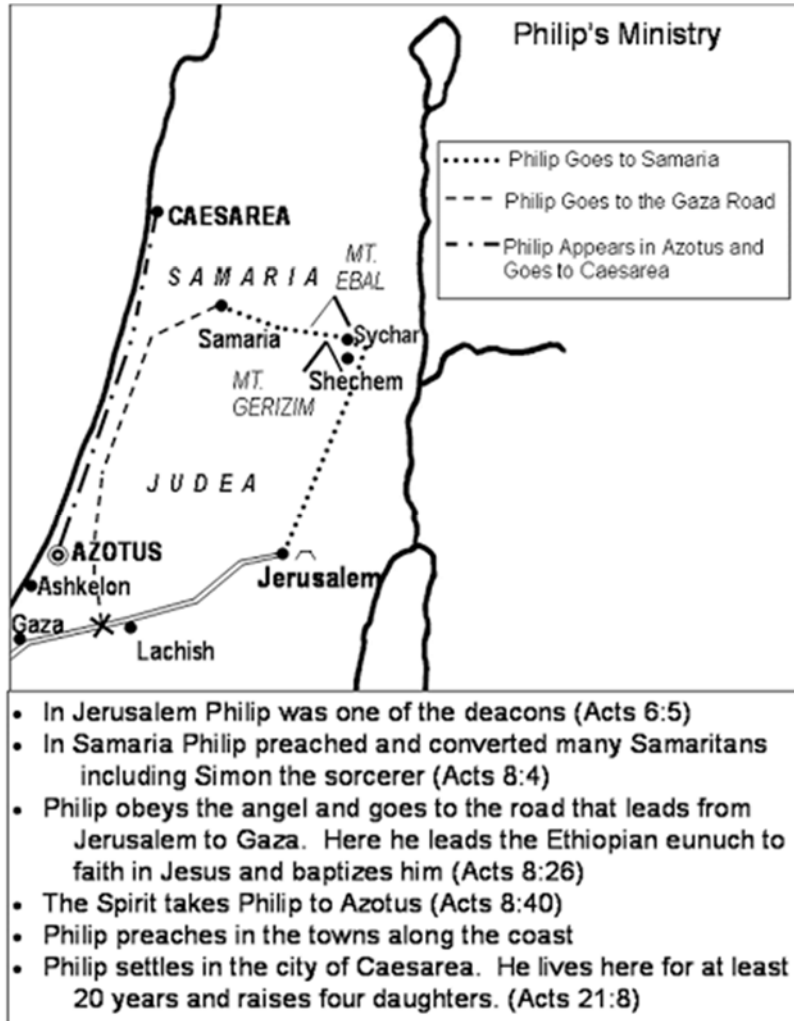
Result of this: Acts 8:25

2) Read Acts 8:18-20: What important truth can we learn from this passage?

3) Acts 8:26-38 (reference Isaiah 53:7-8)

Look what happens next.... (weird stuff) Acts 8:39-40

Look at the map and **highlight these places in Red.**



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Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem..... Saul continues his quest to wipe out this new movement. Remember, Saul was a Pharisee.... He was trying to keep corruption out of the Jewish Faith. Corruption had happened many times before and always led to destruction.

Ch. 9 conversion of Saul

Saul acquired letters from High Priest to help him find people that were following Jesus. He heads to Damascus.... You know the story. Read Acts 9:1-31

Who had God chosen Saul to minister too? (V 15)

Since the beginning of time, God has included everyone in His plan of redemption. The Israelites had the tendency to think they were special because they were Abraham's family; but this was not true. They were no one special.... They were just descendants of the one God had chosen to make His Covenant with, Abraham. They were chosen by God to bless every nation and every family. (Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 17:1-8)

Read Deut. 7:7, Deut. 10:15

But God quickly began including others that were outside of Abraham's family and made allowances for sojourners to be included.

Exodus 23:9, Numbers 9:14, Numbers 15:15-16

Some examples of these would be:

- Zipporah ----wife of Moses from Midian
- Rahab, from Jericho ----prostitute who hid the spies in Jericho)
- Ruth--- the Moabite great grandmother of David

Back to Chapter 9... Saul had been chosen as God's instrument to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles, kings, and children of God. Ananias may have been shocked by this but he quickly addressed Saul as his brother.

Saul was a Pharisee, so his first stop was in the Synagogue. The Jews tried to kill him, but he escaped. It is likely that here is where Saul spent 3 years being disciplined by Jesus and the Apostles.

John MacArthur

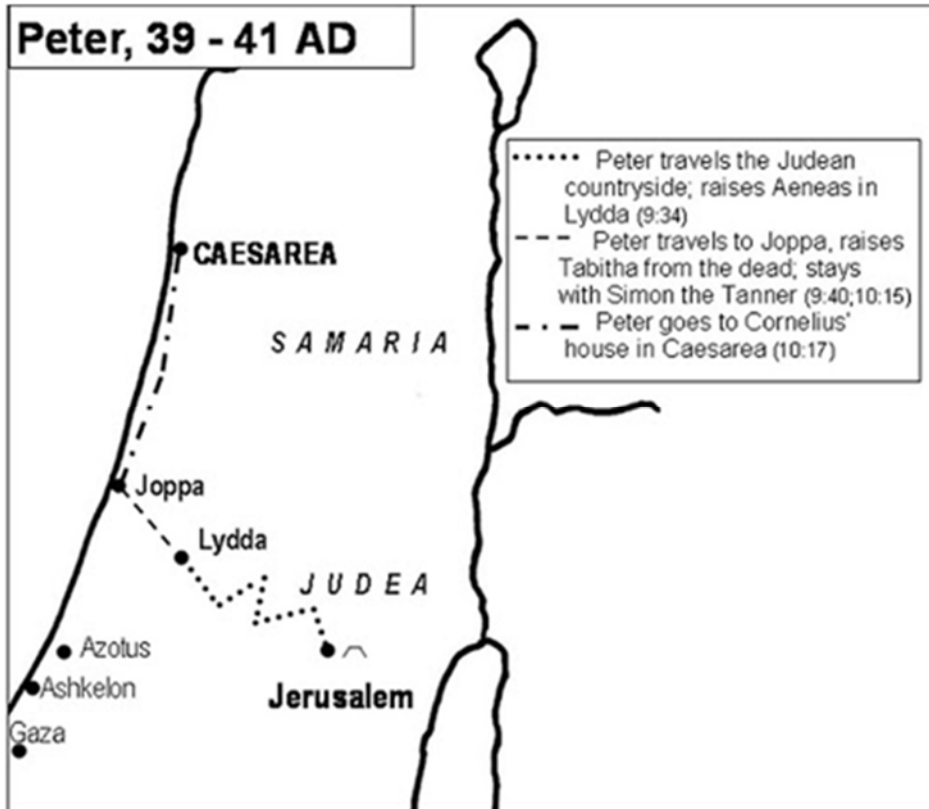
Historical and Theological Themes

Galatians provides valuable historical information about Paul's background (chaps. 1, 2), including his 3-year stay in Nabatean Arabia (1:12, 17, 18), which Acts does not mention; his 15-day visit with Peter after his stay in Arabia (1:18, 19); his trip to the Jerusalem Council (2:1-10); and his confrontation of Peter (2:11-21).

The text continues with Peter. Acts 9:32-43

The Holy Spirit worked through Peter to heal and spread the Gospel. What was the result in Acts 9:42? Where is Peter? Who is he staying with?

Mark cities in RED.



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God's message of inclusion continues....

Read Acts 10 So much we could talk about here, but just the big picture.

Summarize what happened?

This was scandalous, Jewish people would NEVER enter the house of a non-Jewish person. The other Apostles were flabbergasted!

They questioned Peter about including and baptizing Gentiles who were uncircumcised in Act 11:1-3

Peter tells them all that happened, read Acts 11:16-17. What did Peter tell them in v.17?

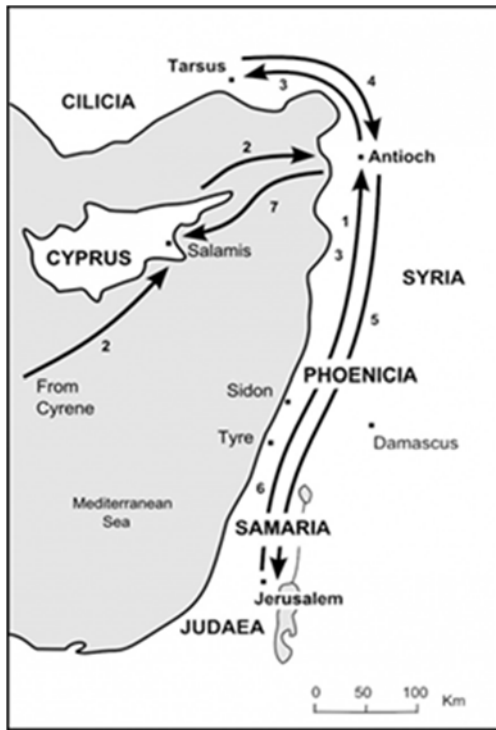
How did the Apostles respond in Acts 11:18?

- ❖ *Just a thought back to our Galatians study.... Even though Peter had experienced first hand God's inclusion of the Gentiles by faith in God alone, he also got caught up in the circumcision discussion that was going on in Galatian with the Judaizers. It is no wonder that Paul was so zealous in his rebuke of Peter.*

We know that circumcision was a sign of God's Covenant, but it was not the Covenant. God saves, circumcision does not. Abraham was declared righteous based on his belief in God, before he was circumcised. Righteousness before God is dependent on faith alone. Paul explains this in Ephesians 2:11-22.

What happened next? Read Acts 11:19-21 (see map) Why?

In Acts 11:22-26, we are introduced to Barnabas. He went to find Saul. Where did they go? Again... mark in RED.



**The Bible Journey

Acts 11:27-30 Shows us how God provided for the church in Jerusalem during a time of need. Keep this in mind ---- it will be important later in Acts.

Chapter 12

Persecution continuedJames, the brother of John was killed, Peter was imprisoned and God rescued him, the people were amazed.

A couple of quotes from men that say it well.

- ❖ *Unable to stop the masses from embracing this new faith, the Jews launched a direct attack upon the leaders of the Christians. No more mere threats and warnings--- this time. Herod had James executed and Peter arrested. Though from a human perspective the situation appeared terribly grim, from a heavenly perspective this was just another occasion to display the infinite power of God.----* John MacArthur, Acts: The Spread of the Gospel

Read Acts 12:1-5 and 12:20-24

What have you learned about how God uses suffering and persecution?

- ❖ *Indeed, one cannot fail to admire the artistry with which Luke depicts the complete reversal of the church's situation in Acts 12. At the beginning of the chapter Herod is on the rampage---arresting and persecuting the church leaders; at the end he is himself struck down and dies. The chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing; it closes with Herod dead, Peter free and the Word of God triumphing. Such is the power of God to overthrow hostile human plans and to establish his own in their place. Tyrants may be permitted for a time to boast and bluster, oppressing the church and hindering the spread of the gospel, but they will not last. In the end, their empires will be broken and their pride abased.---*John Stott, Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work

Paul's First Missionary Journey--- Acts 13-14

Background—Acts 11:19-21

- *¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.*

*At this point in the record, the focus of attention shifts from Jerusalem to Antioch. The gospel had been spread throughout **Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria**, as Jesus had said it would be (1:8). This work had focused on the efforts of the Jerusalem church. Now the message was about to go to the **uttermost parts of the earth**, and the story focuses on the work of Saul, who was sent from the Antioch church.---*David Platte:
Acts of the Apostles

About the Church in Antioch: Dan Steel—The Gospel Coalition

Antioch was a massive city, with nearly half-a-million people and an eclectic mix of cultures and ethnicities. When first built, it was constructed as a divided city—with a literal wall to keep Syrians and Greeks apart. By the time Luke wrote, though, at least 18 different ethnic groups were living within the city’s boundaries. Yet division remained, and these groups largely kept to their own communities.

Here in Antioch the believers were first called Christians ([Acts 11:26](#))—presumably, at least in part, because they were difficult to categorize. In a place where people kept to themselves, here was a group that didn’t.

The early Christians defied cultural norms. They were a diverse group of people not conforming to the ways of the world. The church was being built, not on a social agenda, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 13-14 The First Missionary Journey

Beginning in Chapter 13, Luke almost exclusively focuses on outreach to the Gentiles and Saul... no surprise because God had chosen Saul to be His instrument to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

We will only focus here on where Saul and Barnabas went.

In Acts 13:9, Saul is also called Paul...the rest of Acts refers to him as Paul. Saul is his Hebrew name; Paul is his Roman name. Paul’s Roman citizenship protected him for many years.

Where are they?

Acts 13:1-3 _____

Acts 13:4-6 _____

Acts 13:13-14 _____

In Acts 13:16-41 Paul preaches in the Synagogue and reviews all the Israelite history, and how Israel had rejected God for centuries. He also emphasized forgiveness through faith in 13:38-39. The people urged Paul and Barnabas to return to speak again on the next Sabbath, which they did. Look at the reaction:

Acts 13:44 How does the crowd respond to Paul and Barnabas?

Acts 13:45 What did Jews do?

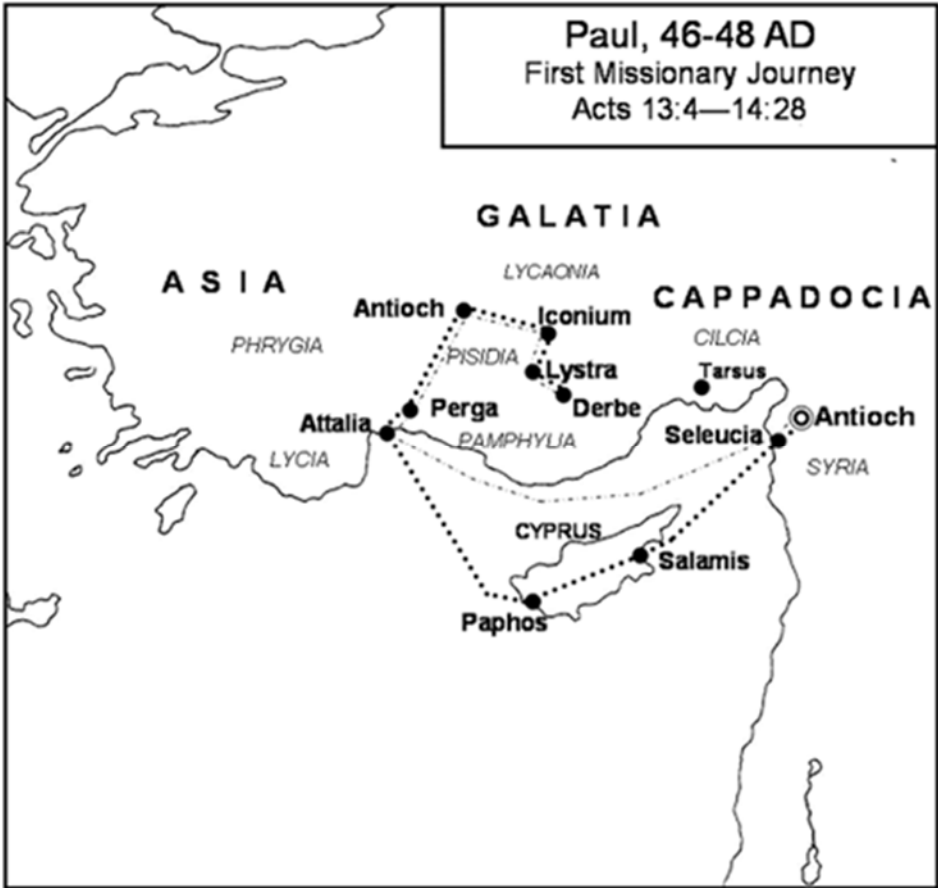
Acts 13:46-47 How do Paul and Barnabas respond?

Act 13:48-49 How do Gentiles respond?

Acts 13:50 What happened?

In Acts 13:51-52 What did Paul and Barnabas do?

Mark all places that Paul and Barnabas went in red.



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The Theme continues in Chapter 14

Read and summarize Acts 14:1-7

Are you beginning to see a pattern?

- The Gospel is spoken; the Holy Spirit works in hearts
- People believe
- Jewish and/or Roman leaders are threatened
- Persecution
- Holy Spirit strengthened the Apostles
- More people believe
- The Apostles go to another city to tell others about Jesus

Acts 14:8-28 look for a similar pattern:

- Gospel _____
- Belief _____
- Opposition _____
- Holy Spirit _____
- Apostles strengthened _____

In Chapters 13 and 14 Paul and Barnabas not only preached the Gospel, they gave of themselves for the sake of Jesus. They were under constant threat of imprisonment or death. The Holy Spirit worked through them to guide their steps, protect them, and cause the Word to spread like fire. What keeps you from helping others grow spiritually?

The Apostles would never have thought of trying to make their lives more comfortable or changed their behavior because of what people thought of them. They considered suffering an honor because Jesus had suffered and died for the world. How should we expect to be treated when we speak up for the sake of the Gospel?

I love the fact that we have the letter that was sent to the churches regarding the Jerusalem Council's decision.

Read Acts 15:23-29 and Read Matthew 11:29-30

Record you thoughts:

The motto of the EPC Denomination is:

"In essentials Unity, In non-essentials liberty, and all things charity"

How is this similar to the decision of the Jerusalem Council? How does this inform us concerning the gospel message?

- ❖ *It was one thing to secure the gospel from corruption; it was another to preserve the church from fragmentation. Paul was resolutely unwilling to compromise the "truth of the gospel." At the same time, he was extremely anxious to maintain Jewish-Gentile solidarity in the one body of Christ. Once the theological principle that salvation is by grace alone and that circumcision was not required but neutral was firmly established, he was prepared to adjust practical policies. We may say, then, that the Jerusalem Council secured a double-victory--- a victory of love in preserving the fellowship by sensitive concessions to conscientious Jewish scruples. As Luther put it, Paul was strong in faith and soft in love. Or as John Newton once said, "Paul was a reed in non-essentials,---an iron pillar in essentials."----- John Stott, Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work.*

At the end of Chapter 15, verses 36-41 we read about an incident in which Paul and Barnabas separate. We don't know what led to this decision, but we do know that God's word would be spread because of it. Now Paul and Silas would go one way while Barnabas and Mark went another. The conflict could have been hard for Paul, Barnabas, and Mark, but God was working to make His name known to more people.

What we should notice in chapters 8-15.

- ❖ The pattern of persecution in response to gospel
- ❖ Persecution causes Apostles to spread the Gospel to new cities
- ❖ The Apostles suffered but persecution never caused them to stop telling others about Jesus
- ❖ The Apostles were unified in essentials and non-essentials

Lesson 3

The Early Church

Acts 16-28

As you may know, I like to start each lesson with some background and recap of what we have seen so far.

Paul had been chosen by God to be His instrument to spread the gospel to the Gentiles. He partnered with Barnabas for his first missionary journey from Antioch to take the good news “to the ends of the earth.”

As they traveled from city to city, leaders were concerned about this message of an upside-down kingdom of service, self-sacrifice, and love. They were beaten, jailed, threatened with death... but continued to preach because the Holy Spirit continued to equip them with fervor for the gospel. The more the apostles were persecuted, the more the gospel spread. They considered it an honor to suffer for the sake of the gospel.

As this new movement spread to different cultures, there were some conflicts. Some Jewish believers were insisting that Gentiles become “Jewish” and be circumcised. The apostles met in Jerusalem to discuss essentials and non-essentials. The Jerusalem Council decided that the Gentiles should not be burdened with keeping the Mosaic Law that they had never kept and that all believers should be united these things:

- Do not eat meat sacrificed to idols
- Do not eat meat with blood in it
- Do not eat meat that had been strangled (it would have blood in it)
- Keep away from sexual immorality

This new movement was not dependent on anything they could do to be saved... like circumcision or keeping the Law; it was granted by faith alone. For the Jewish people, this concept was difficult. Their lives had been centered around keeping the Law. For the Gentiles, it was giving up all the idols of wood and stone they had but their trust in. Salvation for all through faith alone is a concept that Paul will use to convince new believers all over the Roman empire.

So, let's dive into the last lesson... it will be a fly over.... No, a zoom over!

Lesson 3

Paul's 2nd missionary journey is written about in Acts 16:1-18:21. Read this passage.

We are only going to look at a few things from this section.

First, just after the Jerusalem Council, Paul and Silas allow Timothy to join them. Before they left, Paul circumcised Timothy! What!! Wait, what happened to "faith alone?" Are you confused?

Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Since he had a Jewish mother, he was considered Jewish, but he had never been circumcised since his father was Greek. Even though it was a non-essential, it would have been a point of conflict that Paul did not want to be a stumbling block. So..... Timothy was circumcised. Afterward, Paul, Timothy and, Silas (and Luke) left.

IN Acts 16:10, Luke switches the pronoun "they" to "we" indicating that he was with them.

Look at the converts that Luke mentions in this passage. Who believes in each of these passages?

Acts 16:11-15 _____

Acts 16:18 _____

Acts 16:25-34 _____

Acts 17:1-4 _____

Look at this list of new believers, now read Galatians 3:28-29

Who are the offspring of Abraham?

What did God say about Abraham's offspring in Genesis 12:3, 17:7, 22:17-18

What happens in Acts 17:5-9?

So, Paul and Silas went to Berea. More people believed, but Jews from Thessalonica showed up and stirred up crowds...So Paul was sent to Athens. Again... persecution leads to spread

Paul had to wait in Athens for Timothy and Silas. He was saddened to see a city full of idols (Acts 17:16)

- ❖ *Idols seem particularly dominant in cities. Paul was deeply pained by the idolatrous city of Athens. It was a city of aesthetic magnificence and cultural sophistication, as well as being the world center of pagan philosophy and religion. How do we communicate Jesus Christ to such a city? Paul gave us a marvelous example when he visited Athens.--John Stott, Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work*

As we know, Athens was a place of reason, free-thinking, and discovery of new ideas. The Athenians were interested in hearing what Paul had to say, so he spoke at the Areopagus.

Read Acts 17:22-34

- 1) How does Paul address the Athenians in V22?
- 2) What 5 things does Paul say about God?
- 3) What impact on the people of Athens would the statement that God is the Creator of the universe have?
- 4) How did Paul implore them to repent?

What idols do we come up against in trying to share the gospel with others? How can we learn from Paul's message to Athens?

After Paul's sermon in Athens, some believed, others did not.... But Paul moved on to Corinth.

As Paul moved into each city, his strategy was to go first to the synagogue to speak to the Jews. When they rejected his message, he went to the Gentiles. He told everyone he could about Jesus. Many people believed, but many did not. In Corinth, note where he went after he was rejected in the synagogue. (Acts 18:6-7). :)

When Paul was staying with Justus, God appeared to him with a message. What was it?

This has always been God's message to His people. Read Genesis 15:1, Joshua 10:25, Psalm 56:3-4, Jeremiah 1:6-8, Matthew 14:26-27

Why are we still afraid? Why do we find it difficult to tell people about Jesus?

Paul continued to speak about Jesus and opposition arose again. What was the response of Gallio in Acts 18? (remember God's message, "do not be afraid")

Paul moves on to Ephesus and then back to Antioch.

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey Acts 18:23-21:16

Paul's third missionary journey is filled with opposition, persecution, God's sovereignty, and God's spirit prevailing again and again.

- ❖ Paul is in Ephesus... *It is likely that the gospel was first brought to Ephesus by Priscilla and Aquila, an exceptionally gifted couple, who were left there by Paul on his second missionary journey. Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, on the east side of the Aegean Sea, the city of Ephesus was perhaps best-known for its magnificent temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was also an important political, educational, and commercial center, ranking with Alexandria in Egypt, and Antioch of Pisidia, in southern Asia Minor.*--John MacArthur, Acts: The Spread of the Gospel

Paul made several new disciples while he was in Ephesus... including Apollos, about 12 in all (Acts 19:7). He spoke in the synagogue for 3 months and it was evident that God's spirit was moving in the city.

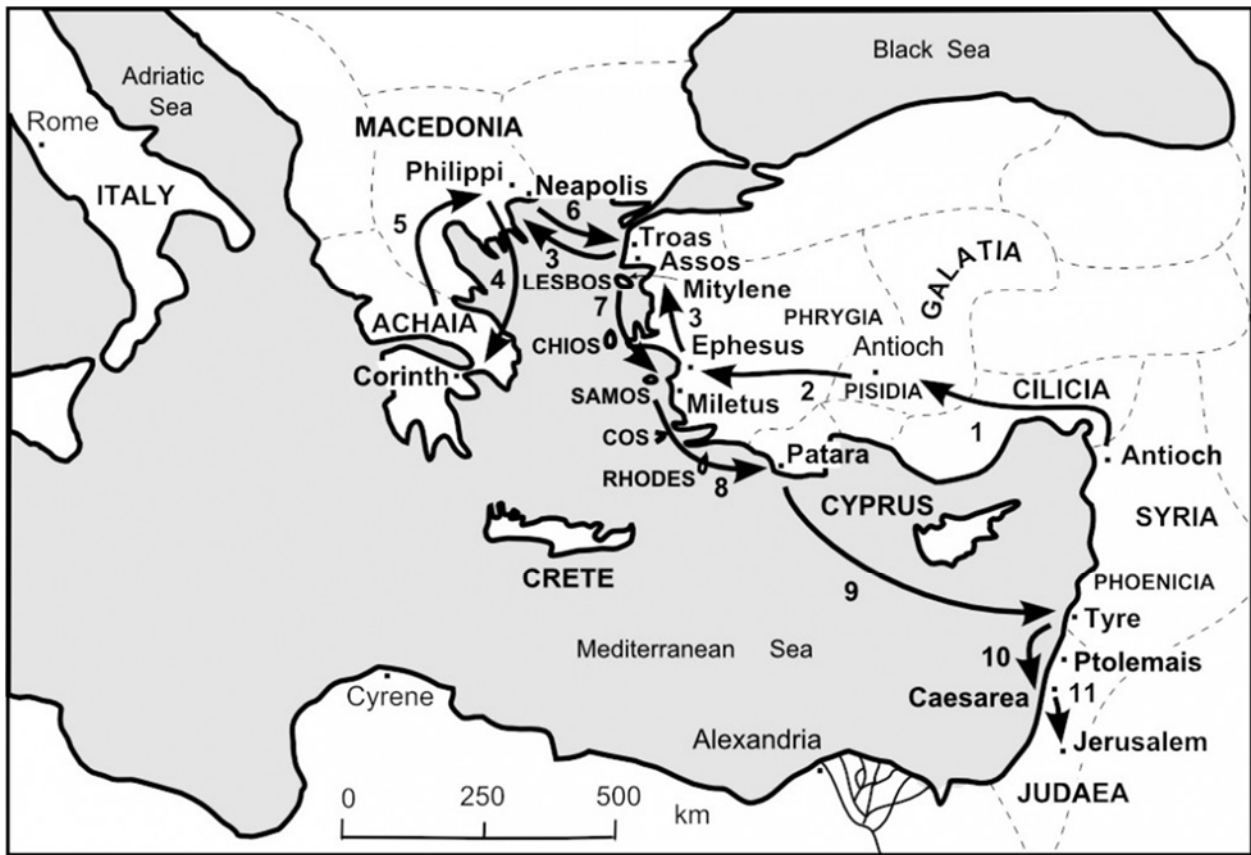
Read Acts 19:8-20 Note the work of the Holy Spirit in these verses. Especially v20!

As usual, some people were threatened by this. Sometimes people are threatened by losing power, status, or financial stability.... This time it was financial.

Read Acts 19:23-20:1

How do you see God's working to give Paul evidence that He is with him? (Remember His message to Paul ---" Do not be afraid" Acts 18:9)

Paul continued to travel and speak to as many people as he could. Read Acts 20:1-16 and **mark in Red all the places that Paul visited.**



*The Bible Journey

Where does Paul want to be for Pentecost? V16 _____

Read Paul's powerful message in Acts 20:18-38

How did Paul feel about what awaited him in Jerusalem? _____

Why did he still want to go?

How did his friends feel? (v38) _____

Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem, despite his friends' begging him not to go.
Read 21:4, 10-11, 12,

Read Paul's reply in v13.

This journey to Jerusalem for Paul was personal. He had previously persecuted Christians in Jerusalem and it was in Jerusalem that Jesus had suffered and died.

- ❖ *What fortified Paul in his journey was the Christian fellowship which he and his travel companions experienced in every port. He was personally escorted from Caesarea by disciples to Jerusalem where he was received warmly. It would be an exaggeration to call this Paul's "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem, but at least his warm reception strengthened him to bear the crowd's shouts a few days later "Away with him!" ---- John Stott, Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work*

Read Acts 21:1-14

How did Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem affect those traveling with him?

How should our perspective on sharing the gospel be affected by Paul's life?

Politics and Christianity

Read Acts 21:27-36

What accusations did the crowd make against Paul? (2 accusations)

Continue reading in Acts 21:37-22:29

Paul demonstrates a desire for solidarity among Christians and sensitivity to the crowd as he spoke to them.

In Acts 22:22 Paul was interrupted by the crowd who wanted him dead. The Jewish leaders thought that making Gentiles into Jews was fine, but making them Christians before they became Jewish was an abomination. Paul consistently spoke of the message that everyone needed to come to God through Jesus on equal terms.... Through faith alone.

His message was always the same. Look at this in a few of Paul's letters to the Churches that he had planted.

- Acts 4:12,
- Romans 1:16-17,
- Romans 3:21-26,
- Galatians 3:11-14,
- 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

A few people who God uses in Paul's life that you should know more about:

- ❖ **King Agrippa II:** *Herod Agrippa II. son of the Herod who killed James and imprisoned Peter. He was the last of the Herods, who played a prominent role in New Testament History. His great-uncle, Herod Antipas, was the Herod of the Gospels, while his great-grandfather, Herod the Great, ruled at the time Jesus was born. Though not the ruler of Judea, Agrippa was well versed in Jewish affairs. Bernice was not Agrippa's wife, but his consort and sister. (Their sister, Drusilla, was married to the former governor, Felix.) Their incestuous relationship was the talk of Rome, where Agrippa grew up. ----John MacArthur: Acts: The Spread of the Gospel*
- ❖ **Ananias:** *A high priest in Jerusalem from 47-59 AD. From Josephus (Ant., XX, v, 2; vi, 2; ix, 2; BJ, II, xvii, 9) we glean the following facts: He was the son of Nedebaeus (or Nebedaeus) and was nominated to the high-priestly office by Herod of Chalcis. In 52 AD he was sent to Rome by Quadratus, legate of Syria, to answer a charge of oppression brought by the Samaritans, but the emperor Claudius acquitted him. On his return to Jerusalem, he resumed the office of high priest. He was deposed shortly before Felix left the province, but continued to wield great influence, which he used in a lawless and violent way. He was a typical Sadducee, wealthy, haughty, unscrupulous, filling his sacred office for purely selfish and political ends, anti-nationalist in his relation to the Jews, friendly to the Romans.-- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
- ❖ **Felix:** *means happy, The Roman procurator of Judea before whom Paul "reasoned" (Act 24:25). He appears to have expected a bribe from Paul, and therefore had several interviews with him. The "worthy deeds" referred to in Act 24:2 was his clearing the country of banditti and impostors. At the end of a two years' term, Porcius Festus was appointed in the room of Felix (A.D. 60), who proceeded to Rome, and was there accused of cruelty and malversation of office by the Jews of Caesarea. The accusation was rendered nugatory by the influence of his brother Pallas with Nero. Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa, having been induced by Felix to desert her husband, the king of Emesa, became his adulterous companion. She was seated beside him when Paul "reasoned" before the judge. When Felix gave place to Festus, being "willing to do the Jews a pleasure," he left Paul bound.---Easton's Bible Dictionary*
- ❖ **Festus, Porcius:**
the successor of Felix (A.D. 60) as procurator of Judea (Act 24:27). A few weeks after he had entered his office the case of Paul, then a prisoner at Caesarea, was reported to him. The "next day," after he had gone down to Caesarea, he heard Paul defend himself in the presence of Herod Agrippa II. and his sister Bernice, and not finding in him anything worthy of death or of bonds, would have set him free had he not appealed unto Caesar (Act 25:11,12). In consequence of this appeal Paul was sent to Rome. Festus, after being in office less than two years, died in Judea.

In Acts 22:24-29 how is Paul protected by Roman law?

Again, God speaks directly to Paul. What does God tell in in 23:11

How does God protect Paul in Acts 23:12-35

How do you see evidence of God's sovereignty in Paul's life?

Character, personality

Upbringing, training

Citizenship

Affliction

Read Acts 24

Note the “tone” of Tertullus in Acts 24:2-8. What is your impression of his compliments and accusations?

What charges did he bring against Paul?

How did Paul respond in Acts 10-21

Reread Acts 24: 22-27

Evidently, Felix was interested in what Paul had to say but kept him in prison. Why?

There were no more public hearings for 2 years. During this time, Felix summoned Paul to talk with him. Undoubtedly, God’s words to Paul gave him the confidence to continue speaking. Felix was interested in what Paul had to say, but as far as we know, Felix never submitted to Christ. Paul knew he would go to Rome, but he also knew it would not be easy. He was not afraid..... He had an important message to share.

Read Acts 25

What were the Jewish leaders planning to do to Paul?

Did Festus find any fault with Paul? _____

What is the main point that Festus makes to Agrippa in v18-19

Why did Festus want King Agrippa II to hear from Paul?

- ❖ *It was a dramatic moment when the holy and humble apostle of Jesus Christ stood before this representative of the worldly, ambitious, morally corrupt family of the Herods who for generation after generation had set themselves in opposition to truth and righteousness. "Their founder, Herod the Great," wrote R.B. Rackham in The Acts of the Apostles, "had tried to destroy the infant Jesus." His son Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, beheaded John the Baptist, and won from the Lord the title of "fox." His grandson Agrippa I slew James the son of Zebedee with the sword (Acts 12:1-2). Now we see Paul brought before Agrippa's son. But Paul was not the least intimidated. --- John Stott Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work*

Read Acts 26

What reason does Paul give for his trial?

Paul basically gives his testimony to King Agrippa II and all those in attendance. He was not at all afraid to speak boldly about the incredible and unbelievable events that he had experienced. Jesus had commissioned him to be his instrument to the Gentiles to open their eyes and turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan.. (Acts 26:15-18)

Festus interrupts him in v24, but Paul is unabated. What does Paul tell King Agrippa II in 26:26-29 to show that he is committed to his mission?

Festus and Agrippa find no fault with Paul and could have been freed at this time... but God had told Paul he was going to Rome.So, Paul sails for Rome

Read Acts 27

His journey to Rome was eventful, to say the least.... But Paul was a man of action, a man of the Spirit, and a man of common sense. How do you see Paul encourage, respect, and care for those traveling with him?

In chapter 28, the shipwreck arrives in Malta, with everyone safe! The people of Malta were hospitable and cared for the 276 people who had come from the sea. Again, God brings evidence through Paul of His work. What two events showed the power of God in Acts 28:1-10

Acts 28:11- 31 Paul in Rome

- ❖ *Jerusalem and Rome were the centers of two enormously strong power blocs. The faith of Jerusalem went back two millennia to Abraham. The rule of Rome extended some three million square miles around the Mediterranean Sea. Jerusalem's strength lay in history and tradition, Rome's in conquest and organization. Their combined might was overwhelming. If a solidarity dissident like Paul were to set himself against them, the outcome could be inevitable. His chances of survival would resemble those of a butterfly before a steamroller. He would be crushed, utterly obliterated from the face of the earth.*

Yet such an outcome, we may confidently affirm, never entered Paul's mind as a possibility. Paul saw the situation from an entirely different perspective. He was no traitor to either church or state that he should come into collision with them, although this is how his accusers tried to frame him. Paul's contention, while on trial was that in principle the gospel both supports the rule of Caesar and fulfills the hope of Israel. He presents himself as both a loyal citizen of Rome and loyal son of Israel.

The gospel is on trial today. May we share the confidence and courage of Paul as we live and speak in its defense. ----John Stott, Acts: Seeing the Spirit at Work

Paul, as he always did, spoke to everyone he came in contact with about Jesus. Some believed some did not. He was basically under house arrest for 2 years, with a guard, but anyone was allowed to come to his home.

- ❖ **Acts 28:30-31** *30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.*

And that is the end of Acts..... Seems abrupt doesn't it. But that is because the story is not over.... Let's go back for a bit to Matthew 28: 18-20 when Jesus gave his last instructions to the disciples to GO.....

- ❖ *18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Obviously, the disciples would not live until the end of the age, so this great commission would be passed on to future believers, the offspring of Abraham who would bless all the families of the earth. Who are the offspring of Abraham? Of course, we are.... All believers in Jesus' work on the cross to fulfill the Covenant the God made with Abraham and suffer and die and bring us back into relationship with Him.

So, let's look again at Acts 1:8

- ❖ *8 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."*

The story does not end here.... We are "the rest of the story....."

God has given us the same power he gave to Paul.... What will we do with it? Teach, make disciples, love, care, and reflect Christ to the world no matter what the cost? Or hide it under a bushel where no one will hear?