ABSTRACT

This training course studies the book of Acts to provide insight into the way the early church worked and functioned so that modern day Christians will be encouraged to be faithful to the standard that we have been given. This course has a variety of resources, including an outline of the book of Acts, character profiles and passage comparisons; these resources are intended to help the student gain Biblical perspective on the people, events, and teachings introduced in the book of Acts. © 2011 David Istre
CONTENT OF THIS STUDY
Welcome to the Acts Bible study!

The first edition to this Acts Bible study takes an in-depth, chapter-by-chapter look at the lives of the first church Christians from the book of Acts.

This study features *compare and contrast* sections to help you focus on what was happening throughout the whole book and to help you see how the apostles carried out the Lord’s words from the gospel.

**Key Study Features:**

- An Acts outline,
- 4 Bible Maps,
- 2 Group Activities,
- 2 devotionals,
- 17 Consideration and Discussion activities, *and*
- 26 Character and City profiles!
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ACTS OUTLINE

A Brief Profile:

- Acts is written by Luke the evangelist around A.D. 62
- Written towards the end of Paul’s two-year imprisonment
- Written before Nero’s persecution of the Christians
- 28 chapters long divided into 8 sections with many sub-sections.

This is a book of “Witnesses”. Therefore, these are the accounts of the great early Christians, who converted an empire, and laid the foundation of our faith through the passing on of the apostles’ teachings, to the inspiration of their faithfulness.

I) The Beginning of the Church (Acts 1:1-8:1)
   i) Jesus’ Ascension (Acts 1:1-11)
   ii) Mathias Chosen (Acts 1:12-26)
   iii) The Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41)
   iv) Peter’s Sermon & Believers Fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)
   v) Peter Heals the Beggar (Acts 3)
   vi) Peter & John at the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-31)
   vii) Believers fellowship & Ananias and Sapphira (4:32-5:16)
   viii) Imprisonment and Release (5:17-42)
   ix) Choosing of the Seven Deacons (6)
   x) Stephens defense and execution (7)

II) The Persecution and dispersion of the Church (Acts 8:2-12:23)
   i) The Conversion of the Samarians (8:2-25)
   ii) Philipp the Ethiopian (8:26-40)
   iii) Saul’s Conversion and Healing (9:1-31)
   iv) Peter Heals Aeneas and Raises Dorcas (9:32-43)
   v) Peter Meets Cornelius (10:1-11:18)
   vi) The Church at Antioch - Syria (11:19-30)
   vii) Peter’s Escape from Prison (12:1-19)
   viii) Herod’s Death (12:20-23)

III) Paul’s First Missionary Journey (Acts 12:24-14:28)
   i) Saul and Barnabas Begin the Journey (12:24-13:3)
   ii) Cyprus (13:4-12)
   iii) Pisidian Antioch (13:13-52)
   iv) Iconium (14:1-7)
v) Lystra & Derbe (14:8-21)
vi) Return to Antioch (14:22-28)

i) James’s Judgment (15:13-29)

V) Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)
i) Paul & Silas in Asia (15:36-16:10)
ii) Philippi (16:11-40)
iii) Thessalonica (17:1-9)
iv) Berea (17:10-14)
v) Athens (17:15-34)
vi) Corinth (18:1-18)
vii) Paul returns to Antioch (18:19-22)

i) Paul Travels to Galatia and Phrygia (18:23)
ii) Apollos in Ephesus (18:24-28)
iii) Paul in Ephesus (19)
iv) Paul in Macedonia and Greece (20:1-16)
v) Paul in Miletus (20:17-38)

VII) Paul is Arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21-26)
i) Paul in Caesarea (21:1-14)
ii) Arrival in Jerusalem (21:15-26)
iii) Paul’s Arrest (21:27-22:29)
iv) Paul before the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:11)
v) Paul’s transfer to Caesarea (23:12-35)
vi) Paul before Felix and later Festus (24:1-25:12)
vii) Paul before Agrippa (25:13-26:32)

VIII) Paul’s trip to Rome (Acts 27-28)
i) Paul Sails to Rome (27:1-8)
ii) Shipwreck (27:9-28:10)
iii) Paul in Rome (28:11-31)
The Beginning of the Church

Acts 1:1-8:1

A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES

And Jesus said,

“You heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the Earth.”

Acts 1:4-5, 7-8

This is a book of witnesses; the witness of the apostles and the disciples. Truly, a book of evangelists and disciples, we see the standard laid out for us to follow.

THE BEGINNING OF THEIR WITNESS

Where did the disciples begin their witness (v8)?


- What was the message in Luke that Jesus opened their minds to understand?
- What does Luke 24:48 say they were to do about these things?
- Where did Jesus say they should witness these things to in Acts 1:8?
Where did they go after returning from Mount Olivet (Acts 1:12)?

- Who went with them into the Upper Room (v13-14)?
  - 
- What did they do?
  - 
  - 

THE DAY OF PENTECOST- 2:1-13

The disciples and followers of Christ were gathered together: what did they do? (Acts 2:2-4)

What did the crowd outside hear?

• (v7-8)

What were they (the Christians) speaking about?

• (v11)

How did the crowd first react? (v12-13)

PETER’S STAND- 2:14-40

Peter and the disciples did not hesitate; explain what Peter’s response was to the crowd’s presence.

• (v14) • (v22-25)
• (v15-16) • (v33)
Peter was faithful to the resounding message of Christ and spoke with boldness and compassion to the crowd.

**ATTENTION**

What did Peter tell them to do (vv38-40)?

- ____________________________
- ____________________________
- ____________________________

**WHAT HAPPENED? (v41-47)**

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________
5. ____________________________
6. ____________________________
7. ____________________________
8. ____________________________
9. ____________________________
10. ____________________________
11. ____________________________

**FOR CONSIDERATION**

Was Peter’s message “carefully planned?”

Is it particularly eloquent or fancy?

What was the source of Peter’s message?
PETER [pēˈtər] (Gk. **Petros**).† Simon Peter, the most prominent of Jesus’ twelve disciples.

Peter’s original name was Simon (Aram. *šim‘ôn*, represented in Greek by *Σίμων* and *Συμεών*). Jesus gave him the Aramaic name *kēpā* “rock” (**Matt. 16:18; Luke 6:14; John 1:42**), which in Greek is transliterated (*Kēphas*; Eng. *Cephas*) and translated (*Petros*). Peter is also called “son of John” (v. 42; KJV “Jona”; 21:15–17; KJV “Jonas”) and Bar-Jona (**Matt. 16:17**; from Aram. *bar-yônâ* “son of Jonah”).

Peter’s original home was Bethsaida (**John 1:44**), and he later lived in Capernaum (**Matt. 8:5, 14; Mark 1:21**). He was married (**Matt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5**). He and his brother Andrew were partners in a fishing business with James and John the sons of Zebedee (**Luke 5:10**), […]Peter received only the fundamental education in Judaism of the common people (**Acts 413**). Marked as a Galilean by his accent (**Matt. 26:73; Mark 14:70**), […]he later was able to work] among Greek-speaking Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:12; Gal. 2:11–12).

Peter and Andrew were followers of John the Baptist and had their first contact with Jesus through John (**John 1:35–42**). When Jesus called Peter to follow him, Peter was still working as a fisherman (**Mark 1:16–17**), but had already respected Jesus as “Master” for some time (**Luke 5:5**).

Peter’s loyalty is portrayed in (**Matt. 14:28–29; 17:24–25; Mark 10:28; 11:21; 14:29–31; Luke 5:8; 8:45; John 6:68–69; 18:10; 21:7**). He also misunderstood Jesus and was rebuked by the Master, often because of what his loyalty had led him into (**Matt. 15:15–17; Mark 8:29–33; 9:5–6; 14:37–38; John 13:6–11; 18:10–11**). Peter’s loyalty failed at the point of greatest strain… (**Mark 14:66–72** par.). Afterwards, he was the first of the apostles to see the risen Jesus (**Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5**), but returned to fishing in Galilee and had to be coaxed out of this decision by Jesus (**John 21**).

After the ascension of Jesus Peter was the main leader of the Church in Jerusalem (**Acts 1:13–14**). He initiated the replacement of Judas (vv. **15–26**). When the Church’s growth was initiated by Pentecost, he stepped forward as interpreter of the event and the preacher of the gospel to the crowd that assembled (ch. **2**). From that time until he had to go into hiding (**12:17–19**), Peter played a significant part in the Church in Palestine. He healed people (**3:1–10; 5:15–16; 9:32–43**), preached to crowds (**3:12–26; 5:21, 42**), was jailed (**4:1–3; 5:17–18, 26; 12:3–5**) and miraculously released (**5:19–20; 12:6–17**), and spoke to government authorities about Jesus (**4:5–12; 5:27–32**).

Peter played a central role in some of the events that took the Church beyond its original limitation to Judean Jews (**8:14–25; 10:1–11:18**; cf. Gal. 1:18–19**). At the **APOSTOLIC COUNCIL**, which took place after he could safely return to Jerusalem, Peter took a leading part in the defense of evangelism of Gentiles, which did not require conformity to Judaism (**Acts 15:7–11**; cf. Gal. 2:8–10). […]Peter did err in bowing to pressure from the conservative Jewish Christians and withdrew fellowship from the Gentile Christians] until he was sharply rebuked by Paul (vv. **11–14**).

Peter is not mentioned in Acts after the account of the Council. It appears, however, that after Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14) he went on missionary journeys farther into the Gentile world (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22;9:5).


For Serious Consideration

What was Peter’s Core Message again: (Acts 2:17-21)

Who did Peter exalt and, overwhelmingly, point to?

Is his core message simple or complicated?

In your own words, what did Peter preach?

What did Peter try to appeal to?

• Their Culture?
• Their lives?
• The Testimony of God?
• The Workings of Christ?
• The Truth?
• The Scripture?

Anything else?
The cultural confrontations of Peter’s time were no less complicated than the cultural confrontations that we face in our time; he had to face a world saturated in false deities, monotheistic and polytheistic worldviews, in-fighting with the Jews, oppression from the ruling authorities, and an array of socio-political issues that would have consumed the citizens of Rome much like our modern political movements and issues consume us today.

In such an atmosphere, consider:

Why didn’t Peter use a more creative approach that was more sensitive to the issues of the day with the crowd?

Do you believe that a simple approach like this can work today?

Why or Why Not?
MIRACLES & PETER’S 2ND SERMON- 3:1-26

READ: Acts 3:1-10

Peter stopped to talk to the beggar at the gate entrance to the temple called “Beautiful”, and he said, “___________________________...” (v6)

What was the result of this miracle?

• (v8)  
• (v9)  
• (v10)

What should be expected of any miracle worked in God's name?

ANOTHER RESULT OF MIRACLES (v10)

What was Peter’s reply to the crowd that was gathering?

• (v12)________________________________________________________________________________

• (v14-16)_______________________________________________________________________________

• (v19, 26)______________________________________________________________________________

Has Peter’s message changed from his first sermon?
This time, what was the result?

**READ:** Acts 4:1-12

Who came up to Peter and John while they were preaching?

- How did *the people* react? *(v4)*

On the next day, what did the Sanhedrin ask them? *(v7)*

- Peter’s response? *(v8-12)*
  - o
  - o
  - o
  - o

**THREATENED**

**READ:** Acts 4:13-31

What did the Sanhedrin observe about Peter and John’s character?

1.

2.

“And when they had summoned them, they commanded them **not** to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.” *(Acts 4:18)*

**ATTENTION**

Although the Romans had power in Jerusalem, the Roman governor granted authoritative power to the Jewish Sanhedrin- the same power that was used to arrest Jesus. This was no small matter.
How did Peter and John respond? (v19-20)

- Were Peter and John disrespectful?
- Did they threaten the Sanhedrin back?
- Did they even speak *any* accusations against the Sanhedrin?
- Who did they appeal to as the authority?
- Did they submit to the Sanhedrin?

After the Sanhedrin threatened Peter and John some more, they released them.

Why? (v21-26ff)

**READ: Acts 4:32-35**

- What was the *congregation* doing?
- What were the Apostles doing?
SATAN’S BLASPHEMY
READ: Acts 4:36-5:11

QUICK QUESTIONS:
What was the Church doing in 4:32-37?
What did Ananias and Sapphira do?

To whose influence did Ananias and Sapphira give in?

• Who did they lie to?
• Whom did they test?

FOR CONSIDERATION
Have you ever thought about whom it really is that you are lying to when you lie?

What happened to Ananias and Sapphira?

KEY
What was the result of the Church witnessing the power of God?
**IMPRISONED**

Threatened by the apostles and faced with the public’s realization that they had crucified the Messiah, the High Priest and the sect known as Sadducees rose up against the apostles to throw them into jail!

**READ**: Acts 5:17-21 & 5:27-32

What happened when they were imprisoned?

Having been brought to the people in the temple, they began preaching Christ again:

- What did they say to them?
- How did the apostles respond?
- Was this any different than their last response?

**READ**: Acts 5:34-40

**CHARACTER PROFILE**

*Rabban Gamaliel I, called the Elder.*

According to the Talmud, he was the son of Simon and grandson of Hillel the Elder (other sources call him the son of Hillel), whom he succeeded as a leader of the Sanhedrin.

A distinguished teacher of the Law, he was the first to be honored with the title *Rabban* “Our Master” or “Teacher”; the apostle Paul... [was] one of his students (*Acts 22:3*; cf. *Talmud b. Šabb. 30b*).

Gamaliel was instrumental in establishing *liberal Pharisaism* and is generally acknowledged for his humane interpretation of the Law (cf. *Git.* iv.:1–3); his tolerance is demonstrated by his intervention in the Sanhedrin in behalf of Peter and the apostles (*Acts 5:33–39*). As a measure of Gamaliel’s esteem, the Mishnah notes that when he died (ca. A.D. 50) "respect for the Torah ceased, and purity and abstinence died" (*Soṭah* ix. 15).

What was Gamaliel’s advice to the counsel?

Did they listen?

**7 DEACONS CHOSEN**

The disciples were increasing in number and becoming overwhelmed with the work they had to do— they could not devote themselves entirely to their calling of preaching the Word and serving tables at the same time.

So, they came together to choose seven men from among the brethren as servants—the word we use today is *Deacons*.

**READ: Acts 6:1-7**

What were the qualities of the men selected for this task? (v3)
1. 
2. 
3. 

What were the names of the seven men chosen?
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 

When they chose these seven men, what did they do?
• (v6)
FOR DISCUSSION

Imagine a servant for a moment.

What kind of picture do you have in your head?

Is he or she a weak or strong person?

Discuss—Matthew 20:25-28, 23:10-12, & John 12:26

READ: Acts 6:8-10

Now, look at the character traits and requirements made of someone that waits tables: list 5 attributes and compare them to what you imagined a servant to be.

• ______________________________________________________________
• ______________________________________________________________
• ______________________________________________________________
• ______________________________________________________________
• ______________________________________________________________
• ______________________________________________________________
**STEPHENS DEFENSE**

**READ:** Acts 7:1-3 & 51-53

Stephen was accused of blasphemying Moses. They rose up with false accusations against him.

In his own defense, Stephen relayed the entire story from Abraham through the prophets—he preached the glory of God and the sin of their forefathers. In his final plea, Stephen tried to show the Jews how they were falling into the same trap that their forefathers had fallen into by persecuting the righteous prophets of their time!

**READ:** Acts 7:54-60

- What did the Jews do?
- What did Stephen continue to do?
- Did Stephen ever insult the Jews?

Compare the difference between how Stephen pleaded with the Jews (in a righteous way) to the possible conduct of someone who might’ve been accusatory and angry towards his oppressors.

Which attitude do you think is most effective? Why?

**READ:** Proverbs 15:1 & Matthew 27:14

**AS SERVANTS OF CHRIST**—what should our attitudes be like?
THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

Acts 8:2-12:23

A GREAT PERSECUTION

Stephen was the first Christian martyr during the first big wave of persecution to hit the church.

The persecution was so severe that it scattered Christians throughout the whole region. On the very front lines of this persecution in Jerusalem was a man named Saul, who was a tentmaker by trade, and foremost of up-and-coming Pharisees who even studied under the great Gamaliel himself.

What was the result of so many Christians being forced to spread throughout the region?

(Acts 8:4)

PHILIP IN SAMARIA

READ: Acts 8:4-24

CHARACTER PROFILE

Philip, the evangelist of the seven.

Philip the evangelist, of “the seven” chosen to assist the apostles in the distribution to the widows of the church (Acts 6:1-5; 21:8). Philip was the first to take the gospel to Samaritans (8:5-8); one of the converts on that occasion was Simon Magus (vv. 9-13). Philip was then sent by an angel to take the gospel to an Ethiopian official who was returning home from a Pilgrimage to Jerusalem (vv. 26-39). He then preached in the coastal cities from Azotus to Caesarea, where he settled (v. 40; 21:8). He was thus significant in the initial steps of extending the gospel beyond the Jews of Judea and Galilee. His four daughters were Christian prophetesses (v. 9)1

Among those scattered into the region of Samaria was Philip - an evangelist.

Philip went preaching the word of Christ because of what they heard and saw.

- He proclaimed Christ
- He cast out demons
- Healed the lame and sick

What was the result of this? (v8)

SIMON THE SORCERER

In the city of Samaria, there was a man performing great and powerful magical arts - the people of that city even said, “This man is what is called the Great Power of God”.

- What was the result of his “wonders” (v11)?
- What is the difference between the result of his work, and Philip’s work (v8, 11)?

THE KINGDOM OF GOD PREVAILS

Philip continued preaching “the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Christ”, and many believed his message: what happened?

- (v12)
- (v12)
- (v13)

What caused the people of Samaria to believe?

What was Simon the Sorcerer attracted to (v13)?
**SIMON’S WICKEDNESS**
The church enjoyed unity because it helped one another wherever there was need.

When the apostles heard that *the Word* had been received in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to Philip in Samaria.

Upon arriving, the apostles saw that the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of the believers in Samaria, so, they prayed and laid hands upon them and the Holy Spirit was imparted.

*Simon saw that the Holy Spirit could be given through the laying on of hands.*

What did Simon do:
- v19-

How did Peter respond:
- v20-22-
- v23-

**PHILIP’S MINISTRY IN SAMARIA**
Philip was not sent to impart the Holy Spirit- what did he do?
- (v5)
- (v6)
- (v16)

Neither was Philip a one-man show- what happened?
- (v14)

*This is the body of Christ working in unison!*

Using the idea above,

How can the Church today restore unity?
AN ETHIOPIAN RECEIVES CHRIST
An evangelist is commissioned to proclaiming the Word of God—Philip was doing precisely that.

How did Philip Know when his work was finished (v25)?

Was the number of people that received the message a factor?

Where was Philip going?
  1.

What was he doing along the way?
  1.

Who came to Philip?

What did he say to Philip?

Philip obeyed the Angel of the Lord and went along the road from Jerusalem to Gaza where he found an Ethiopian eunuch.

The Ethiopian had encountered Christ... not in person, nor through a vision or revelation, but through the prophecy of Isaiah. Therefore, the Lord sent Philip to fully reveal Christ to the Ethiopian.

• Who told Philip to “go up and join the chariot” (v29)?

READ: Acts 8:32-33

This is where the Ethiopian encountered Christ- through the Word. But did he understand what the Word was saying?

Beginning from where the Ethiopian encountered Jesus, what did Philip do (v35)?

What was the response of the Ethiopian (v36-38)?
HATRED TURNED TO LOVE

“He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief cornerstone” (Psalm 118:22).

Hatred burned against the church in the heart of its opponents—chief of whom was a man named Saul.

Saul (later called Paul) was still “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord”. He requested special letters from the high priest to bring to the Synagogues (Jewish temples) in Damascus so that he could throw any Christians that he found there into prison.

His request was granted and Saul set out on the road for Damascus.

READ: Acts 9:3-19

What happened to Saul as he was traveling to Damascus?
  • (v3)
  • (v4-6)
  • (v7)
  • (v8)
  • (v9)

It was the Lord that appeared to Saul and converted such an adversary! But Saul was still feared by the Church because they did not yet know of this miracle.

Who did the Lord appear to next? (v10)

What did He tell Ananias to do? (v11)
CHARACTER PROFILE

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles


Paul was from Tarsus, a prosperous city and center of education in the Cilician plain of southeastern Asia Minor (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3). Paul inherited Roman citizenship (Acts 22:25–28), which was widely granted during the latter part of the Roman republic, and was also a citizen of Tarsus (21:39). His two names, Saul (Heb. šâ·ûl) and Paul (Lat. Paulus, the source of Gk. Paulos), reflect the bicultural nature of Hellenistic Diaspora Judaism. He was a “tentmaker” (18:3); the trade may well have been that of his family.

Despite the relative liberalism of his teacher Gamaliel, Paul was, according to his own reports, a strict rigorist among Pharisees (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5–6). This zealous strictness included his response to the gospel; Paul sought to destroy the Church (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13, 23). Even in the retrospect of Christian faith and apostleship Paul was able to say that he was before his conversion “as to the righteousness under the law blameless” (Phil. 3:6).

Paul’s conversion and call took place in and near the city of Damascus in Syria. Four features stand out in the accounts of this event (Acts 9:1–9; 22:4–16; 26:9–17).

1. Paul was actively engaged in persecuting Christians and did not anticipate that such an event would occur.
2. That which initiated and controlled the unexpected change of course was a revelation of Jesus made in a clear fashion to Paul alone.
3. Soon after this revelation Paul had contact with at least one Christian in Damascus who recognized Paul as a believer in Christ by baptizing him.
4. Paul was immediately called by Jesus to take the gospel to the Gentiles. This broad picture is confirmed by what Paul writes of his conversion to Christian faith and his call to be apostle to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8–9; Gal. 1:15–16; cf. Eph. 3:1–6).

Paul’s preaching of Jesus as “Son of God” began immediately after his call (Acts 9:20). He then went into “Arabia” (the Syrian desert near Damascus; Gal. 1:17), and probably preached there too; whatever he did there caused the Nabatean king Aretas IV to attempt to have Paul arrested (2 Cor. 11:32). After three years in and around Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem, where he stayed for fifteen days (Acts 9:22–26; Gal. 1:18). There, Paul attempted to join with the Christians, but apparently met only with some of the apostles (Acts 9:26–27; Gal. 1:18–19; vv. 22–23). From Jerusalem Paul went to Tarsus, where he stayed for an unstated length of time. He then went to Antioch in Syria, where he stayed for one year and was quickly drawn into the Hellenistic Jewish Christians’ first mission to Gentiles, probably because he had already shown himself suitable for such work (Acts 9:30; 11:20–26).

Ananias was frightened because he knew that Saul was on his way to persecute the saints.

What was Jesus’ response and answer to Ananias? (v14-16)

Ananias obeyed the Lord and went to the house where Saul was staying. He declared his purpose for being there and something that looked like scales fell from Saul’s eyes.

What happened next?
- (v18)
- (v19)

READ: Galatians 1:11-24

Acts 9:19 doesn’t transition into verse 20 immediately; rather, approximately 3 years pass between these two verses!

What did Saul do between these two verses?
- (Galatians 1:12)
- (Galatians 1:16)
- (Galatians 1:17)
- (Galatians 1:17)
- (Galatians 1:18)

This is characteristic of the apostles- they were not taught by man, nor even by prophets, but through Jesus Christ Himself.
SAUL BEGINS TO PREACH CHRIST

READ: Acts 9:20-31

Why were the people amazed?
- (v21)
- (v22)

CHALLENGE

There are many Christians being persecuted today all over the world: if your persecutor and enemy suddenly claimed to be a Christian, would you trust him?

Now, read 1st John 4:1-6; how would you test the spirit behind someone who was once persecuting you, but now has “converted”?

When Saul began to preach the gospel to the Jews, he “confounded” them—their wisdom lacked any rebuttal to the message given to Saul: so they became angry and conspired against Saul.

WHAT DID SAUL AND HIS DISCIPLES DO?
- (v25)

Saul’s hardship did not stop there: when he narrowly escaped he went to Jerusalem where he attempted to associate with the other disciples. But they were afraid of him!

Who helped Saul?
- (v27)

Soon, because of Barnabas’ obedience and faithfulness, the other disciples accepted Saul and he began preaching to the Jews once again.
The Jews, again, became angry with Saul and conspired to kill him.

Where did he go?

**For Consideration**

Take a moment to consider what attributes contributed to the continual increase of the Church:

- (v31)
- (v31)

**PETE’S MINISTRY**

**READ: Acts 9:32-42**

Corresponding to this, Peter was going through the regions of Samaria and eventually moved on into Lydda.

Who did he meet, and what did he do? (v32-35)

In Joppa, what were Tabitha’s (Dorcas) gifts?

•

Tabitha (also known as Gazelle), died and she was greatly mourned. But the disciples washed her body and laid her in the upper room. Immediately they sent for Peter because they had heard that he was not far away.

Peter spoke to her and raised her from the dead, saying “Tabitha, arise.”

This event became well known over Joppa and many believed.
VISIONS

READ: Acts 10:1-23

This story takes place in Caesarea.

There was a devout man named Cornelius, who was a centurion in the Italian cohort. He feared the Lord God, along with his entire household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people while continuously praying to God.

Cornelius received a vision during the day from an angel of the Lord who came to him and told him that “God had seen how many alms he had given, and heard his continuous prayers, and now he must send some men to Joppa to find Peter.”

What did Cornelius do (v7-8)?

Why did he choose devout men to do this work?

The next day, Peter was on top of the roof preparing to pray when he became hungry. So he went to make preparation to eat.

What happened (v10-16)?

Did Peter understand this vision at first?

ATTENTION!

You mean, an APOSTLE, didn’t even understand the full extent of his vision?

What should we do when God tells us something, even if we don’t understand it?
Peter went with these servants to Cornelius. Explain what happened here:

What lesson did Peter say he had learned from the Lord’s vision (v28, 34-35)?

ASSOCIATION

Compare and understand these verses:
- Matthew 5:22
- Acts 10:28
- Romans 12:16
- 1st Corinthians 5:9-11
- 1st Corinthians 15:33
- Psalm 95:6-7

What do you think Peter’s vision means, then?

READ: Acts 10:34-48

What message did Peter preach?

Was it complicated?
- Compare to the Acts 2 sermon: is it any different?
- Compare to the Acts 3 sermon: is it any different?
What is the foundation of the Church according to these things?

**GROUP ACTIVITY**

**Supplies:**
- A Bible for each member
- One Concordance for every 3 or 4 people
- Pens or Pencils
- Paper

**Instructions:**

As a group, look up references in the Bible related to the foundation of the Church.

Some key words may be: “Church”, “Foundation”, “built upon”, “head”, “authority”, and “body”.

You will want to consider authority and attributes.

Using the verses you find, construct the parameters of the foundation in which the Church sits on.

**For Discussion:**
Now discuss, how can the Church today build-on, and stay within, the parameters of its foundation?
WHAT GOD HAS CLEANSED

“What God has cleansed, no longer consider as unholy” Acts 11:9

God’s work is performed by His power, not through any one individual.

Paul would later become known as the Apostle to the Gentiles, however, notice that it is through Peter that God declares the Gentiles clean in Christ!

“‘And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. ‘And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ‘Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?’ When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.’”

Acts 11:15-18

SCATTERED THROUGHOUT PHOENICIA, CYPRUS, AND ANTIOCH

Up until this point we have been witnessing events that occurred as a direct result of the persecution of Stephen—that “lowly” servant—who was filled with the Holy Spirit and Wisdom.
**READ: Acts 11:19-30**

Some men from Cyprus and Cyrene had begun preaching the word in Antioch.

What happened?

- (v21)
- (v22)
- (v23)
- (vv25-26)

Following the same format as before, when the Word was preached somewhere, and it took root with faith in those who heard, then the Church in Jerusalem would send the Apostles or other disciples there to remain and increase the faith of those who heard.

How long did Saul and Barnabas spend in Antioch?
**PRAYER AND A GREAT MIRACLE**

**READ:** Acts 12:1-19

Herod had just put James, the brother of John, to death by the sword, which pleased the Jews, so he proceeded to arrest Peter.

Perhaps it was now that Peter thought he might meet his end, if it were the Lord’s will. But it was not!

What happened?

- (v5)
- (v6-8)
- (v9)
- (v11)

When Peter came to Mary’s house, the mother of John, and began knocking, Rhoda the servant girl recognized his voice and reported to the gathering there.

With Peter, still out in the cold street knocking, they began debating among themselves whether or not this could be real!

**ATTENTION**

Are we ever like this: God sends something our way, real and right in our face, and we stand around debating whether or not it is real instead of acting upon it?

When they could not find Peter after his escape Herod was greatly displeased, and after failing to find Peter in the following days, he executed the guards.

**CONSIDER THE POWER OF PRAYER**

Are you practicing prayer like this?
Paul’s First Missionary Journey

Acts 12:24-14:28

PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY
Beginning this Missionary Journey, who were the members that composed this missionary party?

1.
2.
3.

PAUL’S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (www.bible-history.com)

Beginning from Seleucia, where did Paul go?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
**READ:** Acts 13:4-12

There was a man named Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Saul and Barnabas to hear the Word of God.

Describe the events and opposition that followed:

You may note that there is no explanation for Saul’s name becoming changed to Paul.

In Acts 13:9 we simply see Saul become identified as Paul, and from here onward, Saul will be called Paul.

**READ:** Acts 13:13-43

Paul and his companions set out to Perga, but John left their company to return to Jerusalem. When Paul arrived in Pisidian Antioch (not the same as Syria Antioch) he went into the Jewish Synagogues on the Sabbath and was invited to speak.

How did Paul present Christ to them?

*Note verse 38*

Was Paul’s message much different than that of Peter?
Compare Peter’s sermons to Paul’s.
  • Acts 2
  • Acts 10
  • Acts 3
  • Acts 13

What did they each preach?

PAUL CONFRONTED BY THE JEWS

Paul’s initial success with the Jews was not to be a sign of things to come because jealousy was soon to set in.

READ: Acts 13:44-52

What happened?
  • (v45-46)
  • (v48-50)

JEALOUSY AND BITTERNESS

Paul would suffer under the jealousy and bitterness of “those in prominence” and “the Jews” for the remainder of his ministry and until his death.

The message of God that would run strong before him, would meet with acceptance and oppression at each and every point.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Paul suffered because of the pride, prominence, jealousy, and bitterness of others...

Do you expect that we will not endure suffering in our age?

How can you ensure that you remain faithful in the face of such sufferings?
**READ: Acts 14:1-7**

Continuing the trend of preaching followed by persecution that spread the word further and further around.

What happened?
- (v3-5)

**IN WHAT WAY DID THEY PREACH THE GOSPEL?**

By their own intellect?
Under their own skills?
Easily?
... or

**A STRANGE PREDICAMENT USED TO PREACH CHRIST**

**READ: Acts 14:8-18**

Who did the gentiles think that Barnabas was?

Who did the gentiles think that Paul was?

What did they begin trying to do?

How did Paul and Barnabas respond (what was their message)?
- (v14-17)

Paul and Barnabas were horrified and greatly disturbed that they were being worshipped and that pagan gods were getting credit for God’s work!

Tearing their clothes and mourning this horror, they rushed out to declare that it is God that they were preaching; God, “whom created the heavens and the earth” and has “done good things for you”.

Alas, the Jews seeking to persecute Paul persuaded the crowds against him and had Paul and Barnabas stoned, presuming them to be dead.
RETURNING THROUGH LYSTRA, ICONIUM, AND DERBE

Paul and Barnabas, as companions and brothers, not lone super-stars, returned through the cities they had been preaching in...

What did they do?
- (v22)  
- (v23)

Where did they go from there?

What did they do?

The works of the Church were as follows:

1. Preach the Word
2. Send disciples to strengthen the places where the Word is received
3. Glorify God (through miracles and the word preached)
4. Spread the Word as persecution spreads the disciples
5. Testify of the things that God has done to the Church
Jerusalem Council & Paul’s 2\textsuperscript{nd} Mission

Acts 15:1-18:22

**READ:** Acts 15:1-12

**JERUSALEM COUNCIL**

Beginning with the first Church, contention set in among the brethren when some began preaching things that they did not receive from Christ, nor the apostles.

What was being taught that caused contention among the brethren?

What was the solution that was determined?

What was Peter’s testimony (v7-12)?

What was James’ decision and the action of the brethren?

- (v19)
- (v20)
- (v23-26)
- (v28)
- (v32-33)

Give special attention to verse 28.

They did not build on the foundation of Christ with peripherals that caused there to be a necessity for more than the essentials. They were standing firm on the simplicity of Christ—which resulted in praise to God for the encouragement they received from their leaders decisions.
FOR CONSIDERATION

Consider some things in which we have built non-essential issues into the Church today.

Should they be removed?

How?
PAUL’S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey did not neglect some of his previous cities (like Lystra and Derbe), but moved onward further West into (then) Asia and Macedonia.


Paul and Barnabas, who had remained ministering together to this point could not agree upon John (Mark) who had deserted them in Pamphylia.

- Barnabas took Mark to __________.
- Paul took ______ and traveled through Syria and Cilicia.

What was Paul’s purpose in this journey (v41)?
THE MACEDONIAN VISION

READ: Acts 16:1-13

Character Profile
Timothy, Paul’s son in the faith

Timothy had already been a God-fearer that may have been converted out of Paul’s first missionary journey. Paul and Silas passed through Timothy’s home, Lystra, during their second missionary journey (Acts 16:1; cf. 14:6–8, 21).

His mother was Jewish and “a believer,” and his father was a Gentile. Timothy had not been circumcised, but had received some training in the Jewish scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). Wanting Timothy to join him and Silas, Paul circumcised the young disciple so that traveling with the son of a marriage regarded as illegal according to Jewish law would not be such an immediate hindrance to work among Jews (Acts 16:2–3).

Later, when Paul was forced to leave Macedonia for Athens, he left Timothy and Silas behind in Macedonia (17:1–15). When Timothy joined Paul at Athens, the apostle sent him back northward to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1–2). When they were rejoined at Corinth, Timothy again worked alongside Paul (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 1:19). His name occurs with Paul’s in the letters to Thessalonica written from Corinth (1 Thess. 1:1; 3:6; 2 Thess. 1:1). On his third missionary journey, Paul had Timothy with him as an assistant and sent him to locations where help was needed but where the apostle could not himself be present (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1).

Timothy was with Paul at Corinth on the eve of his journey to Jerusalem and continued for at least part of that journey with him. (Acts 20:4; Rom. 16:21). Later Timothy worked at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), perhaps going there while Paul went on to Jerusalem. If Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were written from Rome, then Timothy was there with Paul at least for a short time (Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1; Phlm. 1).

Toward the end of Paul’s life, Timothy was an especially significant helper (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:22). Paul wanted Timothy to be with him (2 Tim. 4:9, 21). It appears that alongside his faithfulness was a timidity on Timothy’s part, which Paul considered a difficulty, and problems with physical health as well (1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 1:7; 4:1–5). At some time during his career as a Christian worker Timothy was imprisoned (Heb. 13:23).

Upon arriving at Lystra and Derbe, Paul met a man named ________, the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek man.

**What did Paul do with Timothy?**

- (why?)

**Compare & Reference**

- Galatians 5:3-4  
- Acts 16:3  
- Galatians 2:3-5

**CONSIDER**

Read the following passages:

- Romans 14:21  
- 1st Corinthians 8:13

Paul was an advocate of protecting your brethren from stumbling- if they are still captivated by the law, it is better to sacrifice of your own self so that they can be free than to cause them to stumble: and so Timothy, also, made a sacrifice.

However, the teachers of such false doctrines that would try to enslave the brethren under law by forcing circumcision upon them, such as in Titus’ case, were opposed so that the Gospel would run free and unhindered.

*We face such things today: when do you deem it beneficial to make a sacrifice in your personal liberty in Christ, and when do you deem it necessary to take a bold stand so that the gospel is not hindered?*
Working in Unison Under Authority

“Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon for them to observe by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the Churches were being strengthened in the faith and were increasing in number daily”—Acts 16:4-5

Neither Paul, nor the other disciples were operating under their own authority independently of the other brethren. The teachings that they were offering were decided upon in unison by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

Being Led By The Spirit

Where did the Holy Spirit forbid them to enter?
1. 
2. 

Upon arriving at Troas, Paul received a vision: describe the vision below.
FIRST EUROPEAN CONVERT

READ: Acts 16:14-21

CHARACTER PROFILE

Lydia, the God-fearer

A woman from Thyatira residing in Philippi, who became a Christian and opened her home to Paul and his coworkers (Acts 16:14, 40). The name Lydia may have derived from her designation as “a woman from Lydia,” a region in western Asia Minor where Thyatira, a small city with numerous craft guilds, is located.

As a seller of purple cloth, an especially prized commodity (cf. Mark 15:17-20; Luke 16:19), Lydia was probably wealthy.

She was a “God-fearer” (RSV “a worshipper of God”), a Gentile who worshipped with Jews although not a full convert to Judaism. Lydia apparently had adopted Philippi as her home, since she had a house there. After her conversion and baptism and the baptism of those in her household, this house became the home base for Paul’s mission in Philippi (Acts 16:15, 40).


Lydia was a craftswoman that made purple fabrics and had become a “God Fearer”. She was listening to Paul speak and heard with faith the message of Christ.

What was her response?

➢ (v15)
Imagine being the first to convert somewhere...

What attitude do you think Lydia must have had to believe Paul’s message like this?

What kind of priorities would someone like this likely have in their life?

Discuss— *Proverbs 14:5; Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:10-12; Revelation 2:10*
Imprisonment and the Jailers Conversion

**READ:** Acts 16:22-40

**GROUP ACTIVITY**

**Supplies:**
- 1 Bible per/member
- Pen and Paper
- 3 or more Hymns/ worship songs

**Instructions:**

Take time individually to consider what you are grateful for: write them down.

Come together as a group to worship God in prayer- These prayers should not be prayers of petition- set this time aside to simply worship God in prayer with thanksgiving and gratitude.

When everyone is finished, begin worshipping God in song.

Now, as a group read **Acts 16:22-40**.

**For Discussion:**
- Was it difficult to worship God in prayer without petitioning Him?
- Read Romans 8:18 & 1st Peter 4:13: does our hope and expectation of Christ’s return outweigh the present trials and tribulations that we face?
FIRST TO THE JEWS AND THEN TO THE GENTILES

Paul and Silas continued on into Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.

Continuing with his usual custom, Paul and Silas went first to the Jews at the Synagogue and spent three Sabbaths preaching to, and reasoning with, them.

Paul's Message to the Jews

Paul preached Christ to the Jews: what did He reason with them over?

1. (v3)
2. (v3)
3. (v3)

Then the Jews became Jealous: Why?

When the Jews came to the marketplace, they did not find Paul or Silas: who did they find instead?

What did they do with the brethren they found?

Romans 1:16
“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

Luke 24:47
“And that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”
The Thessalonians

**CHURCH PROFILE**
*Believed Amidst Great Trial and Tribulation*

During Paul’s second missionary journey, Paul came across Thessalonica (ca. A.D. 49–50). He was only allowed to preach there for two or three weeks (depending on whether Gk. *sábbata* at Acts 17:2 is understood as “sabbath days” [such as in the KJV] or as full weeks [RSV]). Strong opposition arose against him from the bitterness of his rivals hearts and forced him to leave Timothy behind to continue the work (cf Acts 17:14).

Because of strong opposition from Jews who had become jealous of the large number of Gentiles being won to the gospel (Acts 17:5), Paul was forced to depart and go to Berea (v. 10) where he left his companions, Silas and Timothy (v. 14). He sent for them when he reached Athens (v. 15), but it was not until later when they rejoined him at Corinth with the report of the steadfastness of the Thessalonian believers that the apostle knew he had made progress with his missionary labors there (18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6).

It was at that time that the first letter was written. The second letter, which presupposes the first (cf. 2 Thess. 2:15), was most likely written from the same place soon after the first (both ca. A.D. 51).

Although Timothy informed Paul of the steadfastness of their faith (3:6), he also apparently informed him that they were puzzled about Christ’s return. They were troubled with whether or not Christians that had died before his return would share in the blessings of his return (4:13-17). Therefore, as the body of Christ supports and works together, Paul attempted to answer these questions.

Paul gives a salutation (1:1) and thanksgiving for their faith (1:2-10) and retells of his own circumstances (2:1-3:10). Then expresses his wish to be reunited with them (3:11-13). Paul exhorts them in holy living (4:1-12), and then begins addressing the questions that apparently had been reported to him (4:13-5:11). His conclusion and personal greetings close out his first letter (5:12-22; 5:23-28).

Specific notes from 1st Thessalonians are that Christ will come “like a thief in the night” (5:2; cf. v. 4), and warns against letting our guard down (5:4-7). He urges them to continue in faith and love (v. 8). Paul then admonishes them to find gainful employment (5:14) and live peaceful and quiet content lives.
From the accounts found in Acts and 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, we can glean only a glimpse of the trials, tribulations, and obstacles these early Christians faced and overcame.

They had to face doubts over having been left behind, survive intense persecutions, all while having the apostle Paul with them for only a few weeks before his forced departure.
And all this was done according to the power of the Spirit so that no man could boast...

1st Corinthians 12:18, “But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body just as He desired”.

FOR CONSIDERATION & DISCUSSION

Paul, Silas, and Timothy evangelized (preached the Word) in Thessalonica for only 3 weeks before Paul was forced to leave...

Read: Ephesians 4:11-13 & 1st Corinthians 12

Yet the Church was strong and Timothy continued on faithfully in declaring the word according to the Spirit until their faith grew and became steadfast.

God equips the body as He desires so that no man can boast in himself; to Christ be the glory.

• Why, then, do we see so many 1-man-show churches?
• Why is it so hard for the brethren to step up and serve faithfully as Silas and Timothy?
• What do you think you should do to be part of the Lord’s equipping for the Church?
Paul and Silas Sent to Berea

The brethren sent Paul and Silas off by night to Berea.

READ: Acts 17:10-15

Where is the first place that Paul and Silas went to preach?

FOR CONSIDERATION:

In Acts 17:11, what is the characteristic that made the brethren at Berea "more noble" than the Thessalonians?

1.  
2.  

The jealousy of the Jews in Thessalonica was so severe that when they heard Paul and Silas has made converts, even among the prominent Greeks, they went to Berea to stir up the crowds against them there, too.

The brethren decided to send Paul away, however, two of those with Paul stayed: who were they?

1.  
2.  


**City Profile**

_A City of Idols_

In New Testament times Athens could still boast of being one of the most famous centers of wisdom, architecture, and art. Though it had been surpassed economically by Corinth and intellectually by Alexandria, the city nevertheless maintained a great reputation.

At the center of the ancient city was the rocky hill called the Acropolis, which arose some 156 m. (512 ft.) above sea level, and could be approached from the west via a stately colonnade named the Propylea. Upon this site were erected many temples, of which the Parthenon, constructed by Pericles’ sculptor, Phidias (_ca_. 438), and the Erechtheion were the principal centers of worship. The Parthenon, dedicated to the virgin goddess Athena, contained a golden image of Pallas Athena.

West-northwest of the Acropolis was the Areopagus, which for many years was the seat of Athens’ highest court of justice. Still further northwest was the Agora or the marketplace, a large open space encircled by colonnades, temples, bazaars, and government buildings. It was here that the Athenians spent their time discussing political issues and exchanging goods and services.

Brought to Athens ahead of his companions Silas and Timothy, Paul occupied the interim talking to people in the marketplace and the Jews in the synagogue (Acts 17:15–17). If the apostle first entered the city on foot he would have walked along the road where the Greek geographer Pausanias claimed to have observed “altars to gods unknown” (cf. v. 23; _see Unknown God_). He accepted an invitation to address the Stoics and Epicureans, though he made only a small impact on them (vv. 32–34). Soon, perhaps three or four weeks later, Paul left the city (18:1), moving on to Corinth without having established a church. Actually, Athens seems to have played no part in Paul’s missionary plan.

The New Testament epistles refer only once to Paul’s stay in Athens. According to 1 Thess. 3:1, he was left alone in the capital, having sent his faithful companion Timothy to the Thessalonians, recent converts of his. The passage reveals Paul’s emotional attachments to these Christians as he tried to proclaim Christ to cynics and mockers of the gospel.

READ: Acts 17:16-34

What Provoked Paul’s Spirit in Athens?

Paul went into the Synagogues and Marketplaces to reason with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles.

What two groups of Philosophers did he encounter?
1. The ____________________________
2. The ____________________________

CHARACTER PROFILES
GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

EPICUREANS [ē'-pi-kur'-e-anz] (Gk. Epikoureioi).† Members of a philosophical school founded by Epicurus (341–270 B.C.). Epicurus taught that all reality is made up of indestructible and undifferentiated “atoms,” whose integration produces life and whose separation produces death. He acknowledged the existence of deities and held that they were composed of atoms like all other beings and were, therefore, corporeal; they did not, however, play a role in human life. This materialistic view of existence was intended, negatively, to free people from anxiety regarding death and the gods; death is the end of everything and, therefore, is nothing to be feared.


STOICS [stō’iks] (Gk. Stōikoi). The members of a philosophical school founded by Zeno of Citium (ca. 335–263 B.C.) who taught in the Stoa Poikilē (“Painted Porch”), a colonnaded building in the Agora at Athens, hence the name. In Stoicism the primary focus is on how life is to be lived, with the attainment of virtue stressed above all. For the Stoics, virtuous living is living in accordance with nature. Stoicism was attuned to the new international climate created by the conquests of Alexander and Rome, in which rootlessness was a common condition. It came to be the most influential philosophical school in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, influencing such philosophers as Epictetus and Seneca.

The Greeks in Athens inquired of Paul as to what his message was and took him to the Areopagus—A small, barren, limestone hill in Athens Northwest of the Acropolis—So Paul went with them to proclaim Jesus and the resurrection.

The Athenians had an ear eager to hear new things, but not for the purpose of repentance or in faith; they were eager for intellectual delights. Paul’s message had very little effect.

**FOR DISCUSSION**

**READ:** Acts 17:23-25, 30-34

- What opportunity did Paul take advantage of to preach the gospel to them?
- What was Paul’s gospel message (vv. 30-32)?
- Did he change this message to fit the cultural situation that he was taking advantage of?

Who were the few converts that came out of Athens?

1. __________________
2. __________________
3. __________________

**CHARACTER PROFILE**

**DIONYSIUS OF ATHENS**

[dii´nəš´əs] (Gk. Dionysios). One of a few converts in Athens following Paul’s address at the Areopagus (Acts 17:34). Luke indicates that Dionysius was a member of the local government. He may have been Athens’ first bishop (cf. Eusebius HE iii.4.11;iv:23.3). Others identify him with Denys, the patron saint of France (third century), beheaded on Montmartre (Gregory of Tours Historia Francorum i.31). The mystical Neo-Platonic writings of a certain Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite were attributed to Dionysus of Athens by their Syrian author (ca. A.D. 500).

Paul at Corinth and His Return to Antioch

**READ:** Acts 18:1-22

Paul left Athens and went on into Corinth.

**CITY PROFILE**

**THE CENTER OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE**

**CORINTH** [kôr´inth] (Gk. Korinthos). A city located about 2 km. (1 mi.) south of the narrow isthmus connecting mainland Greece with the Peloponnesian peninsula. With the Gulf of Corinth on the west and the Gulf of Aegina (or the Saronic Gulf) on the east, the city was well situated for ocean trade, especially as a transfer port.

Merchants from Italy and Spain could go as far as the western harbor of Lechaeeum, while those from the east and from Egypt could moor their vessels in the harbor at Cenchреаe about 11 km. (7 mi.) east of the city. A specially constructed road (Gk. diolkos “haul-across”) permitted small ships to be pulled overland across the isthmus rather than attempt the dangerous Cape Malea at the southern point of the Peloponnesus. The Roman emperor Nero planned to cut a canal some 5 km. (3½ mi.) long through the isthmus, but it was not until 1893 that the plan was finally realized.

Rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. and settled with Roman colonists, Corinth became the capital of Achaia and the seat of the Roman government. It surpassed even Athens as a center of science and culture, and as the hub of intercourse between Romans, Greeks, Jews, Syrians, and Egyptians.¹


Who did Paul meet when he arrived at Corinth?

1. _______________ and

2. _______________

Paul continued reasoning with the Jews in the Synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade the gentiles.
What happened when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia?

There is considerable power when the brethren minister together; even the apostles needed the strength of the Body of Christ present with them when they were conducting their great wonders!

The Jews and their blasphemy and resistance eventually exasperated Paul; he finally shook out his garments and said to them, “your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

After this event, whom did Paul go to (v. 7)?

1. ______________________

Though Paul met great resistance at this science and cultural epicenter, the pure Word of the Lord still prevailed.

What was the name of the leader of the synagogue that believed?

• ______________________ (v. 8)

What was happening to the Corinthians when they heard the gospel (v. 8)?

1. ______________________ 2. ______________________

Paul received a vision in which the Lord said, “do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.”

How long did Paul spend in Corinth?

What was he doing during this time?
The Jews finally rose against the Christians and dragged them before the proconsul, Gallio, for trial. However, Gallio was unconcerned with these matters because it was not a matter of the State, but of Jewish law.

Who did they begin beating in front of the judgment seat?

Having remained with them several days longer, Paul left for Syria and took with him Priscilla and Aquila.

In what city did Paul leave Priscilla and Aquila?

Paul again entered the Synagogues in Ephesus and tried to reason with them there in keeping with the Lord’s words, “first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles”. The Jews there asked him to stay, but Paul did not consent.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Paul did not consent to stay even though there were some wishing to hear of the gospel from him. He left disciples there, and having already preached the word to some extent, he moved on.

He did not forsake them or withhold the gospel, however, there was a measure of discernment according to the Spirit in which he used to minister.

This is a challenge to take into account the whole-counsel of God with wisdom and understanding: WHO SHOULD YOU BE MINISTERING TO NOW?

The Lord loves all mankind and desires that none would perish but come to repentance and salvation in Christ (2nd Peter 3:9). Still, it remains that He searches the hearts of man and knows when someone has encountered Christ

He set sail for Caesarea and went down to the Church in Antioch to greet them there.
PAUL’S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

READ: Acts 18:23-28

PAUL’S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (www.bible-history.com)

Beginning from Seleucia, where did Paul go?

1. 8.
2. 9.
3. 10.
4. 11.
5. 12.
6. 13.
7.
Apollos was an eloquent man \( \text{(likely due to his education in Alexandria)} \) and was mighty in the scriptures according to the work of the Spirit in Him \( \text{(v25)} \). The Bible says he was teaching and speaking accurately the things of Jesus, even in the Synagogues, still having only been acquainted with John’s baptism.

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What did Priscilla and Aquila do when they heard him?

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**Character profile**

Apollos, a man mighty in the scriptures.

**APOLLOS** \([\text{ə̅pələs}](\text{Gk. } \text{Apollōs, abbreviation of } \text{Apollōnios; Lat. } \text{Apollonius})\).

An Alexandrian Jew, who was “well versed in the scriptures” \( \text{(Acts 18:24)} \).

He had learned from John the Baptist, where he had been taught John’s baptism.

After Paul left Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus, Apollos arrived there and began his ministry \( \text{(v. 26)} \). They met together and Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos “\text{more carefully in the way of God}”.

He then set out for Achaia and began strengthening the members of the church with his more careful insights that Jesus Christ was presaged in the Old Testament \( \text{(vv. 27-28)} \).

There was a segment of the Corinthian church that rallied behind Apollos against some that rallied behind Paul \( \text{(1st Corinthians 1:12)} \). Paul heavily criticized the church for this division, but never laid the blame upon Apollos. Paul not only credited Apollos with following up on his work at Corinth \( \text{(3:6)} \), but even urged him to revisit the church there \( \text{(16:12)} \). His censure was directed, instead, toward the Corinthians themselves \( \text{(3:6–9; 4:6–7)} \).

Later, to Titus, Paul recommends Apollos to Titus \( \text{(Titus 3:13)} \). Apollos was in Crete \( \text{(ca. A.D. 63)} \) just southwest of Ephesus and Northwest of his native Alexandria.

FOR CONSIDERATION

There was no division or confrontation between Apollos and Priscilla and Aquila: the Bible mentions several times that they were *both* teaching *accurately* the Word of God- and that was their concern.

The brethren were submitting to one another out of their love for Christ.

This speaks of their attitude and heart and demonstrates what their desires and concerns were.

Apollos wanted to go across to Achaia. So the brethren encouraged Apollos and wrote ahead to the disciples to instruct them to welcome him.

**The brethren trusted, supported, and protected one another...**

_There was a great deal of trust between the brethren. When a disciple was called to go onward, they would write to one another to let the brethren know to accept this disciple and embrace him as a brother. This protected the church from false schemers and false prophets, and supported the brethren that were going about doing the Lord’s word._

What did Apollos do when he arrived in Achaia?

1. ______________________________________

2. ______________________________________

3. ______________________________________
"...he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

– Acts 18:27-28

There were many signs and miracles that accompanied the Church, but the most powerful testimony of God— even above His signs and wonders— is the testimony of the scriptures about Jesus Christ! Therefore, now Apollos was powerfully demonstrating Christ through the scriptures!

**Paul at Ephesus**

**READ: Acts 19:1-10**

As Apollos was faithfully ministering in Corinth, Paul had passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus where he found some disciples. He began inquiring to them about the gospel and salvation that they received from Christ and he began inquiring of their baptism. The disciples had only been taught, much like Apollos, in the ministry of John the Baptist. The baptism they had received, therefore, was John’s baptism of repentance, which did not include the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, Paul proceeded to baptize them into Christ; when they received the Holy Spirit, they went out and began to speak with tongues and prophesy.

**Devotional Thought:**

**Teaching More Accurately...**

The Apostles and disciples did have to deal with divisions among the brethren; however, these divisions did not come from the Apostles or disciples because their mind was upon teaching more accurately the gospel.

Remember when Paul confronted Peter, or when Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos: they were all so eager to come into submission to the accurate Way that they accepted and welcomed sound instruction from one another!

James says, “What’s the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is it not the source of your pleasures that wage war in your members?” (James 4:1)

Are there divisions among you? What is their source? What is the attitude of the brethren among you? How should you change this so that you can teach more accurately the gospel of Christ?
This was not a re-baptism. This was a new baptism. The believers had received the baptism of repentance; what they needed was the baptism of Christ.

**READ: Ephesians 4:4-6**

How many baptisms are there for the church (believers)?
Check One

1. ___ 3. ___ 5. more...
2. ___ 4. ___

In this matter of more careful instruction, the believers were united in the One Way of Christ.

**WHERE DID PAUL GO NEXT?**

________________________________________________________________________

**How Long Was Paul in Ephesus Preaching and Teaching the Gospel?**

________________________________________________________________________

What was Paul “reasoning” and “persuading” on?
Circle One

A  We should live peacefully with one another.
B  There is no judgment; you’re good with God.
C  The Kingdom of God
d  All ways lead to God; eventually.
Paul observed their heart and he saw that they were becoming hardened and disobedient; they were speaking evil of the Way before the people (Acts 19:9).

**What did Paul do?**

**Why?**

Who did Paul *take away* with him when he left?

Where did he go?

**Character Profile**

**TYRANNUS** [τῖς ῥάνας] (Gk. *Tyrannos* “ruler”). A teacher at Ephesus in whose lecture hall Paul preached when because of opposition he ceased preaching in the synagogue (Acts 19:9).


How many years was Paul at this lecture hall teaching?

Paul used a great deal of discernment in leaving Ephesus earlier; in Acts 18:20, the Ephesians had asked him to stay, but he did not. Having now returned, perhaps when the harvest was more complete, *great fruit was produced according to God’s plan*. Imagine if he had tried to stay and force it, instead of being attuned to God’s will?
READ: Acts 19:11-20

The power of the Holy Spirit was upon Paul with great power and demonstration for the glory of the Father in Heaven.

But there were some who tried to copy Paul by applying some kind of “formula”-thinking they could reproduce his actions and say his words without having the work of the Holy Spirit produce in them a new creation first.

How many sons of Sceva were there (v. 14)?

They went out and began trying to cast out the demonically possessed.

What was the demonic Spirit’s response to these seven sons of Sceva (v. 15)?

The children of God are known by the demonic forces, by name! They know those that are faithful to God and have His Spirit because they contend with the faithful. That is why we are told to be diligent and careful, knowing that our enemy prowls around looking for a way to devour us!

The demonic spirit overpowered the seven sons of Sceva and beat them up. This event became known so that all the people who lived in Ephesus began to fear the Lord and His name was magnified!

What response did this newfound fear and reverence have upon the people in Ephesus (v. 18-20)?
Paul received discernment from the Spirit that he would go to Jerusalem and then through Macedonia and Achaia, and finally on to Rome. So he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he himself stayed in Asia for a while longer.

It was during this time that he was still in Ephesus that a persecution broke out under a man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis (Latin- Diana). Demetrius gathered together workmen of similar trades and convinced them to rise up against Paul because of his blasphemous words against Artemis and driving away their source of income.

What motivations did Demetrius use to persuade the other workmen (vv. 25-27)?

1.
2.
3.
4. …more?

What did they begin shouting?

Paul was prevented from going into the assembly by the disciples and Asiarchs, who urged him not to expose himself.
Which two disciples did the mob drag out of the theatre (v. 29)?

1. 
2. 

Character Profile
Aristarchus, called a fellow prisoner & worker of Paul

**ARISTARCHUS** [ăr′ĭs tär′kəs] (Gk. Aristarchos “best ruler”). A faithful traveling companion of Paul from Macedonia. He was dragged into the theater at Ephesus by an angry mob during a riot instigated by Demetrius, a silversmith who was losing business on account of Paul’s teaching (Acts 19:29). When things had calmed down in the city, he joined a group of men in Greece who went to Troas, where they waited for the apostle (20:4, 6). According to 27:2 Aristarchus even accompanied Paul during his fourth missionary journey, possibly all the way to Rome. Sometime later Aristarchus is described as a “fellow prisoner” with Paul (Col. 4:10). Whether he stayed with Paul during the resumption of his voyage or went home to Thessalonica, his birthplace, he was among those who shared Paul’s first imprisonment at Rome. He is called a “fellow worker” by Paul, with whom he sends greetings to the church at Colossae and to Philemon (Phlm. 24).


A great crowd had assembled, some shouting one thing, and another shouting something else- most of the crowd was in confusion as to why they had gathered. When Alexander, a Jew, first tried to make a defense to the crowd, they began shouting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” at him.

*Their culture and status quo of life was being disrupted by the teachings of Christ, and the crowds seemed unsure how to respond... thus ensued the truth that the flesh and spirit are at odds with one another.*

Finally, Alexander quieted the crowds and made a defense and reminded them of the danger they were running of being accused by Rome of rioting. Being unable to account for why they were gathering, the crowd finally dispersed.
Macedonia and Greece

**READ:** Acts 20:1-12

After the uproar had ceased, what did Paul do?

1. He _____ for the disciples…
2. He _______ them…
3. He took _____ of them…

Paul spent his time in the districts of Macedonia exhorting and encouraging the brethren there. The support and ministry of the Body of Christ can be seen in how we take care of one another, to encourage and strengthen each other to walk rightly before God.

In his first pastoral letter to Timothy, Paul wrote that the goal of their instruction was love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith; he firmly instructed him not to get involved in the quarrels and disputes that do not lead to these things (*1st* Timothy 1:5).

**FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Paul spent his time encouraging, exhorting, preaching and teaching the brethren, but even he himself was ministered to, as he often is found to ask for the companionship and encouragement of his brothers in the faith.

Are we fostering this kind of community within the church where our primary concern is to strengthen our brethren to do what is right in the faith in every way possible according to the spiritual gifts we’ve been given?

How long did Paul spend when he arrived in Greece (v. 3)?

Why did he decide to return through Macedonia?

Who accompanied him?

1. 5.
2. 6.
3. 7.
4.
### Character Profiles

**Sopater, a Christian from Beroea**

SOPATER [sô´pa tar] (Gk. Sōpatros). A Christian from Beroea who was a member of the group that accompanied Paul from Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor to Jerusalem at the end of Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). Sopater was probably one of the agents appointed by the churches to take the money gift to the church of Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3–4). He may be the same person as Sosipater (Rom. 16:21).

**Secundus, a Christian from Thessalonica**

SECUNDUS [sə kōn´dəs] (Gk. Sekoundos; Lat. secundus “second”). One of the two Thessalonian Christians who accompanied Paul from Macedonia as he carried the collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem, going at least as far as Troas on the coast of Asia Minor (Acts 20:4). Since Secundus was probably one of Paul’s disciples to collect funds, (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3–4; 2 Cor. 8:23), he probably made the whole journey to Jerusalem.

**Gaius, a Christian from Derbe**

GAIUS [gā´yəs, gī´əs] (Gk. Gaïos). A man from Derbe in Asia Minor who accompanied Paul on his journey from Macedonia to Asia Minor (Acts 20:4). One ancient text, however, gives his home as Doberus in eastern Macedonia; such an identification is also supported by the fact that Acts 19:29; 20:4 cite Gaius with Aristarchus.

**Tychicus, a Christian from Asia and an emissary for Paul**

TYCHICUS [tĭk´əkəs] (Gk. Tychikos “child of fortune”). A Christian from the province of Asia who accompanied Paul in delivering to the Jerusalem church the relief money collected from the Gentile Christians of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece (Acts 20:4). Tychicus later worked as an emissary for Paul while the apostle was imprisoned (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12).

**Trophimus, a Christian from Ephesus**

TROPHIMUS [trŏf´ə məs] (Gk. Trophimos “nutritious”). An Ephesian, one of two Gentile Christians from the province of Asia who accompanied Paul from Troas to Jerusalem with the relief money collected for the Jerusalem Christians from the Gentile Christians of Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor (Acts 20:4–6). His presence in Jerusalem led some of the Jews to conclude that Paul had taken him into part of the temple complex where Gentiles were not allowed. Their accusation caused a riot that led to Paul’s arrest (21:27–33). Paul later left Trophimus ill at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20).
What did the brethren do on the first day of the week (v. 7)?

Paul’s message went until midnight; a young man named Eutychus was sitting on the window sill and fell asleep, falling three stories to his death.

What did Paul do (vv. 10-11)?

**READ: Acts 20:12-16**

What cities did Paul travel through?

Why did he not want to go back through Ephesus?

**READ: Acts 20:17-38**

Paul summed the elders of Ephesus to him at Miletus to give his farewell to them.

He testified to them the manner in which he worked among them, with humility, and reminded them of the repentance towards God and faith in Christ that he had been preaching to both the Jews and the Gentiles.

What bonds did he say he was being led to Jerusalem in?

What did he exhort them to do in v. 28?

These bonds of the Spirit *in diligence* to proclaim the gospel are the bonds that we are to be ministering in every day we spend in this world: in what bonds are you?
The Prophesy of Agabus

READ: Acts 21:1-14

What were some of the brethren trying to urge Paul not to do in v. 4?

Paul decided to continue on into Jerusalem and keep preaching the Word of God as he had been doing faithfully.

They knelt down on the beach side to pray, made their farewells and boarded the ship to depart for home.

- Which Evangelist’s house did they stay in when they came to Caesarea (v. 8)?

- Who was the prophet that came to Philip’s house to prophesy over Paul?

- What was Agabus’ prophesy through the Holy Spirit?

The disciples began weeping at this prophecy and begged Paul to stay and not depart for Jerusalem.

What was Paul’s response?

The brethren declared, “The will of the Lord be done!”
**In Jerusalem**

**READ:** Acts 21:15-Acts 22

In the face of this danger,

What was the first thing Paul did for the brethren (vv. 19-20)?

Who did he meet with?

What did they do to try and dispel the accusations made against Paul (vv. 20-26)?

---

Explain the events that led up to Paul’s imprisonment.

What was Paul accused of?

Which of Paul’s disciples did they accuse of defiling the temple?

On account of the confusion and disturbance, who came to stop the Jews from beating Paul?

Could the crowd lay any charges against Paul? Why or why not?

**What was Paul’s defense before the Jews** (see next page for text)?
Paul’s Defense before the Jews

READ: Acts 22:1-21

1 “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you.” 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, 3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

6 “But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ 8 “And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’ 9 “And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. 10 "And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’

11 “But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. 12 "A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. 14 “And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. 15 ‘For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 ‘Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

17 “It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, 18 and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’ 19 “And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. 20 ‘And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by
approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.’ 21 “And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”

**READ: Acts 23**

What did Paul say that stirred up dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees (vv. 6-9)?

That night, after he was taken away, the Lord stood at his side, what did the Lord say to Paul?

The following day about 40 men took an oath not to eat or drink or sleep until they had slain Paul! Having heard of this plot, the son of Paul’s sister came to inform Paul and the commander of this murderous plot.

Where was Paul moved (v. 23)?

When Paul arrived, where was he kept (v. 35)?
READ: Acts 24

Which high priest came down with Tertullus, the attorney?

Character Profiles
Ananias the High Priest, called a proud and greedy person

ANANIAS [ān′ə nī′əs] (Gk. Hananias, from Heb. hānanyā “Yahweh has been gracious”). The son of Nedebaes, he was a high priest appointed by Herod Agrippa II (ca. A.D. 48). According to Acts 23:2 he ordered the Roman tribune Claudius Lysias to bring Paul before him to ascertain the basis of the Jews’ charges against the apostle (22:30). When Paul spoke in his own defense, Ananias ordered him struck on the mouth; Paul sharply retorted, but apologized when told he was addressing the high priest (23:2–5). Five days later Ananias went to Caesarea, where Paul had been taken, to accuse him in person before Felix the governor (24:1).

A proud and greedy person, whose cruelty is well attested (cf. 23:2), Ananias was deposed in A.D. 58; six years earlier the emperor Claudius had acquitted him of charges of oppression of the Samaritans. At the outbreak of the Jewish revolt against Rome (66) he was murdered because of his pro-Roman sympathies (Josephus BJ ii.17.9 [441–42].


TERTULLUS [tər tūl′əs] (Gk. Tertylos; diminutive of Lat. Tertius). The hired spokesman of the Jewish accusers of the apostle Paul before Felix, the Roman governor at Caesarea (Acts 24:1). Although he may have been a Jew, his name is Roman in form. Schooled in rhetoric and probably in both Roman and Jewish law, Tertullus began his speech by flattering the court (vv. 2–3) and then stating the case of the accusers: that Paul was a “pestilent fellow” and an agitator among the Jews, “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (probably implying that Paul promoted a political messianism), and one who attempted to profane the temple in Jerusalem (vv. 5–6). (The Western text adds that the Jews charged the Roman tribune [RSV mg. “chief captain”], Claudius Lysias, with taking the case out of its proper Jewish jurisdiction; KJV, JB, v. 6b–8a). Tertullus closed his speech with an invitation to the governor to examine the accused himself (or Lysias, if the Western text is followed) about these matters (v. 8). After Tertullus had presented the case against Paul—recorded by Luke only in outline—the Jewish delegation reiterated the charges (v. 9).
Felix was said to have a more exact knowledge about the Way of Christ gave what order regarding the case (v. 22)?

Quick Questions:

- What were the conditions of Paul’s imprisonment under Felix (v. 23)?
- What was Paul preaching that frightened Felix?
- For how long did Felix and Paul continue discussing these things?
- Why did it continue so long (v. 26)?
- Who succeeded Felix?

**Character Profile**
Felix the Procurator over Judea, a freedman of emperor Claudius

**FELIX** [fē’liks] (Gk. Phēlix, from Lat. felix “happy”). Antonius Felix, a freedman of emperor Claudius who became procurator of Judea. He probably ruled first over only a portion of Samaria, but in A.D. 48 or 52 was installed as procurator over Judea by Quadratus, the governor of Syria. Felix was a cruel and tyrannical man. At the same time he sought to suppress the activities of robbers within his realm, he used their services to murder the high priest Jonathan.

After Paul was falsely accused and taken prisoner in Jerusalem, he was sent from the Sanhedrin there to Felix at Caesarea (Acts 23:23–24); when Felix interrogated Paul, the apostle’s words about justice, self-control, and future judgment alarmed him and his wife Drusilla (24:24–25). However, he refused to allow Paul to go free, hoping the apostle would bribe him with money (v. 26). When Felix’s rule came to an end in A.D. 60, he left Paul in prison in an attempt to please the Jews (v. 27). Later, when his brother Pallas refused to defend him before Nero, Felix was allegedly punished in Rome for poorly managing the procuratorship.

Character Profile

Festus the Procurator over Judea, a freedman of emperor Claudius

FESTUS, PORCIUS [pôrˈshəs fəsˈtəs] (Gk. Porkios Phestos).† The Roman procurator of Judea who succeeded Antonius Felix. According to Josephus (Ant. xx.8.9–11), his administration was more efficient and more sensitive to the Jewish constituents than that of his predecessor, and he succeeded in quelling at least temporarily the insurgent Sicarii (Gk. sikáriói “assassins”; from Lat. sica “dagger”) who were robbing and murdering the populace (cf. Acts 21:38). He died in Palestine ca. A.D. 62 and was succeeded as procurator by Albinus.

Immediately upon assuming power at Caesarea, Festus concerned himself with the plight of Paul, who had already been imprisoned for two years under Felix (Acts 24:27). The Jewish authorities sought to have Paul brought before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, secretly plotting to have him murdered en route (25:2–3), but Festus shrewdly invited them to present their case upon his return to Caesarea (vv. 4–5, 7). Sensing the personal danger at hand, Paul rejected Festus’ conciliatory proposal that he himself try the apostle at Jerusalem and instead requested as a Roman citizen a trial before Caesar (vv. 10–12). King Herod Agrippa II concurred with Festus that Paul was innocent of any capital crime (25:24–27; 26:31), but they were compelled to send him before Claudius (v. 32).

Festus’ accession as procurator, regarded as an important key to determining New Testament chronology, nevertheless remains open to debate. Although Eusebius dates this event to A.D. 56 (Chron. ii), modern scholarship favors placing it in 60 (or perhaps late 59).


READ: Acts 25
Who was Festus trying to please (v. 9)?

It is very likely that Paul recognized his opportunity to go into Rome, just as the Lord commanded Him in Acts 23:11.

To whom did he now appeal (v. 11-12)?

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**Character Profile**

Felix the Procurator over Judea, a freedman of emperor Claudius

**HEROD** [hĕr´əd] (Gk. Hērōdēs). The Idumean family which governed Palestine for the Roman Empire 37 B.C.—A.D. 70. The dynasty was founded in the early first century B.C. by Antipater I, who was appointed governor (Gk. stratēgōs “general”) of Idumea by Alexander Janneus. Antipater (or Antipas) II gradually accumulated power by manipulating the Hasmonean Hyrcanus II and earned the favor of the Roman hierarchy; in 47 B.C. Julius Caesar named him procurator of Judea.

The family was nominally Jewish, compelled with all Idumean peoples to accept circumcision and embrace Judaism following their conquest by John Hyrcanus in 125 B.C.

Agrippa II (A.D. 27–ca. 100), son of Agrippa I. Raised in the Roman court, he was only seventeen at his father’s death and considered too young to govern his territories, which were thus placed under procurators. In A.D. 50 he succeeded his uncle Herod as king of Chalcis (in modern Lebanon), which the emperor Claudius exchanged in 53 for the larger territory of Herod Philip (Batanea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis) and the region of Abilene that had been ruled by Lysanias. Shortly after his succession in 54 Nero added several cities, including Tiberias, Tarichea, Julias, and Abila.

Partly because of an incestuous relationship with his sister Bernice, Agrippa held little favor among the Jews. He exercised control over the priesthood, and perhaps because of this religious authority Festus asked him to hear Paul’s defense (Acts 25:13–26:32; “Agrippa”). Agrippa enlarged the palace of the Hasmoneans at Jerusalem and also undertook construction projects at Caesarea. When the First Jewish Revolt broke out in 66 he sided with Vespasian, and after the conquest of Jerusalem in 70 he accompanied Titus to Rome, where he was appointed praetor. He died ca. 100, the last of the ruling Herods.

READ: Acts 26

In chapter 26, Paul begins his defense before King Agrippa. Paul’s defense has not change, but continues to be a faithful narrative of all the things that he has done in Christ.

Examine the Responses:

What was Festus’ response (v. 24)?

What was King Agrippa’s response (v. 28)?

Do you think King Agrippa was sincere?

FOR CONSIDERATION

Often Paul’s appeal to Caesar is seen as an attempt to save his own life. Read Acts 26:32.

Was Paul trying to save his own life from the Jews, or was Paul trying to take advantage of an opportunity to go into Rome and obey the Lord’s revelation to Him given earlier in Acts?

What does this tell us about the measure of devotion that we should have in Christ?
Beginning from Seleucia, where did Paul go?

1. 7.
2. 8.
3. 9.
4. 10.
5. 11.
6.

What consideration did Julius show to Paul (v. 3)?

What happened during their voyage to Rome (vv. 14ff)?
During this entire calamity, what did Paul stop to do (v. 35)?

**READ:** Acts 28- the final Chapter

Upon what Island did they discover they had landed?

What struck Paul as he was piling wood away? What did the natives think?

**Compare:** Acts 28:5-6 & Mark 16:15-18

Having trusted in the Lord’s command, Paul was being taken to Rome for his appeal, but did his ministry stop?

The Power of the Body of Christ
What happened when Paul saw the brethren that had come to meet him (v. 15)?

To the very end, Paul’s love was courageous and stirred him up on behalf of the brethren- with words of great boldness, he testified to the Truth that is in Christ, never withholding anything, because of the Love he had for them, he spoke to them all things concerning the Word which had been entrusted to him.

“And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered...”—Acts 28:30-31