

Online Grace Bible School

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Online Grace Bible School
Phase 2
Acts - Turning the World Upside Down

1) The Kingdom of God and the Spirit of God

Acts 1:1. Luke wrote a two-volume account of the birth and growth of Christianity. Both volumes cover approx 33 years each and would have filled an almost equal sized papyrus roll:

- ✓ 1st Volume - all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Luke's gospel). Jesus' ministry on earth
- ✓ 2nd Volume - all He continued to do and teach through the Church, by the Spirit. His ministry from heaven

1:2&3. Jesus was 40 days on earth, before His ascension and spoke about 2 things:

1) The kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is where the King is. It is not ushered in by soldiers but by witnesses; not with weapons, but seeds. They just preached the gospel... because it is the power of God unto salvation.

6 Progress reports of the growth of the kingdom of God:

- 1) Jerusalem 6:7.
- 2) Judea & Samaria, 9:31.
- 3) The Gentiles, 12:24.
- 4) First Missionary Journey, 16:5.
- 5) Mission to Europe, 19:20.
- 6) Paul at Rome, 28:31.

2) The Spirit of God. 1:8. Acts tells how the Church grew from 120 to hundreds of thousands. It is a record of how they turned the world upside down! Before, the disciples were weak and ineffective. The transformation would take place when the Holy Spirit came upon them. The Holy Spirit enabled them to take the gospel across every kind of barrier - geographical, social, religious, language, cultural - and reach every ethnic group. The Holy Spirit enables us to go with the gospel!

1:9-11. But before the Spirit comes the Son must go. A cloud received Him. The angel said: 'You've seen Him go. You'll see Him come. He will come in the clouds with great power and glory (Mk.13:26)'. But in the meantime we know what we are to do - preach the gospel to all nations and to every creature, trusting in the God's Spirit. The completion of the mission task and the Second Coming will coincide - Matt.24:14. This is guaranteed, not because we have a strategy, but because Jesus is seated on the right hand of the majesty on high.

1:12-26. Then they returned - without Him. They were in 'one accord', or mind, or purpose. Judas was replaced with Matthias.

2:1. Everything was in place. All that was needed was the Holy Spirit. There were 3 festivals of which every male within a 20 miles radius of Jerusalem was legally bound to attend - Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Others willingly travelled to these. The best feast to travel to, time-wise, was Pentecost. The normal population of 50,000 ballooned to around 1 million.

They suddenly spoke in at least 15 languages they had never learned. The Jews who came to Jerusalem on this occasion were mainly pilgrims from various lands of the Dispersion.

They all heard them speaking the gospel in their own language. This was a reversal of Babel. At Babel mankind tried to ascend to heaven. At Pentecost heaven descended to earth. At Babel, the languages were confused and the nations scattered. At Jerusalem language barriers were overcome and representatives from all nations were brought together in one new family in Christ.

2) The Church in the Beginning

Acts 2:12-13. When the Spirit was poured out upon the Church the crowds asked what this meant. In Peter's response we can identify the main characteristics of apostolic preaching to the Jews.

1) We Are Living In A New Dispensation. The 'last days' is a new era of God's dealings with men. It is the new covenant age; the time between the 1st and 2nd comings of Jesus as foretold by Joel.

2) The Message Is Jesus

- ✓ His life on earth was confirmed by God, through miracles, signs and wonders (v.22)
- ✓ His death was the result, not only of the wicked actions of man, but, the foreknowledge of God and His predetermined plan. It is God's way of salvation (v.23)
- ✓ He rose from the dead (vs 24-32). Jewish tradition says truth must be established by at least 2 witnesses: 1) It was **predicted** in Scripture (v.30-31). 2) It was **attested** by witnesses (v.32).
- ✓ He was exalted to God's right hand. Only this explains the outpouring of the Spirit (vs33-35)

3) Conclusion & Appeal

- ✓ There is only one conclusion – God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ (v.36).
- ✓ Note the contrast between the way He was treated by man and by God.
- ✓ No message is Christian unless it is based upon the life, death and resurrection of Christ.
- ✓ The death and resurrection of Christ inaugurated this age and gave the church the gospel.
- ✓ The appeal, 2:37-39. God has vindicated Him.
- ✓ No guilt is greater than theirs. Yet, even this can be forgiven. Thus, '*what shall we do?*'
- ✓ Repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.

Peter's message at Pentecost is an example of the message of the early Church. It is called the *kerygma*, or proclamation. The same basic elements in other sermons in Acts. The primary points:

- ✓ The Old Testament promises are fulfilled, and a new dispensation is here
- ✓ God brought this about through the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- ✓ His death was foreordained by God, and His resurrection is God's authentication of Him
- ✓ God has exalted Jesus to His right hand, where He is Lord over all
- ✓ In Christ God offers salvation to all who believe

Characteristics of the Early Church

- 1) It was built upon the foundation of the apostle's doctrine. See 1 Cor.12:28; Eph.2:20.
 - ✓ The foundations are Jesus (1 Cor.3:11). Each of The Twelve had a revelation of Christ.
 - ✓ This apostle's doctrine is a body of truth which was the foundation for the Jerusalem Church
- 2) It was a fellowshipping Church.
 - ✓ When Christ joins us to Himself, we are automatically joined to one another. The word 'saint' is never used in the New Testament in the singular.
 - ✓ Fellowship is a translation of the Greek word *koinonia*, meaning to have in common.
- 3) They celebrated the breaking of bread. To keep the centrality of Christ's death before them.
- 4) It was a praying Church. See 3:1; 4:23; 6:4; 12:5; 13:1.
 - ✓ Prayer is an outward demonstration of our complete dependence on Him the living Head.

3) Satan's First Counter Attack1) There's A Miracle (Acts 3:1-8). See 2:43.

- ✓ This man's lameness was congenital. He was over 40 years old and had to be carried.
- ✓ The temple was a good place to sit and beg.
- ✓ 3:4. People never usually make eye contact with a beggar.
- ✓ 3:6. *'Silver and gold have I none...'* Peter was not able to give him money, but money was not what he needed most. Peter gave him something money could never buy.

2) There's A Crowd (3:8-11).

- ✓ The way to reach the masses is to help and minister to individuals.
- ✓ Then that one's testimony would shake the community, (Jn.12:9-11).
- ✓ Luke records another miraculous event leaving crowds amazed and unable to explain.

3) There's A Sermon (3:12-26). 3:13. Peter's sermon:

- ✓ God glorified His Son on earth.
- ✓ In spite of God's endorsement, you delivered Him to be crucified.
- ✓ God raised Him from the dead – we are witnesses.
- ✓ And He is responsible for this miracle.
- ✓ Appeal: Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out. Sins are not blotted out until one believes, (2:38; 3:19; Jn.8:24)
- ✓ God will send times of refreshing; then Jesus will return. Grace upon grace. Wave after wave

4) There's A Response (4:4). Numbers grew to 5,000 men. This is the main point Luke brings us to.5) There's A Counter Attack From Satan (4:1-3). Are you persecuted? What is persecution?

- ✓ To revile - to mock or scoff at. E.g. Jesus on the cross.
- ✓ To persecute - to vex or attack, physically or verbally.
- ✓ To slander – *'all kinds of evil against you falsely'*. Dictionary definition: false report made maliciously to injure anyone

This may come from: a) The world. *'In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'* (Jn.16:33); b) The religious world – Paul was in perils among false brethren. Children of the bondwoman persecute the children of the free woman.

6) There's Spirit-Filled Defiance From The Apostles (4:8-22).

- ✓ 4:8. Peter was changed by the Holy Spirit from a timid coward to a bold preacher.
- ✓ 4:9&10. The apostles were able to continue the works that Jesus did, because they acted in the name of Jesus. This is the emphasis in Acts 3&4, (see Acts 3:6,16; 4:10,12,17,18,30).
- ✓ There is a consistency about the apostle's message, i.e. the death and resurrection of Christ. Acts 2:23-24; 3:14&15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39-40; 26:22-23. This is the gospel. 1 Cor.15:1-4.

7) There's Prayer (4:23-31). 4:23. After persecution they went to their own and were in one accord. Note what followed:

- ✓ Praise 4:24-28. God of creation – 'You made'; God of revelation – 'You spoke'; 'God of history' – You decided.
- ✓ Prayer 4:29-30. Did they pray, 'Consider their threats and deliver us?' No. 'Give us boldness!'
- ✓ Power 4:31. The place was shaken, which made them unshaken.

Summary: Pray for a miracle to be catalyst for God's greater work.

4) Satan's Second Counter Attack

Compare Acts 4:33 'great power'; 'great grace', with Acts 5:11 'great fear'.

- ✓ Having failed in his first attempt to silence the Church through persecution, Satan has another strategy – to corrupt it from within through pretense and deceit.
- ✓ He is both a murderer and a liar (John 8:44).

4:32-37. Summary of Church life after the first wave of persecution.

- ✓ The Church was so united that it even had a common fund for one reason – that there should be no needy person among them.
- ✓ They did not renounce ownership of property (see 5:4; 12:12), but neither did they claim their possessions as exclusively their own. Many sold properties to give to a central fund.
- ✓ Did they do the right thing? It ended in liquidation, i.e. their capital assets eventually became drained and the Church sunk into poverty (Acts 11:29; 24:17; Rom.15:25-26; 1 Cor.16:1-3). Funds ran out completely and the Church became dependent upon the generosity of other believers.
- ✓ If the strategy was wrong their spirit was right. No one was needy because no one was greedy.
- ✓ There's nothing wrong with having rich people in the Church. The problem is having poor people.

Two Contrasting Examples

1) Barnabas. He was given a name change because of his incredible generosity and encouragement to the Church. He went on to have a tremendous ministry in the Early Church, being mentioned 25 times in Acts and 5 times in the epistles. He was instrumental in Paul being launched in his ministry.

2) 5:1. But...Ananias & Sapphira.

- ✓ Both Barnabas and Ananias & Sapphira did the same thing on the outside, but not in reality.
- ✓ 5:2. 'Kept back'. The only other time it is used in NT is in Tit.2:10 where it translated to pilfer or steal.
- ✓ Why is it called stealing? Because they retained what they had dedicated to the Lord.
- ✓ 5:3&4. The sin was not in keeping back part of the proceeds of the sale but in pretending to give all.
- ✓ They did this consciously with the purpose of deceiving the Church.
- ✓ Ananias was a hypocrite. Peter didn't blame Satan but Ananias who allowed Satan to fill his heart.
- ✓ Jesus said: 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy' (Luke 12:1). Religion is concerned with what is on show.
- ✓ The righteousness of God frees us from the need to pretend any righteousness of our own.
- ✓ Maybe Barnabas' notable gift filled Ananias & Sapphira with envy, so they attempted to impress the Church with their giving too.
- ✓ The word 'integrity' is from the Latin *integritas* and means that which cannot be divided, untouched, entire, and complete. It is the opposite hypocrisy. Hypocrisy means duplicity. There are two persons.
- ✓ A hypocrite does not understand righteousness or grace.

5:5-11. Summary.

1. Were Ananias and Sapphira Christians? Probably not. They were tares. See 5:11,13&14.
2. Who killed Ananias & Sapphira? This question cannot be answered for sure. The word in v.5 translated 'breathed his last' is only used here, in v.10 and Acts 12:23. In the last reference it is to be struck down by God. This is Luke's meaning. Herod was also an unbeliever.
3. The main point of Luke is to communicate that the Church is the temple of the Spirit. They *tested the Spirit of the Lord*, i.e. to see how far they could go; how much they could get away with.

5:14-16. People from outside of Jerusalem were brought into the city. Later the apostles itinerated around the towns. Because of the incredible growth of the Church the apostles could not lay hands on all the sick – thus, they brought the sick out into the streets so that Peter's shadow might fall upon them and they would receive healing. 'Shadow' is used on 2 other occasions by Luke - Lk.1:35; 9:34 referring to the overshadowing of God's presence. The same power of God that judged Ananias and Sapphira, healed the sick.

5) Satan's Third Counter Attack

The second wave of persecution.

1) The Council Attacked The Truth (5:17-28)

Persecution is to attack the truth and those who teach it.

- ✓ 5:20. The apostles were faced with a decision – to preach or not to preach.
- ✓ The Sanhedrin forbade them, but the angel confirmed God's command to them. It is amazing that after their miraculous release they did not go straight into hiding, but went straight back into the temple courts to preach.
- ✓ 5:26. The apostles could have resisted arrest; they had the support of the crowd.
- ✓ 5:28. '*...in this name...with this Man's blood...*' They could not even say the name of Jesus!

2) The Apostles Affirmed The Truth (5:29-32) (Note the same elements of Peter's sermon again)

- ✓ God endorsed Jesus but you murdered Him
- ✓ God raised Him from the dead. He is seated at His right hand and calls men to repent.
- ✓ '*We are His witnesses...*' We are ambassadors, not diplomats!

3) Gamaliel Avoided The Truth (5:33-39)

- ✓ 5:33. The Sadducees would not execute the apostles without the support of the Pharisees.
- ✓ Gamaliel was a Pharisee. He had taught Paul. He was greatly esteemed.
- ✓ He wanted the convenience of not having to take a stand for or against the truth.
- ✓ His philosophy: 'If it's not of God it will come to nothing'. His philosophy is wrong.

4) The Church Proclaimed The Truth (5:40-42)

- ✓ The apostles, even with their backs lacerated and bleeding, rejoiced.
- ✓ They continued to evangelize and make disciples.

Satan's Third Counter Attack

Distraction. See 5:42. Satan had a plan to get the apostles pre-occupied with social administration. It would result in their neglecting what God had called them to – preaching and praying.

1) The Problem

- ✓ 6:1. The apostles who received the relief money (4:35&37) and were not effective or equitable in their distribution of it. Some widows, the Hellenists, were being neglected.
- ✓ This had the potential to bring division in the body of Christ.
- ✓ But there was also the danger that the apostles would become so involved with this that it would distract them from their call to devote themselves to prayer and the Word of God.

2) The Solution

- ✓ 6:2-6. The apostles did not attempt to solve the problem, but to resolve it by delegation.
- ✓ They were not too proud to do social work, but knew they this was not their calling.
- ✓ The question is not: 'will we serve?' but 'who will we serve?'
- ✓ The solution: a) Choose appropriate people for this task; b) We will give ourselves to what we are called to do - pray and teach the Word.

3) The Result

- ✓ 6:7. The Word spread. It cannot spread when it is neglected.
- ✓ The first of 6 progress reports. It is the climax of the ministry in Jerusalem.
- ✓ The Church at Jerusalem was established; now it began to expand.
- ✓ Luke's main point is that God was at work and neither Satan nor man could stop Him.

6) Stephen – A Seed That Became a Great Harvest

So far the church has been restricted to Jews in Jerusalem. This section is a preparation for world evangelism. There are three key figures: Stephen (6:8); Philip (8:5); Saul (9:1).

- ✓ Stephen – see 6:3,5,8a. Yet, he encountered incredible hatred.
- ✓ First his opponents began to argue with him, but were no match for his wisdom.
- ✓ Then, they started a smear campaign (bribed false witnesses).
- ✓ Finally, they arrested him and tried him under false charges.
- ✓ 6:11. They accused him of being against Moses and against God (i.e. the temple, vs.13&14).
- ✓ In regards to the temple: Jesus was accused of the same things, Mk.14:58; 15:29. Mt.26:61.
- ✓ Jn.2:20&21. The temple Jesus spoke of was His body – natural and spiritual. *'I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple'* (Matt.12:6). See also - Jn.4:21,24.
- ✓ In regards to the Law: Jesus said He would fulfill it, Matt.5:17.
- ✓ The false teachers twisted this to say that Jesus Himself would tear down the temple; and tamper with the law to change what Moses said.
- ✓ Both would be superseded because they would have fulfilled their intention which was to prepare for Jesus. He is the temple and has fulfilled the law.

In Stephen's speech he rehearsed 4 main periods of Israel's history – Abraham's call, Joseph's time in Egypt, Moses being sent to Israel and the exodus, and the tabernacle and temple. He responded to the two accusations and drew out lessons they never saw. They were reading their Bibles wrong!

1) God's presence is not limited to any particular place

- ✓ Abraham in Mesopotamia. The God of glory appeared to him. It was not the temple that made God glorious, but God's glory that made the temple holy.
- ✓ Joseph in Egypt. 7:9-15. 6 times in 7 verses, Stephen mentioned Egypt. Joseph was a foreigner there – yet God was with him (v.9).
- ✓ Moses in Midian. God appeared to Moses in Midian. That spot of Gentile land was holy ground for the sole reason that God manifested Himself there. See 7:33.
- ✓ Solomon's temple. God never asked for a temple. It was not intended to be a permanent structure hindering the progress of God's plan for taking the gospel to the world. Ex.20:24.

2) Moses and the Law pointed to Christ

The Israelites, not Stephen, were the ones who rejected Moses:

- ✓ He was rejected when he offered to be their deliverer (7:27).
- ✓ When God sent him back he had to show them signs and wonders (7:36).
- ✓ He was rejected in the wilderness (7:38&39).
- ✓ He was rejected while he was in the Mount with God receiving the Law (7:40-41).
- ✓ They were given up to worship idols (7:42-43).
- ✓ Moses spoke of Jesus. Stephen accepted Him, they crucified Him. (7:37; Jn.5:39, 46).

It's a new era – God would be just as present with Gentile believers in far away countries as with Jews in Jerusalem. Lessons:

- 1) God now has a new place – the Church. Never seek to imprison God in the confines of institutional religion. Where He is, is holy.
- 2) Remember that the Bible has one message – Jesus.
- 3) 8:1-4. God is on the move, planting churches and reaching nations.

7) Philip The Evangelist

Sequel to Stephen's stoning:

- ✓ 8:2. Stephen was given a respectable funeral. The mourners placed themselves at great risk.
- ✓ 8:3. Saul made *havoc* of the church – this word denotes a brutal, sadistic cruelty.
- ✓ Like Stephen he understood that there could be no compromise. (Unlike Gamaliel!)
- ✓ 8:1&4. A great persecution arose, scattering the Christians into Judea and Samaria.
- ✓ As they went they preached the gospel. What seemed to be a setback was an advantage.
- ✓ Stephen's speech began to be prophetic. The focus shifted from Jerusalem and the temple.
- ✓ It's now the next phase of missions: Judea and Samaria.
- ✓ Jewish and Samaritan enmity existed for centuries. This changed after the resurrection.
- ✓ What if Jewish missionaries (i.e. the apostles) went to Samaria to preach the gospel? They would have been received as Jesus was (see Luke 9:51-56). But God used a Hellenist, Philip.

Philip the evangelist

- ✓ A new word is introduced for 'evangelism', *euvangelizo* – to bring good news.
- ✓ Evangelism is preaching the gospel; the gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ; the good news about Jesus Christ results in great joy.
- ✓ 8:9&11. The city was previously under the spiritual control of Simon the sorcerer.
- ✓ 8:13. Simon believed when he saw miracles. Was his faith genuine?
- ✓ 8:14-17. Apostles sent to investigate the move of the Spirit at Samaria.
- ✓ They had been baptized '*...into the name...*' of Jesus. This, is used in a commercial context when property is transferred or paid into the name of someone. At baptism we are declaring that we have passed into the ownership of Jesus.
- ✓ So why did the apostles come and why did God withhold the Spirit until the apostles came?
- ✓ Because this group needed to be seen as one with the Church at Jerusalem. See 11:15-17.

Simon the sorcerer

- ✓ He craved the power to do the miraculous at will. Why? Sorcery is the use of supernatural powers for the purpose of gaining control over others. He wanted to stun others with the idea that he was the great power of God.
- ✓ He wanted to get that power by wrong means – buying it. Compare Ananias and Sapphira.
- ✓ 8:20-21. '*To hell with you and your money!*' (JB Philips). Peter who previously demonstrated that he didn't have silver and gold, now refuses to accept any in exchange for his gifts. Clearly money was not his motivation for ministry. (1 Pet.5:2-3).
- ✓ 8:25. The person who held sway over the city of Samaria was defeated and the city received the gospel. The apostles taught them the Word; then evangelized other Samaritan villages.

The Ethiopian Eunuch. This man was:

- ✓ A proselyte. A second class Jew.
- ✓ From Ethiopia, considered the extreme boundary of the habitable world in the south.
- ✓ A eunuch. Thus, a high ranking official. But not allowed into the congregation, '*He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD*' (Deut.23:1).
- ✓ Like the apostles, Philip preached the gospel using the OT. The OT cannot be understood without a key to unlock it. The key is Jesus.

Summary: Both the Samaritans and the eunuch heard the same message – Jesus (8:12&35). The response was the same – faith and baptism. The result was the same – joy!

8) Paul – A Trophy of Grace

The Conversion of Saul

- ✓ Paul was the most significant figure in Church history, after Jesus.
- ✓ He occupies about two-thirds of Acts and wrote two thirds of the epistles.
- ✓ There are three accounts of his conversion in Acts.
- ✓ 9:1-2. There is 'still' persecution towards the Church, i.e. after death of Stephen and the expulsion of the Hellenistic Christians from Jerusalem.
- ✓ Paul pursued those who escaped the net. Persecution was a full-time occupation for him.
- ✓ 9:3-4. He saw a light '*brighter than the noonday sun,*' (26:13). He later qualified as an apostle, because he saw the resurrected Jesus, (1 Cor.15:8; 1 Cor.9:1).
- ✓ Paul and his companions also heard a voice, though it seems only Paul understood it.
- ✓ 9:5. '*Why are you persecuting Me?*' 1) Paul thought he was serving God. He now understood that his zeal was mistaken; 2) In persecuting the Church he persecuted Christ.
- ✓ He was blinded for 3 days during which he died, was buried with Christ and raised with Him.
- ✓ '*It is hard for you to kick against the goads*'. Jesus likened him to a stubborn, rebellious young bullock. Goad = a spiked stick used for driving cattle.
- ✓ The light was sudden, but God's pursuit of him was constant, beginning from eternity.
- ✓ 9:10-12. The first words the converted Paul heard from a fellow Christian were: '*Brother Saul*'. '*Saul, my brother!*' The #1 enemy of the Church was welcomed instantly as a brother.

Paul's Early Ministry

- ✓ 1) Damascus 9:15. Paul got saved and preached Christ in the synagogues in Damascus.
- ✓ The focus of his preaching was Jesus the Son of God (9:20) and Jesus the Messiah (9:22).
- ✓ 9:21. The people were astonished. He baffled the Jews in the synagogues.
- ✓ 2) Arabia 9:22. How did he go from strength to strength? Where did he get this wisdom?
- ✓ He went into the desert of Arabia for 3 years with Jesus, (Gal.1:11&12). He was taught directly by Christ, without the instrumentality of the apostles at Jerusalem.
- ✓ Jesus established the gospel of grace, but Paul was the one who was raised up to explain it.
- ✓ 3) Damascus 9:23-25. Then he returned to Damascus and preached Christ until he had to flee because of persecution.
- ✓ 4) Jerusalem 9:26-28. Paul had been a Christian for 3 years and rumours circulated about him. He was hated by his old friends and treated with suspicion by his new family.
- ✓ Barnabas reached out to him. Note: 1) God intends for us to be in fellowship, no matter how hard it might be; 2) Churches must welcome everyone, regardless of their background.
- ✓ 5) Syria & Cilicia 9:29-30. Paul took up where Stephen left off, reaching out to the Hellenists, i.e. the Jews of the Dispersion living in Jerusalem. He soon faced the same opposition. He was whisked away to Caesarea and on to Tarsus, Syria and Cilicia.
- ✓ We read nothing more of him for 10 years.

9:31. Second Progress Report.

- ✓ Sometimes the Church thrives on persecution; sometimes on peace.
- ✓ This section that began with the death of Stephen ends with the conversion of the chief persecutor. There can only be one explanation – he met the risen Christ!
- ✓ God had an incredible purpose for him. Paul later wrote: '*I want to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me!*' (Phil.3:12).
- ✓ He received a vision – Jesus! He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. The same applies to you and me.

9) Peter Opens the Door to the Gentiles

- ✓ A new section which records the bridge into the Gentile world.
- ✓ Luke first records 2 miracles. Yet he devotes more attention to the conversion of Cornelius.
- ✓ The conversion of Cornelius is so important it is the longest story told by Luke.
- ✓ This does not minimize the miracles. Miracles are clearly a major factor in the spread of the gospel. See 2:22, 43; 6:8; 8:6; 14:3. Likewise, in both these stories too.

- ✓ Aeneas. Peter, travelling through the country, visited the church at Lydda.
- ✓ This church probably started from the visitors to Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, or from the dispersion after the persecution. Church planting is a key factor in church growth.
- ✓ Aeneas had been bedridden with paralysis for 8 years. Through Peter, Jesus healed him.
- ✓ Aeneas was a walking miracle and was used by God to bring many to Christ, see Acts 9:35.

- ✓ Tabitha. Dorcas was highly respected. She helped many widows with her deeds of charity.
- ✓ When she died they sent for Peter, who raised her from the dead.
- ✓ This miracle resulted in many coming to Christ, 9:42.
- ✓ Peter stayed many days teaching. Faith is not built by miracles but by teaching, 9:43.

- ✓ Cornelius. Matt.16:19. Peter used the keys to open the kingdom to the Gentiles.
- ✓ Both Peter and Cornelius were divinely prepared for this event by a vision.
- ✓ Cornelius was a 'God-fearer' (not a proselyte because he did not accept circumcision).
- ✓ God-fearers were still segregated from the Jews. A Gentile was not allowed into the home of a Jew, and it was strictly forbidden for a Jew to enter the home of a Gentile.
- ✓ Cornelius received a vision and sent messengers to Joppa to fetch Peter, 10:1-8.
- ✓ They arrived at Joppa just after Peter's vision while he pondered the meaning, 10:9-16.
- ✓ 10:23. Peter invited them across the threshold of the house where he was staying.
- ✓ The next day he set out with them and 6 others. By this time Cornelius had gathered his extended household, 10:25-27. Now Peter crossed the threshold, 10:28. This was taboo.
- ✓ 10:34-35. By choosing and blessing one nation God intended to bless all nations.
- ✓ 10:36-43. Peter made it clear that the message he preached to them is the one that is preached to the Jews and is the only means of salvation for all.
- ✓ 10:39. To make this possible, Jesus died on a tree, i.e. became a curse for all mankind.
- ✓ 10:40-41. Note the contrast between man's treatment of Jesus and God's treatment of Him.
- ✓ 10:42-43. Judgment awaits those who reject Him.
- ✓ 10:44. When they heard this (i.e. 10:43) the Spirit fell upon them. The Pentecost of the Gentiles - they spoke in tongues and magnified God. The circumcised were amazed.
- ✓ 10:30,34&35. Cornelius' good works did not save him, (Lk.18:11). That's why Peter was sent to him. In his prayers he was asking God the way of salvation, (11:13-14). See Acts 15:7-9.
- ✓ 10:47. The Jews taught that no one could be saved unless they became a Jew, i.e. circumcised. Peter saw fit to baptize Cornelius, but not circumcise him.
- ✓ God had accepted the Gentiles; it only remained for the Church to do so.
- ✓ The news reached Jerusalem before Peter did. He asked the other leaders how he could place a barrier between believing Gentiles and Jews when God evidently did not do so.
- ✓ The leaders accepted this and rejoiced at the conversion of the Gentiles.
- ✓ The Hebrew Christians obviously weren't so enthusiastic. See Acts 14:26-52; Gal.1:6; Phil.3:1-3; etc). They did not understand the difference between law and grace because they did not have the benefit of Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Hebrews, etc.
- ✓ Peter had opened the door. Now Luke makes a sudden switch from Paul to Peter.

10) The Word of God Grows and Multiplies

- ✓ Acts 11:18 is the link to this new section.
- ✓ 11:19-21. After the Dispersion of 8:1 some Christians ended up in Antioch. These originally preached to Jews only. But now they preached to the Gentiles and a great number got saved. So Jews and Gentiles were present in the church at Antioch, 15:1.
- ✓ Missions was clearly beyond the control of the Jerusalem church.
- ✓ 11:22-26. The mother church sent a 'good man' Barnabas to investigate the Antioch church.

What does a 'good' person do?

1. He saw the grace of God, i.e. he saw what God was doing, just like Peter at Cornelius' house. Jesus saw what His Father was doing and did that. We need to work with God.
2. He encouraged them to continue with the Lord, i.e. in grace. Heb.13:9; 1 Cor.15:10.
3. His edification led to evangelism. Healthy sheep produce lambs. Result: many were saved.
4. He sent for Paul. He knew that Paul was called to minister to the Gentiles, Acts 9:15, 26-27.

The Antioch church

- ✓ The church was allowed to continue receiving uncircumcised Gentiles.
- ✓ In Antioch, believers were first called 'Christians'. See the various names for Christians in one chapter alone – 9:2,13,14,17,19. Christians accepted a name given to them by their enemies. Christ's ones; belonging to Christ; followers of Christ. They gave them this name because they were a Christ-centered community. They had been taught about His life, death, resurrection, exaltation, present reign, coming glory, etc. But this would mean that they would not enjoy the protection that the Jews enjoyed.
- ✓ Antioch was the birthplace of foreign missions. This church became a great church, taking over from Jerusalem. Yet we don't know the names of those who took the gospel there!

Meanwhile, Back In Jerusalem...

- ✓ 12:1-3. Herod persecuted Christians, to be popular with the Jews. James was beheaded.
- ✓ 12:4. Peter was imprisoned at the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, so he couldn't be tried for up to 6 days. 16 guards watched over him. They remembered the last time!
- ✓ 12:5. Spiritual warfare. Peter was rescued in answer to prayer.
- ✓ 12:6-11. Leaders may get victories but they are often won through the prayers of others.
- ✓ An angel appeared to Peter and wakened him. His chains fell off; he put his day clothes on and went through two guard posts, and then the third prison gate opened automatically.
- ✓ 12:12-17. Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where the prayer meeting was, and knocked on the door. The apostles refused to believe it was Peter. Peter could get the iron gate open; but not the door of the prayer meeting!
- ✓ 12:17. Peter left and was unheard of again, except in Acts 15. He stepped aside for Paul.
- ✓ Why James became the head of the Jerusalem church: 1) He was ascetic, strict and more accepted by the Judaizers; 2) He was free of any incident of fraternizing with the Gentiles; 3) The apostles were on the move. Peter travelled amongst the Jewish Diaspora.
- ✓ 12:20-23. The people of Tyre and Sidon had displeased Herod. But they depended on the Jews for food and needed to keep the trade route open. They were in danger of losing their assistance. Herod took full advantage of their groveling to the point of being worshipped by them. According to Josephus he contracted some bowel infection and died 5 days later.
- ✓ 12:24. Progress Report. At the beginning of the chapter it seems like Herod was in control and the Church was in hiding. One apostle was executed; another imprisoned awaiting execution. But by the end it is clear that God is in control. The gospel continued to advance.

11) The Spirit of Missions

- ✓ Acts 13:1-4. The Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of Missions.
- ✓ Jesus died for the world; then sent the disciples into all the world to preach the gospel.
- ✓ Missions is church based. 13:1-3; 14:27.

The First Missionary Journey

- ✓ Paphos. 13:4-12. There is an official enquiry into the nature of their mission and message.
- ✓ Sorcery and magic were banned in Judaism, but some, like Elymas, still practiced it.
- ✓ Elymas needed to discredit the gospel in order to keep his job, so he opposed the gospel.
- ✓ But Paul went on the offensive. Elymas was not Bar-Jesus, but a son of the devil.
- ✓ 13:13. Change in the team. Paul becomes leader and Mark deserts the mission.

- ✓ Antioch in Pisidia. 13:14-41. Paul was a strategist. He selected key cities, planted churches there and challenged the believers to spread the gospel from there.
- ✓ Church planting is God's way of leaving a witness in a community and nation, Matt.24:14.
- ✓ Paul's way of approach to the Jews: 1) The advent of Jesus world is the consummation of history; 2) But He was rejected when He came; 3) But God confirmed Him as His Son and the Saviour through the resurrection. This was witnessed by many; 4) Appeal. The gospel is good news to those who receive it and bad news to those who reject it. 13:38-41. The choice: forgiveness and justification from all things through faith, or judgment.
- ✓ The Jews saw themselves as the exclusive channel to salvation via the law of Moses. 'God fearers' believed that God was the one true God, but could not bring themselves to break their cultural and social ties to become Jewish. The gospel says, 'You don't have to!'
- ✓ Note the difference between Peter (Acts 10:43) and Paul (13:39). Peter offered salvation in Christ but, as yet, did not speak of the inadequacy of the law. Paul taught the inability of the law to save. This issue will come to a climax after this missionary trip. See 15:3.
- ✓ Synagogues were a good starting point for the gospel but people could get saved anywhere.
- ✓ 13:42-43. Hungry hearts. They 'begged' to hear more.
- ✓ 13:44-52. The following week the synagogue was taken over by people eager to hear a message the Jewish authorities did not endorse, i.e. that salvation through the Jewish Messiah is available to those who are not Jews and without them becoming Jews.
- ✓ 13:48. Those who were ordained, believed; but they had to believe in order to be saved.

- ✓ 14:1. Iconium. A great multitude of Jews and Gentiles believed.
- ✓ 14:2-3. Opposition was met with bold preaching of the word of grace and endorsed by signs
- ✓ 14:4-7. When their lives were in danger they moved to another city.

- ✓ 14:8-20. Lystra. Paul did not start in the synagogue here; the door was opened by a healing.
- ✓ They attempted to worship the apostles. Paul explains the futility of idolatry. There is only One God who is both a giving and forgiving God. He is good yet He commands them to believe. If they continue to choose idols instead of God He will give them over to them.
- ✓ When the Jewish troublemakers from Antioch and Iconium arrived they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city as dead. But after prayer he was raised up and went back into the city to minister to the believers. See 2 Cor.11:25; Gal.6:17; 2 Tim.3:11.

- ✓ 14:20-23. Derbe. A brief but good report of the ministry here.
- ✓ 14:27-28. They returned to the previous cities to strengthen the disciples by: 1) encouraging them through the Word; 2) preparing them for trials; 3) appointing local leaders.

12) It's Official – Salvation is by Grace Alone

Acts 14:28 = God opens the door; Acts 15:1 = Satan tries to close it.

The transition between the old covenant and the new covenant

- ✓ The gospel was first preached by Jews to Jews. The place of the law was never challenged until Stephen challenged it and the place of the Temple; the Jerusalem apostles didn't.
- ✓ Challenging the temple and the law resulted in martyrdom and persecution.
- ✓ The establishment of the Antioch church and the conversion of Cornelius marked a change.
- ✓ The first missionary journey results in division within the Church.
- ✓ The Pharisees, priests and others in the Church tried to pour new wine into old wineskins.
- ✓ They wanted to keep the wall between Jews & Gentiles and put them under yoke of the law.
- ✓ Even some of the apostles were unsure.
- ✓ These legalists came from the Jerusalem church, but were not authorized by them, (15:24).
- ✓ They 'troubled' and 'unsettled' the Gentile converts, (Gal.1:7; Gal.5:10).
- ✓ They added works to the gospel, i.e. 'Christ plus'. Now there are 2 gospels, see 13:39 + 15:5.
- ✓ If Satan was successful in this false gospel the Church would have been a branch of Judaism.
- ✓ The issues discussed at the Council are issues that trouble the Church even today. Is salvation a gift given to us, or a burden placed upon us? Do we need Moses to complete what Jesus began? Are we saved by a mixture of grace and law; faith and works?

The Council of Jerusalem

- ✓ Peter (15:7-11) shared his experience with Cornelius. The Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles without discrimination. The law was an unbearable yoke, even to the Jews. Salvation is by grace for Jew and Gentile alike. The law is now taken away. See Peter's impact, v.12.
- ✓ Barnabas and Paul (15:12) testified how God set His seal upon the Gentiles through the preaching of the Gospel. The emphasis is not on what Paul & Barnabas did, but what God did. Their testimony is brief because, in a sense, they were the ones on trial here.
- ✓ But still there was lacking clear Scriptural authority to settle the issue. This came through James (15:14-18), who quoted Amos 9:10&11 as irrefutable evidence. Question: 'Must the law of Moses be obeyed by Gentile converts?' Answer: 'No! Prophecy states the kingdom of Christ will not be a revival of Mosaic Law, but a restoration of the tabernacle of David.'
- ✓ The tabernacle of David was a foretaste of the new covenant. It was erected at Zion during the reign of David and housed the ark, even though the tabernacle of Moses was at Gibeon.
- ✓ Zion is a new wineskin. It represents a relationship with God based on His lovingkindness and mercy. There is unconditional acceptance for all who approach God by faith, not works.
- ✓ David broke all 10 commandments. But he fell back on the Abrahamic covenant and his sin was not imputed to him; righteousness was! He dwelt in the secret place of the Most High!
- ✓ The main emphasis is that the new covenant allows all people to experience the presence of God. Through Jesus we have boldness to enter the holy place! God is no longer locked up in a building or a tent. He now tabernacles with His people by indwelling them.
- ✓ Remember the question: 'Must the Law of Moses be obeyed by Christian converts?' Amos doesn't say, 'I will build again the tabernacle of Moses,' but 'the tabernacle of David'.
- ✓ 15:19. James was saying, God is doing a new thing. He is taking out from the Gentiles a people for Himself. This is new and sets aside the law of God, as the tabernacle of David did.
- ✓ 15:19-35. 2 commands and 2 concessions: avoid idolatry & immorality; abstain from blood & meat from things strangled. Blood was prohibited before the law, Gen.9:4. 1 Cor.9:19-23.
- ✓ The Judaizers tried to separate James and Peter from Paul. The unity of the Church is based on the gospel. There is only one gospel. It is this which preserves the unity of the Church.

13) The Winds of Change

- ✓ 15:36-18:23. The 2nd Missionary journey lasted around 3 years.
- ✓ 15:36. God was about to bring change upon His Church. The fate of the Christian Church hung upon the ability of the apostles to read the signposts clearly and correctly.
- ✓ The Bible is change literature. The Holy Spirit is a change Leader. Are we change candidates?
- ✓ Spiritual perception is the ability to participate in God's new thing prior to its happening.
- ✓ 15:36-39. Should Mark, who deserted the apostles before, be allowed to go with them?
- ✓ Paul said 'No!' Barnabas 'kept on insisting' Mark be given him another chance.
- ✓ Paul, was pragmatic and realized the seriousness of the task. He saw Mark as a bad risk.
- ✓ Barnabas was warmhearted. He believed in Mark as he had also believed in Paul.
- ✓ Luke doesn't say who was right or wrong. Both were right.
- ✓ Result: a split and now 2 missionary teams.

Paul's new team

- ✓ Barnabas was replaced by Silas He was a leader in the church at Jerusalem (15:22), a prophet (15:32), and a Roman citizen (Barnabas wasn't - 16:37). He was also fluent in Greek.
- ✓ Mark was replaced by Timothy. He had a Jewish and Greek background, which was definite advantage (16:1-3a). Timothy was Paul's special ambassador in some of the trouble spots, like Corinth, (e.g. Phil.2:20; 1 Cor.4:17).
- ✓ Luke was an addition to the team. See 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 27:1-28:16.

Philippi

- ✓ 16:1-5. Paul brings the report of the Council which strengthened the churches, 16:5; 15:41.
- ✓ 16:6-7. Doors were tried in Asia and Bithynia, but were closed to them (see vs 6&7).
- ✓ Sometimes God's guidance is *restraint* and other times *constraint*, i.e. 'Don't go!' 'Come!'
- ✓ 16:8-10. They boxed themselves into a corner. Then divine revelation came.
- ✓ The revelation was given to Paul. He submitted the guidance to the rest of the team. They all concluded that God was calling them to Macedonia. Guidance is individual and corporate.
- ✓ Few turning points in history are as significant as this. Would Asia have taken up the torch? Take away the books related to this trip and you end up with a miniature New Testament.
- ✓ 16:11. '*... a straight course...*' = a nautical term in the Greek meaning to sail before the wind. See 20:6: the same journey (125 miles) took 5 days next time. In the midst of the purpose of God it took just one day. The pace of blessing when God brings change is phenomenal. They were like a cyclone ripping through the continent with the gospel, 16:20, 26; 17:5,6&12.

The Gospel is for Every Class of Person (16:16-40)

1. Lydia, An Upper Class Person. She was a business woman. A seller of purple. In Philippi there was no synagogue so they met down by the river. The Lord opened her heart. The devil closes the minds of the unsaved – it takes the Holy Spirit to open eyes and hearts.
2. The Slave Girl, A Lower Class Person. She was demon possessed with a spirit of divination (python). She was used to tell people's fortunes. Satan can speak the truth one minute and a lie the next. She gave the apostles unwanted publicity and was a distraction. The owners had no concern for her; she was a means of income only. Paul cast the demon out of her.
3. The Jailer, A Middle Class Person. Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten and placed in the inner prison in the stocks. After this they sang hymns at midnight. Then there was an earthquake. If a guard lost a prisoner he suffered the prisoner's fate, (12:19). Paul assured him no one had escaped. He asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' The Council of Jerusalem asked this question. Answer: Compare 15:1 with 2:38-39; 4:12; 8:12,37; 10:10-43; 13:38-39.

14) God Encourages the Discouraged

- ✓ Satan wants to discourage us; especially when we go forward with the gospel.
- ✓ Paul was beaten, insulted & banished at Philippi. Yet it didn't stop him, 1 Thes.2:2.
- ✓ Resistance is designed to discourage us. How does God deal with our discouragement?

In Thessalonica God Made the Bad Work for Good

- ✓ 17:2-3. In the synagogue: 1) Paul reasoned (dialogued with questions and answers) that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead; 2) Explained (gave the meaning) the Scriptures; 3) Demonstrated (to prove by providing evidence) that Jesus is the Messiah who had to suffer, die and rise again; 4) Preached (announce the truth) Jesus is the Messiah.
- ✓ 17:4-6. A mixed response: Some were persuaded and joined the apostles. Others were jealous and stirred up a mob. They called the apostles: '*These who have turned the world upside down.*' They couldn't find the apostles so arrested Jason and made him pay a bond.
- ✓ Opposition was turned to outreach: Compare 1 Thes.2:18 with 1 Thes.1:8.
- ✓ If the gospel was established here it could spread quickly east and west.
- ✓ Paul's policy: establish churches in key cities as centres for outreach. (See Acts 19:10,26).

In Berea God Encouraged them with Receptive Hearers

- ✓ 17:11. They searched the Scriptures not to prove something is NOT true; but to see if it IS!
- ✓ False teaching comes in when people are ignorant of the truth.
- ✓ You will easily know what you DON'T believe when you know what you DO believe!

In Athens God Opened A Door To Preach The Word

- ✓ Athens was a city of past glory and cultured paganism, known for its philosophy & idolatry.
- ✓ Paul's spirit was 'provoked' to righteous jealousy.
- ✓ He went to the synagogue and then to the market daily where he reasoned with the people.
- ✓ There he was encountered by Epicureans & Stoics. These offered the Gentiles alternatives for dealing with the plight of humanity. Epicureans: enjoy life. Stoics: endure life.
- ✓ From there he was taken to Areopagus where he was called a 'babbling', i.e. a seed-picker, i.e. one who has no original ideas but picks up scraps of ideas and teachings here and there and passes them on. A parrot or plagiarist. This was a great insult to the greatest theologian.
- ✓ His message: Starting point – 'I see you are very religious ...The God you don't know, I proclaim to you': 1) God is not made; He is the Maker; 2) He is not in need of being served by human hands, because He is the provider and sustainer. The goodness of God should lead you to repentance; 3) He is behind history. He made the nations and determined their boundaries and the places where men should live; 4) Men are groping in the darkness to find God. That's because of sin. Just because you can't find Him doesn't mean He cannot be known; 5) God has set a day when He will judge the world through Jesus, whom He raised from the dead. Though you were ignorant and God overlooked your ignorance (i.e. did not judge you), now you do know and must repent.
- ✓ Mixed response: Some mocked, others delayed their decision, a few believed.

In Corinth Jesus Personally Encouraged Him

- ✓ By providing fellowship. Isolation is a major tactic of the enemy. 18:2&5.
- ✓ He received some encouraging news.
- ✓ He was blessed financially, enabling him to work fulltime in ministry.
- ✓ He received a vision: 18:9&10. He stayed a year and a half preaching the Word. The promise of protection is not promise he will not be attacked, but protected in the attack.

15) Ephesian Ministry

- ✓ Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Population: 300,000.
- ✓ For Paul it became a great centre for evangelizing the whole of Asia.

We meet a man with an incomplete message

- ✓ Apollos knew & taught about Jesus. He was fervent in spirit but his message was incomplete
- ✓ Aquila & Priscilla could see this. They probably had similar gaps which were filled in by Paul.
- ✓ When the gaps were filled in Apollos was a blessing at Corinth and in reaching the unsaved.

There were twelve men with an incomplete salvation, 19:1-7

- ✓ Paul met some men who were on their way to salvation, but were not yet saved.
- ✓ They were enlightened, but not regenerated; awakened but not born again.
- ✓ They were disciples of John, but had not believed in Christ nor received the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ John's baptism was one of repentance, pointing to Jesus. Jesus has died, rose from the dead and given the Holy Spirit, Jn.7:39. Without the Spirit, repentance will avail nothing.
- ✓ They believed in Jesus and were baptized, receiving the Holy Spirit.

Paul engaged in saturation evangelism, 19:8-10

- ✓ In the synagogue Paul was argued persuasively for 3 months.
- ✓ Then he was no longer welcome there, so he went to the hall of Tyrannus for 2 years.
- ✓ Paul preached every day 11.00am-4.00pm. This shows his eagerness and their hunger.
- ✓ All in Asia heard the gospel & many churches were established (Rev.2-3; Col.1:7; 2:1; 4:16).

Seven men with an unauthentic ministry, 19:13-19

- ✓ These had no relationship to Jesus, but used His name (see Matt.7:21-23). It backfired!
- ✓ News quickly spread throughout Ephesus and the name of Jesus was magnified.
- ✓ His name was no longer misused by unbelievers; and believers practicing magic repented.
- ✓ 19:20. Progress report #5.

'I must see Rome'

- ✓ 19:21. Missionary trips 1,2&3 were complete & the eastern part of the empire evangelized.
- ✓ Paul planned to go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome.
- ✓ He visited some of the churches collecting an offering for the Jerusalem Church.
- ✓ 19:23. A disturbance erupted in Ephesus which threatened his life & ministry, 1 Cor.15:32.
- ✓ Paul's preaching turned many away from idolatry of the Diana cult. This impacted upon silversmiths who made shrines, and Demetrius led a revolt against the apostles.
- ✓ In their fanatical zeal they arrested Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's companions.
- ✓ The town clerk, cleverly brought the situation under control.
- ✓ 20:1-5. This time of ministry in Macedonia and Achaia probably took about a year.
- ✓ Paul taught the churches in Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia re: the offering for Jerusalem
- ✓ He spent around 3 months in Corinth, during which time he wrote Romans (Rom.15:17-33). Probably much of what he wrote he taught at the hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus.
- ✓ Heading for Jerusalem and about to board a boat to Syria he became aware of a plot by the Jews to kill him, so he changed his plan and went back to Macedonia to board a ship there.
- ✓ 20:7. They met on the Lord's Day (1 Cor.16:1-2; Rev.1:10) and shared the Lord's Supper, which was joined to a regular meal where slaves and masters would eat at the same table.

16) It's More Blessed to Give than to Receive

Acts 20:17-38. Paul's farewell sermon to the elders at Ephesus. There are 8 messages by Paul in Acts. This is the only sermon to Christians. It reveals Paul the pastor rather than Paul the evangelist.

There are 2 main parts:

- ✓ 1) **Looking back** (20:18-21). He mentions 2 things as he looks back - His life and his ministry.
- ✓ His life (20:18&19). 'You know...' They were aware of his life, (in contrast to itinerant preachers). They knew of, a) his humility; b) his compassion; c) his suffering.
- ✓ His ministry (20:20-21).
- ✓ a) He shared the whole truth, (vs20&27).
- ✓ b) He included everyone, i.e. Jews and Gentiles, (v.26).
- ✓ c) His message was the gospel of grace. There is only one true gospel, but many false gospels. '*I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified*' (1 Cor.2:2).

- ✓ **2) Looking forward**. '*I know...*' (20:25). He was aware of the future by the Spirit.
- ✓ His personal future. This included:
 - ✓ a) He probably would not see them again, (v.25). He had planted the gospel seed, and now he was moving on and it was the duty of others to water it.
 - ✓ b) He didn't know everything that was going to happen but he knew the next step in God's plan, i.e. to go to Jerusalem which included suffering for Christ and the gospel, (vs22&23).
 - ✓ c) He wanted to complete the course God had set before him, (v.24). He knew what he must do, but he doesn't know what the consequences will be. Self-preservation was not his goal. His goal was to complete his course which was to preach the gospel of grace.

- ✓ The church's future.
- ✓ a) There would be wolves who would infiltrate the church (20:29), i.e. imposters who would try to force their way in amongst the flock and ravage them with false teaching. By distorting the truth they would tempt people to forsake the true faith.
- ✓ b) There would be ambitious people rising up from among them. These don't care for the flock. They would gladly split a church in order to advance their own ministry, i.e. draw disciples after themselves, 3 John 9. Many false prophets started in the church 1 Jn.2:18-19.
- ✓ c) Thus, '*Be on your guard!*' God's response to the dangers facing the church is:
 - ✓ 1) To appoint godly overseers who will protect and care for the church. The security of the flock is entrusted to elders who are shepherds. In the NT church leadership was *plural*.
 - ✓ 2) To commit them to God and the word of His grace. This is able to build them up and give them an inheritance among those who are sanctified, 20:32. Notice he commits them to the grace of God. The Church is built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, but grows through the grace of God.

- ✓ Summary of Paul's Ministry, (20:33-35). This is the 8th beatitude. You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving.
- ✓ Paul is not teaching that pastors should not receive an income, because elsewhere he has taught that they should.
- ✓ What he did was to set an example of being a giver rather than a taker.
- ✓ True blessing is not found by accumulating wealth, but by giving to those in need.

17) Sailing into the Storm

- ✓ Paul's message to the Ephesian elders marked the end of his missionary work.
- ✓ A storm is brewing. 20:22-23. Jewish zealots inside and outside the Church spread rumours that Paul discredited the law. He had to go to Jerusalem to seek to resolve this problem.
- ✓ 21:1-4. The Spirit was *warning* (not *forbidding*) to go to Jerusalem. See 19:21; 20:22.
- ✓ 21:8-14. Agabus likewise warned. Paul's companions pleaded with him. See 20:24.
- ✓ 21:15&16. He began the 64 mile journey by road to Jerusalem.

Paul's arrival at Jerusalem

- ✓ 21:18-21. Paul was given a warm welcome. He represented the Gentile churches and brought a report of his missionary activity as well as an offering from the Jewish believers.
- ✓ The Jerusalem delegation acknowledged that Paul's success was God's doing. They represented myriads of Jewish believers, many of whom were still zealous for the law (v.19).
- ✓ Hebraic Jews did not drop their Jewish lifestyle. Hellenistic Jews probably did become more relaxed and Paul was blamed for it, (v.21). It was rumoured he not only refused to impose Jewish requirements upon Gentile converts but told Jewish converts not to keep them.
- ✓ Paul taught: 1) Gentiles were not obligated to be circumcised or keep the law. Faith in Christ is sufficient; 2) The Jews were free to continue to keep their traditions as long as they did not regard this as having merit; 3) Those who are free from the law should not despise those who choose to keep parts of it; those who keep parts of it shouldn't judge those who don't.
- ✓ 21:22-25. But this was a delicate situation and James wanted Paul to know the effect it had upon the Jerusalem Church. It would take more than his denial to persuade the zealots.
- ✓ Maybe this was why there was no mention of accepting the gift at this stage. This would make matters worse as they would be openly identifying with the Gentile Christians.
- ✓ They said: 'Before we openly identify with the Gentiles by receiving their gift we want you to openly identify with us. Pay the expenses of the men who made a vow and join with them'.

Paul's arrest

- ✓ Paul went along with the plan, to make things easier for the Church at Jerusalem, 1 Cor.9:20.
- ✓ 21:27-29. It led to disaster because nothing would have swayed the zealots.
- ✓ On the last day of Paul's 7 days of purification a riot broke out. Jews from Asia jumped to the conclusion that Paul brought Trophimus, a Gentile, into the Temple court of the Jews.
- ✓ It is ironic that in the very act of Paul's keeping the law he was accused of breaking it. No matter how hard you try to please legalists, if they have closed their heart it is impossible.
- ✓ 21:37-38. As he was carried to safety he made an amazing request – to speak to the mob!
- ✓ 22:1-2. He spoke in Aramaic and defended himself by proving that he was a loyal Jew.
- ✓ 22:3-21. He shared his conversion experience which was witnessed by those with him.
- ✓ Jesus spoke to him from heaven. Therefore He must have been raised from the dead.
- ✓ God had sent him to the Gentiles. But when he said this, a riot erupted.
- ✓ 'No! The Gentiles must come to the Jews to be saved.'
- ✓ 22:24 The centurion intended to interrogate him by use of the dreadful flagellum.
- ✓ But Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship. So he was brought before the Sanhedrin.
- ✓ Luke wanted to show the reaction to the gospel by the 2 communities – Jewish and Roman.
- ✓ Hostility by the Jews included disruption of meetings, instigation of mob riots, banning him from cities, deceiving his converts and plotting to kill him. 21:30. They sealed their fate.
- ✓ In contrast Roman officials affirmed his right to preach, confirmed over again that he was breaking no law, offered him protection some times, rescued him on other times, and ensured that he always had a fair trial. 23:29; 25:25; 26:31-32. This is Luke's point.

18) The Lord Stood by Paul

- ✓ 23:1. The Roman captain and his guard brought Paul to the Sanhedrin and then stepped aside. They would only have intervened if things got out of hand.
- ✓ 23:3. Paul said he had lived in good conscience concerning his being a good Jew. He was struck for saying this.
- ✓ Striking Paul was a violation of the Jewish Law. Therefore the high priest was a hypocrite. Attempting to uphold the Law by trying Paul, he also violated the Law by having him struck.
- ✓ 23:11. Paul stood as a prisoner before Jerusalem whose history went back 2,000 years, and Rome whose territory extended 3 million square miles. What chance did he have?
- ✓ But Jesus came and stood by him! See also Acts 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 27:22-25; 2 Tim.4:16-17.
- ✓ Each time Jesus came to him He revealed that His purpose was much greater than the trial.
- ✓ The Romans and the Jews thought Paul was being called to account, but Jesus arranged this so that Paul would stand before them to preach the gospel!

The Jewish plan to kill Paul, and his rescue

- ✓ 23:12-15. The attempt of the Asian Jews to lynch Paul failed. The Sanhedrin attempt to convict him failed. Now there is a plan to ambush and murder him. This also was to fail.
- ✓ 23:23-24. The commander could not risk a Roman citizen assassinated while in his care. So he ordered 2 centurions to get their troops ready, including 200 soldiers, 70 cavalry men and 200 spearmen.
- ✓ 23:31-32. Once out of the danger zone the infantry turned back and the cavalry took Paul to Caesarea.

Paul's trial before Felix

- ✓ 24:1-9. Paul was now in the custody of Felix, the governor of Caesarea. The next day the Sanhedrin arrived with their lawyer, Tertullus, to bring their charges against Paul.
- ✓ Tertullus flattered Felix (24:2-4) and accused Paul of stirring up riots, being the ringleader of a cult and desecrating the temple, (24:5-9).
- ✓ In Paul's defense he stated a) He only had come to Jerusalem 12 days ago; b) This was to bring offerings for his nation; c) He was in the temple to worship, not to defile it; d) He hardly had time to head up a revolt; e) He was alone when arrested; not followed by a sect of people.
- ✓ He affirmed: 'I worship the God of our Fathers, I believe everything in the Law and I stand for the hope of the resurrection.' The real reason Ananias opposed him was that he believed in the resurrection and his conscience was clear in regard to the 'Way' because it was a fulfillment of the Law. Jewish believers were not *former* Jews, but *fulfilled* Jews. 24:10-21.
- ✓ 24:22-27. Felix adjourned the case until Lysias came. Paul was under military guard.
- ✓ Then Felix, with his wife Drusilla, conducted his own private interview with him.
- ✓ But Paul spoke to Felix about the faith in Christ in context of: righteousness (we all have a past), self control (we all have a present), and the judgment to come (we all have a future).
- ✓ The gospel answers all these three.
- ✓ Felix's response: He was afraid, he procrastinated and then he tried to bribe Paul for his release. His is typical of someone who is enlightened but not regenerated.
- ✓ He could not condemn him because of lack of evidence, but did not want to release him for fear of the Jews. There was no further public hearing for 2 years.
- ✓ After 2 years Festus replaced Felix as governor of Judaea.
- ✓ There is no record of the Jerusalem church reaching out to him during this time.

19) It's Testimony Time!

- ✓ Two years had passed. Felix had been summoned to Rome and replaced by Festus.
- ✓ The Jews wanted Paul to be taken to Jerusalem for trial so he could be ambushed and killed.
- ✓ Even if this failed, once under the power of the Sanhedrin his execution would be certain.
- ✓ Festus had just commenced his office and wanted to get off to a good start with the Jews.
- ✓ Paul appealed to Caesar. This gave Festus a way out.
- ✓ Problem: How could he send a prisoner to the Emperor without a *proven* charge?
- ✓ At this time King Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice arrived at Caesarea.
- ✓ He was an expert on Jewish matters. He was the 7th and last of the Herod's.
- ✓ Paul's defense before Herod was the most important for Luke, and is given more attention.
- ✓ 25:23. The purpose of this meeting was to find some charge.
- ✓ 26:1. Paul waited 2 years for this. He appears as a defendant but becomes a witness.

Paul's testimony

- ✓ Paul's life before he was a Christian (26:4-11):
- ✓ He was a Pharisee of the strictest sect. He was being tried by the Jews for the hope of the resurrection. This had now been validated in the resurrection of Jesus.
- ✓ Yet he once fanatically opposed this faith. He violently attacked Christians, putting them in prison and agreed with their death penalty.
- ✓ How he became a Christian (26:12-18):
- ✓ He was confronted by the risen Jesus, who told him how impossible it was to fight against the 'goads'.
- ✓ Jesus commissioned him to be a minister and a witness (26:16-18).
- ✓ His life since he became a Christian (26:19-23):
- ✓ Immediately he set about obeying the commission. First to the Jews, then the Gentiles.
- ✓ It was because he offered the gospel freely to the Gentiles that he was attacked in the temple. Yet, Moses and the Prophets foretold all these things.
- ✓ *'I continue to this day...'* Many lands, in spite of much opposition & many discouragements.

The response of Festus

- ✓ 26:24. Festus concluded that Paul had done so much studying that he was going mad.
- ✓ He was too heavenly-minded to be of any earthly use. 'Come back to the real world.'
- ✓ But who is crazy - those who live for temporal things or those who live for eternal things?
- ✓ 26:25-27. Paul insisted that what he believed was true and reasonable.
- ✓ He turned to Agrippa for support. Was this not in the prophets? The ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus were well reported, as was the taking of the gospel to the Gentiles. Surely the king believed the prophets – they foretold it all.
- ✓ And the gospel had been openly proclaimed for 3 decades. It was not done in a corner.
- ✓ 26:27-28. Paul went from defendant to witness; then called for a response from the King!
- ✓ Paul's question embarrassed the king. He was put on the spot by a prisoner in public, so asked: 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to become a Christian?'
- ✓ 26:29. Paul said: 'Short time or long time I pray you become as I am, without these chains.'
- ✓ 26:30-32. Agrippa had heard enough to know that Paul was innocent. Even though the Jewish high priest and the Sanhedrin opposed Paul, the king who outranked them agreed with the verdict of innocence.
- ✓ Conclusion: 'This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'
- ✓ Each of Paul's three defenses so far – to Felix, Festus and Agrippa were successful. Paul was declared innocent. But more than this, he testified before these kings and rulers of Christ.

20) The Gates of Hell will not Prevail

- ✓ Acts 27:1&2. Paul wanted to go to Rome but not as a prisoner. Rom.1:10-15; 15:22-24.
- ✓ He was accompanied by 'other' prisoners, and Luke and Aristarchus (possibly as his slaves).
- ✓ They took a long route because of the prevailing winds. A direct journey would have been impossible.
- ✓ Because of the winds it took '*many days*' to cover the 130 miles from Myra to Cnidus.
- ✓ They were forced to head south-west to Crete and came to Fair Havens.
- ✓ Paul advised to winter there but the pilot and ship owner did not want to.
- ✓ A soft south wind came up and this caused them to decide to sail to Phoenix.
- ✓ 27:14. There was a sudden change to a violent north easterly wind known as Euraquilo.
- ✓ The ship was blown out of the lee of Crete and there were no more harbours to protect it.
- ✓ 27:15. Paul was proved right; they were caught in a vicious storm, losing control of the ship
- ✓ For 14 days they didn't see sun or stars, therefore had no idea where they were.

Paul takes charge of the situation

- ✓ The situation seemed hopeless until Paul took charge. The prisoner became the captain.
- ✓ 1) Spiritual. He shared God's word. No one will be lost; only the ship (27:22-26) and on this basis he twice urged them to take courage, 27:22,25.
- ✓ 2) Practical. He gave directions, (27:27-32). During the 2 weeks the ship was driven 500 miles off course and was now adrift in the Adrian Sea. They could hear the breakers and knew they were in shallow waters near rocks. Some tried to escape, but Paul prevented it.
- ✓ 3) Caring. He encouraged them to eat.
- ✓ The ship broke up and it was every man for himself. Some swam, others held onto planks.
- ✓ 28:1&2. They swam to island of Malta where 276 were received with hospitality.
- ✓ Paul helped in gathering firewood. A viper hung on to Paul's hand by its fangs yet Paul is OK.
- ✓ The father of Publius who was sick with gastric fever and dysentery was healed and the rest of the sick of the island were brought to Paul. They were three months on Malta.

Rome at last!

- ✓ Just 3 days after arriving in Rome he sent for the leaders of the Jewish community.
- ✓ Paul explained that 1) He was not acting against his nation but was a prisoner for the hope of Israel; 2) He was handed over to the Romans; 3) He appealed to Rome.
- ✓ They were ignorant of his case. They wanted to know more about his views.
- ✓ Paul's theme was not himself but Jesus and the kingdom. He argued this from the Scriptures. Some were persuaded; others against. They were divided amongst themselves.
- ✓ Paul quoted Isaiah to prove that their obstinacy was foretold and so was the offering of the gospel to the Gentiles.
- ✓ A new policy from now. They have passed from: '*To the Jew first...*' to '*the hardening of the Jews*' and '*the times of the Gentiles*'. The gospel to the Gentiles.
- ✓ 28:30&31. 1) Nothing can prevent us from doing the will of God. Paul was arrested, faced endless trials, imprisonment, assassination attempts, shipwreck, snake attack, soldiers wanted to kill him, all indicated Satan's attempts to prevent him reaching Rome
- ✓ 2) When we are doing God's will He will make all things work together for good. Paul kept an open house and received anybody who wanted to discuss the things concerning the kingdom of God. He was chained to a guard every 6 hours, (Phil.1:12-14; 4:22).
- ✓ During this time he wrote Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.
- ✓ He was released and arrested again. Tradition says he was beheaded at Rome in AD67/68.
- ✓ Is this an abrupt ending or an unfinished book? It is time for the next generation to rise up.