

Acts

Universal Savior Proclaimed in Sovereign Kingdom Progress					
Jerusalem		Judea and Samaria		Uttermost Part	
1:1–6:7		6:8–8:40		Chapters 9–28	
Jews		Samaritans (mixed breeds)		Gentiles	
AD 33-35 (2 years)		AD 35 (a few months)		AD 35-62 (27 years)	
Peter		Stephen & Philip		Paul	
Establishing Home Base		Nearby Outreach		Missionary Journeys	
Established 1–2	Expands 3:1–6:7	Stephen 6:8–8:3	Philip 8:4-40	Damascus 9:1-31	to Rome 10:1–28:31
Rome					
AD 62 (completed after Paul's house arrest)					

Key Word: Sovereignty II

Key Verse: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Summary Statement: The reason to witness everywhere is because *God has directed the progress of the kingdom message* to all people since early church history.

Application:

Is God extending his kingdom message through you?

How are you fitting into his overall purpose to spread the gospel throughout the entire earth?

Acts

Introduction

- I. **Title:** The Greek title (*Πράξεις Ἀποστόλων* *Actions/Deeds of Apostles*) was added to this volume about the middle of the second century AD in the Anti-Marcionite Prologue. More proper than the English title, “The Acts of the Apostles,” might be “Some Acts of Some Apostles” since the book is not an exhaustive treatment of the history of all the apostles but only Peter and Paul. Perhaps an even more accurate title might be “Some Acts of the Holy Spirit!” The book of Luke is the companion volume to Acts in that both address Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1).

II. Authorship

- A. **External Evidence:** The Church Fathers from the latter half of the second century agreed that Luke, “the beloved physician” (Col 4:14), wrote Acts after writing Luke. Both books circulated together during the latter half of the first century until the beginning of the second century AD when Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were gathered together and circulated as a fourfold gospel (Bruce, 15). The tradition for Luke as the author is strong:

1. The earliest evidence for Lukan authorship stems from the Anti-Marcionite Prologue (AD 150-180) and the Muratorian Canon (AD 160-200).
2. Others cite Luke as the author, such as Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*; ca. AD 185) and Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 155-216; cf. Hiebert, 1:248-49).

Luke's name appears only thrice in the NT (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 24). Since Paul lists his companions as Jews (Col 4:10-11) and then Gentiles (Col 4:12-14), and Luke's name appears in the latter group, he evidently was a Gentile, confirmed by his brilliant use of Greek. Tradition says that he came from Syrian Antioch, never married, and died at age 84 (*TTTB*, 327).

- B. **Internal Evidence:** Support for Luke as author is in Acts itself, especially when compared with Luke.

1. Luke and Acts had the same author since: (a) both are dedicated to the same man, Theophilus, (b) Acts 1:1 refers to “the first account,” which most naturally refers to Luke's Gospel, (c) The language and style of the two books are remarkably similar, and (d) both books share many common interests (see “Characteristics” below; cf. Guthrie, 100).
2. Acts has four first person narratives often called the “we-sections” (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1–28:16) that show the author as Paul's traveling companion. Of his traveling companions, only Titus and Luke are not mentioned by name in these sections and Titus has never been seriously considered as a candidate for the authorship of Acts (Hiebert, 1:119ff.).

III. Circumstances

- A. **Date:** Acts is fairly easy to date, assuming that Luke wrote church history up to his time. It ends with Paul's two-year imprisonment (AD Feb. 60-Mar. 62; cf. Acts 28:30-31) and does not mention Nero's persecutions (AD 64), Paul's ministry in the remaining years until his death (AD 62-68), nor the climactic destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70). Therefore, the most likely date of composition is AD 62.
- B. **Origin/Recipients:** No one knows for certain where Luke wrote this account, nor does the book itself give any hint. Suggestions include Rome (since this is the location of the story at the end of the book), Antioch, Ephesus, Asia Minor, and Achaia. He clearly wrote to Theophilus (1:1), a man whose name means “lover of God.” The title of “most excellent” for Theophilus (Luke 1:3) indicates that he was probably an official in some capacity and as a man of high social standing he may have funded the publishing of Luke and Acts.
- C. **Occasion:** Theophilus apparently thought Luke the physician a great source to write an orderly account of the life of Christ and the early history of the Church. He was detailed, well educated, an excellent historian, well acquainted with Paul, and as a single man able to travel and interview eyewitnesses. Luke probably wrote at Theophilus' request, but in any event, he purposed to strengthen the wealthy Christian's faith by showing that his faith rested on firm historical fact (Luke 1:3-4). Perhaps even more significantly, Luke sought to explain to his wider Gentile audience that God directed the progress of the kingdom message, not human ingenuity and skill.

IV. Characteristics

A. Different opinions exist for the purpose of Luke-Acts:

1. Conciliation: to solve an opposition between Peter and Paul to show that Paul's credentials are equal to Peter's to defend Paul's apostleship of his letters (Baur and Tübingen School cited by Liefeld, *EBC*, 8:801). This view is speculative.
2. Soteriological/Evangelistic: to present Christ to non-Christian Gentile readers as the perfect Son of Man who "came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10; *TTTB*, 328). This view really explains only the purpose of the Gospel of Luke.
3. Instructional/Edification: to confirm Theophilus and other Gentile believers in their faith (Luke 1:4; *TTTB*, 328; Hiebert, 1:132-135). Longenecker (*EBC*, 8:217) believes the primary purpose of the book is *kerygmatic* (instructional) in that Acts emphasizes the continued confrontation of men and women by the Word of God through the church (4:29, 31; 6:2, 4, 7; 8:4, 14, 25; 10:36; 11:1, 19; 12:24; 13:7, 44, 46, 48-49; 14:25; 15:35-36; 16:6, 32; 17:11, 13; 18:5, 11; 19:10).
4. Apologetic: to show that Christianity was not a politically subversive sect but rather a universal movement (cf. Pilate's three announcements of Christ's innocence in Luke 23:4, 14, 22; *TTTB*, 328; the tracing of the movement from a primarily Jewish to a predominately Gentile membership, *TTTB*, 353).
5. Ecclesiastical: to "trace the development and distinction of the Church over and against Judaism" (Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, 60-62)
6. Historical Narrative: to preserve "the record of the origin and growth of the early church" (Fitzmyer cited by Liefeld, *EBC*, 8:800).
7. Kingdom: to explain how God has orderly and sovereignly directed the progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles to answer the natural questions of any Gentile unbeliever: (1) "How could a Jewish Savior be the Savior of the world?" (Book of Luke) and (2) "How does this 'little Jewish sect' relate to me?" (Book of Acts).
 - a. Luke answers question #1 by showing that Jesus was a *universal* Savior, not a Jewish Savior. Then he answers question #2 in that Christianity is not a Jewish sect but a divinely directed movement that *began* in Jerusalem but reached the center of the known world—Rome.
 - b. That this kingdom theme appears in Luke's Gospel is unquestionable as the phrase "kingdom of God" appears at least 27 times. In Acts it appears only eight times but the concept is throughout from the beginning (1:3, 8) to the end (28:31).
 - c. Sovereignty is emphasized in Luke through God's control of all events despite obstacles and in Acts with its emphasis on predestination (2:23; 4:28; 13:48).
 - d. Since Luke and Acts have the same author and the Gospel account has a strong kingdom emphasis, one would expect the same emphasis in Acts since it is a continuation of Luke's gospel. This emphasis does in fact exist.
 - e. Acts 1:8 shows that the kingdom message (cf. 1:3, 6) would expand into three different people groups in three ever-widening geographic circles: the witness in Jerusalem (1:1–6:7), Judea and Samaria (6:8–8:40) and the uttermost part (Acts 9–28).
 - f. This purpose for Acts is seen in several "progress reports" of the expanding kingdom message (2:47; 6:7; 8:40; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31; also possibly 2:41; 4:31; 5:42; 8:25, etc.; adapted from Toussaint, *BKC*, 2:352).
 - g. This view includes all the views above (except #1 and #2).

- B. The Book of Acts is significant for several reasons (Toussaint, *BKC*, 2:349):
1. While the Bible contains *four* accounts of the life of Christ, Acts provides the *only* narrative of the early Church. Thus, it links the Gospels with the Epistles and provides invaluable insights into how the first century Church operated.
 2. The chronological arrangement of the material enables a more accurate background for understanding of the Pauline and General Epistles.
 3. The early saints' zeal, faith, joy, commitment, and obedience in Acts exhorts us today.
- C. Interpretive problems come when establishing doctrinal beliefs based only upon the Acts narrative. A proper understanding of Acts recognizes it as a transitional book not intended to set norms for the post-apostolic age. For example, note the transitional nature of speaking in tongues in Acts:

Speaking in Tongues in Acts (Toussaint, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:408, adapted)

Passage	Speakers	Audience	Related to Salvation	Purpose
2:1-4	Apostles+	Unsaved Jews at Pentecost	After salvation	Validate for Jews the fulfillment of Joel 2
8:14-17	Samaritans	Saved Jews doubting God's plan (Peter+)	After salvation	Validate for Jews God's acceptance of Samaritans
10:44-47	Gentiles (Cornelius+)	Saved Jews doubting God's plan (Peter+)	At salvation	Validate for Jews God's acceptance of Gentiles
19:1-7	OT believers in Messiah	Jews needing gospel message confirmed	At salvation	Validate for Jews God's message through Paul

- D. Luke wrote with superb style and structure. Luke-Acts contains the best Greek syntax in the New Testament, using over 700 words found nowhere else in the New Testament.
- E. The universal message of the gospel is stressed (1:8; 28:30-31). In fact, Acts records over 80 geographical locations—more than any other New Testament book.
- F. A large emphasis is the Holy Spirit and his ministries (Acts 2; cf. Acts 1:8).
- G. Assuming the author of Hebrews was a Jew, the combined Luke-Acts remains the only book in the Bible written by a Gentile.
- H. Luke's two-volume work is very comprehensive. Luke and Acts together comprise 2138 verses, or 28% of the New Testament. Since Paul wrote only 2033 verses, Luke wrote more than any other author of the New Testament (*TTTB*, 329).
- I. Sermons play a very important role in the chronology with 24 of the 28 chapters including a sermon or portion of a sermon.
- J. The Gospel of Luke contrasts with Acts as such:

	<u>Luke</u>	<u>Acts</u>
Chapters	24	28
Verses	1150	988
Verses per Chapter	48	35
Time Period Covered	5 BC-AD 33 (37 yrs.)	AD 33-62 (30 yrs.)
Content	Life of the Christ	Life of the Church
Kingdom Message from...	Jews to Gentiles	Jews to Gentiles

- K. Acts provides the framework of Paul's missionary journeys. These enable us to understand the historical context of the epistles:

Paul's Missionary Journeys in Acts

(Furloughs in parentheses)

	Area	Acts Texts	Dates	Yrs.	Letters	Men with Paul
1	Galatia	12:25–14:28	April 48–Sept. 49	1.5	Galatians	Barnabas, Mark
				(.5)		
2	Aegean	15:36–18:22	April 50–Sept. 52	2.5	1, 2 Thess.	Silas, Timothy, Luke
				(.5)		
3	Ephesus & Aegean	18:23–21:16	Spring 53–May 57	4	1, 2 Cor., Romans	Timothy, Luke, Titus, Erastus, Aristarchus, Sopater, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus, Sosthenes
				(0)		
*	Jerusalem, Caesarea	21:26–26:13	May 57–Feb. 60	2.8	None	Timothy, Luke
				(0)		
*	Rome	27:1–28:31	Feb 60–Spring 62	2.2	Eph., Col., Phil., Philem.	Timothy, Luke

* These were imprisonments rather than missionary journeys.

- L. Contrasting the beginning and the end shows the progress of the gospel in Acts:

	Acts 1	Acts 28
AD	33	62
Church	Non-existent	Thriving
Composition of believers	100% Jewish	Mostly Gentiles
Location	Jerusalem	Rome
Central Figure	Peter (narrow ministry)	Paul (broad ministry)

Argument

Luke's Gospel is written *from* a Gentile mind *to* the Gentile mind to confirm Theophilus' faith (Luke 1:3) and to answer how the Jewish Savior could be a Savior for Gentiles. Luke continues this universal emphasis in Acts, tracing the progress of the kingdom message from its reception by Jews in Jerusalem (1:1–6:7) to Judeans and Samaritans (6:8–8:40) to Gentiles toward the uttermost part of the Roman Empire (Acts 9–28) to encourage believers that the responsibility for the growth of the Church is God's work, not man's. This divine responsibility for the task is clearly stated in Acts 1:8 as the key verse, which affirms that God gives the power to witness rather than people earning it.

However, Luke also notes how the early *church* was faithful to the task. This serves to encourage all believers everywhere to be faithful witnesses to their own locale (their "Jerusalem"), immediately outside this area (their "Judea and Samaria"), and throughout the globe (their "end of the earth"). Thus, Luke's purpose is to show both the divine and human roles in world evangelism, although God ultimately takes final responsibility for his Church (cf. Matt. 16:18).

Acts 1:8 has the preceding threefold outline where each section ends with a summary statement ("progress report") to show the extent the kingdom message traveled up to that point (i.e., 6:7; 8:40; 28:31). Five more "progress reports" (2:47; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20) end subsections within the major sections (adapted from Toussaint, *BKC*, 2:352).

Synthesis

Universal Savior proclaimed in sovereign kingdom progress

1:1–6:7	Jerusalem
1–2	Established
1	Preparations
1:1-5	Transition from Luke
1:6-8	Outline for Acts
1:9-11	Ascension
1:12-26	Prayer/Matthias
2	Church born
2:1-13	Spirit comes
2:14-41	Peter's sermon
2:42-47	Fellowship
3:1–6:7	Expands
3:1–4:31	Temple beggar
4:32–5:11	Barnabas/Ananias/Sapphira
5:12-16	Healings reach immediate area
5:17-42	Peter's escape
6:1-7	Food distribution
	Opposition:
	External
	Internal
	External
	Internal
6:8–8:40	Judea and Samaria
6:8–8:3	Stephen—cause
6:8–7:1	Jerusalem: Seized for miracles/preaching
7:2-53	Indicting sermon
7:54–8:3	Results
7:54–8:1a	Martyrdom
8:1b-3	Persecution: scattered in Judea and Samaria
8:4-40	Philip—effect
8:4-25	Samaria—Simon the sorcerer
8:26-40	Judea—Ethiopian eunuch
9–28	Uttermost part
9:1-31	Damascus—Paul
9:32–12:24	Antioch/Samaria Gentiles
9:32–11:18	Peter—Samaria Gentiles (Cornelius)
11:19-29	Barnabas/Saul—Antioch
12:1-24	Peter escapes vs. Herod dies
12:25–16:5	Galatia
12:25–14:28	#1—Paul, Barnabas, minus John Mark
15:1-35	Jerusalem Council
15:36–16:5	#2 begins—Paul, Silas, plus Timothy
16:6–19:20	Aegean area
16:6-10	Macedonian call
16:11–19:20	Macedonia, Achaia, Ephesus
16:11–18:22	#2 ends—3 plus Luke
18:23–19:20	#3 begins—confirms Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus
19:21–28:31	Rome
19:21–21:16	#3 ends—Aegean strengthened
21:17–28:31	Captivities (people reached in parentheses)
21:17–23:22	Jerusalem (Jews, commander, Sanhedrin)
23:23–26:32	Caesarea (Felix, Festus, Agrippa)
27:1–28:30-31	Rome (ship passengers, Malta inhabitants, Romans, Nero?)

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book

The reason to witness everywhere is because *God has directed the progress of the kingdom message to all people since early church history.*

I. We should witness to our own area first because God began the kingdom message expansion in Jerusalem (1:1–6:7).

- A. The Spirit established the Jerusalem church by preparing the believers and Spirit baptism to teach us to trust the Spirit for witness (Acts 1–2).
 - 1. Believers wait for the Spirit so they can witness until Christ's return and are prepared by prayer and leadership replacement (Acts 1).
 - a) Luke ties this account to his gospel by summarizing Christ's ministry up to his command to wait for the baptism with the Holy Spirit (1:1-5).
 - b) Rather than focus on Israel's restoration, Jesus commanded his disciples to witness everywhere, starting in Jerusalem (1:6-8).
 - c) Jesus ascended to heaven with the promise of his return to the Mt. of Olives to exhort witnessing until he comes again (1:9-11).
 - d) The apostles and 120 believers prepared for the coming of the Spirit through prayer and the replacement of Judas with Matthias (1:12-26).
 - 2. The Spirit baptizes the 120 believers into the new Church and empowers Peter to bring 3000 more Jews into the faith, teaching, and fellowship (Acts 2).

Progress Report #1: "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (2:47b).

- B. The Spirit expands the Jerusalem church to nearby towns through miraculous healings despite external and internal opposition (3:1–6:7).
 - 1. External opposition of the Sanhedrin after Peter and John heal a beggar enables witness to this highest religious body in Israel (3:1–4:31).
 - 2. Internal opposition from Ananias and Sapphira's deceit backfires, causing a fear of God needed for church growth (4:32–5:11).
 - 3. Miraculous healings by the apostles expand the church beyond Jerusalem to people from nearby towns who bring others for healing (5:12-16).
 - 4. External opposition of the Sanhedrin again persecutes the apostles, so God could provide an escape from jail and joy from suffering for Christ (5:17-42).
 - 5. Internal opposition about food distribution is squashed by assigning seven managers to demonstrate God's commitment to his Church (6:1-7).

Progress Report #2: "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (6:7).

II. We should witness outside our own locale because God expanded the kingdom message in all Judea and Samaria (6:8–8:40).

- A. God uses Stephen's martyrdom by the Sanhedrin to incite persecution that brings the kingdom message throughout Judea and Samaria (6:8–8:3).
- B. Philip witnesses in Samaria to crowds and Simon the sorcerer, and in Judea to an Ethiopian eunuch, as part of God's plan to witness in these two areas (8:4-40).

Progress Report #3: "Philip, however, appeared at Azotus [in Judea] and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea [in Samaria]" (8:40).

III. We should witness to the whole world because God expanded the kingdom message to Rome to reach the end of the known world (Acts 9–28).

- A. God saves Saul, who preaches even beyond Judea and Samaria in Damascus, Syria, as God's tool to reach Jews and especially Gentiles (9:1-31).

Progress Report #4: "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (9:31).

- B. God protects believers in Samaria and in Gentile cities of Caesarea and Antioch despite the Jerusalem church's racism, as he is committed to the uttermost part (9:32–12:24).
1. Peter reaches Gentiles in Joppa, Lydda, and Caesarea [all in Samaria] despite racist Jerusalem believers as God's kingdom message is for all (9:32–11:18).
 2. The Gentile church in Antioch alleviates famine in the Jerusalem church, demonstrating God's blessing on its ministry (11:19-29).
 3. God avenges Herod's murder of James and imprisonment of Peter at Jerusalem in Peter's miraculous escape and Herod's death by worms (12:1-24).

Progress Report #5: "But the word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24).

- C. God expands the church to Asia Minor in Paul and Barnabas's two missionary journeys, and the Jerusalem Council approves witness to Gentiles (12:25–16:5).
1. The first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas extends the kingdom message to Cyprus and Asia Minor (12:25–14:28).
 2. The Jerusalem Council decision not to require the Law for Gentiles is directed by God to expand the kingdom message through the Roman Empire (15:1-35).
 3. The second missionary journey of Paul and Silas strengthens Asia Minor churches, and Barnabas and John Mark go to Cyprus due to a ministry conflict (15:36–16:5).

(Note: Second Missionary Journey = Acts 15:36–18:22)

Progress Report #6: "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew in numbers" (16:5).

- D. God extends the church to the Aegean area after keeping Paul from Asia so he can first evangelize Macedonia and Achaia (16:6–19:20).
1. Paul is called to Macedonia after Phrygia and Galatia, but kept from Asia by the Spirit as God planned the kingdom message first to reach Europe (16:6-10).
 2. The second missionary journey becomes the third as Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy extend the church into Macedonia, Achaia, and Ephesus by God's leading (16:11–19:20).
 - a) The end of the second missionary journey extends the church into Macedonia and Achaia (16:11–18:22).
 - (1) Luke helps Paul plant churches in the Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (16:11–17:15).
 - (2) Paul plants churches in Athens and Corinth in Achaia and then leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus while he returns to Antioch (17:16–18:22).

- b) The third missionary journey begins with miracles and exorcisms confirming the churches in Galatia, Phrygia, and Ephesus (18:23–19:20).

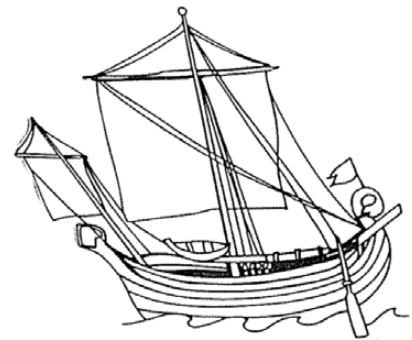
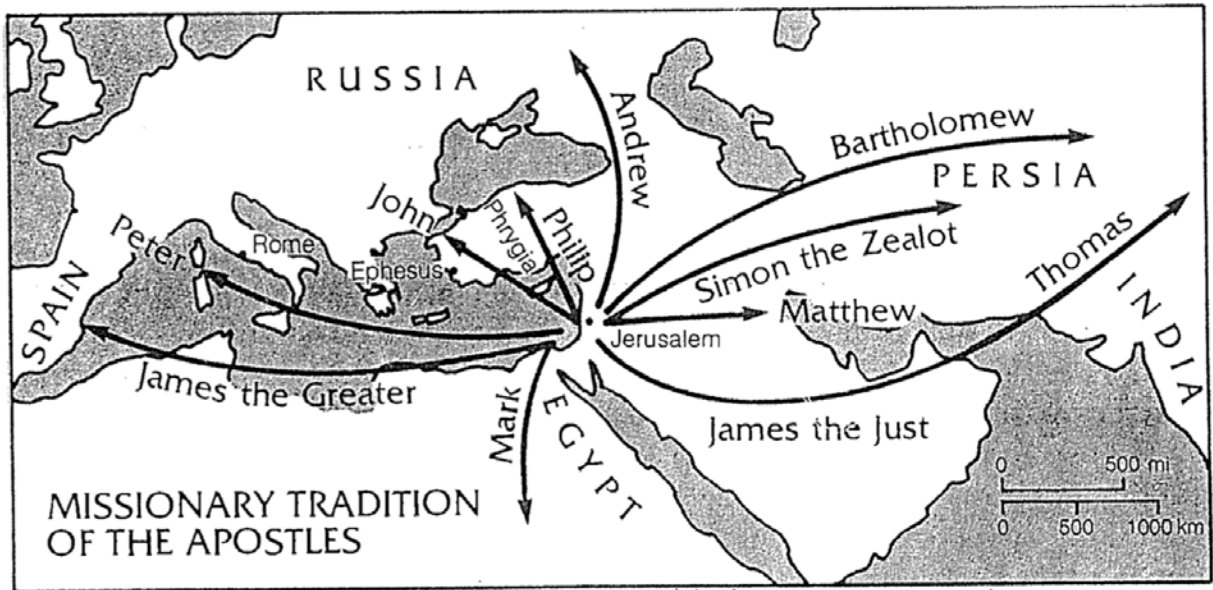
(Note: Third Missionary Journey = Acts 18:23–21:16)

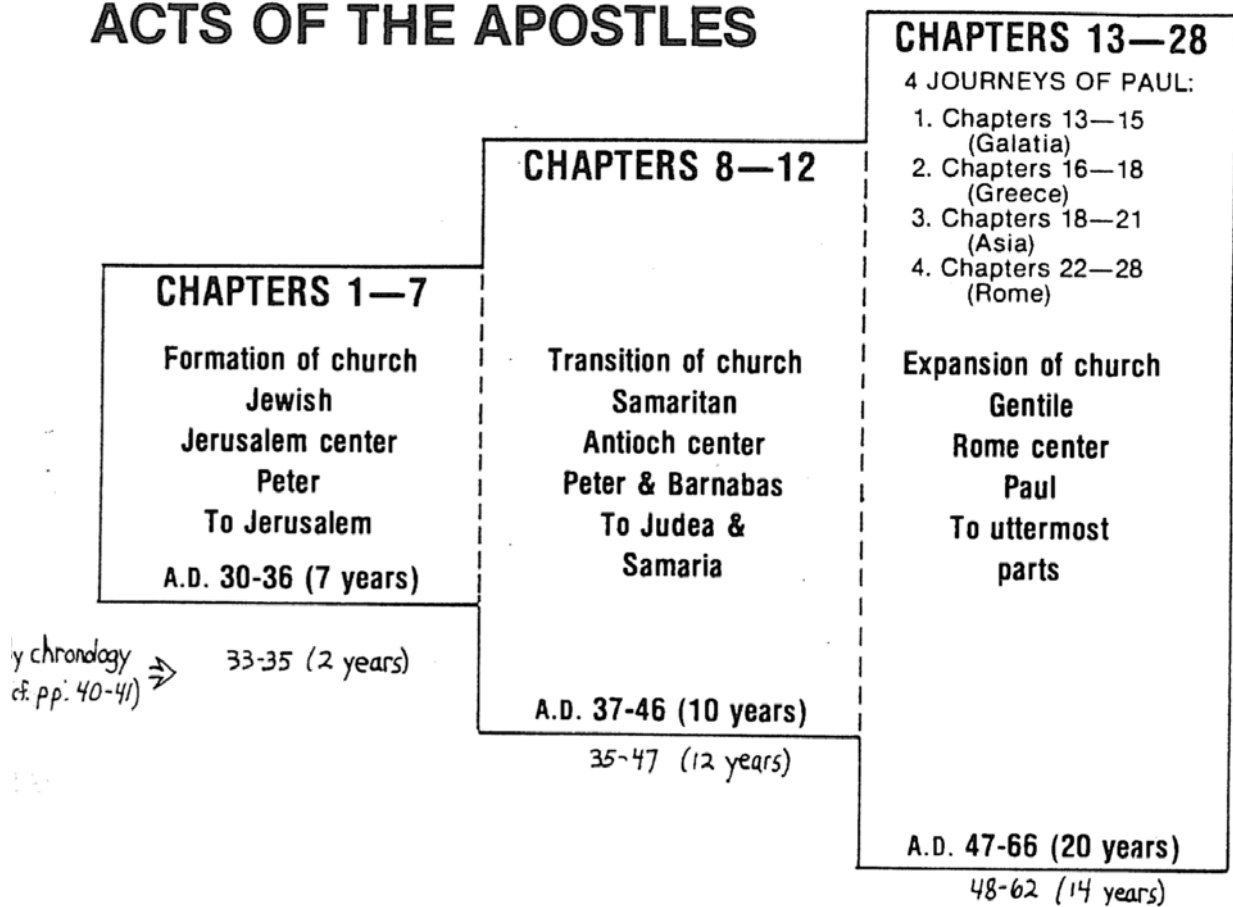
Progress Report #7: “In this way, the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (19:20)

- E. God extends the kingdom message to Roman rulers after Paul’s third missionary journey, leading to his trip to Rome as a prisoner (19:21–28:31).
 - 1. Paul’s third journey has Luke and starts no new churches but strengthens Aegean area believers, especially in Ephesus, until it ends in Jerusalem (19:21–21:16).
 - a) The uproar at Ephesus shows Christianity innocent of wrongdoing but idolatry useless (19:21–41).
 - b) Paul says farewell to the Ephesian church by exhorting the elders to care for the flock in light of future apostasy (20:1–38).
 - c) Paul continues to Jerusalem despite prophecies of suffering ahead of him (21:1–16).
 - 2. Paul’s journey to Rome includes three captivities, during which God extends the kingdom message among rulers in Rome as a sending base to the end of the world (21:17–28:31).
 - a) Paul’s Jerusalem captivity spreads the gospel to his own Jewish people, a Roman officer, and a new Sanhedrin, with Roman protection, in Caesarea (21:17–23:22).
 - b) Paul’s Caesarean captivity extends the kingdom message to Governor Felix, Porcius Festus, and King Agrippa II, all under Roman support (23:23–26:32).
 - c) Paul’s captivity in Rome extends the gospel to Gentile passengers and Malta dwellers en route to Jews and Gentiles unhindered in Rome (Acts 27–28).

Progress Report #8: “For two whole years Paul stayed there [in Rome] in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance, he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:30–31).

And the story continued...

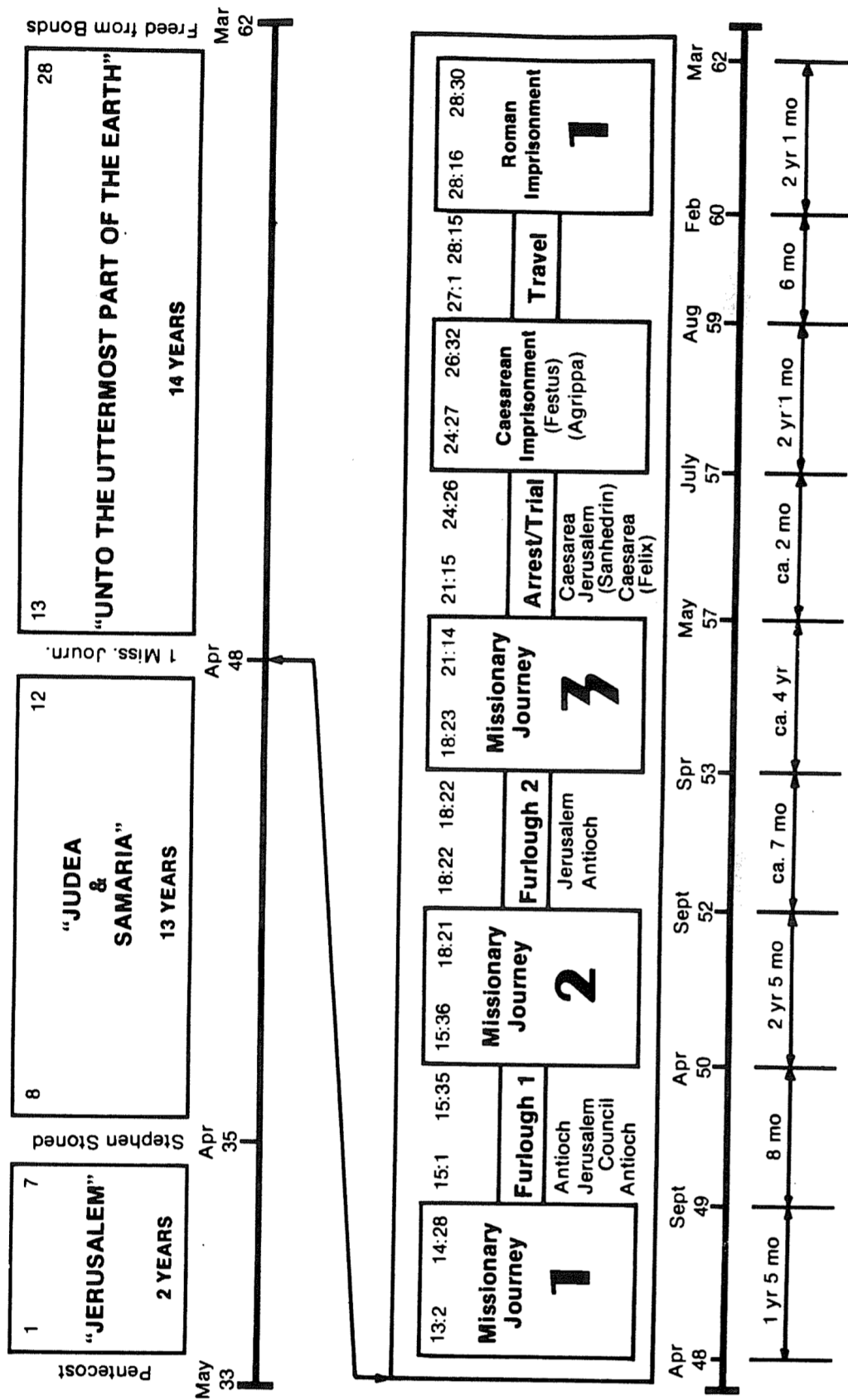


Expanding View of ActsTerry Hall, *Bible Panorama*, 162**ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

Chronology of the Book of Acts

Chronology of the Book of Acts

Walk Thru
the New
Testament



Questions on Acts 2

My friend Oliver sent me four questions that I attempted to answer below...

A question was brought up during my Care Group's Bible study...

The question is the prophecy of Joel in Acts 2:17-21 (cf. Joel 2:28-32). We have the following points, of which we are uncertain:

1. Who does "all mankind" in verse 17 refer to? All believers? Everybody, both believers and non-believers? Or the saved in the millennial kingdom?

Joel's prophecy up to Joel 2:28 refers to the future time of judgment and restoration of Israel, also known as Daniel's seventieth week (cf. Dan. 9:27), or the seven-year Tribulation. "After" that time (2:28a), there will be a pouring out of the Spirit that the world has never seen, when everyone will receive the Spirit regardless of sex (sons and daughters), age (young and old), or rank (even on my servants). Jeremiah spoke of the same time period that we know call the millennial age (cf. Rev. 20:1-6) when he said that everyone will know the Lord (Jer. 31:34). In other words, at the beginning of the millennium, every person on earth will believe in the Lord! Wow! Before Joel's time, the Spirit had come only on certain leaders to empower them for ministry—and that only for a limited time. But the Spirit indwelling now and in the future is eternal (John 14:16).

2. When does "those days" in verse 18 refer to? Pentecost and after? Or during the days when Christ returns?

Joel's prophecy describes the coming of a "day of the LORD," following a recent locust invasion in Judah. The prophet's point is that while the people are concerned about the locusts destroying their crops, even more serious "locusts" (eschatological armies) are coming, threatening their nation's existence.

Then Joel declares that in the last days, the LORD will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (all of Judah or the earth) so that young men will have dreams and old men see visions (2:28-32). This is a clear prophecy of the Holy Spirit's coming and eschatological dimensions. In other words, deliverance in Joel's time foreshadows deliverance in the end times.

When Peter and the apostles saw the Holy Spirit descend on the day of Pentecost, several unusual things also occurred. Each of the apostles praised God in new languages that could be understood by pilgrims to Jerusalem visiting at that time (e.g., from Pontus, Cappadocia, Rome, and other distant places). Further, tongues of fire appeared on their heads. With these new languages and strange fiery phenomena, the accusation came that the apostles were drunk with wine. Peter refuted this claim by quoting Joel 2:28f. He declared that what they witnessed fulfilled Joel's prophecy of giving the Holy Spirit. This is clear in his designation, "This is that which was spoken..." (Acts 2:16), which leaves no question that the reception of the Spirit was what Joel had in mind.

However, Joel also prophesied strange events in the sky—the sun darkened, and the moon reddened. Acts 2 records no such phenomena because the prophecy was left incomplete due to Israel's unbelief. These certain elements are reserved for a future time when the nation will believe just before the return of Christ. (For a study of five views on this issue, see Hobart Freeman, *An Introduction to the OT Prophets*, 154-56.)

But why does Peter apply this yet-future event to his own age? The Spirit was bestowed on all people, even in his day, which announced that the "last days" had already arrived.

3. Does the "Day of the Lord" in verse 20 refer to the return of Christ?

The coming day of the LORD, a time of awesome judgment upon people who have rebelled against God, is the preeminent theme of Joel's prophecy (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14, 18). The day of the LORD theme pervades this prophecy perhaps more than any other with the possible exception of Zephaniah (e.g., Zeph. 1:14-18; chaps. 2-3) and finds mention throughout the Bible (cf. Amos 1:3-2:3; Zech. 12-14; Isa. 13:6, 9; 14:28-32; 17:1ff.; 20:1-6; 31:1-5; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3ff.; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). Joel mentions this "day" several times (1:15; 2:1-2, 11, 31; 3:14, 18), indicating that it actually refers to a time period that "is to be a day of wrath and judgment upon the wicked and a day of salvation to the righteous" (Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the OT Prophets*, 146).

So, the "glorious day of the Lord" noted here seems to refer to the latter part of this "day." In other words, after the sun turns dark and the moon turns red (during the judgment part of the "Day"), the "great and glorious day..." will arrive when Christ rules.

4. Was the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, or will it be fulfilled when Christ returns?

When is this day? The mention of apocalyptic phenomena such as wonders in the heavens (i.e., the sun being turned to darkness and the moon to blood; 3:20-21) indicates that while to some extent near judgment would strike Judah for disobedience, the ultimate judgment would befall the nation at Christ's second advent (cf. Matt. 24:29-30). However, this will not just be a day of wrath upon the unbelieving but of blessing as well for the righteous (Joel 2:32; Zech 14; Zeph 3:8-20; Isa 2; Isa 11; 65-66; Amos 9:11-15; Ezek 20:33-44, etc.; idem., 147). I think that Pentecost only put in place the events that will culminate in the return of Christ. Therefore, we have a partial fulfillment during Peter's time, but the full fulfillment will occur at Christ's return.

I trust I didn't confuse you more! Good questions!

Still learning with you,

Rick

Church Planting in Acts & Church History

I. Definitions

- A. Acts 2 records how the Church began on the day of Pentecost, fulfilling Acts 1:8, in which Christ promised that witnesses would begin in Jerusalem and spread from there.
- B. However, is it true that, following this first church plant, “churches should always be planted by other churches”? Was this true even in the Book of Acts?

II. How Churches Began in Acts

- A. **Ethiopia** saw its first church planted not by another church but by Philip, whom God used to share the gospel with one of Ethiopia’s highest officials (Acts 8:26-40). The Ethiopian church tradition holds that this official brought Christianity back to his nation.
- B. **Damascus** had one of the first churches outside Jerusalem (9:19b). Did the Jerusalem church plant the Damascus church? Paul reached both Jews and Gentiles there (Gal. 2:11-16), but he had to defend himself before the Jerusalem church (9:26). The best we can tell is that it was the persecution in Jerusalem—not a church plant—that thrust out the disciples into places such as Damascus (Acts 8:1).
- C. **Antioch** remains a superb example of a local church sending out missionaries like Paul and Barnabas into the harvest to plant churches (13:1-3). However, this support was inconsistent, which left Paul needing to support himself as a tentmaker in Corinth (Acts 18:3). One wonders whether it can accurately be said that the Antioch church planted the church at Corinth.
- D. **Colossae** and the other Asia Minor churches began, according to scholars, in an unknown way. The best guess for their origin is Paul’s daily teaching at the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus. “This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (19:10). While we may wish that the church of Ephesus planted these churches, such was not the case.
- E. **Rome** also baffles experts of early church history. Paul wrote the Romans in AD 56 to an established church, yet no one knows how it started. Catholics claim Peter started it, but we have no evidence of Peter arriving in Rome until the 60s. Our best guess is that Jews who trusted Christ on the day of Pentecost brought the gospel back to Rome, since some from Rome attended this important gathering (2:10b).

III. How Churches Began in Church History

- A. European Christians who migrated to America in the 1600s were not sent by their churches in England and other European nations. Nevertheless, they still came, thrust out in large measure by Anglicans and other state churches that persecuted rather than supported them!
- B. The modern missionary movement from Europe began in 1792 when William Carey left England for India. His own church refused to send him, so he established the first missionary society.
- C. J. Hudson Taylor initially entered China, backed by British churches. However, when his senders insisted that he stay in coastal areas in missionary compounds and wear Western dress, God called him to do otherwise. He moved inland and established the China Inland Mission. CIM missionaries were viewed as “renegade” since they adopted Chinese dress and integrated into society. However, this began a movement that has lasted to this day in millions of Chinese believers, though it was not initiated by the local churches of Hudson Taylor’s day.

- D. History records that Jesus Christ Himself built His church throughout the centuries, according to His promise (Matt. 16:18). Often, He did so through the faithfulness of local churches that recognized their responsibility to establish new congregations. However, as in the book of Acts, he continued to call individuals to faithfulness in establishing churches when their institutions failed to catch this vision.

IV. Do You Agree or Disagree?

To explore your own ideas on this vital subject, please mark A, U, or D beside each statement below to show whether you Agree, are Unsure, or Disagree with the teaching.

- A. Other churches always planted churches in the Book of Acts.
- B. Throughout church history, other churches have always planted churches.
- C. The only way to plant churches today is for churches to plant other churches.

V. Conclusion

God desires that churches plant other churches. But is this the only way that he works? Both in the book of Acts and throughout church history, churches often failed in this role. At these times, God raised up individuals who shared His heart with the lost, resulting in the establishment of new congregations.

This subject causes one to reconsider the identity of the bride of Christ. Is His “bride” the local church? If so, Jesus has many brides. The bride of Christ is the universal church that he washed, sanctified, and will present to Himself at his return (Eph. 5). Christ is adorning and expanding this bride through numerous church planting strategies.

Contrary to popular belief, Scripture does not command church planting. The Great Commission is to make disciples—not to plant churches (Matt. 28:18-20). I believe in church planting and am involved in this endeavor through a church-planting mission board and in helping establish Crossroads International Church in Singapore. Disciple-making best occurs in the context of the local church. Still, God brings these local assemblies into being in various ways—sometimes through faithful churches, and at other times through His faithful individuals who obey God’s voice even when their institutions neglect to respond to the Spirit’s promptings.

Permanent or Temporary?

Ralph Covell & Marshall Shelly, *Wherever* magazine (Spring 1982)

PERMANENT or temporary?

Which of the specific practices and commands that appear in the New Testament are to apply to all times in all places? Which are merely temporary, needed at one particular time in one particular place, but not necessarily applicable at other times and in other places?

To get a handle on the problem, try this self-think exercise we've adapted from some material put together by Mont Smith, a former missionary in Ethiopia. We've listed 50 practices and commands that appear in the New Testament. In a sense, all are "scriptural." The question is: Which are meant to be permanent (P)? Which are merely temporary (T)? Think about each one, then circle the appropriate response.

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Greet one another with a 'holy kiss (Rom. 16:16). | P | T | 25. Drink communion from a single cup (Mark 14:23). | P | T |
| 2. Abstain from meat that has been sacrificed to idols (Acts 15:29). | P | T | 26. Take formal religious vows (Acts 18:18). | P | T |
| 3. Be baptized (Acts 2:38). | P | T | 27. Avoid praying in public (Mt. 6:5,6). | P | T |
| 4. A woman ought to have a veil on her head (1 Cor. 11:10). | P | T | 28. Speak in tongues and prophesy (1 Cor. 14:5). | P | T |
| 5. Wash one another's feet (John 13:14). | P | T | 29. Meet in homes for church (Col. 4:15). | P | T |
| 6. Extend the right hand (left hand?) of fellowship (Gal. 2:9). | P | T | 30. Work with your hands (1 Thess. 4:11). | P | T |
| 7. Ordain by the "laying on of hands" (Acts 13:3). | P | T | 31. Lift your hands when praying (1 Tim. 2:8). | P | T |
| 8. "It is indecent for a woman to speak in an assembly" (1 Cor. 14:35). | P | T | 32. Give to those who beg from you (Mt. 5:42). | P | T |
| 9. Have fixed hours of prayer (Acts 3:1). | P | T | 33. Pray before meals (Lk. 24:30). | P | T |
| 10. Sing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16). | P | T | 34. Support no widow under 60 years old (1 Tim. 5:9). | P | T |
| 11. Abstain from eating blood (Acts 15:29). | P | T | 35. Say "Amen" at the end of prayers (1 Cor. 14:16). | P | T |
| 11. Slaves, obey your earthly masters (Eph. 6:5). | P | T | 36. Fast in connection with ordination (Acts 13:3). | P | T |
| 13. Observe the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:24). | P | T | 37. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic (Mark 6:9). | P | T |
| 14. Do not make any oaths (James 5:12). | P | T | 38. Wives, submit to your husbands (Col. 3:18). | P | T |
| 15. Anoint the sick with oil (James 5:14). | P | T | 39. Show no favoritism to the rich (James 2:1-7). | P | T |
| 16. Permit no woman to teach men (1 Tim. 2:12). | P | T | 40. Use unleavened bread for communion (Lk. 22:13, 19). | P | T |
| 17. Preach two by two (Mark 6:7). | P | T | 41. Cast lots for church officers (Acts 1:26). | P | T |
| 18. Go into Jewish synagogues to preach (Acts 14:1). | P | T | 42. Owe no man anything (Rom. 13:8). | P | T |
| 19. Eat what is set before you asking no questions of conscience (1 Cor. 10:27). | P | T | 43. Have seven deacons in the church (Acts 6:3). | P | T |
| 20. Prohibit women from wearing braided hair, gold, or pearls (1 Tim. 2:9). | P | T | 44. Don't eat meat from animals killed by strangulation (Acts 15:29). | P | T |
| 21. Abstain from fornication (Acts 15:29). | P | T | 45. If anyone will not work, don't let him eat (2 Thess. 3:10). | P | T |
| 22. Do not seek marriage (1 Cor. 7:27). | P | T | 46. Worship on Saturday (Acts 13:14, 42, 44). | P | T |
| 23. Be circumcised (Acts 15:5). | P | T | 47. Give up personal property (Acts 2:44, 45). | P | T |
| 24. Women should pray with their heads covered (1 Cor. 11:5). | P | T | 48. Have self-employed clergy (2 Thess. 3:7, 8). | P | T |
| | | | 49. Take collections in church for the poor (1 Cor. 16:1). | P | T |
| | | | 50. Long hair on a man is a disgrace (1 Cor. 11:14). | P | T |

Now that you're finished, get ready for the hard part. What principle did you use to decide which were permanent and essential and which were temporary and cultural? Since you made a separation, you must have used some standard. What was it? Remember that your principle must be one that can apply to every example in the above list.

Write out your principles here. Then, just to keep yourself honest, have a friend examine your categories for a second opinion on how well you held to your principles.

_____ 's Principles of Biblical Interpretation.

_____ (your name)

How Do We Know Whether a Bible Passage Is "Culturally Conditioned"?

Dr. Roy Zuck, unpublished class handout, "Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods"
(Dallas Theological Seminary, 1983)

To what extent is the relevance of Bible passages to us today limited by cultural contexts? Is every cultural practice and every situation, command, and principle in the Bible immediately transferable to our culture? How do we determine what is transferable and what is not?

1. Some situations, commands, or principles are repeatable, continuous, or not revoked, or pertain to moral and theological subjects, or are repeated elsewhere in Scripture, and therefore are transferable.
Examples: Gen. 9:6; Prov. 3:5-6; John 3:3; Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 6:10-19; Col. 3:12-13; 1 Pet. 5:6.
2. Some situations, commands, or principles pertain to an individual's specific nonrepeatable circumstances, or nonmoral or nontheological subjects, or have been revoked, and are therefore not transferable.
Examples: Matt. 21:2-3; 2 Tim. 4:11, 13; Heb. 7:12; 10:1; Lev. 20:11 (cf. 1 Cor. 5).
3. Some situations or commands pertain to cultural settings that are only partially similar to ours and in which only the principles are transferable.
Examples: Rom 16:16; 1 Cor. 8; Deut. 6:4-6.
4. Some situations or commands pertain to cultural settings with no similarities to ours but in which the principles are transferable.
Examples: Matt. 26:7; Exod. 3:5.

* * *

A frequently discussed passage pertaining to the question of "culturally conditioned" biblical material is 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. One question to answer is, Does this passage refer to the hair as a covering or to a separate head covering, such as a veil, over the hair? If it means the latter (and that seems to be suggested by verses 4, 5, 6, and 7) then there are four options in interpreting its cultural conditioning and the extent of its relevance for today:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. Women today should wear <u>shawls</u> in church as a sign of their submissiveness.
<i>- women wear shawls in all their public gatherings - to not wear it was a sign of rebellion</i></p> | <p>The situation and the principle are both repeatable.</p> |
| <p>b. The passage has no relevance at all for women today.</p> | <p>The situation and the principle are not repeatable.</p> |
| <p>c. Women today should wear <u>hats</u> in church as a sign of their submissiveness.
<i>- what does women wearing hats in church convey today?</i></p> | <p>The situation is partially similar, and the principle is transferable.</p> |
| <p>d. Women today need not wear hats in church but they are to be submissive.
<i>gentile brides did not wear shawls until they were married; at the wedding, they put on a shawl as a sign of their submission to their husbands</i></p> | <p>The situation is entirely different (a woman's <u>veil</u> ^{shawl} was a symbol of her husband's authority; therefore sacred prostitutes in Corinth did not wear ^{veils} veils), but the principle is transferable.</p> |

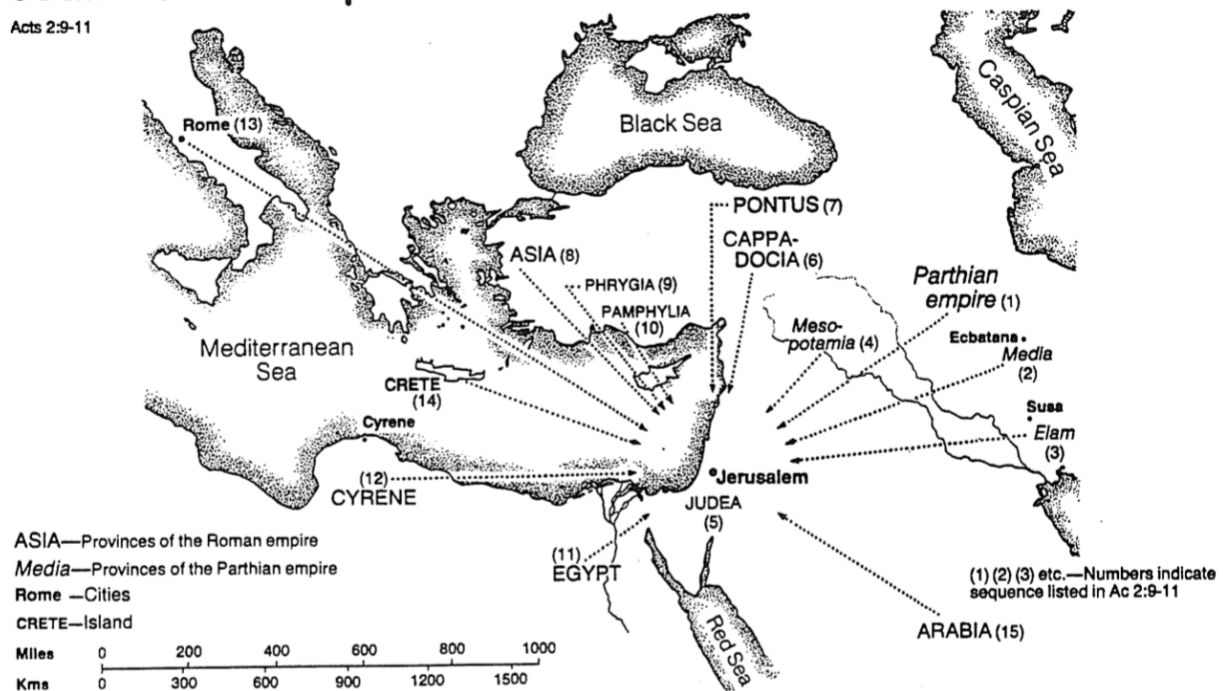
Pentecost Countries & Damascus

Bible Visual Resource Book, 215

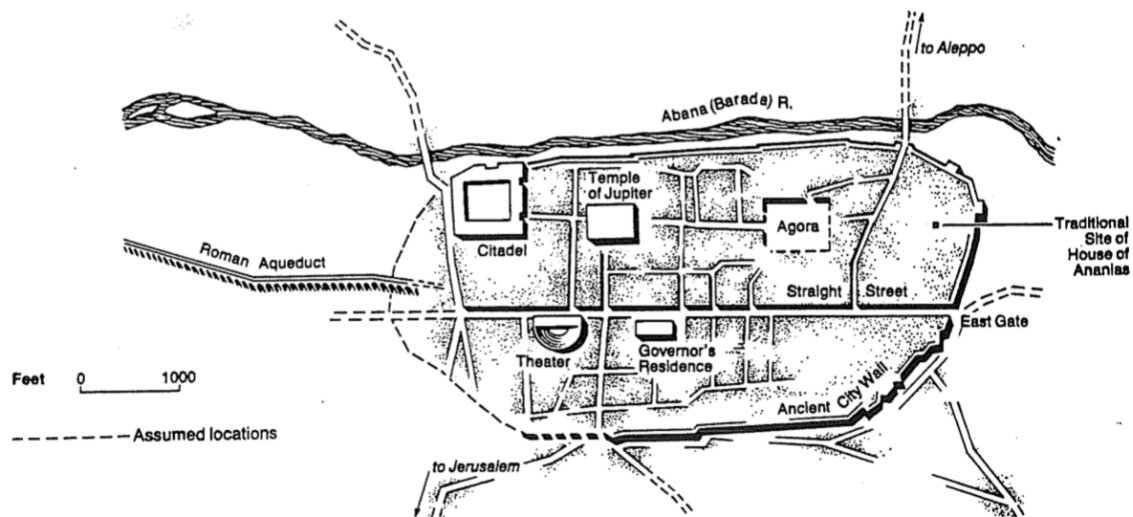
Acts

Countries of People Mentioned at Pentecost

Acts 2:9-11



Roman Damascus



Damascus represented much more to Saul, the strict Pharisee, than another stop on his campaign of repression. It was the hub of a vast commercial network with far-flung lines of caravan trade reaching into north Syria, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Persia and Arabia. If the new "Way" of Christianity flourished in Damascus, it would quickly reach all these places. From the viewpoint of the Sanhedrin and of Saul, the arch-persecutor, it had to be stopped in Damascus.

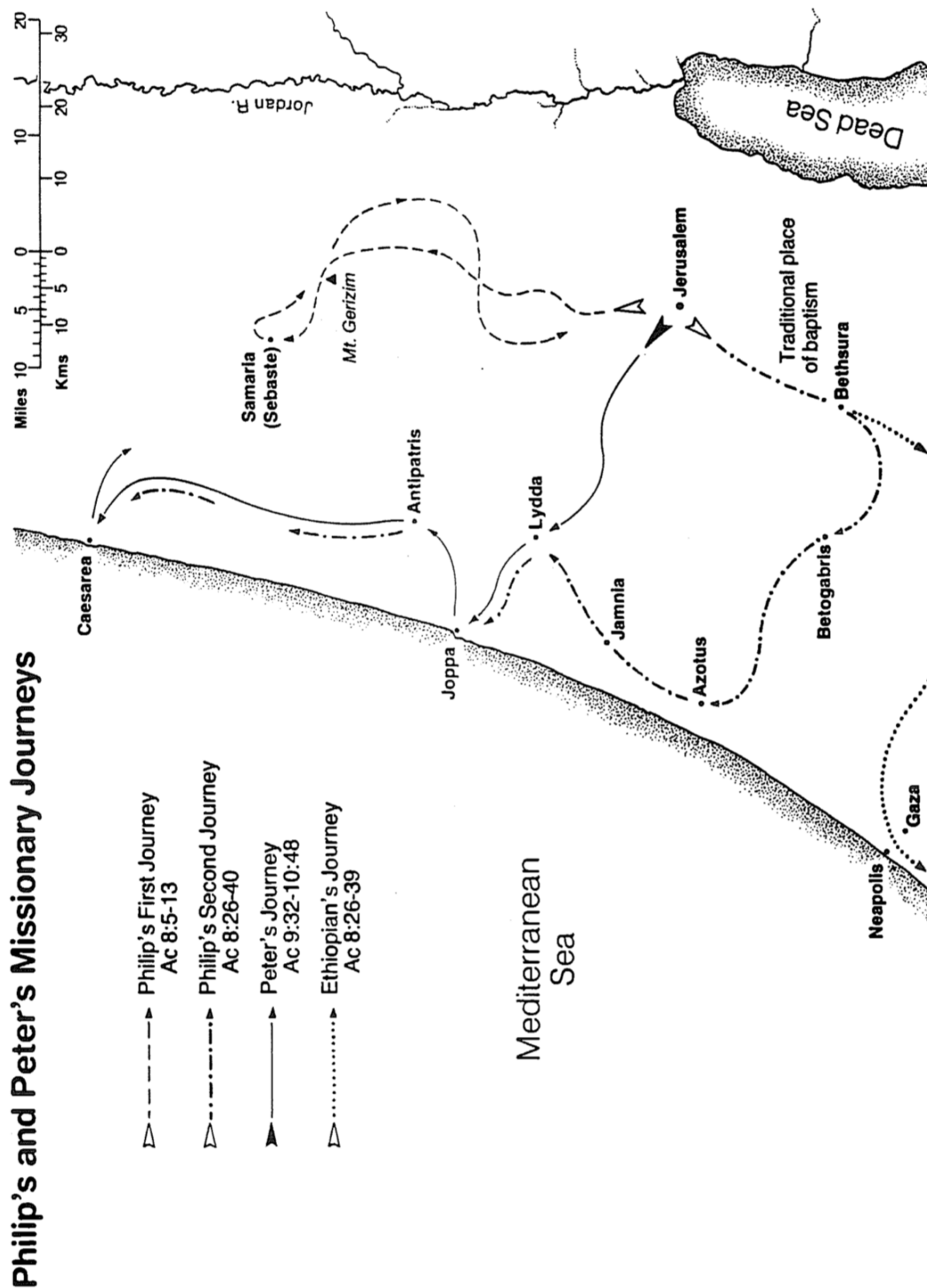
The city itself was a veritable oasis, situated in a plain watered by the Biblical rivers Abana and Parpar.

Roman architecture overlaid the Hellenistic town plan with a great temple to Jupiter and a mile-long colonnaded street, the "Straight Street" of Ac 9:11. The city gates and a section of the town wall may still be seen today, as well as the lengthy bazaar that runs along the line of the ancient street.

The dominant political figure at the time of Paul's escape from Damascus (2 Co 11:32-33) was Aretas IV, king of the Nabateans (9 B.C.-A.D. 40), though normally the Decapolis cities were attached to the province of Syria and were thus under the influence of Rome.

Philip's and Peter's Missionary Journeys

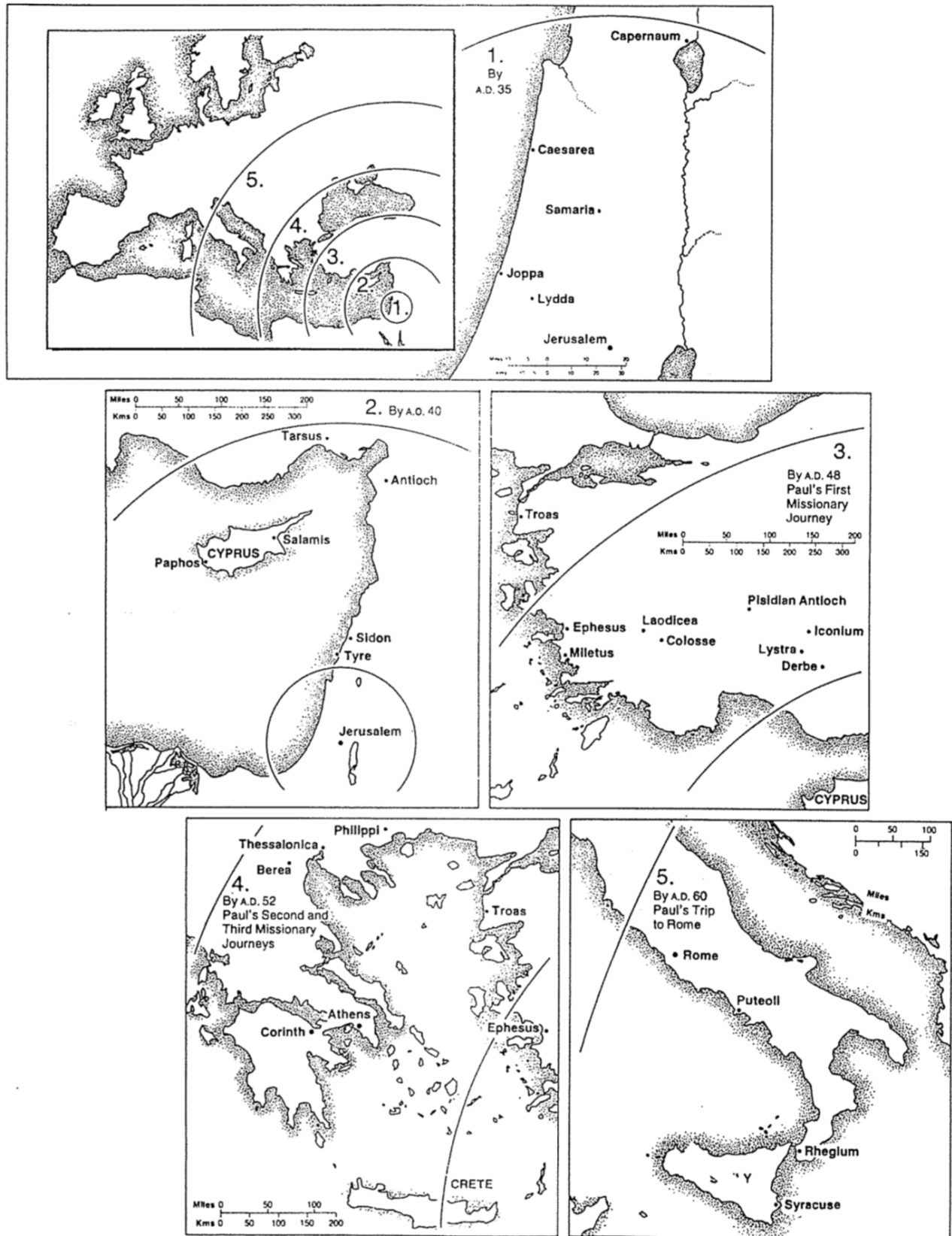
Bible Visual Resource Book, 223



The Spread of the Gospel

Bible Visual Resource Book, 217

The Spread of the Gospel



Two Important Issues in Acts

Dr. Walter Steitz, East Asia School of Theology (Singapore, 2005)

1. What is the purpose of Acts? Is Acts 1:8 a full statement of the purpose of this book?

a. Test cases:

- 1) Acts 5:12-42: What is emphasized? The proclamation of the gospel or the opposition?
- 2) The ministry at Cyprus (13:4-12). What do these nine verses relate? What is the author emphasizing in this account? (The narrative technique of pace of the narrative gives us the clue).
- 3) The ministry at Thessalonica (17:1-9).

Conclusion: Opposition by the Jews is emphasized more than the preaching of the gospel.

b. How much preaching of the gospel is recorded in Acts 21-28? (Why is the long account of the shipwreck of chapter 27 included)?

What is emphasized?

- 1) The hostility of the Jews (21:28-31; 22:21-23; 23:12,13; 25:1-3).
- 2) Why are the Jews so hostile? (11:1-3; 12:3,4,11; 21:28; 22:21). (The preaching and inclusion of the gentiles, and yet this was specifically directed by the sovereign Lord).
- 3) The supernatural protection of Paul from certain death (21:31,32; 22:22-24; 23:12-14,23; 25:2-4; 27:20,42-44; 28:3-6).

c. The major theme of a narrative is normally repeated continuously throughout that narrative, is emphasized by much slow paced narrative (mimetic scenes and direct discourse), and is stated at the very end of that narrative. Acts 28:25-28 is the statement of the major theme of Acts.

d. Never in Acts did the gospel go "to the end of the earth." The gospel went as far as Rome, which was considered to be the center of the world. The "end of the earth" would be Tarshish (Spain).

2. What is the role of Acts 12 in the greater narrative of Acts? A secondary question: Why was the Jewish laity so hostile toward the apostles?

a. Commentators (even evangelical) hold varied viewpoints concerning the function and significance of Acts 12.

Two Important Issues in Acts (2 of 2)

Dr. Walter Steitz, East Asia School of Theology (Singapore, 2003)

- b. This chapter is located at the very hinge of Acts.

Book 1--Acts 1-12: Primary character is Peter; all of the action with the exception of 11:19-30--ministry in Antioch) is in Jerusalem or originates from Jerusalem.

Book 2--Acts 13-28: Primary character is Paul; the action of the earlier part originates from Antioch of Syria. With the exception of the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, none of the action originates from Jerusalem--Jerusalem becomes the great source of animosity to the supernatural work of God through Paul.

There are numerous parallels in the two books. The intensity of the miraculous through the primary character increases and culminates with the raising of the dead (4:15, 9:40-41; 19:11,12; 20:9-12). The primary character is supernaturally delivered by God from *certain* death. Each book is initiated by the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4 also 5:20,21; 13:1-3).

- c. The book of Acts is very selective. It covers a historical period of at least 27 years. Thus the average pace of the book is one chapter per year. Yet the events of Acts 12 cover a very short period of time (12:6-18 occur within one night) and are recounted at very slow pace which indicates the importance of this chapter.
- d. Throughout Acts 1-11 God is supernaturally working. Each time that He works there is acceptance and opposition (a cause/effect relationship). However, the opposition is emphasized much more than the acceptance. A major work of the Lord is preparing Peter for the receptivity of the gentiles in Acts 10. The importance of this is greatly emphasized by the numerous repetitions of this event in very slow pace. However, no effect is directly stated other than that of the circumcised believers (11:1-3).

However, a definite pattern of cause/effect has been established in Acts 1-11. Once a definite pattern is established in narrative, it is no longer necessary to state that an effect is an effect. The reader intuitively understands that it is an effect.

- e. Conclusions: The hostility of the Jewish laity of Acts 12 (repeated three times) is the effect of the gospel going to the gentile Cornelius through the Apostles (and particularly Peter).

Acts 12 is a critical hinge in the narrative of Acts. The culmination of the Jewish hostility in Acts 12 is "the straw that broke the camel's back"--"the Kadesh-Barnea." Because of this the Lord turned His back on the nation. He removed His center of spiritual operations from Jerusalem to a gentile city, Antioch of Syria.

The Subject-Complement of Acts

Dr. Walter Steitz, East Asia School of Theology (Singapore, 2003)

I have not developed an adequate subject-complement for Acts. At this time I am not aware of anyone who has done this.

The subject-complement must include the following elements:

1. The unusual supernatural activity of God which initiated and sustained the proclamation of the gospel to the gentiles.
2. This work was increasingly resisted by the Jews. Ultimately there was a total rejection of this work.
3. Yet ironically God used this very Jewish resistance to further move the gospel to the gentiles.
4. Regardless of the intensity of the Jewish opposition, God's work could not be thwarted. (Peter and Paul should have died--there was no other alternative from the human perspective. However, God miraculously overruled. Neither of them could be put to death).
5. The result of the intense Jewish opposition was that Israel was blinded.
6. This book shows the move of the gospel from the Jews to the gentiles.

Saul and Paul

Probably one of the most dramatic conversions in the early church was that of Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul, the best missionary in the first century. God often takes persons of great passion like Saul and breaks them to use in his service. Notice the differences between the “two men”:

	Saul	Paul
Meaning of Name	“to demand”	“little”
Citizenship	Roman citizen & Jew	Same—could preach in either Greek or Hebrew
Title	Pharisee, rabbi (orthodox)	Apostle, servant of Jesus Christ (orthodox)
Trainer/Place	Gamaliel in Jerusalem (22:3)	God in Arabia & Damascus (Gal. 1:17)
Style of Education	Formal	Informal
Passion	Zealous for the Law (Phil. 3:5-6)	Zealous for Grace
Defended	Judaism	Christianity
Teaching Audience	Jews alone	Mostly Gentiles
Demeanor	Killed Christians (22:4)	Blessed all (23:1)
Opponents	Fought “heresy” called Christianity	Fought heresies of Judaizers, mystery religions, Stoics, Epicureans, etc.
Prayer	Others prayed for him (7:60–8:1)	He prayed for others
Oral Law	Authoritative 613 commands (248 positive + 365 negative)	Matter of conscience (Rom. 14:1–15:13)

Do you know anyone who is so opposed to Christ that it seems impossible to envision that person as a Christian? I hope not after seeing Paul’s background!



The Use of Amos 9 in Acts 15

Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:394-95

Acts 15:11-18

15:11. The statement, "We are saved, just as they are, is amazing. A Jew under the Law would say the opposite and in reverse order ("they are saved as we are"), but one who knew God's grace, as Peter did, would not say that. Salvation for anyone—Jew or Gentile—is by God's grace (v. 11) and is by faith (v. 9; cf. Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8).

15:12. Barnabas and Paul, who next addressed the assembly, described the miraculous signs and wonders (*semeia* and *terata*; cf. 2:43 [see comments there]); 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3) that God had done among the Gentiles through them. These would especially convince the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22) so they listened in silence. This response implied they would not argue against the testimonies of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas.

c. The decision concerning circumcision (15:13-29)

15:13-14. James, evidently the head of the church at Jerusalem, then took the floor and issued a summary statement. He was Jesus' half brother and wrote the Epistle of James.

He began by discussing Peter's experience (Acts 10). In referring to Peter as Simon, James used a name which would be logical in its setting in Jerusalem (actually the Gr. has *Symeōn*, an even more Jewish spelling, used only here and in 2 Peter 1:1 in the NT).

The phrase at first is crucial because it affirmed that Paul and Barnabas were not the first to go to the Gentiles. As Peter had already said (Acts 15:7-11) the question had actually been settled in principle (chaps. 10-11) before Paul and Barnabas went on their first journey.

15:15-18. Quite properly the council desired more than the testimony of experience. They wanted to know how it corresponded with the witness of the Scriptures. This was the ultimate test.

To prove that Gentile salvation apart from circumcision was an Old Testament doctrine, James quoted from Amos 9:11-12. Several problems are involved in this quotation.

One problem involves the text. James here quoted a text similar to the Septuagint (the Gr. OT) that differs from the Hebrew text. The Hebrew of Amos 9:12 may be translated, "That they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the

Col. 1:24-27), so the church would not be referred to in Amos.

A second view of the passage is commonly held by premillennialists. According to this view there are four chronological movements in this passage: the present Church Age ("taking from the Gentiles a people for Himself," Acts 15:14), the return of Christ to Israel (v. 16a), the establishing of the Davidic kingdom (v. 16b), and the turning of Gentiles to God (v. 17). While this does interpret these verses in a logical fashion, this approach has some difficulties. (1) The quotation begins with the words "After this," Premillennialists assert James used this phrase to suit his interpretation of the passage. But since the quotation begins with "after this" James must be quoting the sense of Amos 9:11. Therefore this phrase looks back, not to Acts 15:14, but to Amos 9:8-10, which describes the Tribulation ("a time of trouble for Jacob," Jer. 30:7). (2) If the temporal phrase "after this" refers to the present Age in Amos 9:11, Amos would then have predicted the church in the Old Testament.

A third view, also premillennial, may be more plausible. James simply asserted that Gentiles will be saved in the Millennium when Christ will return and rebuild David's fallen tent, that is, restore the nation Israel. Amos said nothing about Gentiles needing to be circumcised. Several factors support this interpretation: (1) This fits the purpose of the council. If Gentiles will be saved in the Kingdom Age (the Millennium), why should they become Jewish proselytes by circumcision in the Church Age? (2) This approach suits the meaning of "in that day" in Amos 9:11. After the Tribulation (Amos 9:8-10) God will establish the messianic kingdom (Amos 9:11-12). James (Acts 15:16) interpreted "in that day" to mean that "at the time when" God does one (the Tribulation) He will then do the other. In that sense James could say "After this." (3) This interpretation gives significance to the word "first" in verse 14. Cornelius and his household were among the first Gentiles to become members of Christ's body, the church. Gentile salvation will culminate in great blessing for them in the Millennium (cf. Rom. 11:12). (4) A number of prophets

Acts 15:19-21

predicted Gentile salvation in the Millennium, as James stated in Acts 15:15 (e.g., Isa. 42:6; 60:3; Mal. 1:11).

15:19-21. As a result of this theological discussion James set forth a practical decision. It was his considered judgment (*krinō*, lit., "I judge") that the church should not make it difficult (*parenchlein*, "to annoy"; used only here in the NT) for the Gentiles. This parallels in thought the sentiments of Peter expressed in verse 10. Instead (*alla*, "but," a strong adversative conjunction) James suggested they draft a letter affirming an ethic which would not offend those steeped in the Old Testament.

The Gentiles were to abstain from three items: (a) food polluted by idols, (b) sexual immorality, and (c) the meat of strangled animals and . . . blood. Many Bible teachers say these are only ceremonial matters. The food polluted by idols is explained in verse 29 as "food sacrificed to idols" (cf. 21:25). This then, it is argued, looks at the same problem Paul discussed (1 Cor. 8-10). The abstinence from sexual immorality is explained as referring to the marriage laws of Leviticus 18:6-20. The prohibition against eating blood is taken to refer to Leviticus 17:10-14. All three prohibitions according to this interpretation look back to the Jewish ceremonial Law.

However, it seems better to take these as moral issues. The reference to food polluted by idols should be taken in the sense of Revelation 2:14, 20. It was a usual practice among Gentiles to use an idol's temple for banquets and celebrations. Paul also condemned the practice of Christians participating in these (1 Cor. 10:14-22). Fornication was such a common sin among the Gentiles that it was an accepted practice. The problem of immorality even persisted among Christians all too often, as is witnessed by the New Testament injunctions against it (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12-18, where Paul was evidently answering arguments in favor of immorality). The third prohibition goes back further than Leviticus 17; it looks back to Genesis 9, where God established the Noahic Covenant, a "contract" still in effect today. There God gave people the privilege of eating flesh but the blood was to be drained from it.

All three prohibitions in Acts 15:20 are best taken in an ethical or moral

Interpreting Acts

How Does Luke Teach Theology Through His Narrative?

Dr. Tim Wiarda, Singapore Bible College (February 2005)

1. How are the passages in Acts 16:10-17 (the trip from Troas to Philippi), 20:5-21:18 (the trip from Philippi to Jerusalem) and 27:1-28:16 (the trip from Caesarea to Rome) *different* from the rest of the book of Acts?
2. What does this tell you about the author of Acts?
3. What if someone said, 'The author put in these first-person plurals on purpose in order to make people think he was an eye-witness, when actually he wasn't.'
4. What if someone said, 'The author found a record written by someone else and incorporated it into his narrative, forgetting to change the first-person plurals to third person.'
5. Why does Luke end the book of Acts the way he does? Does the ending tell you anything about when the book was written?

Interpreting Acts

How Does Luke's Including Himself in Certain Accounts Affect the Theology?

Dr. Tim Wiarda, Singapore Bible College (February 2005) Page 2 of 2

Elwell and Yarbrough highlight a key question for interpreters of Acts: 'How much of Acts merely *describes* what once took place, and how much *prescribes* what *should* take place in other times and settings?' At one extreme are those who want to make everything they see in Acts a normative pattern for doctrine and practice. At the other end of the spectrum are those who say Acts is purely descriptive history and therefore not a source of teaching at all. Better than either of these two extremes is to recognise that Acts does provide important teaching for Christians, but that we must think carefully to make sure we discern Luke's intended lessons.

How do we know whether something we see in Acts should be taken as a pattern for us today? The following five questions can help us decide.

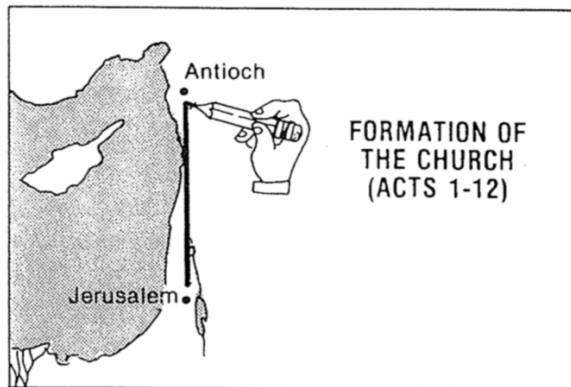
- 1) What is the primary *focus* of the section of narrative in which the item occurs?
- 2) Does the item occur only once or is there a repeated pattern of similar behaviour?
- 3) Does the item play a special role relating to a unique moment in the history of God's redemptive plan?
- 4) Is the item somehow related to the particular cultural or situational context of the early church?
- 5) Is there didactic material (direct teaching material) elsewhere in the NT that throws light on the item we find in Acts?

Test case for discussion: Should we choose church leaders by casting lots?

1. How does the practice of casting lots measure up when the five questions above are asked?
2. What is Luke's intention or purpose for including 1:26 in his history of the early church?
3. What is the primary focus of the whole episode of choosing a replacement for Judas (1:12-26)?
4. What details in the narrative of 1:12-26 show you its primary focus?

The Land of Acts and Letters Compared with the USA

Terry Hall, *Bible Panorama*, 144

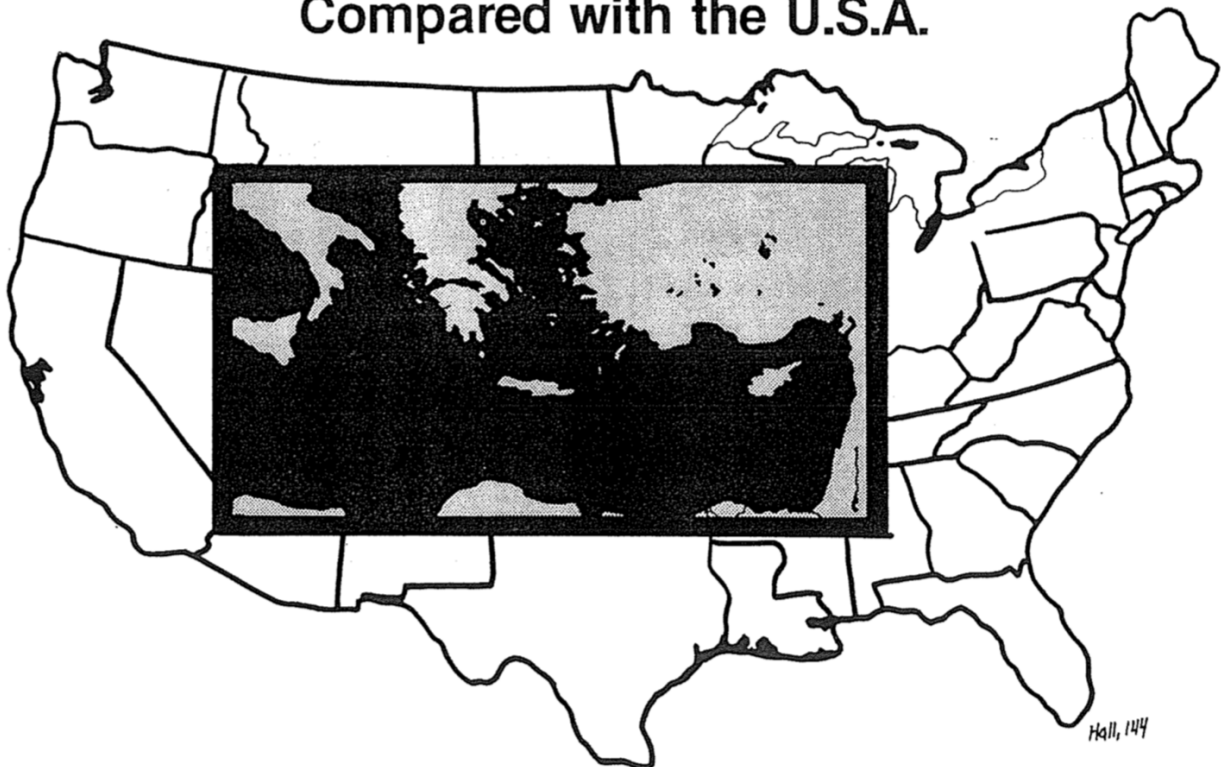


After Pentecost the church was mainly Jewish and was centered in Jerusalem. Then Philip took the Gospel to Judea and Samaria before Saul of Tarsus was converted on the Damascus Road. Peter was encouraged, in a vision of a sheet full of ceremonially clean and unclean animals, to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. Then Jewish persecution caused a great expansion of the church as far north as Antioch

in Syria, where the disciples were first called "Christians." Antioch soon became the missionary center of the early church. The first three evangelistic tours by the Apostle Paul began in this city.

Let's let the S of Syria also remind us of Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, who began the church and who still seeks to empower it. Twenty-six times in Acts we read that Christians spoke the word of the Lord boldly. Many of those references, in their contexts, also mention the Holy Spirit. Who converted the cowardly Peter after Jesus' trials into the powerful, bold preacher on the Day of Pentecost? The Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit who enabled the apostles to rejoice when they were persecuted for Jesus' sake. There is a principle here for us. God's power works in and through His people by His Holy Spirit.

The Land of the Acts and Letters Compared with the U.S.A.



Sermons in the Book of Acts

Acts has many abbreviated sermons. In fact, 24 of the 28 chapters include a sermon or sermon portion. This study contrasts three key sermons to discover some clues as to what made them so effective.

	Acts 2:14-39	Acts 13:16-41	Acts 17:21-31
Speaker	Peter	Paul	Paul
Audience	Jews	Jews and God-fearing Gentiles	Pagan Gentiles
City	Jerusalem	Antioch	Athens
Place	House (v. 2) at the Temple (Luke 24:53)?	Synagogue	Aeropause Meeting
Type of Place	Religious	Religious	Secular
Time	Day of Pentecost	1st Missionary Journey	2nd Missionary Journey
Subject (theme)	The reason some Jews miraculously speak unknown languages	The fulfillment of Israel's national history	The activities of the unknown God
Complement	is because God's Spirit is poured out on them through Jesus, Israel's resurrected Messiah	is in Jesus as our risen Savior who is worthy of our trust	are creation and judgment of man which makes idolatry unreasonable
Short MI	Jesus is Messiah (36)	Believe in Jesus (39)	Repent of idolatry (30)
Application Structure	Simple—application at the end (38-39)	Cyclical—application in centre (26) & end (38-41)	Simple—application at the end (30-31)
Main Idea Structure	Inductive (36)	Inductive (23)-Deductive (24-37)	Deductive (24)
Type	Topical-Biblical	Expositional	Topical-Secular
Style	Extemporaneous	Narrative	Reasoned polemic
Introduction "Ho Hum!" (How he gets attention)	Cites a recent event: Spirit baptism (14-15)	Tells a familiar story: Identifies with listeners by citing common history (16-22)	Notes local interest item: altar to an unknown god (22-23)
Thrust of Introduction	"Why do you think these people appear drunk?"	"I am an informed Jew who also has longed for the Messiah"	"I have been observing your town"
How the Speaker Draws in His Listeners	Raises curiosity about the miraculous speaking in other languages	Raises curiosity about how his Judaism differs from theirs	Raises curiosity about who the unknown God is
Body	"The Spirit descended from the risen Messiah Jesus" (16-36)	"Jesus is Israel's risen Messiah" (23-37)	"Idolatry is incompatible with the living creator God" (24-28)
Illustration Sources	Scripture (Joel 2:28-32; Ps. 16:8-11; 110:1)	Scripture (Ps. 2:7; 16:10; Isa. 55:3; Hab. 1:5)	Secular (v. 28: poets Epimenides & Aratus)
Resurrection of Christ Noted	Extensive with scriptural support (24-32)	Extensive with scriptural support (30-37)	Brief & no mention of Jesus' name (31)
Conclusion	Main Idea: Jesus is the Messiah (36)	Scripture: Habakkuk 1:5 quoted: "I will do something that you won't believe" (41)	Burning questions: "Who will judge us?" and "Who is it who was raised?" (31)
Application	Indirect: Implications left to them: "How can we be saved?" (37)	Direct: "Forgiveness is offered to you" so "don't be scoffers" (38, 40)	Direct: God "commands all people everywhere to repent [of idolatry]" (30)
Result	3000 saved (41)	Invited to speak again, some believed, he turned to Gentiles (42-48)	Many believed but others sneered (32-34)

The Kerygma* of the Early Church

H. Wayne House, *Chronological Charts of the NT*

* *Kerygma* (Gr. κήρυγμα) is a noun that means "what is preached, message, proclamation."

1. The promises by God made in the Old Testament have now been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 2:30; 3:19, 24; 10:43; 26:6-7, 22; Rom. 1:2-4; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-2; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:18-19).
2. Jesus was anointed by God at His baptism as Messiah (Acts 10:38).
3. Jesus began His ministry in Galilee after His baptism (Acts 10:37).
4. He conducted a beneficent ministry, doing good and performing mighty works by the power of God (Mark 10:45; Acts 2:22; 10:38).
5. The Messiah was crucified according to the purpose of God (Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Acts 2:23; 3:13-15, 18; 4:11; 10:39; 26:23; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 1:17-18; 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:2, 19; 3:18; 1 John 4:10).
6. He was raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples (Acts 2:24, 31-32; 3:15, 26; 10:40-41; 17:31; 26:23; Rom. 8:34; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:4-7, 12ff.; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Peter 1:2, 21; 3:18, 21).
7. Jesus was exalted by God and given the name "Lord" (Acts 2:25-29, 33-36; 3:13; 10:36; Rom. 8:34; 10:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22).
8. He gave the Holy Spirit to form the new community of God (Acts 1:8; 2:14-18, 33, 38-39; 10:44-47; 1 Peter 1:12).
9. He will come again for judgment and the restoration of all things (Acts 3:20-21; 10:42; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; 1 Thess. 1:10).
10. All who hear the message should repent and be baptized (Acts 2:21, 38; 3:19; 10:43, 47-48; 17:30; 26:20; Rom. 1:17; 10:9; 1 Peter 3:21).

This schema served as the essential proclamation of the early church, though different authors of the New Testament may leave out a portion or vary in emphasis on particulars in the kerygma. Compare the entire Gospel of Mark, which closely follows the Petrine aspect of the kerygma.

Key Characters in the A.D. Video

Religious life was complex during the time Paul wrote his epistles. Probably the most extreme differences came in the contrast between Roman religion and Judaism (and those Jews who had embraced Christ as Messiah). The conflicts are well portrayed in the film viewed in class entitled "A.D." This 12-hour Vincenzo LaBella production cost US\$30 million to produce and was filmed on location in Tunisia, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Rome. It was broadcast in the USA during the 1984-85 television season. Gospel Films, Inc. (PO Box 455; Muskegon, Michigan 49443-0455) edited the version seen in class to a 6-hour series that I purchased from Christian Book Distributors (www.christianbook.com). The following characterizations are taken from the study guide that accompanies this 3-tape set on pages 7-9.

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A.D. mixes historic characters who we know from the New Testament, leaders mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus, figures that appear in the works of Roman historians Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio Cassius, and characters who have been created by the script writers to advance the story.

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

Peter, Paul, Barnabas, James the Greater, James the Lesser, Luke, Stephen, Philip and Thomas are all disciples and apostles who appear in the narratives of the Four Gospels and The Acts of the Apostles. Much of their dialog is drawn from the words of Scripture and should be checked in the cross-referencing in the Study Guide.

Priscilla and Aquila, mentioned in The Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's letters, have a greatly expanded role in A.D. Their presence as leading members of Rome's small Jewish community, their migration to Corinth during the expulsion of Claudius, and their important connection with Paul can be traced through Acts. The additional program material given to them is in character and context, but is the creation of the scriptwriters.

Gamaliel, the teacher and leading Pharisee in the Jerusalem Temple appears in Acts 5 and is also mentioned in the work of Josephus. His moderate views and tolerance of the new Christian teachings is based in history and makes him an important character as the small band of believers come to terms with their Jewish heritage.

The Ethiopian servant of Candace, who is baptized by Philip, is an important character in Acts, Chapter 8. Not only does his search of the Scriptures lead him to a decision of faith, but he represents an important expansion of the Gospel message to all people.

Pilate and Festus, the Roman provincial governors who attempted to maintain the Roman rule over Judea are both mentioned in the New Testament. Roman historians mention that Pilate was removed from office, though the reason for the removal is obscure.

Thought Questions:

1—Contrast the reactions of Nero and his advisor with that of the senators and common people on the burning of Rome.

2—What are your feelings and thoughts about the Christians dying in the arena?

3—Valerius states after seeing the slaughter of Christians, "I am not a Roman soldier anymore. I will not serve a butcher and a pack of wolves... I renounce my rank. I renege my service to the Emperor, this city!" How did hearing this strike you? Have you ever heard something similar in your own experience or that of others?

Key Characters in the A.D. Video (2 of 2)

FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

Two of the three couples who play key roles in the developing story of A.D. (the third couple is Aquila and Priscilla) are (1) Caleb, (the Jewish zealot freedom fighter) and Corinna, (daughter of a Senator and female gladiator) (2) Valerius, (the Roman soldier) and Sarah, (sister of Caleb). Aside from being interesting characters, they represent four important social and cultural perspectives that had great effect on the Roman world of A.D.

Caleb bridges the Judean resistance fighters who sought to overthrow the Roman government and bring in the Messianic Age by force with the violent world of the gladiators - people trained to fight and die for the supposed entertainment of the Emperor and the citizens. Since the excesses of the Emperor often left the public treasury without any money, the games were created to take the people's minds off the unemployment, poverty and hunger that gripped Rome during these years.

Although Caleb's character does not end the program with a confession of faith, it is clear that the words, teachings and lives of the Christians has made a dramatic impact on his life.

His early relationship with the various groups within Jewish culture gives an introduction to the following:

Pharisees - a strict and legalistic group that studied the Torah and spent much of its time debating the implications of the Law.

Saducees - a group that drew its heritage out of the Wisdom books in the Scriptures and had very different views of life, death and resurrection.

Nazarenes/Essenes - members of reclusive, monastic communities that pulled away from the rest of Jewish society and spent most of their time in rites of purification, study, and prayer.

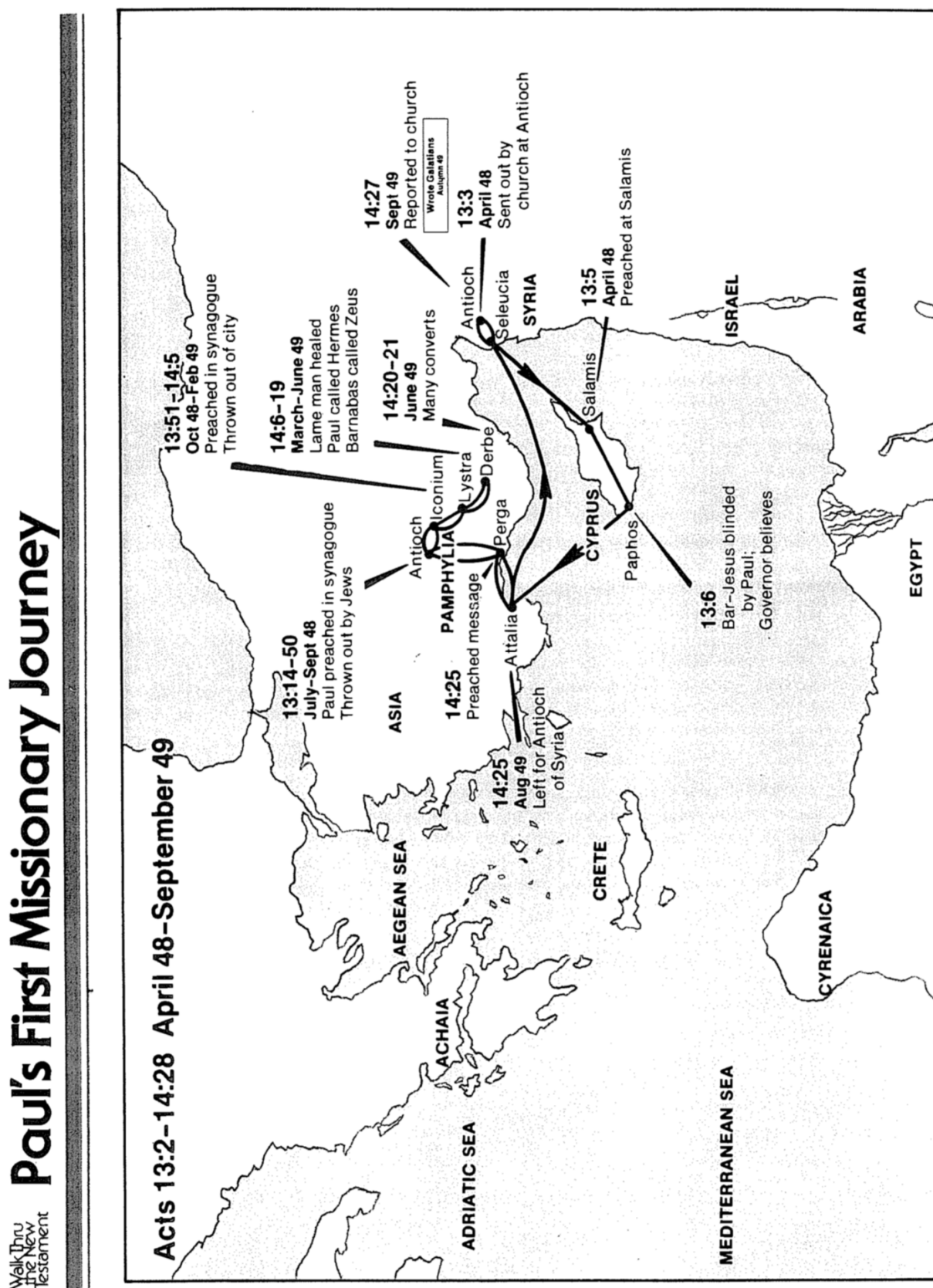
Zealots - Jewish freedom fighters who fought as guerilla bands, attacking the Romans where they could and working for the overthrow of the government.

Corinna, who becomes Caleb's wife, represents a small but active part of Roman society. Although history concentrates on the male gladiators, Roman historians make the point that women were also involved in the gladiatorial training and struggles. Because she is a Roman, Corinna's character is much more reliant on the superstition and mysticism that were a major part of Roman religion.

Valerius represents the side of Roman life that was most stable through the tumult of the various Emperors. The military, carefully organized into units that were highly disciplined, represented the strength and presence of Rome. Being a career soldier was considered an honor and the military had great status in the community. The character of Valerius presents a uniting thread between Roman history and the growth of the faith. His presence with Emperors and governors and with Paul and Aquila and Priscilla pulls the narrative together and, in a believable way, bridges the two worlds.

Sarah brings the Jewish tradition into her slavery, represents the struggle that the Jews had under Claudius, and through her marriage to Valerius, shows not only the traditional Roman wedding, but also the process through which slaves could become free.

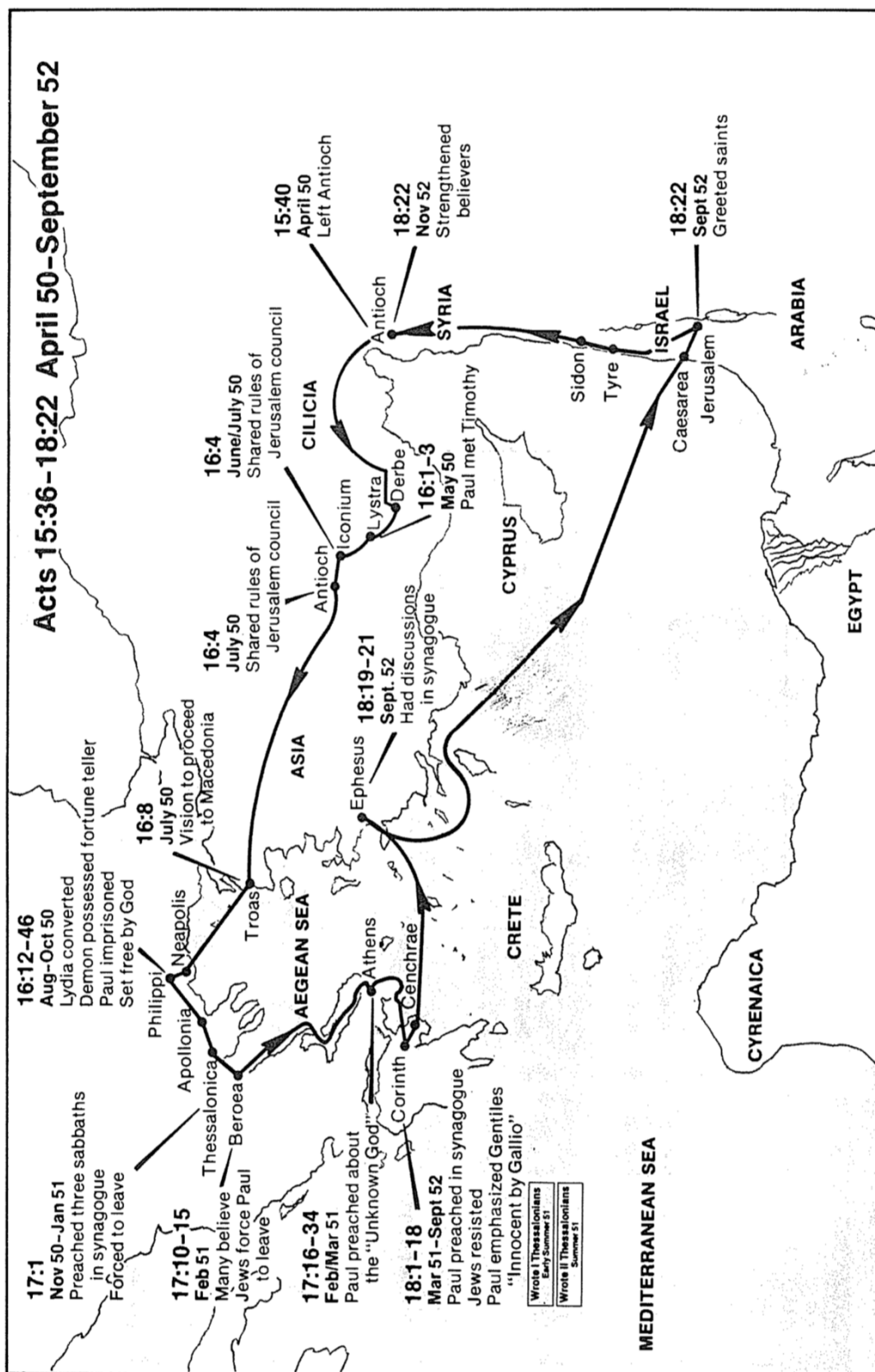
Paul's First Missionary Journey



Paul's Second Missionary Journey

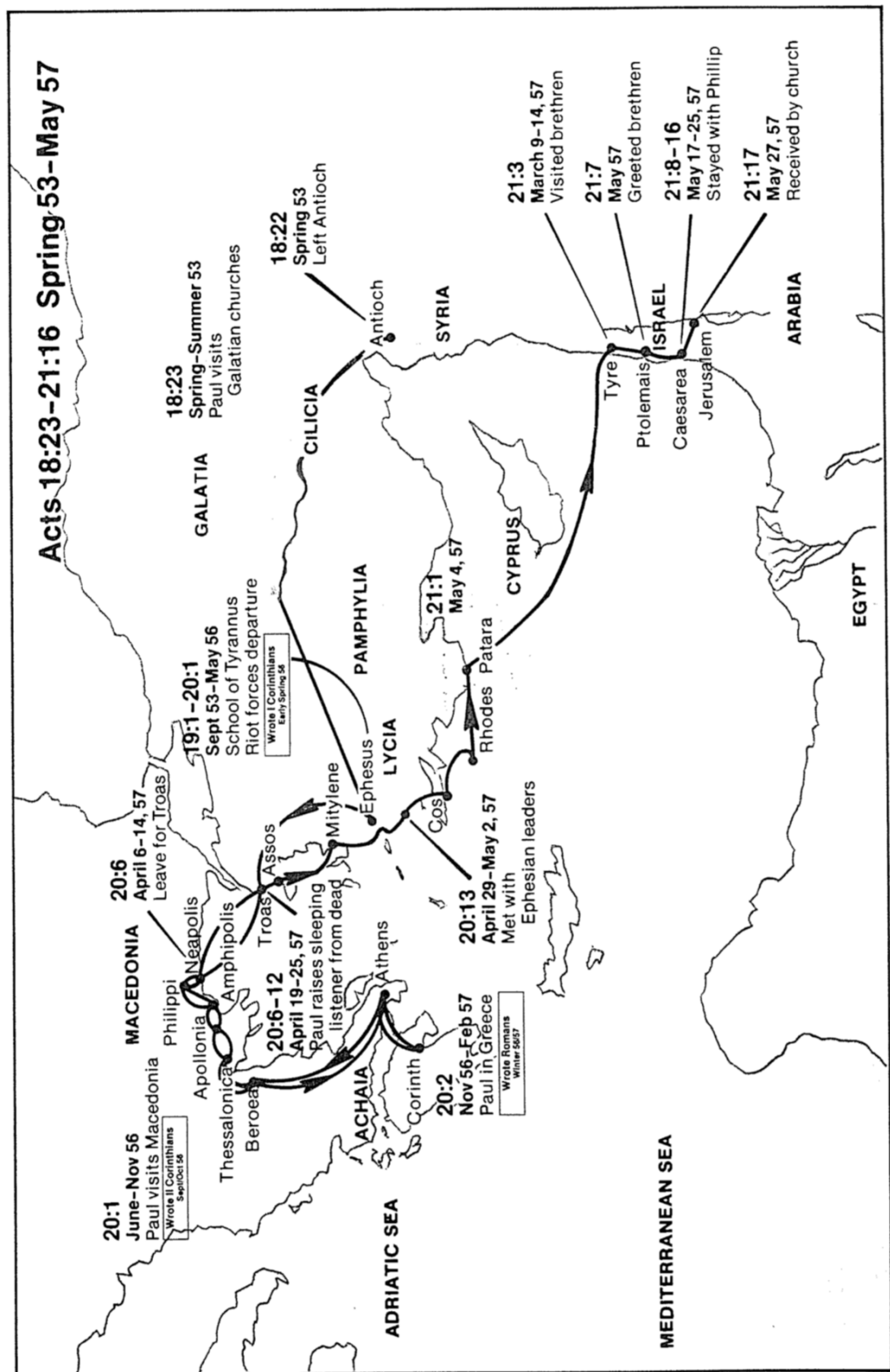
Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Walk Thru
the New
Testament



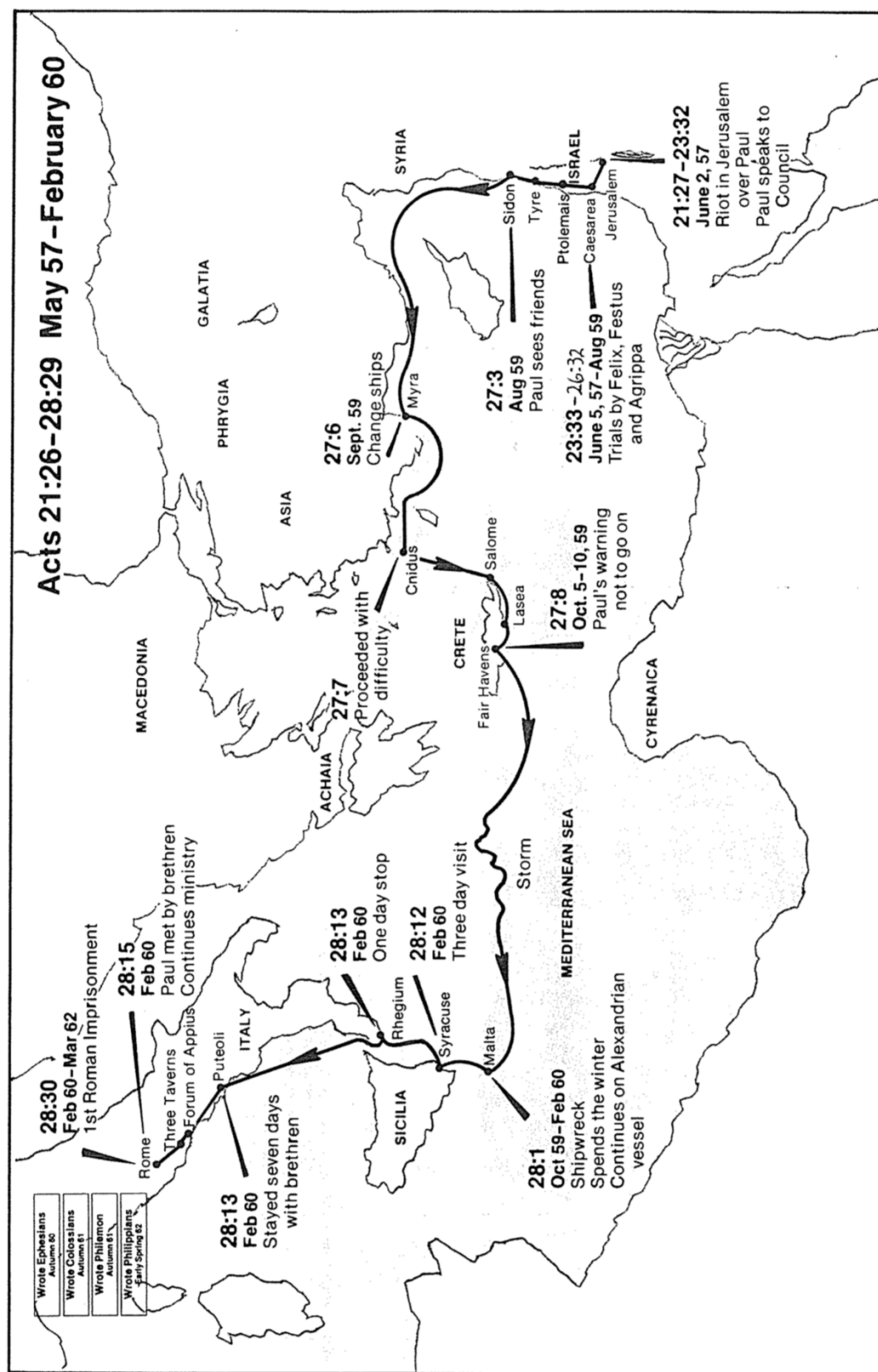
Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Walk Thru
the New
Testament



Paul's Trials and Imprisonments

Walk Thru
the New
Testament

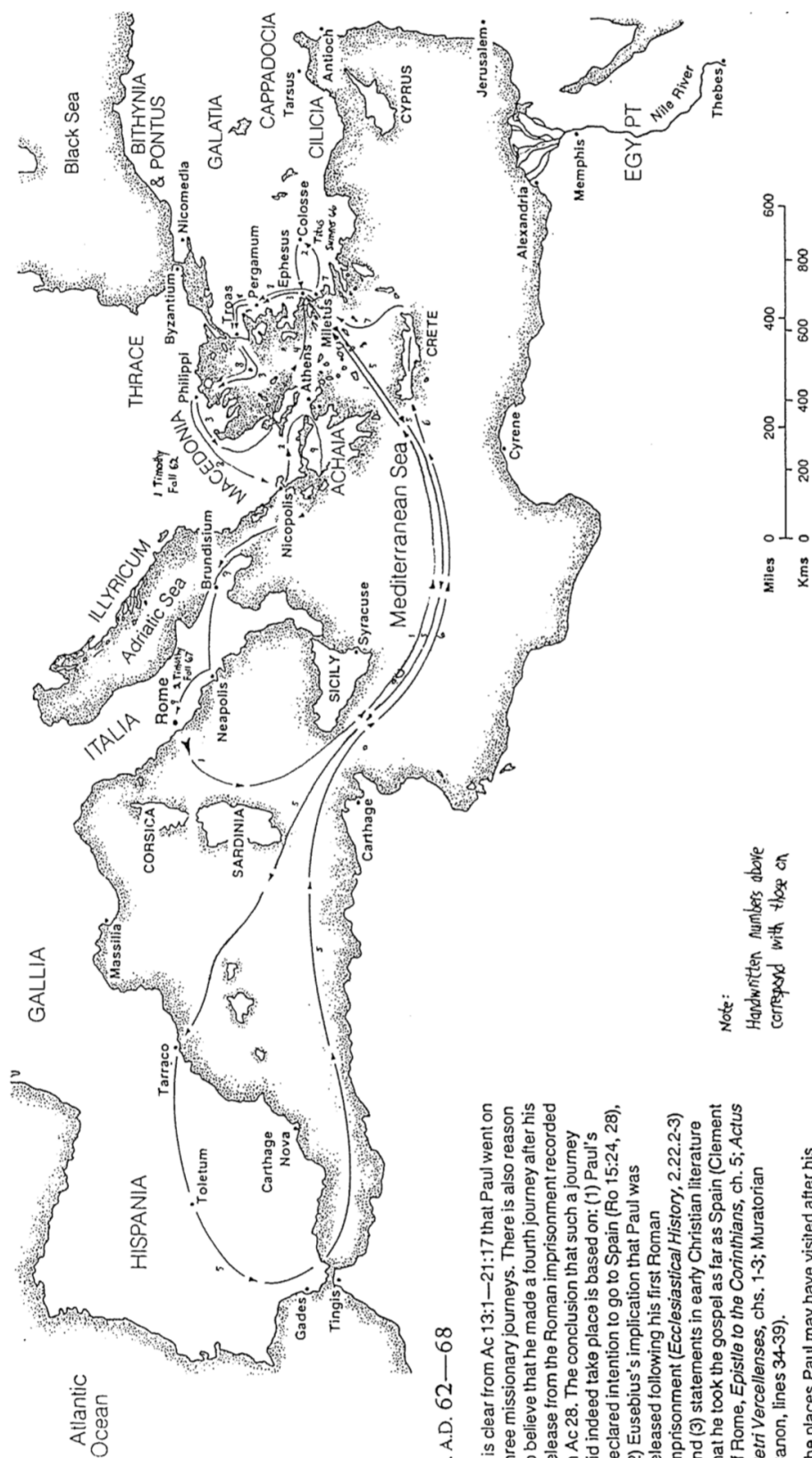


Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey

Bible Visual Resource Book, 259 adapted

1 Timothy

Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey



c. A.D. 62—68

It is clear from Ac 13:1—21:17 that Paul went on three missionary journeys. There is also reason to believe that he made a fourth journey after his release from the Roman imprisonment recorded in Ac 28. The conclusion that such a journey did indeed take place is based on: (1) Paul's declared intention to go to Spain (Ro 15:24, 28), (2) Eusebius's implication that Paul was released following his first Roman imprisonment (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2.22.2-3) and (3) statements in early Christian literature that he took the gospel as far as Spain (Clement of Rome, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, ch. 5; *Actus Petri Vercellenses*, chs. 1-3; Muratorian Canon, lines 34-39).

The places Paul may have visited after his release from prison are indicated by statements of intention in his earlier writings and by subsequent mention in the Pastoral Letters.

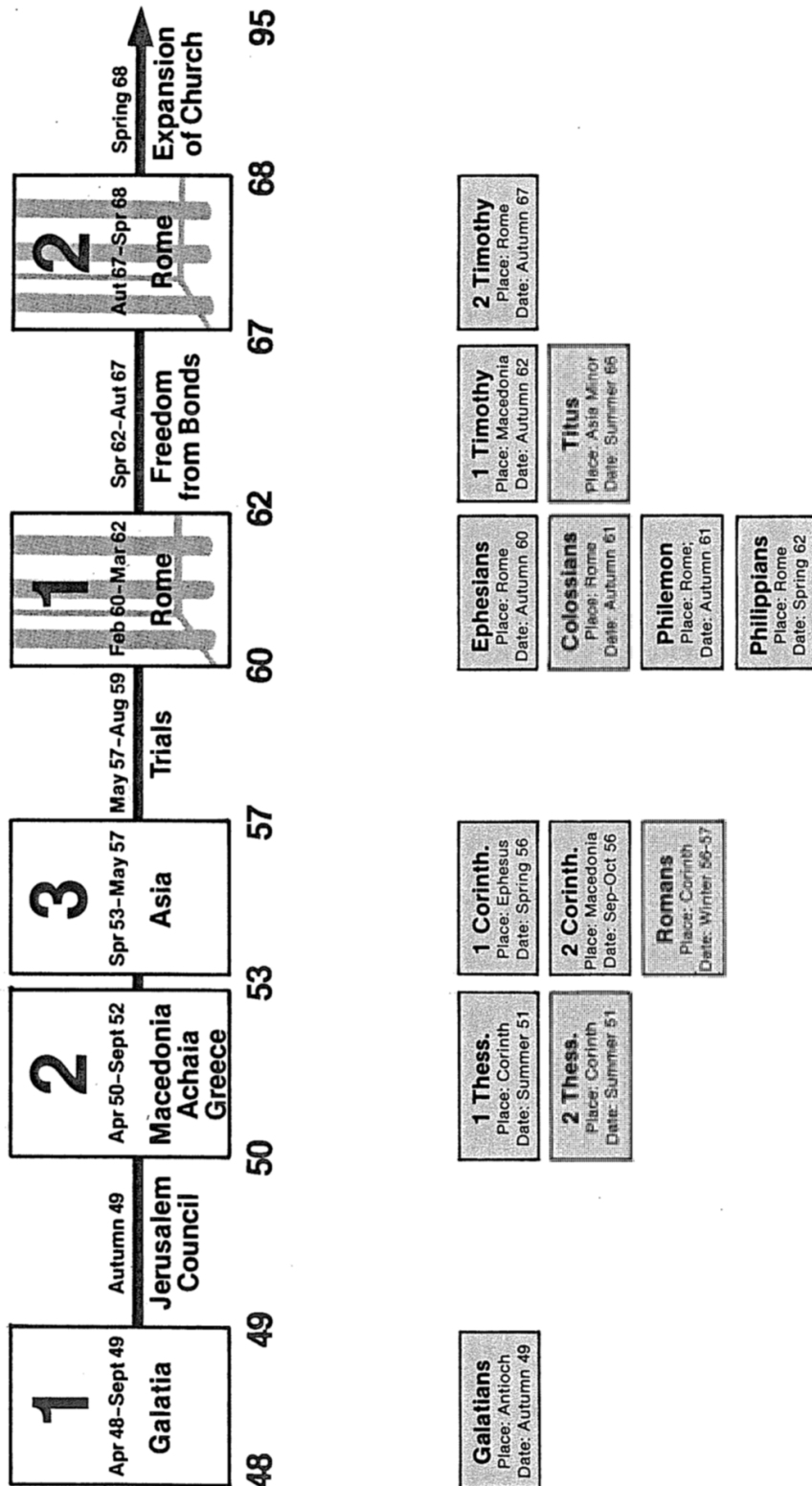
Walk Thru the Pauline Epistles

Walk Thru the Pauline Epistles

Walk Thru
the New
Testament

"Unto the uttermost part of the earth..." (Acts 13-28)

13 14 15 16 18 19 21 22 28



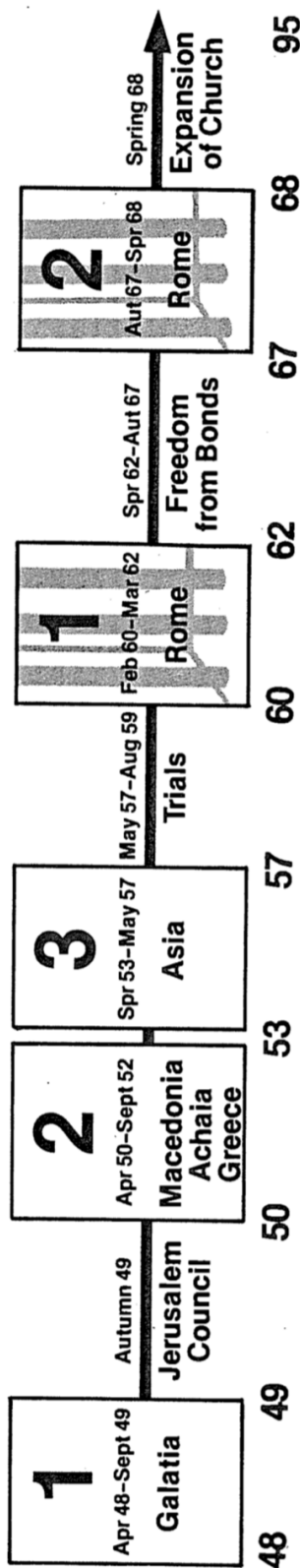
Walk Thru the General Epistles

Walk Thru the General Epistles

Walk Thru
the New
Testament

"Unto the uttermost part of the earth..." (Acts 13-28)

13 14 15 16 18 19 21 22 28



NT Epistle Contrasts

Pauline		General	
Named after	Recipients	Author (except Hebrews)	
Authors	1	5	
Date	Earlier	Later	
Chronology	Most during missionary journeys and Acts	Most after missionary journeys and Acts	
Number	13	9	
Number of Letters in Theological Categories (cf. p. 24)	Soteriology (2) Ecclesiology (5) Eschatology (2) Christology (4)	Soteriology (2) Ecclesiology (0) Eschatology (4) Christology (1) Missiology (2)	

James
Place: Jerusalem?
Date: 45-501 Peter
Place: Rome
Date: 64Hebrews
Place: Unknown
Date: 671 John
Place: Ephesus
Date: 85-952 Peter
Place: Rome?
Date: 64Jude
Place: Unknown
Date: 67-682 John
Place: Ephesus
Date: 85-953 John
Place: Ephesus
Date: 85-95Revelation
Place: Patmos
Date: 95-96

Timeline of Paul's Life

Bible Visual Resource Book, 227

Time Line of Paul's Life

Lines, brackets and dotted lines help show sequence of events, but are not meant to point to precise months or days within a given year, since exact dating is difficult.

