

History of the Church in Acts

Taught by
Richard Rogers



THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN ACTS



INTRODUCTORY NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

Arranged for study by
Virgil Yocham



**3728 34th Street
Lubbock, Texas 79410**
(806) 788-3280/1 or (800) 687-2121
©1998

History of the Church in Acts

©Sunset Institute Press

Copyright © 2007
Sunset Institute Press

Printed and Bound in the
United States of America
All Rights Reserved

All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE:
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by
International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.
All rights reserved.

Cover Design by Beth E. Miller & Richard Cravy

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without
the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations within
critical articles and reviews, including translation.

DISCLAIMER

The textbook used in this course was selected because we consider it one of the best and well adapted to this course of study. “***New Testament History, Acts***” by Gareth L. Reese contains a wealth of knowledge, charts and special studies which will increase your understanding of this great history book. The author’s scholarly approach to this study will enhance your understanding of the church and its growth and progress in the first century. As with all books written by men, there may be some things with which you and I would not agree. The principle, “use what is good and discard what is not good” applies to all textbooks used with our courses. Please be wise enough to discard any and all teaching that is not biblical.

Instructions and Requirements for Level II Students (Non-Transferable)

Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the VHS tape, DVD, CD, or audio cassette tape. Listen to the lecture on the tape as you follow along in the course Study Guide book.

Reading: You must read the book of Acts two (2) times during the course of this study. Make one of the readings in a modern version (NIV, NASV, etc.). **(This will be 5% of your grade)**

Test: There will be two tests to complete for this course. The mid-term test is to be done at the end of lesson six (6), the final test will be after lesson twelve (12). **(This will be worth 85% of your grade)**

Memory Work: Memory work will be done on the honor system. You are asked to write your verses from memory on your test in the presence of the administrator. After You have completed the test, and turned it in, correct the memory work with a different colored pen. Or you may quote them to the administrator during the course and he will keep track of the verses completed and report them to us. Please be diligent in doing your memory work. All memory work must be completed to pass this course. You will have twenty-one (21) verses to memorize. **(This will be 10% of your grade).**

Due by the mid-term test: (11 verses)

Acts 2:36-41, 4:8-12

Due by final test: (10 verses)

Acts 5:41-42, 6:7, 13:44-49, 20:32

- ▶ All the Self Exams in the Study Guide must be completed to pass this course.
- ▶ All the memory verses assigned must be completed, either written or quoted. Eleven (11) are due for the mid-term (lessons 1-6), and ten (10) are required for the final test (lessons 7-12).
- ▶ Levels II & III must obtain a 70% or better on each test to pass this course.
- ▶ All assignments **must be completed and turned in** at the time of the final to pass the course. All late work will be penalized by a reduction in grade.

Grading Scale:	Reading	5%
	Two Tests	85%
	Memory Work	10%

Instructions and Requirements for Level III Students (Transferable)

Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the VHS tape, DVD, CD, or audio cassette tape. Listen to or view the lecture as you follow along in the course Study Guide book.

Readings: One book will be required “*New Testament History, Acts*” by Gareth L. Reese. This book must be read in its entirety by the time the course is completed and ***a one page evaluation submitted with your last test***. You must read the book of *Acts* three times during this study. One reading must be in a modern version. **(These readings and evaluation paper will be 10% of your grade)**

Memory Work: You will have only 33 Bible verses to memorize, all in the Book of Acts. Memory work will be done on the honor system. You are asked to write your verses from memory on your test in the presence of the administrator **after** you have completed and turned in your test. Correct the verses with a different colored pen before sending in.. Or you may quote them to the administrator during the course. He will keep track of the verses completed and report them to us. Please be diligent in doing your memory work. All memory work must be completed to pass this course. **(This will be 10% of your grade)**

Due with the Mid-term test: (17 verses)
Acts 1:6-11; 2:36-41; 4:8-12.

Due with the Final Test: (16 verses)
Acts 5:41-42; 6:7; 7:59-60; 9:31; 10:34-35; 11:21-24; 20:7, 32; 28:30-31.

Please indicate which version of the Bible you are using in your memorization if written out!

Research: Write a research paper (at least 6 pages) on **the beginning and progress of the church in the Book of Acts**. Trace the growth and progress of the church based on the statement of Jesus in Acts 1:8. Include also in this paper the growth of the church numerically and in territory (area). **(This will be 10% of your grade)**

Tests: There will be two major tests to complete for this course. The mid-term test is to be done at the end of lesson six (6) and the final will be at the end of the study, after lesson twelve (12). Each test receive 70% or better to pass this course. **(This will be 70% of your grade):**

NOTE! All assignments **must be completed and turned in at the time of the final exam to pass this course**. Any late work will be penalized. Your total average grade for the course must equal 70% or above to pass this course.

Grading Schedule

Readings	10%
Memory work:	10%
Research paper:	10%
Exams:	<u>70%</u>
TOTAL	100%

CONTENTS

LESSON 1:	INTRODUCTION – THE FIRST WORD	1
LESSON 2:	THE FIRST DAY & THE FIRST CHURCH	6
LESSON 3:	THE FIRST PERSECUTION AND THE FIRST	12
	SIN IN THE CHURCH	
LESSON 4:	THE FIRST CHURCH SQUABBLE AND THE FIRST	18
	MARTYR OF A LONG LINE	
LESSON 5:	THE FIRST MISSIONARY – PHILIP	24
	CONVERSION OF FIRST “WORLD CHRISTIAN”	
LESSON 6:	EMPHASIS SWITCHED TO THE GENTILES	30
	AND PERSECUTION INTENSIFIED	
LESSON 7:	MISSIONS BEGUN & THE CHURCH ENLARGED	36
LESSON 8:	THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM	41
LESSON 9:	MISSIONS CONTINUED, THE SECOND JOURNEY	46
LESSON 10:	MISSIONS CONCLUDED AND THREATENED	53
LESSON 11:	MISSIONARY TRIED	58
LESSON 12:	MISSIONARY TRIUMPHANT	63



LESSON ONE

THE FIRST WORD

(Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-14)

INTRODUCTION:



his series will be comprised of a twelve lesson survey of the History of the Church in Acts. The first twelve chapters of Acts contains twelve “Firsts.” These twelve “Firsts” will furnish an outline for our study of the first twelve chapters. The last sixteen chapters details eight mission statements and will supply our outline for these last sixteen chapters.

The book of Acts is the only book of history in the New Testament—compared with 12 in the Old Testament. But the fact that the New Testament includes a book of history is very important. It means that New Testament faith, like that of the Old Testament, is tied to actual events. The myths that were the basis of pagan religions were growing old at the time of the New Testament. At just the right time, the earliest Christians could say, “Listen to us—here is something that actually happened in the full light of history!”

A good way to start reading Acts is to read the last chapter of Luke and the first chapter of Acts at the same setting. Many scholars believe that Luke wrote Acts as a kind of “Book II” to follow his Gospel.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 1:1-14; All the scriptures listed in the Study Guide.

LESSON AIM: To overview the nature and character of Luke, the writer of Acts and to introduce the study of the “History of the Church in Acts.”

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Investigate the reason for writing the book and see that it was to defend the church and Christianity in an environment of Jewish hostility.
 2. Notice five stages in the development of the history of Christ and the church.
 3. See Luke’s diplomacy as he presents the true nature of the church to the Roman officials and to the church as he seeks to make peace between the Jewish and Gentile Christians.
-

INTRODUCING THE BOOK AND WRITER

A. The Writer Luke and His Two-volume Work on the Origin of Christianity

1. **Luke as a historian** – To Jesus' work on earth, both personally and in his body, the church. Luke 1:1-4 is the introduction of both volumes. Notice five stages in the development of the history of Christ and the church.
 - a. **Fulfilled** (v. 1). These things are neither random nor unexpected but took place in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
 - b. **Witnessed** (v. 2). The Apostles, who were eyewitnesses of the historical Jesus, handed down to others what they had seen and heard. This is the meaning of “tradition.”
 - c. **Researched** (v. 3). Luke had not accepted the “traditions” uncritically. He had “carefully investigated everything from the beginning.”
 - d. **Written** (v. 3). He did not write in a vacuum. “Many” had written about Jesus before (v. 1). Now Luke must write these things to Theophilus.
 - e. **Certified** (v. 4). He wanted Theophilus “to know the certainty of the things you (Theophilus) had been taught.”

NOTE: Surely writing these two books to one man would teach us about the importance of “discipling” (Matthew 28:18-20).

NOTE: Luke's qualifications for writing history:

- a. ***He was a physician.*** This means that he had undergone rigorous training; had received the very best education the world had to offer; was a cultured person who would speak and write in stylish Greek. Luke used many medical terms. Compare Acts 3:7; 8:7; 9:33; 14:8; 28:8-9; et al.
 - b. ***He was a companion to Paul.*** Notice the “they” (Luke not with them) becoming “we” (Luke being with them) in the following passages of scripture:
 - a. From Troas to Philippi (16:10-17). Church planted on European soil.
 - b. From Philippi to Jerusalem (20:5-21). Conclusion of work in Asia Minor and Europe.
 - c. From Jerusalem to Rome (27:1-28:31). Conclusion of Paul's life.
 - c. ***He had resided in Jerusalem for over two years.*** He had opportunity to visit the places of Jesus' life and interview the apostles and others who had seen, heard and talked to Jesus.
2. **Luke as a diplomat** – Luke was very selective about recording history. He was selective about those he talked about, about the spread of the gospel, and about the churches he wished to discuss. So Luke is more than a historian. He is, in fact a sensitive Christian “diplomat” in relation to state and church.
 - a. Luke was a diplomat **to the Roman Government**. He was deeply concerned about the attitude of the Roman authorities toward Christianity. He argues that the authorities have nothing to fear from

Christians. They are neither seditious nor subversive. They are legally innocent and morally harmless and exercise a wholesome influence on society. He calls Theophilus “most excellent,” which could easily be translated “Your excellency” (NEB). In any case, Luke makes three points:

- 1) The Roman officials were consistently friendly to the church and some had even become Christians (Cornelius, Sergius Paulus, Erastus, et al).
- 2) The Roman officials could find no fault in either Christ or his apostles.
- 3) The Roman officials concede that Christianity was a lawful or licensed religion because it was the ultimate fulfillment of all that God had promised Israel about their religion.
 - a) **Harmless** (Some officials had become believers themselves).
 - b) **Innocent** (No official could find basis for prosecution).
 - c) **Lawful** (It was the true fulfillment of Judaism)
- b. Luke was a diplomat **to the church**. He sought to be a peacemaker between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. He offers four cases:
 - 1) The **acceptance of the Samaritan** (a half-breed) in Chapter 8.
 - 2) The **acceptance of the Gentiles** in chapters 10 and 11.
 - 3) The **Jerusalem discussion** in chapter 15.
 - 4) The **prominence and equality he gives to Peter and Paul**.
 - a) Both filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8 and 9:17; 13:9).
 - b) Both preached with boldness (4:13, 31 and 9:27, 29).
 - c) Both preached to Gentiles and Jews (10:34ff and 13:46ff).
 - d) Both received visions about the work (10:9ff and 16:9).
 - e) Both imprisoned and miraculously freed (12:7ff and 16:25ff).
 - f) Both healed the infirmed (3:2ff; 9:41 and 14:8ff; 28:8).
 - g) Both raised the dead (9:36ff and 20:7ff).
 - h) Both refused to be worshiped (10:25-26 and 14:11ff).
3. Luke **as an evangelist**. Luke at heart was a theologian of salvation. Three fundamental facts stand out:
 - a. Salvation has been prepared by God (Luke 2:30-31 and Peter and Paul's sermons as well as Stephen's defense).
 - b. Salvation is bestowed by Christ (Luke 2:11; 19:10; Acts 2:38-39; 4:12; 5:31; 13:38-39).
 - c. Salvation is offered to all people (Luke 2:31-32; 24:46-47; Acts 2:17; 9:15; 10:34-35; 11:18).

B. The Preface (1:1-14)

1. The earthly ministry (vs. 1-3). The period of forty days between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus was filled with quiet but thrilling activity when Jesus was doing two things: Giving commandments (v. 2) and confirming the resurrection (v. 3).
 - a. Preparation (v. 1). Began personally, continued in His body (the church).

- b. Continuity (v. 2). Through chosen apostles.
 - c. Thorough (v. 3). By evidences and instruction.
- 2. The parting words (vs. 4-8).
 - a. Promise and instruction (vs. 4-5). The promise of the Holy Spirit. This coming of the Holy Spirit would be the crucial event of the entire Book of Acts because it would complete the redemptive purpose of God.
 - 1) It would be the source of individual power.
 - 2) It would be the great unifying event for it would unite believers into the Body of Christ.
 - b. Ignorance and inquiry (v. 6). *“Lord, will you at this time restore again the Kingdom of Israel?”*
 - c. Encouragement and teaching (vs. 7-8). The promise of power from the Holy Spirit. Not specifically the power to heal or raise the dead. It was the power to evangelize through teaching and preaching (or witnesses).
- 3. The glorious ascension (vs. 9-14).
 - a. The event (v. 9).
 - b. The rebuke and revelation (vs. 10-11).
 - c. The outcome (vs. 12-14).

NOTE: Although the ascension presented what seemed like separation there is no isolation for our Lord is omnipresent among us. The ascension has become another link in the chain of redemptive events which include incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and return. The incarnation meant *God with us*; the crucifixion meant *God as us*; the ascension meant *God for us*; and Pentecost means *God in us*.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ONE:

1. Three (3) qualifications Luke possessed for writing the history of Christianity and the church were:
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

2. What three-fold picture of Luke is given by Richard in his relation to Christianity?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

3. What three (3) points does Luke use to show to Theophilus the validity of Christianity?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

4. List four (4) arguments Luke used to show the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____

5. What three (3) fundamental facts stand out in Luke's writing concerning salvation?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

LESSON TWO

THE FIRST DAY AND THE FIRST CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

Just as Jesus had promised (1:4), the Holy Spirit was about to come on the apostles in a dramatic way. The day on which this occurred was the Day of Pentecost. In the Jewish calendar, Pentecost was the second of the three major feasts. It fell fifty days after the Sabbath of Passover week (Leviticus 23:15-16).

More important was what Pentecost came to represent. With the giving of the Holy Spirit, this day became the birthday of the church.

The first order of activity was to work with God in placing another in the apostleship vacated by Judas. So there was preparatory work to be done before the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Beginning with 3,000 conversions, the apostles founded a permanent fellowship of believers in Jerusalem. Emphasized by Luke is the continuing nature of this fellowship. "*They devoted themselves to*" all the defining elements of Christian living. And thus the first congregation of the Lord's church began and continues unto this day.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 1:15 – 2:47 and the scriptures listed in the Study Guide.

LESSON AIM: To see a panoramic picture of the events leading up to and involved in the beginning of the promised kingdom of God.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will. . .

1. See the attitude of the believers as a man is chosen to replace Judas in the apostleship.
 2. Investigate the circumstances that preceded the beginning of the New Testament church.
 3. Learn that those who obeyed the gospel message were made into the church and see the nature and character of the early church toward teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer.
-

THE FIRST DAY FOR THE CHURCH (2:15-40). THE APOSTLES EMPOWERED AND THE CHURCH BEGUN (1:15-2:47)

A. Preparation (1:15-26). The day before:

1. The fellowship (v. 15). The church began small: *"In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)"*
It seems obvious that there were more believers scattered over Jerusalem and Judea (1 Corinthians 15:6).
2. The statement (vs. 16-20). The replacement of Judas Iscariot.
 - a. Peter honored scripture (vs. 16-17): *"Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus."*
 - b. Luke (vs. 18-20) Gave the history of the actions and death of Judas.
3. The counsel of Peter (vs. 21-22). Qualifications necessary to accomplish the work. A man who:
 - a. Has been with us the whole time Jesus was alive.
 - b. Was with them from the baptism of John until Jesus ascended.
 - c. A witness of His resurrection.

NOTE: Interestingly the apostles saw fit to replace the vacancy left by Judas, but later when the Apostle James died (12:2) no record was given of a successor being appointed. Evidently it was necessary to replace Judas' position because he had vacated his place of promise, referred to in Matthew 19:28.

4. The action taken (vs. 23-26).
 - a. The qualified (v. 23). Joseph, called Barsabbas and Matthias.
 - b. The prayer (vs. 24-25). A simple request: That the all-knowing Lord would reveal the proper choice. They did not ask God to alter His will to fit their desires; but rather that they might know God's will in the matter before them.
 - c. The choice (v. 26). The apostles completed the selection and Matthias was chosen with the casting of lots.

B. The First Day – Pentecost (2:1-40)

- 1 The waiting apostles (v. 1). In the upper room in anticipation.
 - a. The fiftieth day after Jesus' resurrection and the tenth day after His ascension.
 - b. An event on the level of importance with the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus.
- 2 The descending Spirit (vs. 2-4). The assurance and power to begin the kingdom.
 - a. Sound like the blowing of a violent wind. The Holy Spirit manifested Himself in both sound and sight.
 - b. Tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

Indicating that each of the disciples participated in the manifesting of the Holy Spirit equally.

- c. The miracle of tongues – speaking in unlearned languages.
- 3 The witnessing people (vs. 5-13). The beginning of testimony that will continue till Jesus comes.
 - a Jews from every nation (v. 5). In Jerusalem to observe the Pentecost.
 - b Confusion from miracle (vs. 6-12). Wonder and amazement.
 - c Mockery through unbelief (v. 13). *“They have had too much wine.”*

NOTE: These “tongues” were undoubtedly spoken living languages; the word used in 2:6, 8 is “dialekto,” which means “language” and not ecstatic utterance. This gives insight into what is meant by “tongues” in chapters 2; 10; 19; and in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

- 4. The faithful preacher (vs. 14-40). Peter was destined for this occasion from the time he began to follow Jesus.
 - a. Assertion (vs. 14-21).
 - 1) Negative confutation (vs. 14-15) – categorical denial; groundless charge; clear impossibility.
 - 2) Positive confutation (vs. 16-21) – fulfillment of scripture (Joel 2:28-32). A description of the “Day of the Lord.” An offer of deliverance. *“And anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*
 - b. Argument (vs. 22-36).
 - 1) The work of Christ (vs. 22-32). Life, death, resurrection.
 - a) His works attest to the fact that He is the Messiah.
 - b) His resurrection attest that He is the Messiah.
 - 2) The glory of Christ (vs. 33-36). Exalted, acknowledged, honored by God for His redemptive work. The Crucifixion was no accident. It was in **God’s set purpose** and was God’s determined will, not merely His inclination. It was a divine necessity (4:28).
 - c. Appeal (vs. 37-40).
 - 1) Conviction (v. 37). The verb **cut** (katenygesan) means “to strike or prick violently, to stun.” Consciousness of:
 - a) Guilt – Sin.
 - b) Responsibility – Personal sin.
 - c) Powerlessness – Irreparable sin.

NOTE: Their question had a ring of desperation about it (Acts 16:30). If the Jews had crucified their Messiah and He was now exalted, what was left for them to do? **What** could and must they **do**?

- 2) Direction (vs. 38-40).
 - a) Blessings offered (vs. 38-39). Pardon from sin and presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - b) Conditions required (v. 38). Repentance and baptism (lit. immersion). The Jews had rejected Jesus; now they were to trust in Him. Repentance was repeatedly part of the apostles' message in Acts.
 - c) Promises made (vs. 38-39). The gift of the Holy Spirit for all those the Lord God will call.
 - d) Witness continued (v. 40). *"With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'"*

C. The First Congregation (2:41-47)

1. Commencement (vs. 41-43). *"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."*
 - a. Entrance into the Body (v. 41). Through the word of God which was:
 - 1) Preached faithfully – by Peter (compare vs. 14-40).
 - 2) Heard penitently – by crowds (compare v. 37).
 - 3) Received gladly – by "three thousand."
 - 4) Obeyed implicitly–through baptism in water.
 - b. Adherence to the Body (v. 42). Those who entered continued in:
 - 1) The Apostle's teaching – basis and authority of Christianity.
 - 2) The Body's fellowship – love and hospitality of the body.
 - 3) The breaking of bread – remembrance and hope of the appearing of Jesus and our own resurrection.
 - 4) The offering of prayers – devotion and trust in the One who redeems from sin.
 - c. Influence of the Body (v. 43). *"Everyone was filled with awe. . ."*
2. Continuation (vs. 44-47).
 - a. Position of the church (vs. 44-45).
 - 1) Unity (v. 44).
 - a) Common faith – *"believers."*
 - b) Common fellowship – *"were together."*
 - c) Common funds – *"had everything in common."*
 - 2) Unselfishness (v. 45).
 - b. Progress of the church (v. 46).
 - 1) Public – *"In the temple courts."* Teaching large groups of people.
 - 2) Domestic – *"In their homes."* Teaching and building up the believers on a smaller scale.
 - c. Power of the church (v. 47). Five things which characterized the early church.
 - 1) Great gratitude – *"Praising God."*

- 2) General favor – *“Enjoying favor with all the people.”*
- 3) Divine blessing – *“And the Lord.”*
- 4) Constant growth – *“Added to their number daily.”*
- 5) Continual salvation – *“Those who were being saved.”*

NOTE: With the first of seven summary progress reports (Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31) Luke brought this section of Acts to a close: each day others **were being saved**. The church grew rapidly right from the start!

NOTE: What is the secret of success for the body?

1. Salvation through Christ Jesus – suppression of sin (daily).
2. Surrender to Christ – repression of self (continual).
3. Satisfaction in Christ – expression of him (increasing).
4. Service to Christ – impression of power (infinite).

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWO:

1. Who was chosen to replace Judas in the apostleship and what were the qualifications for him to become an apostle?

The one chosen: _____

The Qualifications:

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____

2. What were three (3) signs to the apostles that the Holy Spirit had been given?

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____

3. In what two (2) ways did the Jews respond to the apostles speaking in tongues?

- 1) _____
2) _____

4. Those who entered the body in Acts two continued in what four (4) things?

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

5. Five (5) things which characterized the early church in verse 47 were:

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

6. What is the secret of success for the body?

- 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

LESSON THREE

THE FIRST PERSECUTION AND THE FIRST SIN IN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

The healing of the lame man follows the paragraph which describes the “*many wonders and miraculous signs*” done by the apostles (2:43). Acts continues to focus on the conversions of those who might be considered unlikely prospects for God’s favor—first the crowd in Jerusalem, which was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, and now a lame man whose life seemed to be hopelessly ruined.

Peter’s sermon before the temple crowd caught the attention of the temple leaders. The excitement caused by the healing of the lame man and the explanation given by Peter raised concerns among the religious authorities. So we have the account of the apostles’ hearing before the Sanhedrin, as well as their release and reception by the church.

To demonstrate the unity of the early church Luke gives two examples in connection with the practice of Christian sharing. One concerns Barnabas, a Cypriote Jew. Out of a genuine spirit-filled attitude of love, he sold his estate and brought the money as a love-gift to the common treasury for use among the needy. The other example concerns Ananias and Sapphira who acted from a totally opposite motive.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 3:1 – 5:42

LESSON AIM: To see the power, growth and boldness of the believers as the church is confirmed by troubles from without and within.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. See the power and boldness of Peter and John as they reveal the power of Jesus in healing a man who had been lame for 40 years.
 2. Learn that the two immediate responses were honor and praise to God by the people and persecution by Jewish leaders.
 3. Learn that Satan attacks from within (Ananias and Sapphira) as well as by those without (Jewish leaders)
 4. Understand that preaching the Gospel may entail persecution.
-

THE CHURCH CONFIRMED – The First Persecution (3:1 – 4:37)

A. The Miracle (3:1-11)

1. Human need (vs.1-5).
 - a. Extreme (vs.1-2).
 - 1) The man: lame and helpless, deep need from birth. The description of **a man crippled from birth** emphasizes his hopeless condition.
 - 2) The place: Temple where charity can be found.
 - b. Expressed (vs.2-3).
 - c. Encouraged (vs.4-5).
2. Divine power (vs.6-11).
 - a. Claimed (v. 6). NOTE: Absence of money and presence of power.

NOTE: The key to this incident is not the cripple's helplessness; nor even the subsequent miracle which, by the way, is the first recorded miracle of the church age. The key lies in the phrase of Peter, "*such as I have.*" He and the rest of the apostles and disciples (the church) were in possession of a new power; the power of God – without which the church is inept and powerless. The power of healing was not the most significant this day, but the power of salvation through their preaching.

- b. Shared (v. 7). Sympathy and help. Healing for the physical body and good news for the spirit.
- c. Proved (vs. 8-11).
 - 1) Man leapt up and walked. No possibility of deceit for the man's condition was well known and admitted.
 - 2) People saw and were amazed. A testimony to the miracle performed through the apostles.
 - 3) Peter and John attested to as being the ones with the right to speak for God. (See Acts 3:1ff) The miracle showed that Peter and John had the right to speak the words of God and not the Pharisees and Scribes.

B. The Preaching (3:12-26). Peter assessed the situation and used it as an opportunity to preach. His message included: (a) an explanation (vs. 12-16) and (b) an exhortation (vs. 17-26).

1. Self disclaimed (v. 12) "*as if by our own power . . .*" Peter and John claimed no power on their own.
2. God honored (vs. 13-15). "*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers . . .*"
 - a. Christ exalted by God (v. 13). "*. . . has glorified his servant Jesus.*"
 - b. Christ rejected by men (vs. 14-15). The historical facts are recorded in Luke 23:13-25.
3. Explanation supplied (v. 16).
 - a. Source of blessing – "*Jesus' name.*" Peter identifies the source of this healing power with a name.

- b. Channel of blessing – “. . . *faith that comes through him.*” Among this new society, soon to be called Christian, the name of Jesus was synonymous with power, stability, righteousness and survival.
- 4. Exhortation continued (vs. 17-26).
 - a. Generous statement (vs.17-18). Ignorant but not innocent. They had crucified Jesus as a result of ignorance but this did not relieve them of their guilt. Communication had come through all the prophets.
 - b. Urgent pleading (v. 19a). Repent and turn “to God.” (Repent – “to change one’s mind and change one’s life”)
 - c. Gracious promises (vs. 19b-20).
 - 1) Forgiveness of sins (“*your sins may be wiped out*” – debt canceled).
 - 2) Refreshment – like a breeze which brings relief from scorching heat.
 - 3) Fellowship with Christ.
 - d. Clear prophecies (vs.21-24). Restitution and destruction.
 - e. Personal application (vs.25-26). God does what He does because of covenant.

C. The Persecution (4:1-31)

- 1. Opposition manifested (vs. 1-4).
 - a. Power (vs.1-2). A resurrected Jesus with power to do miracles.
 - b. Punishment (vs.3-4). Peter and John silenced by incarceration.
 - c. Progress (v. 4). “. . . *the number of men grew to about five thousand.*”
- 2. Opposition met (vs.5-12). Peter and John stand before the Sanhedrin with boldness and confidence in who they are and whose they are.
 - a. Attack (vs.5-7). By Sanhedrin – “. . . *the rulers, elders and teachers of the law.*” Question: “*By what power or by what name did you do this?*”
 - b. Answer (vs.8-10). By Peter: “. . . *know this, you and everyone else in Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.*”
 - c. Assertion (vs.11-12). From Scripture (Psalm 118:22). Jesus is the “stone” and the only savior.
- 3. Opposition matched (vs. 13-18).
 - a. Surprise (v. 13). “. . . *unschooled, ordinary men . . .*”
 - b. Silence (v. 14). Because the healed man was standing there they had no basis for denial.
 - c. Subterfuge (vs.15-18). Confession, proposition, command.
 - 1) The reality of the miracle admitted. “*Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it.*”
 - 2) The solution: “*Warn the men to speak no longer to anyone in this name.*”
- 4. Opposition mastered (vs.19-22).
 - a. Reality boldly stated (vs.19-20). “*For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*” Who can withhold the good news of salvation upon being commissioned by the Christ to “*make disciples of all nations?*”

- b. Release (vs. 21-22). Threatened and charged.
- 5. Opposition minimized (vs. 23-31).
 - a. Report (vs. 23). To their own people. The believers (Peter and John's **own people**), faced with persecution, acknowledged God's **sovereign** creative power.
 - b. Result (vs. 24-31).
 - 1) Prayer (vs. 24-30).
 - 2) Power (v. 31). *"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."*

NOTE: Just as God's sovereign **power and will** had **decided beforehand** that Christ should be opposed, so now Peter and John prayed for God's power to be manifested in **great boldness** for the apostolic church. They also petitioned the Lord for supernatural ability **to heal** and to **perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of . . . Jesus**.

D. The Power (4:32-37)

- 1. Collectively (vs. 32-35).
 - a. Reality within (vs. 32, 34, 35).
 - 1) Unity – *"All . . . one in heart and mind."*
 - 2) Unselfishness – the effect of the gospel on every sincere believer *" . . . shared everything they had."*
 - b. Prosperity without (v. 33).
 - 1) Testimony – *"great power . . . testify."*
 - 2) Blessing – *"much grace . . . upon . . . all."*
- 2. Individually (vs. 36-37). Barnabas as an example. *"Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."*
 - a. The man (v. 36).
 - b. The money (v. 37).
 - c. The motive:
 - 1) Spirit filled (4:31).
 - 2) Surrendered (15:25-26).

THE FIRST PUBLIC SIN IN THE CHURCH (5:1-42)

A. The Sin (5:1-16)

- 1. Sinful pretense (vs.1-10).
 - a. Spiritual perception (vs.1-4).
 - b. Spiritual punishment (vs.5-6).
 - c. Searching proof (vs.7-8).
 - d. Similar penalty (vs.9-10).

2. Spiritual progress (vs. 11-16). “. . . *more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.*” Rapid numerical growth was a phenomenon of the early church (2:41, 47; 4:4; 6:1, 7; 9:31).
 - a. Great fear (vs. 11, 13).
 - b. Great faith (v. 12).
 - c. Great fruit (vs. 14-16).
 - 1) Men and women (v. 14).
 - 2) Miracles and healing (vs. 15-16).

B. Second Persecution (5:17-42)

1. Arrest, deliverance, preaching (vs. 17-21).
2. A perplexed court (vs. 22-28). The prisoners are gone.
 - a. Surprise and consternation (vs. 22-25).
 - b. Caution and accusation (vs. 26-28).
3. A bold defense (vs. 29-33).
 - a. Reply of the apostles (vs. 29-32). Must . . . because . . . witnesses.
 - b. Result on the hearers (v. 33). “*Furious . . . wanted to put them to death.*”
4. A wise counselor – Gamaliel, a teacher of the law (vs. 34-40). The venerated Gamaliel, a Pharisee and teacher, influenced the Sanhedrin not to oppose the apostles.
 - a. Reminder (vs. 34-37). He gives two illustrations. Theudas with his 400 men and Judas the Galilean. This speech was, in one sense, an apologetic for the church of Jesus Christ given by a representative of the church’s enemies: to try to stop God’s work would be like fighting against God!
 - b. Recommendation (vs. 38-39). “*Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.*”
 - c. Reception (v. 40). The apostles were flogged and released and forbidden to speak in Jesus’ name.
5. An immediate result (vs. 41-42). In spite of the bloody beating, the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing.
 - a. Feeling – “*rejoicing . . . disgrace for the Name.*”
 - b. Action – “*never stopped teaching and proclaiming . . .*”

SUMMARY:

Christianity became identified with a characteristic expression. It was called “the way” (Acts 22:4). Thus “the name” and “the way” were identifying marks of the new movement which was shaking the world to its foundations. Men believed on “the name” and walked in “the way.”

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON THREE:

1. What was the first manifestation of the new power of the church after Pentecost?

2. How did this affect the church as to growth? _____

The opposition: _____

3. What was the apostles' response to persecution? _____

4. What does this section of Scripture say about the church? _____

5. What was the first trouble from within? _____

6. What did the believers do after Peter and John reported the ill-treatment by the Sanhedrin?

LESSON FOUR

FIRST CHURCH SQUABBLE & FIRST MARTYR OF A LONG LINE

INTRODUCTION:

Until now the record of Acts has shown a sense of unity in the church which by modern standards can only be called remarkable. The believers “*were together and had everything in common*” (2:44). They were “*one in heart and mind*” and “*shared everything they had*” (4:32). Their number had grown from the 120 (1:15 to over 3,000 (2:41) and then to more than 5,000 men (4:4).

Now for the first time (though it won’t be the last) internal division made its appearance. At a time when “*the number of disciples was increasing*” the problem surfaced. So rapidly were the converts coming that the church’s desire to minister to needy members was becoming more and more difficult. It was inevitable that someone would inadvertently be left out.

Opposition once again surfaces as a result of the church’s ministry, this time in the person and work of Stephen, one of the seven. “*Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose . . .*” (Acts 6:8-9). This opposition and persecution will result in Stephen’s death and the spread of the gospel beyond the realm of the city of Jerusalem. God’s church marches on!

LESSON TEXT: Acts 6:1- 8:4

LESSON AIM: To see the growth and progress of the church in the midst of a crisis within and great persecution from without.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. See the wisdom of the apostles and the church as they face the problem of the distribution of food to the Grecian widows.
 2. Learn that the gospel continues to spread and the church continues to grow even in the midst, and perhaps as a result, of troubles (6:7).
 3. Learn that Satan attacks through ungodly and hateful men in his attempts to stop the spread of the gospel.
 4. Discover that God works His plan of spreading the gospel into the whole world through the effects of his saints being persecuted.
-

THE FIRST CHURCH SQUABBLE – Dissension in the Church (ch. 6:1-7)

A. The Problem Manifested (v. 1)

1. Caused by growth – success and an increase in numbers frequently creates serious situations (Deuteronomy 1:9-18).
2. Caused by the lack of care of the Grecian widows, i.e. those with no natural protector (1 Timothy 5:3-16).
3. Caused by cultural distinctions. It was out of a social crisis that the need for the next order of Christian workers developed.

NOTE: “Complaining” is a bad method of raising objections.

B. The Proposal Presented (vs. 2-4)

1. The supremacy of the spiritual and the sanctity of the secular (v. 2).
2. The qualifications of servants (v. 3)
 - a. Relation to others – “*known as*” – An honorable reputation.
 - b. Relation to God – “*full of the Spirit*” – Godliness.
 - c. Relation to self – “*full . . . of wisdom*” – Sagacity – skills in ministry and problem-solving.
- 3 The apostle's dedication (v. 4). By choosing these seven, the Twelve could **give** their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word “*. . . and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.*”

C. The Positive Reception (vs. 5-6)

1. Approval (v. 5a). The congregation satisfied with the solution.
2. Choice (v. 5b). Seven men, all with Greek names, suggest that these men were on the Grecian side of the present dispute.
3. Appointment (v. 6). The process was completed when the apostles “*prayed and laid their hands on*” the new leaders.

NOTE: The practice of laying hands on others was a gesture signifying commissioning and granting of authority (8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; Hebrews 6:2). In this case miraculous gifts were also given to these seven men as witnessed in the ministry of Phillip (8:6-7).

D. The Result – Progress and Growth (v. 7)

1. Extension of spiritual work – “*So the word of God spread.*” Its proclamation reached farther and farther.
2. Acceptance of spiritual truth:
 - a. Number of disciples increased.
 - b. Opponents (priests) converted.

NOTE: The Church's appointment of these seven men had far-reaching consequences. In essence the great struggle had begun. The Jews always looked on themselves as the chosen people; but they had interpreted *chosen* in the wrong way, regarding themselves as chosen for special privilege and believing that God had no use for any other nation. At their worst they declared that God had

created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell; at their mildest they believed that some day the Gentiles would become their servants. They never dreamed that they were chosen for service to bring all men into the same relationship with God as they themselves enjoyed.¹

THE FIRST OF IN A LONG LINE OF MARTYRS – STEPHEN (6:8 – 8:4)

A. The Accusation (6:9-14)

1. The source (vs. 8-9). Grace, power and opposition.
2. The methods (vs. 9-12). Dispute, craft, violence. *“Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)–Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke”* (vs. 9-10).
3. The charge (vs. 13-14). Blasphemy and treason.

NOTE: A SPEECH like this could only have one end; Stephen had courted death and death came. But Stephen did not see their faces distorted with rage. His gaze had gone beyond time and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. But when he said so this seemed to them one the greatest of blasphemies. The penalty for blasphemy for speaking evil of God, was stoning to death (Deuteronomy 13:6ff). It is to be noted that this is no judicial trial. This was a lynching, because the Sanhedrin had no right to put anyone to death. It was a surge of blind, uncontrollable anger that killed Stephen.²

B. The Appearance (6:15). *“Like the face of an Angel”*

1. Light – Matthew 28:3; Revelation 10:1.
2. Strength – Psalms 103:2.

NOTE: Stephen looked like a man who had been in the presence of God! Like Moses’ face when he came down from Mt. Sinai.

C. The Answer (7:1-53). Longest defense recorded in the book.

1. Statement: Christianity is the historical fulfillment of God's purpose. The church is the fulfillment of all that God has promised His people from Abraham until the day that Stephen speaks.
 - a. Stephen gives a panoramic view of Jewish history.
 - b. To him every person and event was a specimen and a sample of men’s reactions to the commands of God.
2. The plan: Four points in Stephen’s defense:
 - a. God's dealings **always showed constant progress** – Illustrated by:
 - 1) God’s progress shown in His dealings with Abraham.

¹ Barclay, William, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pg. 52

² Barclay, pg.62

- a) Abraham was a man who answered the summons, “*Get thee out.*”
 - b) Abraham was the man of faith. He did not know where he was going.
 - c) Abraham was the man of hope. He never saw the promise fully fulfilled, but he never doubted that it would be so
- 2) Movement and progress is shown in Moses.
- 3) Progress by God is shown in the life of David.
- b. God **never limited Himself to a special territory** (to Palestine and Temple) – Illustrated from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Midian, Wilderness/Tabernacle.
- c. God's people have **always resisted Him and His messengers** – Illustrated by Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David.
- d. **God's people**, not Stephen, **were opposed to divine revelation** – Illustrated by their participation in the sins of their fathers.
 - 1) Their continued and repeated rebellions and disobedience.
 - 2) In spite of their most amazing privileges – the prophets, the tabernacle of the witness, the Law given by angels
- 3. The application – You have betrayed and murdered the Messiah!

D. The Opposition (7:54-60)

- 1. Madness of the enemy (v. 54) – Anger and action – They were outraged, “cut to the heart” with anger.
- 2. Manliness of Stephen (vs. 55-56) – Peace and power – The vision of Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
- 3. Murder by the guilty (vs. 57-59a) – Consent and cruelty – Stephen stoned to death.
- 4. Martyrdom of the innocent (vs. 59b-60) – Fearlessness and forgiveness – “*While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.*”

NOTE: The words **giving approval**, indicate active approval, not just passive consent (Romans 1:32). This gives fuller meaning to Saul’s deed in Acts 7:58.

E. The Outcome – Disciples Dispersed and Gospel Preached (8:1-4)

- 1. Persecution (vs. 1, 3) “*On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem.*” **On that day** indicates that the **persecution of the church** was signaled by Stephen’s martyrdom. It implies that Jewish leaders approved of Stephen’s execution. Israel was in the process of confirming its tragic choice to reject Jesus as her Messiah.
- 2. Devotion (v. 2).
- 3. Dispersion (vs. 1, 4).
 - a. Scattered – throughout Judea and Samaria

- b. Scattered – went everywhere preaching – thus fulfilling the Lord’s command in the “Great Commission” (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20).

NOTE: A new division in Luke’s material begins at this point. The first seven chapters of Acts described the success of the gospel in Jerusalem, largely focusing on the ministry of Peter and the other apostles.

With the beginning of chapter eight comes a new focus. Now Luke describes the successes of the gospel in areas around Jerusalem, especially in Judea and Samaria, in conformity to his theme statement in 1:8. Now the people carrying the gospel are not just the apostles, but other believers, including Philip, Barnabas, and Paul.

NOTE: From Stephen's Life and Death – Lessons to be learned and characteristics to developed.

1. Fearless testimony for God in the face of dangerous foes.
2. Splendid character toward God and man.
3. Readiness to die for the sake of truth.
4. Christ-like spirit (even when persecuted).
5. Thorough knowledge of Bible truth and the power to impart it.
6. Forgiving attitude toward enemies.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FOUR:

1. What was the first church squabble and what caused it?

2. What was the solution to this problem and how was church growth affected?

3. Who was Stephen and what part did he play in the growth of the church?

4. List the four (4) points in Stephen's defense.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5. Give six (6) things we can learn from Stephen's life and death.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

LESSON FIVE

FIRST MISSIONARY, PHILIP FIRST "WORLD CHRISTIAN"

INTRODUCTION:



Persecution accomplished the further spread of the gospel. Believers went everywhere in Judea and Samaria carrying the good news of Jesus. In this scattering another of the seven men from Jerusalem takes center stage. Luke has reported on the ministry of Stephen in chapters six and seven. Now he focuses on Philip in chapter eight.

This portion of Acts records another of the many “firsts” to occur in the establishment of the church. Here is found the first missionary, and the first missionary effort of the church, when Philip undertook to go to Samaria and preach Christ.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus was the most dramatic and remarkable conversion in all the annals of history. Saul belonged to an aristocratic Jewish family of which the father possessed the rights of Roman citizenship, making Saul a free-born Roman. Saul was a learned scholar and theologian. He had received his training in the school of Gamaliel, the leading Rabbinical scholar of the times. He would later describe his religious pedigree to the church at Philippi in these words, “. . . *though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*” (Philippians 3:4-7).

LESSON TEXT: Acts 8:5 – 9:31

LESSON AIM: To see two important events which play an important part in extending the kingdom beyond the borders of Jerusalem and Judea.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Investigate the missionary efforts of Philip, one of the Seven, in taking the gospel into the regions of Samaria.
 2. Learn that the gospel now reaches into the far-away place of Ethiopia through the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.
 3. See how the church and the spread of the gospel is affected by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.
-

THE FIRST OF A LONG LINE OF MISSIONARIES

The Church Extended.

A. The Church Extended into Judea and Samaria (8:5-25)

This is another evidence of God's sovereign control; in spite of opposition, the Word of God grew (Acts 12:24; 19:20).

1. The evangelist and the crowd (vs. 5-8). ". . . *paid close attention to what he said.*"
 - a. The preaching (v. 5).
 - 1) The preacher – Philip. A Grecian Jew and therefore more broad-minded than Aramaic-speaking Jews in Israel (6:1). "*Known . . . full of Holy Spirit and wisdom.*"
 - 2) The place – Samaria. Hated half-breeds, a mixed race of people.
 - 3) The subject – Christ. Powerful and personal.
 - 4) The manner – Proclaimed ("Imperfect" tense indicates a continual preaching). Forceful and urgent.
 - b. The results (vs. 6-8). Philip's proclamation of Christ was confirmed by **miraculous signs** so that **they all paid close attention to what he said**. The miracles (casting out **evil spirits, demons**, and healing **paralytics and cripples** [cf. 3:1-10]) authenticated his message (cf. 2:43).
 - 1) Reception (v. 6). Attention and acceptance.
 - 2) Proof (v. 7). Miraculous and merciful.
 - 3) Rejoicing (v. 8). Once again the gospel resulted in **great joy**
2. The evangelist and the false teacher (vs. 9-13). Simon the sorcerer.
 - a. Simon's influence was great amongst the people (vs. 9-11). Simon **boasted that he was someone great**, and the people of Samaria believed him. Furthermore, he accepted their adulation.
 - b. Simon's influence weakened by the preaching of Philip (v. 12).
 - c. Simon's influence transformed – he is converted and baptized into Christ as a result of Phillip's preaching (v. 13). Now rather than people following Simon, **he followed Philip!** His response must have had a profound effect on his own followers.
3. The evangelist and the church (vs. 14-17).

NOTE: Because of the natural propensity of division between Jews and Samaritans it was essential for **Peter and John** to welcome the Samaritan believers officially into the church. The contrast between John's attitude here and in Luke 9:52-54 is significant.

- a. Tidings received (v. 14). Christians in Samaria.
- b. Prayers offered (vs. 15-16).
- c. Gifts bestowed (v. 17).
 - 1) Instrumentality – laying on of apostle's hands.
 - 2) Recipients – baptized believers.
 - 3) Source – Holy Spirit.

4. The Apostles and Simon (vs. 18-24).
 - a. Request made (vs. 18-19). “*When Simon saw . . .*” He wants to be honored again as before.
 - b. Rebuke given (vs. 20-23).
 - 1) Denunciation (vs. 20-21). “*Heart not right with God.*”
 - 2) Exhortation (vs. 22-23). “*Repent and pray to God.*”
 - c. Repentance shown (v. 24). Acknowledgment and fear. “*Pray to the Lord for me . . .*”
5. The Apostles and evangelism (v. 25).
 - a. **Personal** testimony – “They . . . testified” *diamarturomai*.
 - b. **Powerful** testimony – “They . . . proclaimed” *lalei* – “preaching /gospel” *euangleizo*, in many Samaritan villages. The gospel was beginning to run even as Jesus had promised/predicted.

NOTE: Peter and John were so convinced of God’s working among the Samaritans that when they **returned to Jerusalem** they too shared **the gospel** with Samaritans, in fact, **in many Samaritan villages**. This was a remarkable thing for these Jewish apostles to do!

B. The Church Extended Beyond Judea and Samaria (8:26-40)

1. The seeking Ethiopian Eunuch. The evangelist (Philip) and the individual.
 - a. An earnest enquirer (vs. 26-28). He is reading the prophet Isaiah.
 - b. A lowly learner (vs. 29-35).
 - 1) Opportunity (vs. 29-30). A God-sent teacher!
 - 2) Willingness (v. 31). The Eunuch was willing to be taught.
 - 3) Question (vs. 32-34). He admitted his ignorance and his need for instruction.
 - 4) Instruction (v. 35). Philip proclaimed to the Eunuch Jesus.
 - c. A faithful follower (vs. 36-40).
 - 1) The desire (v. 36). “*Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?*”
 - 2) The confession (v. 37). In the margin of most translations. “*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*”
 - 3) The determination (v. 38). “*Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.*”
 - 4) The joy (v. 39).
 - 5) The parting (v. 40). Philip’s assignment: Preach the gospel in Azotus and in all the towns until you reach Caesarea.

NOTE: The first consequence of Philip’s evangelization was the eunuch’s conversion. His response, **Why shouldn’t I be baptized?** indicates that **water baptism** was the place forgiveness of sins is granted (Matthew 28:19). The second result was joy, for **the eunuch . . . went on his way rejoicing**. A third result was a further outreach of the gospel to one who was neither Jew nor Samaritan, but a Gentile (African) worshiper of Yahweh who was not a full-fledged proselyte to Judaism.

2. Lessons from Philip – The first missionary.
 - 1) **Live in the Spirit** – for surrender of self.
 - 2) **Learn of the Spirit** – for knowledge of scripture.
 - 3) **Lean on the Spirit** – for strength for service.
 - 4) **Be led by the Spirit** – for salvation of others.

THE CONVERSION OF THE FIRST “WORLD-CHRISTIAN” (9:1-31)

The record of Saul’s conversion at this juncture prepares readers for the gospel going to Gentiles (cp. 10). The apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:8; Ephesians 3:8) was preceded in this ministry by Peter’s evangelization of Cornelius and his household.

A. Saul, the Fanatical Persecutor (vs. 1-2)

1. Persistent in mistaken zeal – “*Meanwhile . . . still.*”
2. Intense in vital expression – “*breathing out*” (lit. breathed in, he lives in the atmosphere of persecution).
3. Fierce in vindictive strength – “*murderous threats.*”
4. Aggressive in initiative – “*went to High Priest.*”
5. Extreme in lengths – “*to the Synagogues in Damascus.*”
6. Cruel in extent – “*whether men or women.*”

NOTE: The account of Saul’s Damascus Road experience may be recorded here to relate it to Stephen’s martyrdom. Stephen’s discourse seemed to have spurred Saul to renewed efforts to stamp out Christianity (Acts 8:1-3). If the doctrine propagated by Stephen was correct, then the Law was in jeopardy. So Saul, zealous as he was, went on persecuting the church (Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6).

B. Saul, Penitent Persecutor (vs. 3-9)

1. The light (v. 3). Sudden, startling, and supernatural.
2. The voice (v. 4). Personal and probing.
3. The revelation (v. 5). Requested and received.
4. The surrender (vs. 6-9). Prompt and practical.

C. Saul, Praying Believer (vs. 10-19a)

1. A difficulty (vs. 10-14). Created by new circumstances.
2. A solution (vs. 15-16). Ananias sent to commission and baptize (Acts 22:16) a vessel chosen by God.
3. A blessing (vs. 17-19a).
 - a. Spiritual – filled with the Holy Spirit (vs. 17-18).
 - b. Physical – his eyesight restored and strength regained (v. 18-19a).

D. Saul, Preaching Fanatic (vs. 19b-22)

1. Preparation (v. 19b). Fellowship with body in Damascus.
2. Proclamation (v. 20). Direct and doctrinal.
3. Perplexity (v. 21). Doubt on the part of some and joy on the part of others.

4. Power (v. 22). Wisdom and refuting. *“Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.”*

E. Saul, Persecuted Preacher (vs. 23-25)

1. Plot (vs. 23-24). The persecutor now becomes the persecuted and his powerful preaching brings intense opposition!
2. Preservation (v. 25). Those who were persecuted now preserving the one who persecuted.

F. Saul, Protected Servant (vs. 26-31)

1. Suspicion and fear of the disciples (v. 26). Painful but natural.
2. Reception and boldness (vs. 27-28). Because of Barnabas, Saul's first co-worker and best friend.
3. Disputation and attempted murder (v. 29). With the Hellenists, the same ones who killed Stephen.
4. Decision (v. 30). To get out of the city.
5. Intermission (v. 31). Peace for the church followed Saul's conversion.
 - a. The church was strengthened.
 - b. The church was encouraged by the Holy Spirit.
 - c. The church grew in numbers.
 - d. The church lived in the fear of the Lord.

NOTE: Congregations of the Lord's church now exist in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. The promise in Acts 1:8 is being brought to fruition.

NOTE: So strong was Jewish antagonism to Saul and his ministry that after he left the area the church **enjoyed a time of peace.**

The church was still confined to Jews, half-Jews (the Samaritans), and proselytes to Judaism who became Christians (with the one exception of the eunuch from Ethiopia, 8:26-40). But all was in readiness for the extension of the church to a new segment of the world's population.

With this third of seven progress reports on the spiritual and numerical growth of the church (2:47; 6:7; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31), Luke brought this section of his book to a conclusion.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FIVE:

1. Who was the first missionary and where was his field? _____

2. In what way did this relate to Acts 1:8? _____

3. Describe the kind of people that lived in Samaria. _____

4. What individual did Philip teach and what does his conversion have to do with Acts 1:8?

5. What was the purpose of Peter and John's visit to Samaria? _____

6. Describe the conversion of Saul of Tarsus by listing the six (6) points of his conversion.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
 - 5) _____
 - 6) _____
7. Identify the following persons:
Simon: _____
Ananias: _____
Barnabas: _____
Grecian Jews: _____
Phillip: _____
Saul of Tarsus: _____
8. By the end of Acts 9:31, how far had the church spread? _____

LESSON SIX

EMPHASIS SWITCHED TO GENTILES AND PERSECUTION INTENSIFIED

INTRODUCTION:

With any growth comes problems. And so it was in the early church. Luke now relates an important matter of church polity which involves a Roman centurion of Caesarea by the name of Cornelius. The events centering in Cornelius and involving Peter, settled a very important question--who can belong to the church?

Up to this time the church had been located at Jerusalem and was involved almost entirely with its Jewish neighbors, and concerned almost solely with its Jewish converts. Now that it was scattered abroad it was brought into contact with the pagan Gentile world from which it was drawing converts. The question now was, what was to be done with these converts? Who had a right to belong to the church? Is it a place exclusively for converted Jews with their Hebraic traditions, or are converts from the pagan Gentile world entitled to a place in the church? God would answer this question and the decision would be centered around two personalities, Cornelius the Gentile and Peter the Jew.

About eleven years after Pentecost, Herod, a notorious enemy of the Christians, begins a grievous persecution of the church. His first victim is James, the brother of John. James is beheaded with the sword. Being pleased with his work and encouraged by the pleasure of the Jews, Herod thinks to strike a decisive blow at the Christian cause by striking down its prime leader, Peter. However, God intervenes and the church and Christianity continue to spread across the Roman empire. This will be the occasion of the first crucial test of the power of prayer as experienced in the early life of the church.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 9:32 – 12:25

LESSON AIM: To see three significant events which serve to broaden the entire scope of Christianity and the church.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Study the conversion of the first Gentile and note the effect on the Jewish character of the church.
 2. Examine the beginning and outreach of the first Gentile church and its relation to the church in Jerusalem.
 3. See two different aspects of God's providential working in the death of James and the saving of Peter.
-

THE CONVERSION OF A MAN NAMED CORNELIUS (9:32-11:18)

The First Outsider Saved (9:32-11:18).

A. Peter's Movements (9:32)

B. Peter's Miracles (9:33-43)

1. Of restoration (vs. 33-35) – Aeneas. The miraculous healing of Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years.
2. Of resurrection (vs. 36-43) – Dorcas. No one had been raised from the dead in the early church so far as the records of Acts declare, but the faith of the believers was so great they expected the Lord to use Peter to resurrect Dorcas. Peter arrived, he **sent** the weeping **widows** and other believers out of the **upstairs . . . room**, prayed **on his knees** for Dorcas, and commanded her to arise (Mark 5:41).

C. Peter's Ministry (10:1-11:18)

1. The double preparation (10:1-16).
 - a. Preparation of the Gentile, Cornelius (vs. 1-8).
 - 1) The place – Caesarea (v. 1) political capital where governor lived.
 - 2) The man – Cornelius, a centurion (vs. 1-2). He was pious, righteous, prayerful and yet, lost. (Interesting: All the centurions in the New Testament seem to be just men. See Matthew 8:5-13; 27:54; Acts 22:5, 26; 27:1, 3, 42-43).
 - 3) The vision (vs. 3-6).
 - 4) The response (vs. 7-8).
 - b. Preparation of the Jew (vs. 9-16).
 - 1) The man (vs. 9-10). Peter, first preached to the Jews (Acts 2); Now he must preach the good news to the Gentiles.
 - 2) The vision (vs. 11-12). A visual demonstration.
 - 3) The command (vs. 13-14). “*Rise, kill and eat.*”
 - 4) The lessons (vs. 15-16).
 - a) All things have divine source and real value.
 - b) Old distinctions are no longer valid.
 - c) Wrong to refuse if God accepts.
2. The divine providence (10:17-29).
 - a. The messengers (vs. 17-20)
 - b. The message (vs. 21-22)
 - c. The meeting (vs. 23-29)

NOTE: Peter's character:

1. Humility (v. 26).
 2. Fearlessness (v. 28).
 3. Directness (v. 29).
3. The difficult problem (10:30-33). Cornelius tells his story.
 - a. The vision related (vs. 30-31). Circumstance and acceptance.
 - b. The command (vs. 32-33a). Given by God and obeyed by Cornelius.

- c. The attitude manifested (v. 33b). Commendation and readiness.
- 4. The direct proclamation (10:34-43).
 - a. Impartial character realized (vs. 34-35). *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism."*
 - b. Immeasurable love recounted (vs. 36-41).
 - c. Incomparable gospel revealed (vs. 42-43)
 - 1) Christ – Master of disciples (v. 42).
 - 2) Christ – Judge of living and dead (v. 42).
 - 3) Christ – Fulfillment of prophecy (v. 43).
 - 4) Christ – Savior of believers (v. 43)
- 5. The definite proof (10:44-48). The Holy Spirit is seen:
 - a. Witnessing to the truth – full and uncompromising (v. 44).
 - b. Bestowing power – immediate and definite (vs. 45-46).
 - c. Warranting discipleship – unhesitating and complete (vs. 47-48a).
 - d. Creating fellowship – desired and granted (v. 48b).
- 6. The defensive presentation (11:1-18).
 - a. The objection (vs. 1-3) – for equality to be granted to the Gentiles.
 - b. The explanation (vs. 4-16) – stated without arguing.
 - c. The challenge (vs. 17-18) – accepted with no dissent.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY CHURCH (11:19-30) – Syrian Antioch

A. The Birth of the Church (vs. 19-21). (Leading to Christ)

- 1. Preparation (v. 19).
- 2. Progress (v. 20).
- 3. Power (v. 21).

NOTE: A few unknown believers, ordinary Christians, started the work which became the center of the Gentile Christian world.

B. The Nourishment of the Church (vs. 22-24). (Living for Christ)

- 1. Sympathy in action (v. 22).
- 2. Strength imparted (v. 23). Barnabas “. . . *encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.*”
- 3. Success given (v. 24). “. . . *and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.*”

C. The Growth of the Church (vs. 25-26). (Laboring for Christ)

- 1. Assistance needed (vs. 25-26a). Called for Saul.
- 2. Advance (v. 26b). Fellowship and teaching.
- 3. Acknowledgment (v. 26c). New name given: Christian – *“The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.”*

D. The Vitality of the Church (vs. 27-30). (Loving in Christ)

- 1. Instruction by Agabus the prophet (vs. 27-28).
- 2. Interest illustrated by a benevolent gift sent to the brothers in Judea (vs. 29-30).

NOTE: The Church at Antioch was -

- Born in adversity.
- Varied in elements.
- Evangelistic in power.
- Earnest in work.
- Mighty in influence.
- Liberal in giving.
- Missionary in spirit.

THE FIRST PRISONER FOR CHRIST – Miraculous delivery from prison (12:1-25)

Luke contrasted the love of the church at Antioch for the saints at Jerusalem with the coldhearted enmity of **Herod** and the Jews for **the church**.

A. The Peril of the Church (vs. 1-5a). The church is threatened:

This incident clearly indicates that the church was an identifiable group which had become hated and despised by the Jews.

1. By the murder of James. (First apostle to die.)
2. By the imprisonment of Peter. Note Herod's:
 - a. Malignity – against “*some who belonged to the church*” (v. 1).
 - b. Servility – to please some of the Jews (v. 3).
 - c. Hypocrisy – pious regard for Passover (v. 4), while plotting against saints.

B. The Prayer of the Church (vs. 5b, 12). United, unceasing, earnest, definite.

Two things they may have been praying for:

1. That Peter would remain steadfast in his faith.
2. That Peter would be delivered from Herod's prison.

C. The Peace of Peter (v. 6). Notice Peter's three sleeps:

1. Of unripe experience (Luke 9:32).
2. Of unfaithful life (Mark 14:37).
3. Of unquestioning trust (Acts 12:6).
 - a. In the presence of danger – perfect calm.
 - b. In the eyes of God – pardoned heart.
 - c. In the duty done – pure conscience.
4. **Peter** was so trusting the Lord that he was sound asleep the **night before** his **trial**.

D. The Power of God (vs. 7-10)

1. Extremity – all circumstances against him.
2. Ease – angels overcame walls, chains, gates, men.
3. Extent – complete.

One of the subthemes of Acts is the outreach of the gospel in spite of opposition. This is seen in Peter's release.

E. The Perception of the Believers (vs. 11-17)

1. Instant (vs. 11-12) – on Peter's part.
2. Gradual (vs. 13-17) – on the church's part.

NOTE: What we find as a prime lesson in this incident of the power of prayer is that:

- 1) Prayer is greater than prisons.
- 2) The church is bigger than Caesar.
- 3) The prayer of the smallest Christian puts him in league with God!

F. The Protection of Peter and Judgment for Herod (vs. 18-23)

NOTE: The people honored Herod as **a god**, and the Lord **God** judged him with death. This was in A.D. 44. This account parallels that given by Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (19. 8. 2). After Herod's death, Felix and Festus, successively, were the governors of Judea. Three of Herod's children figure prominently in the later narrative of Acts—Drusilla, the wife of Felix (24:24-26); Bernice (25:13, 23), and Herod Agrippa II (25:13-26:32).

G. The Providence of God (vs. 24-25)

NOTE: From this chapter learn:

1. The power of Satan is real, yet not unlimited and not to be overrated.
2. The power of the believer is deep, perfect and a practical reality for today.
3. The power of the body is essential, earnest and prevailing in prayer.
4. The power of God is our inner line of defense.

The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

NOTE: *But the Word of God continued to increase and spread* (similar wording in 6:7; 13:49; 19:20). In spite of opposition and persecution the Lord sovereignly prospered the work of His church. With this progress report Luke brought another section of his work to a conclusion (cf. 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31). From Antioch the gospel message was now ready to go to Asia Minor.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SIX:

1. What are the three (3) main events studied in this lesson?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

2. List three (3) things which characterize Cornelius before he heard the gospel.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

3. Identify the first missionary Church and tell how it started.

4. Describe the persecution against the believers in chapter twelve.

5. What four (4) lessons do we learn from chapter twelve?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

LESSON SEVEN

MISSIONS BEGUN THE CHURCH ENLARGED

INTRODUCTION:



One thing which grows increasingly evident in the growth of the early church is the fact that it was an organized body of people. When we come to this point in Acts we enter its second and last division, extending to the end of the book. In the first division the church was centered in Jerusalem. In the second, it was in Antioch. In the first, the church was made up largely of Jews; in the second, of Gentiles. In the first, the leading figure was Peter; in the second, it was Paul. But neither Peter in the church in Jerusalem, nor Paul in the church in Antioch were by any means the only principals, for by this time the church had in addition to apostles, elders (bishops) and deacons. There were others who had an important part in the development of the church, “prophets and teachers” mentioned here as leaders in the church at Antioch.

Luke has recorded the witness of the gospel in Jerusalem (chapters one through seven), as well as in Judea and Samaria (chapters eight through twelve). Now the spotlight swings toward the progress of the gospel as it reaches to the wider targets of the Roman world. Thus Luke is fulfilling his theme as recorded in 1:8 in the quotation of Jesus.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 13:1 – 14:28

LESSON AIM: To see the first mission work of the church as it relates to the progress of the church.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Study the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas.
 2. Examine the beginning of the gospel in the Gentile world and the success it had among the heathen.
 3. See that basically the Jews rejected the gospel in the Gentile world and the Gentiles were receptive to the gospel.
-

THE BEGINNING OF FOREIGN MISSIONS (13-14)

A. The Start Into the Gentile World (ch. 13)

1. The missionary call (vs. 1-3). Antioch of Syria – the sending church.
 - a. The varied gifts (v. 1). Position and capacity – Prophets and teachers.
 - b. The daily life (v. 2a). Service (worship) and denial (fasting).

- c. The divine commission (v. 2b). Separated at the command of the Holy Spirit and sent to the work by the church at Antioch.
- d. The human attestation (v. 3). Trust (prayer) and assignment.
- 2. The missionary work (vs. 4-13). Barnabas and Saul assisted by John Mark.
 - a. Evangelization (vs. 4-5). The beginning place – Seleucia to Cyprus.
 - b. Inquiry and opposition (vs. 6-8). Paphos the capital city of the island. Inquiry by Sergius Paulus and opposition by a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet – Elymas.
 - c. Judgment (vs. 9-11) – blind for a season. From this point on Saul will be called Paul.
 - d. Conversion (v. 12) – amazed at the teaching about the Lord.
 - e. Disappointment (v. 13). John Mark turns back (cf. 15:37-40) in Perga.
- 3. The missionary message (vs. 14-41).
 - a. Scene: Antioch in Pisidia (v. 14) – great trade center of Asia Minor.
 - 1) Paul and Barnabas invited to speak.
 - 2) Longest recorded sermon in the book of Acts.
 - 3) Same basic outline as every sermon in Acts.
 - b. Subject: Salvation (vs. 15-41).
 - 1) Review of Jewish history from Abraham to David (vs. 15-22). The covenant God is still keeping covenant.
 - 2) Presentation of Jesus as David's seed (vs. 23-25).
 - 3) Declaration of salvation based on resurrection (vs. 26-37).
 - 4) Offer of gospel and warning against refusal (vs. 38-41). Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism responded.
- 4. The missionary results (vs. 42-52). Still in Antioch.
 - a. Hearty acceptance (vs. 42, 44, 48, 49) – by Gentiles.
 - b. Intense opposition (vs. 45-47, 50) – by Jews.
 - c. Great opportunity (vs. 46-48, 51, 52).
 - 1) For the Gentiles (vs. 46-48, 51).
 - 2) For the gospel (v. 49).
 - 3) For gospel preachers (v. 52).

B. The Continuation of Mission Work (ch. 14). Through peril, toil, and pain.

- 1. The progress (vs. 1-7) – at Iconium.
 - a. Success (v. 1). A great number of both Jews and Gentiles.
 - b. Opposition (v. 2). From the Jews who refused to believe.
 - c. Testimony (v. 3). Considerable time spent there, speaking boldly and performing miracles.
 - d. Threatening (vs. 4-7). They flee the city and go to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and surrounding country. Paul and Barnabas did not go to Lystra and Derbe simply to escape persecution; they also went to preach the gospel. The verbal construction **they continued to preach the good news** emphasizes continuity of action over a period of time.
- 2. The power (vs. 8-10) – healing at Lystra.
 - a. The dire circumstances of this man are seen in the repeated idea: *crippled in his feet . . . lame from birth . . . had never walked*.
 - b. Apparently there was no Jewish synagogue in Lystra, so God used a different thrust, the healing of this helpless cripple, to bring the gospel to these people.

3. The popularity (vs. 11-13) – “worshiped” at Lystra, proclaimed as gods.
4. The plea and stoning of Paul (vs. 14-19) – preaching at Lystra.

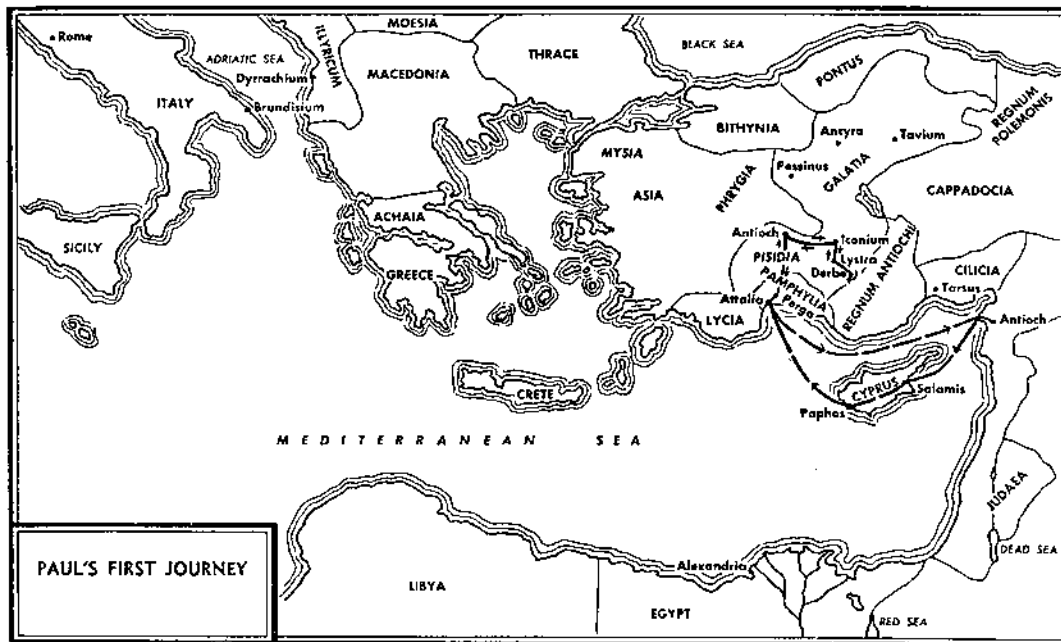
NOTE: The Application: Paul presents God as the:

- 1) God of nature (v. 15).
- 2) God of history (v. 16).
- 3) God of providence (v. 17).
- 4) God of grace (vs. 21-23).

The Result: Persecution led by the Jews . . . death by stoning . . . resurrection.

5. The program (vs. 20-23).
 - a. Preaching (vs. 20-21a). Derbe – a large number of disciples won.
 - b. Discipling (vs. 21b-22). – strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.
 - c. Organizing (vs. 23). Lystra, Iconium, Antioch. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church. The believers were given not only edification but also organization.
6. The praise (vs. 24-28). (This is the record of the first mission report to a sending church) Perga, Attalia, Antioch.
7. What do we learn?
 - a. The demands of mission work:
 - 1) Best talent – men most useful at home will be the most useful on the field.
 - 2) Divine call – after years of preparation.
 - 3) Full consecration – the unseparated are of no use.
 - 4) Christian sympathy – support from home Church.
 - 5) True living – faith, faithfulness, courage.
 - 6) Divine power – motivation by Holy Spirit.
 - b. The difficulties of mission work:
 - 1) Home ties – hard to break.
 - 2) Journeying perils – by sea and land.
 - 3) Satanic influence – to be broken.
 - 4) Human opposition – to be overcome.
 - 5) Varying influence – no two cities are alike.
 - 6) Fickle friends – as well as fearful foes.
 - c. The delights of mission work:
 - 1) Divine leading of God.
 - 2) Grand opportunities.
 - 3) Real interest of people.
 - 4) Necessary power will be provided.
 - 5) Divine blessing – God goes with those that go.
 - 6) Full compensation – by their faith, by the obedience to the gospel, by the reception of the church when they get back home.

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY



SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SEVEN:

1. What were the circumstances surrounding the first missionaries sent out by the church?

2. Who were the first two missionaries sent and to whom were they sent?

3. List the nine (9) cities visited by these missionaries on this first missionary journey.
1) _____ 6) _____
2) _____ 7) _____
3) _____ 8) _____
4) _____ 9) _____
5) _____
4. What was the general response to the gospel by the:
Jews? _____
Gentiles? _____
5. List six (6) things we learn about the demands of mission work.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____
6) _____
6. Write down the six (6) difficulties of mission work.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____
6) _____
7. What is the name of the first great mission church? _____

LESSON EIGHT

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

INTRODUCTION:

Luke now reports on the events which pave the way for the rest of the Book of Acts. The conference at Jerusalem makes it possible for the mission efforts of Paul. These efforts dominate the rest of Luke's report on the spread of the gospel. He has related how the interest in converting Gentiles began with the conversion of Cornelius (10:1-11:18) and the outreach of Antioch (11:19-24). Then came the first missionary journey with its concentration on Gentiles (13:1-14:28). Appropriately enough, Luke now turns to some of the dissension caused by the entrance of Gentiles into the church and how it was handled.

Thus Acts 15 is central, not only because of its position in the book, but because of its role in the story of the early church. What should be done about Gentile converts and their relationship to the Law of Moses? Should they be circumcised? Should they enter the church in the same way that Jewish proselytes entered the synagogue? Once accepted as believers, should they be taught to keep the regulations in the Law? Finally, should Jewish Christians eat with Gentile Christians?

The occasion for religious controversy at the council at Jerusalem, which occurred about fifteen years after the formation of the church at Pentecost, was a fundamental issue of what really constituted conditions of salvation and entrance into the church.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 15:1-35 and Galatians 2

LESSON AIM: To see the solution to doctrinal differences and the effect the differences have on the ongoing mission of the church.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Discover the procedure to follow to solve doctrinal differences which arise in the church.
 2. Learn anew that salvation is by grace apart from the works of the law of Moses.
 3. See the continuing mission work of Paul and Barnabas.
-

MISSIONS CHALLENGED AND INTERRUPTED BY DISSENSION The Battle for Gentile Christian Liberty.

In Chapters 10-11, the Gentiles had been shown to be entitled to eternal life. But what were to be the conditions?

A. The Jerusalem Conference (15:1-35). “*Some men came down from Judea to Antioch.*”

1. The difficulty stated and discussed (v. 1). “On what grounds are Gentiles to be saved?” The sides:
 - a. Lawyers for the accused – Paul and Barnabas, missionaries to the Gentiles.
 - b. Prosecuting attorneys – Believing Pharisees – must add circumcision and the Law to grace. These men may well be the same ones referred to in Galatians 2:12. They insisted circumcision was essential for justification.

NOTE: The men from Judea were dogmatic in their doctrine in spite of the fact they had no authority from the church in Jerusalem. How they explained the case of Cornelius (Acts 10) or the work of Barnabas (11:22-24) is left unstated. Perhaps they felt Cornelius’ case was unique and the believers in Antioch in chapter 11 were too insignificant to use as examples. Now the movement was becoming overwhelming and this was their way of protesting.

2. The disputation (vs. 2-4). The issue taken to the elders and apostles in Jerusalem. “. . . *sharp dispute and debate with them.*” Paul’s position was that this teaching amounted to an enslavement of believers who had been set free in Christ (See Galatians 5:1).
 - a. The appointment (v. 2). The Antioch church sends Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders there. Paul went by revelation also (Galatians 2:2). The church commissioned **Paul and Barnabas** for the task and wisely sent **some other believers** along as witnesses. These witnesses would protect Paul and Barnabas against being accused of distorting the facts.
 - b. The journey (v. 3). They caused great joy among all the churches as they hear the news of Gentile salvation.
 - c. The arrival in Jerusalem (v. 4).
 - 1) Reception – greeted warmly by “. . . *the church and the apostles and elders.*”
 - 2) Rehearsal – of all things God had done. As Paul and Barnabas had done in Antioch (11:27), in Phoenicia and Samaria, they also did in Jerusalem.

B. The People and the Problem (vs. 5-21)

1. The discussion (vs. 5-21).
 - a. The contention (v. 5). Circumcision and Law essential to salvation.
 - b. The conclave (vs. 6-21). The convening of the Council (v. 6). As leaders of the church, “the apostles and elders” served as moderators of the conference.
 - 1) **The testimony of Peter** (vs. 6-11). Rehearsal of God’s initial work among Gentiles. Conclusion: “*He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. . . . No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as*

they are” (vs. 9, 11).

- 2) **The testimony of Barnabas and Paul** (v. 12). God's continuing work among Gentiles with word and wonders. Their testimony also made the point that God demonstrated His acceptance of Gentiles without benefit of circumcision.
 - 3) **The judgment of James** (one of the elders) the Lord's brother (vs. 13-21).
 - a) Assent to Peter's argument (vs. 13-14).
 - b) Appeal to Scripture (vs. 15-18; Amos 9:11-12). *“The remnant . . . and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord.”* In the house of David!
 - c) Agreement between the two (vs. 19-21).
2. Four arguments presented:
- a. Peter's apostolic endorsement (vs. 7-11).
 - 1) God gave the Gentiles (Cornelius) the Holy Spirit as proof that *“He made no distinction* us and them. . .” (v. 9) between Jews and Gentiles, and saved them by faith in Christ without any appeal to the law of Moses at all.
 - 2) He emphatically states the official position of the apostles at this time that Jews were saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in like manner as Gentiles – without the law of Moses.
 - b. God's endorsement by miracles (v. 12). Jesus promised the truth of His word would be confirmed or endorsed by signs following (Mark 16:15-20). When Paul and Barnabas preached only Christ and him crucified among the Gentiles (in Acts 13-14), God confirmed that doctrine by working miracles among them.
 - c. The prophets endorsement and the judgment of James (vs. 13-21).
 - 1) James tells us that Amos predicted what Peter had affirmed, and that by saving Gentiles, God was fulfilling Amos 9:11-12.
 - 2) James concluded on that basis not to “trouble” the Gentile Christians by requiring them to keep the law.
 - d. The decree of the apostles and the Holy Spirit (vs. 22-29). The Holy Spirit inspired an epistle to be read to the churches among the Gentiles where the problem existed. In the epistle sent the error was condemned (v. 24), Paul and Barnabas were endorsed (vs. 25-26), and their gospel declared as genuine (v. 27).

C. Communication to the Gentile Churches (vs. 22-35)

1. The decision (vs. 22-29). Note the results:
 - a. The Pharisees are silenced (not convinced) and the rest are soothed. Some chosen from *“ . . . among their own men and sent to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.”*
 - b. Gentiles reassured by letter that:
 - 1) The legalists had not been authorized in their teaching (vs. 22-27).
 - 2) Compromise is needed on their part because of Jewish associates (vs. 28-29)

2. The development (vs. 30-35).
 - a. The rejoicing. Return with letter caused great joy (vs. 30-31) *“The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.”*
 - b. The reasoning (vs. 32-34). Confirmation by Judas and Silas safeguarded and set forward the principle of liberty and love.
 - c. The renewal (v. 35). Continuation by Paul and Barnabas of teaching and preaching the blessed aspects of body life. *“Paul and Barnabas . . . and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.”*

NOTE: How To Solve Problems

1. Frank discussion (v. 7).
2. Simple creed (v. 11).
3. Teachable spirit (vs. 12-13).
4. Rule of faith (vs. 15-18).
5. Liberal decision (vs. 19-21).
6. Perfect agreement (v. 22).
7. Divine Head (v. 28).

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON EIGHT:

1. Who were involved in the disputation in Acts 15:1-2?

2. How did the church in Antioch handle the problem?

3. What effect, if any, does this kind of thing have on mission work?

4. What was at the heart of the problem in Antioch?

5. What four (4) arguments for “salvation by grace” for the Gentile Christians were made at the conference?
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
6. What resulted from the decision of the council in Jerusalem for the Gentile churches?

Thought Questions:

Do you see this as something that just happened or as another attempt by Satan to hinder the gospel and growth of the church?

Do you see any principles involved here that might help solve problems in the church today?

LESSON NINE

MISSIONS CONTINUED THE SECOND JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION:

After the official act of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to stop the flow of legalism, Paul determined to strengthen the churches in every city wherein he and Barnabas had proclaimed the Word. Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus for the same purpose while Paul and Silas “went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches.” At Lystra Paul, ever vigilant for faithful men who manifested the desire and ability to be true evangelists, pressed young Timothy into the service, who, as a child serves his father, served willingly with Paul “in the furtherance of the gospel” (Philippians 2:19-22). Together these three went on their way through the cities delivering to the churches “the decrees to keep which had been ordained of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (15:36-16:5).

Judaistic legalism having thus been at least for the time being, placed in check, Paul lifts his eyes to the harvest fields of Europe. With both providential and direct guidance from the Holy Spirit he marches forth to make new conquests on a new field of action, and to do battle against a new kind of foe--idolatrous paganism.

The historical account of his exploits for Christ can be traced by the major cities where he preached: each one a commentary on the sophisticated life and religion of Greeks and Romans deep in bondage to idols.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 15:36 – 18:28

LESSON AIM: To see the expansion of the church through the further mission efforts of Paul as he travels into Europe.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will. . .

1. Study the second missionary journey of Paul as he and Silas revisit the churches he started on his first missionary journey.
 2. Travel with Paul and Silas as they visit city after city proclaiming the gospel of Christ to the heathen world.
 3. See again the continuing opposition of the Jews and the receptivity of the Gentiles
 4. Learn the names of the cities visited with one major event that occurred at each city.
-

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (15:36 – 18:28)

A. Seeking Helpers For the Work (15:36-16:3)

1. Paul's commitment (15:36-39). Caused argument with Barnabas and separation to two assignments. The contention was over whether to take John Mark. The Lord overruled in this dissension – two missionary teams were formed instead of one.
2. Paul's action (15:40 -16:3).
 - a. Chose Silas, one of the “*leaders among the brothers*,” to take the place of Barnabas (15:40).
 - b. Chose Timothy to take the place of John Mark as attendant (16:1-3).
 - 1) Timothy's reputation: “. . . *the brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him*.”
 - 2) Timothy's preparation: “. . . *so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek*.”

NOTE: Timothy's circumcision appears to contradict Paul's thinking in Galatians 2:3-5 where he refused to let Titus be circumcised. The situations, however, were different. In Galatians 2 the issue was the method of justification; here it was a question of not giving offense (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Paul acted as he did for the sake of the ministry; it was a wise move.

B. Strengthening Converts (15:41; 16:4-5)

1. Confirming (15:41).
2. Delivering (16:4).
3. Increasing (16:5).

C. Serving the Spirit (16:6-18)

1. The divine check (vs. 6-7). Man's impulses and God's restraint – Phrygia and Galatia.
2. The distinct call (vs. 8-9). A vision at Troas, “*Come . . . and help*.”
3. The decided conviction (v. 10). Luke joins the group at Troas. The first of the **we** sections begins here in Acts, indicating that Luke joined the party of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The how, why, and precise location of Luke's joining the group are left unstated.
4. The direct consequences (vs. 11-18). On to Europe (Philippi).
 - a. Acceptance (vs. 11-15). By Lydia and other women at a prayer meeting at Philippi. The Jewish population at Philippi must have been limited, for there was no synagogue there; 10 Jewish males were required for a synagogue.
 - b. Opposition (vs. 16-17). By masters of soothsayer.
 - c. Victory (v. 18). By healing the soothsayer.

D. Standing for the Faith (16:19-24). Still in Philippi.

1. Suffering persecution (vs. 19-24). Satan uses greedy merchants to hinder the preaching of Paul and Silas.
2. Hatred (v. 19).

3. Injustice (vs. 20-21).
4. Cruelty (vs. 22-24). Paul and Silas cast into the inner dungeon of the prison at Philippi.

E. Proclaiming salvation (vs. 25-34)

1. Rejoicing (v. 25). **NOTE:** The singers (Paul and Silas) and the audience (other prisoners and guards).
2. Reaffirming (v. 26). Shaken foundations, opened doors, loosened bonds. God's preachers not locked away from God's protection.
3. Reassuring (vs. 27-28). "*We are all here!*"
4. Redemption (vs. 29-34). The jailer and his family become captive to Christ through obedience to the gospel.

F. Maintaining Rights (vs. 35-40)

1. Change in attitude by the city rulers (vs. 35-39).
2. Comfort in fellowship at Lydia's house (v. 40).
3. Luke stays at Philippi – disciples the church there.

NOTE: Paul's demand that the magistrates **escort** him and Silas **out** of **prison** appears to be vindictive. But it probably was designed to spare the young church in Philippi from further harassment. It certainly would place the believers in a far more secure position before the officials.

G. In Thessalonica (17:1-9). The trade center of all that area.

1. The gospel preached in the synagogue for three Sabbath days (vs. 1-3).
 - a. Its divine authority (vs. 1-2).
 - b. Its divine argument and appeal (v. 3).
2. The gospel received (v. 4). Faith and fellowship.
 - 1) Some of the Jews were persuaded.
 - 2) A large number of God-fearing Greeks.
 - 3) Many prominent women. The gospel message was received by people of various nationalities and social positions.
3. The gospel opposed (vs. 4-9).

NOTE: Paul on the Thessalonian Christians in 1 Thessalonians 1:3-11.

H. In Berea (17:10-15)

1. The gospel considered – taught in the synagogue (vs. 10-11). Receptive audience with reverent attitude.
2. The gospel accepted (v. 12).
3. The gospel hindered (vs. 13-15). Note the Berean attitude:
 - a. Receptivity – reverent attention.
 - b. Research – reasoning activity.
 - c. Responsiveness – resulting acceptance.
4. Paul sent away by the brothers but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea to disciple that group of new Christians.

NOTE: The glory of Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. was fading in Paul's day and even **Athens**, the proud center of Hellenism, was past its bloom. Even so, it was still a vital cultural center with a world-famous university. Many of its famous buildings were built during the days of its leader Pericles (461-429 B.C.). Beautiful as were the architecture and art forms, Paul could not enjoy them because **he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols**. The art of Athens was a reflection of its worship. The intellectual capital of the world was producing idolatry.

I. In Athens (17:16-34)

1. God's worship neglected (v. 16).
2. God's message delivered (vs. 17-18).
 - a. To the Jews, Greeks and men of all sorts.
 - b. In the Synagogues and the market place.
3. God's servant examined (vs. 19-21).
4. God's person unknown (vs. 22-23).
5. God's truth declared (vs. 24-28). His Person and Exaltation.
6. God's gospel proclaimed (vs. 29-31).
 - a. Past (vs. 29-30a) – Merciful.
 - b. Present (v. 30b) – Demanding.
 - c. Future (v. 31) – Judging.
7. God's offer received (vs. 32-34).

Results: A few men believed.

J. In Corinth and Trip Home (18:1-22). The most immoral city in the Roman empire.

1. Discipleship – Paul and his life (vs. 1-4).
 - a. Wayfaring (v. 1).
 - b. Waiting (vs. 2-3).
 - c. Witnessing (v. 4). Reasoned and persuaded in the Synagogue.
2. Apostleship – Paul and his work (vs. 5-8).
 - a. Faithfulness (vs. 5-6).
 - b. Fearlessness (vs. 7-8).
3. Fellowship – Paul and his God (vs. 9-11).
 - a. Divine manifestation (vs. 9-10). God has many people in this city.
 - b. Human recognition (v. 11).
4. Hardship – Paul and his enemies (vs. 12-17).
 - a. Assault (v. 12).
 - b. Accusation (v. 13).
 - c. Attitude (vs. 14-16).
 - d. Aftermath (v. 17). *“But Gallio showed no concern whatever.”*
5. Companionship – Paul and his friends (vs. 18-22). *“Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time.”*
 - a. Paul departing (v. 18).
 - b. Paul at Ephesus (vs. 19-21). Priscilla and Aquila remain in Ephesus.
 - c. Paul traveling home (v. 22).

K. Apollos (18:24-28)

1. Learned and spiritual (vs. 24-25a).
2. Fervent and eloquent (vs. 25b-26a).
3. Ignorant and instructed (vs. 25b, 26b).
4. Commended and successful (vs. 27-28).

LESSONS FROM THIS JOURNEY**A. From Troas and Philippi – Chapter 16**

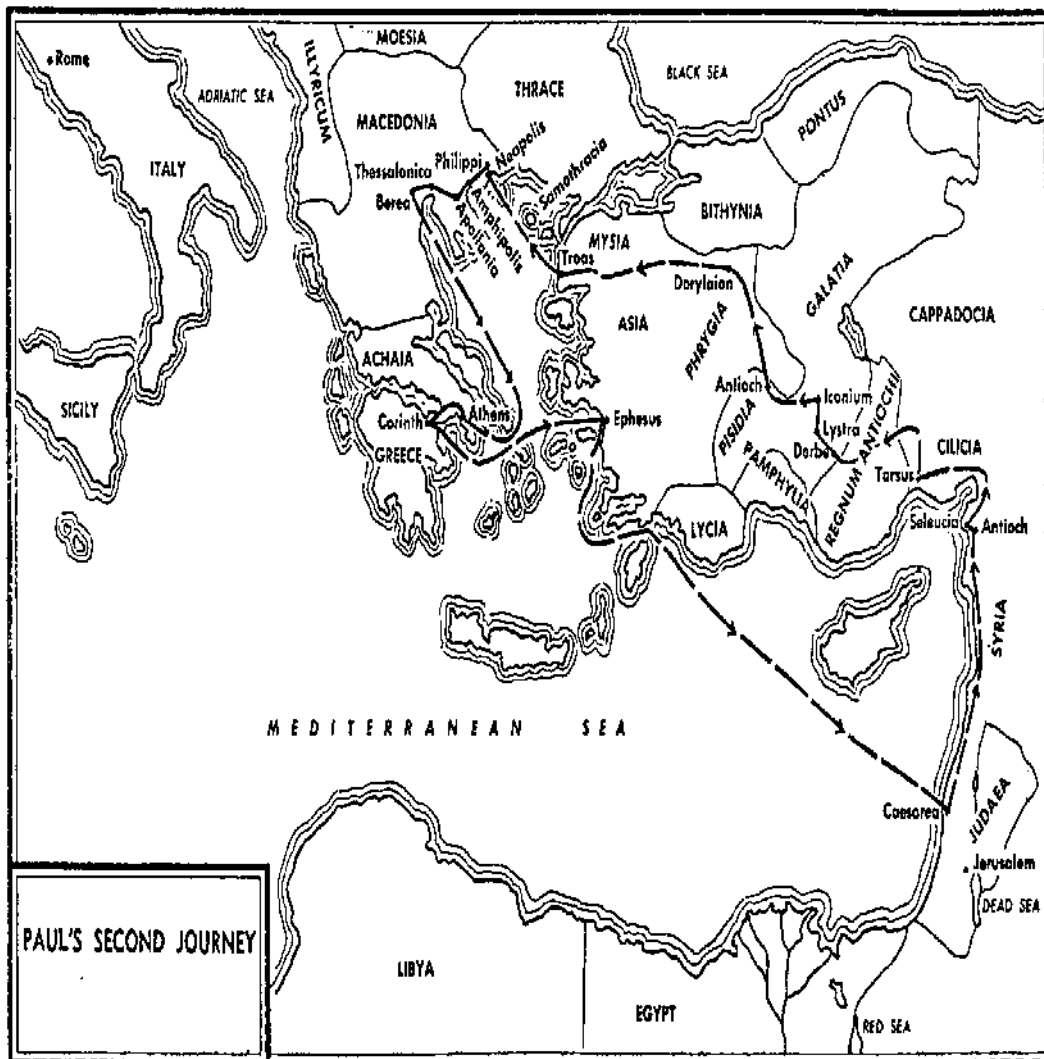
1. God's call to work:
 - a. Human need – fields white unto harvest (16:9; cf. John 4:35).
 - b. Personal readiness – abide in God, await assignment (16:6-7).
 - c. Prompt action – immediate endeavor (16:10).
 - 1) Complete conviction – “God had called us.”
 - 2) Spiritual power – “kept by Holy Spirit” (16:6); “The Spirit of Jesus” (16:7); “God” (16:10).
2. God's care in work:
 - a. Guided by God – open and effectual door (Preventing and enabling).
 - b. Preserved by God – “*sailed straight for . . .*”
 - c. Used by God – teaching and “personal work” like picking fruit by hand.
 - d. Blessed by God – opened hearts sure sign of Lord's presence.

B. From Athens – Chapter 17

1. The messenger of God (Orator and Preacher).
 - a. Conciliatory (17:22). Introduction.
 - b. Clear (17:23). Proposition.
 - c. Concise (17:24-28). Exposition.
 - d. Cogent (17:29-31). Application.
2. The message about God.
 - a. Divine Creator (17:24).
 - b. Universal Lord (17:24).
 - c. Bountiful Life (17:25).
 - d. Almighty Ruler (17:26).
 - e. Unseen Spirit (17:27-28a).
 - f. Tender Father (17:28b-30).
 - g. Righteous Judge (17:31).

C. From Corinth – Chapter 18. Epitome of practical Christianity:

1. Home life (vs. 3, 26).
2. Daily toil (v. 3).
3. Sabbath worship (vs. 4, 19, 26, 28).
4. Gospel testimony (vs. 5, 11, 19, 27-28).
5. Great faithfulness (vs. 6, 25-26).
6. Loving compassion (vs. 7, 21-25).
7. Spiritual communion (vs. 9-10).
8. Inevitable suffering.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON NINE:

1. How did the conflict between Paul and Barnabas affect the expansion of the gospel?

2. Name three (3) men other than Paul that were involved in this missionary tour.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
3. Give a brief description of the events which occurred in each of the following cities.
Philippi: _____

Thessalonica: _____

Berea: _____

Athens: _____

Corinth: _____

4. Identify the following:
Silas: _____
Luke: _____
Timothy: _____
Lydia: _____
Jason: _____
Troas: _____
Areopagus: _____
Aquila & Priscilla: _____
Apollos: _____
Gallio: _____
5. Who joined Paul and Silas at Lystra? _____
6. Who joined Paul's company at Troas? _____ What tells us this? _____
7. Who was left at Philippi to disciple the new Christians? _____

LESSON TEN

MISSIONS CONCLUDED MISSIONS THREATENED

INTRODUCTION:

Luke now describes Paul's journey to Ephesus (which begins in 18:23). Just as Priscilla and Aquila had found in Apollos a man who "*knew only the baptism of John*" (18:25), so Paul now came into contact with "some disciples" whose knowledge may be summarized in the same way. Also, in the same way that Priscilla and Aquila explained to Apollos "*the way of God more adequately*" (18:26), so Paul must now further instruct the disciples he found at Ephesus. Though Luke does not say explicitly, these men had probably been influenced by Apollos before the instruction by Priscilla and Aquila.

Christianity and religion came into conflict at Ephesus, a great religious center. Here a serious incident took place. It arose out of the threat which the gospel presented to the cult of the great goddess Diana (Artemis), and to those trades which were largely dependent on the cult. The conflict of interest arose because the Christian preachers denied the existence of deities "made with hands" and were thus threatening the livelihood of the silversmiths who carried on such a profitable business in the manufacture of these shrines and their images.

LESSON TEXT: Acts 19:1 – 23:35

LESSON AIM: To see the further expansion of the church through the further mission efforts of Paul as he travels again into places he had previously been.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Study the third missionary journey of Paul as he goes again to Ephesus and to the churches he started in Europe.
 2. View the opposition to the gospel in the city of Ephesus and how the Word powerfully overcomes in this heathen city.
 3. Study the meeting Paul had with the elders of Ephesus and the advice he gave to them at Miletus.
 4. Learn the events which occurred after Paul arrived in Jerusalem with the eventual outcome.
-

Conflict has gone on with continuous passion and persistent zeal. It manifests itself in many forms and has even entered the ranks of Christianity itself and corrupted its worship and paganized its practices. When true Christian devotion comes into

conflict with the economic interests of religion, anger is aroused and trouble is on foot.

MISSIONS CONCLUDED – MISSIONARY THREATENED

A. Missions Concluded. The Third Journey (19:1 – 20:38).

1. Paul at Ephesus (19:1-41).
 - a. Christian experience enlarged (vs. 1-7).
 - 1) Holy Spirit declared (vs. 1-4). Apollos had already worked at Ephesus (18:14).
 - 2) Holy Spirit conferred (vs. 5-7). They were disciples having received only John's baptism. The Holy Spirit empowers them through the laying on of Paul's hands.
 - b. Christian message given (vs. 8-20). Paul preaches for two years in Ephesus.
 - 1) Word of God resisted (vs. 8-9). Paul's work in the School of Tyrannus.
 - 2) Word of God attested (vs. 10-20). God works special miracles by Paul.
 - a) False exorcists exposed and books of magic burned (vs. 13-20).
 - b) The name of Jesus is magnified (v. 17).
 - c) Many were emboldened to bring their books of magic and burn them (vs. 18-20).
 - c. Christian influence opposed (vs. 21-41).
 - 1) Culmination (vs. 21-22). Paul's future plans for missions.
 - 2) Complaint (v. 23). A disturbance about The Way.
 - 3) Cleverness (vs. 24-28). Demetrius' speech and the reaction from his fellow craftsmen.
 - 4) Calmness (vs. 29-34). Confusion and mob mentality.
 - 5) Coolness (vs. 35-41). The quieting speech by the town clerk.
 - a) They are not temple robbers or blasphemers.
 - b) The courts are open and there are proconsuls.
 - c) We are in danger of being charged with rioting.
2. Paul travels (20:1-6).
 - a. The plan and progress (vs. 1-2). Encouragement of brothers, three months in Greece.
 - b. The plot and retreat through Macedonia (v. 3).
 - c. The party of travelers and Passover (vs. 4-6). Paul and company stay in Troas seven days. **Luke rejoins Paul at Philippi.**
3. Paul at Troas (20:7-12). Sunday at Troas is noteworthy.
 - a. Christians gather on the Lord's day (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:2).
 - b. Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper on the evening of the first day of the week – departs early the next day (Monday).
 - c. Paul preaches . . . for a long time – until midnight.
 - d. Paul raises Eutychus.
 - e. Paul spent all night in this farewell meeting.
(What a service that assembly was!)

4. Paul travels (20:13-16).
 - a. By land (v. 13). Paul walks about 20 miles to Assos after being up all night.
 - b. By sea (vs. 14-16). Sails to Miletus in 3 days. Because of his urgency to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost and to deliver the gift to the Jerusalem church, he bypasses Ephesus.
5. Paul at Miletus (20:17-35).
 - a. **A look backward** (vs. 17-21).
 - 1) Character of his ministry: His manner and quality of life – **lowly, tearful, trying**.
 - 2) Methods of his ministry: Well-rounded, public, private (house to house).
 - 3) Message of his ministry: Repentance and faith.
 - b. **A look forward** (vs. 22-24).
 - 1) Trouble ahead (vs. 22-23).
 - 2) Trouble not omnipotent (v. 24).
 - c. **A look inward** (vs. 25-31).
 - 1) Paul looks inward (vs. 25-27).
 - 2) Elders to look inward (v. 28). Take heed: To self, flock, doctrine.
 - 3) Elders to lead brethren to look inward (vs. 29-31).
 - d. **A look to the book** (v. 32).
 - e. **A look to an example** (vs. 33-35). Paul's attitude toward their possessions:
 - 1) He did not covet their silver and gold.
 - 2) He supported himself and others.
 - 3) The saying of the Lord: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*
6. Paul leaves Miletus (20:36-38).
 - a. Prayer (v. 36).
 - b. Parting (vs. 37-38).

NOTE: Three phrases indicative of Paul's preaching:

 1. The grace of God (20:24, 32).
 2. The kingdom of God (20:25).
 3. The whole counsel of God (20:27).

B. Missionary Threatened. In Jerusalem – Widening witness (21:1 – 23:35).

1. Journeying to Jerusalem (21:1-16).
 - a. En route (vs. 1-3). Cos, Rhodes, Patara, past Cyprus, to Tyre.
 - b. At Tyre (vs. 4-6). One week of sweet fellowship with loving families.
 - c. At Caesarea (vs. 7-14).
 - 1) A guest in Philip's home (vs. 7-9).
 - 2) Warned by Agabus (vs. 10-11).
 - 3) Begged by brethren (vs. 12-14).
2. Departure to Jerusalem (vs. 15-16). Accompanied by some of the brethren.
3. In Jerusalem again (21:17-40).
 - a. The meeting (vs. 17-19). With James and all the elders.
 - b. The proposal (vs. 20-25). Proves critics wrong, pays the price of

- redemption for four Nazarite men (Numbers 6:1-21).
- c. The action (v. 26). Not *compromise* at *expense* of truth but *comprehensiveness* for *sake* of truth.
- d. The outcome (vs. 27-36).
 - 1) Prejudice and bigotry (vs. 27-29).
 - 2) Seizure and threat (vs. 30-31).
 - 3) Rescue and prison (vs. 32-36).
- e. The appeal (vs. 37-40).
- 4. Paul's defense before his people (22:1-30).
 - a. The solemn plea (vs. 1-21).
 - 1) Conciliation (vs. 1-2).
 - 2) Education (v. 3).
 - 3) Persecution (vs. 4-5).
 - 4) Conversion (vs. 6-16).
 - 5) Commission (vs. 17-21).
 - b. The stubborn prejudice (vs. 22-23).
 - c. The strong protection (vs. 24-30).
 - 1) The plan (vs. 24-25).
 - 2) The protest (vs. 26-28).
 - 3) The privilege (vs. 29-30).
- 5. Paul's defense before the council (23:1-25).
 - a. The court (vs. 1-11).
 - 1) The altercation (vs. 1-5).
 - 2) The appeal (vs. 6-10) **NOTE:** God encourages Paul (v. 11).
 - b. The conspiracy (vs. 12-35).
 - 1) Formulated (vs. 12-15).
 - 2) Found out (vs. 16-22).
 - 3) Foiled (vs. 23-35) To Caesarea with a letter to Felix.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

The question is often before us whether Saturday, as the Sabbath, or Sunday, as the Lord's Day, is the right day of worship. Much, if not most, of the confusion comes because we miss the meaning of the original Sabbath regulation which required man to set aside the last day of the week for rest and worship. There is an incontrovertible contrast between the seventh day and the first day which establishes the first day as the proper day of worship:

1. The Sabbath was the seventh day; Sunday is the first day.
2. The seventh day was associated with creation; the first day is associated with redemption.
3. The seventh day was a memorial to God's work; the first day is a memorial to Christ's resurrection.
4. The seventh day marked an unfinished redemption; the first day marked a finished redemption.
5. The seventh day was based upon law; the first day is based upon grace.
6. The seventh day looked back upon an old week; the first day looked ahead upon a new week.
7. The seventh day was rest at the end of a week; the first day was preparation at the beginning of a week.

8. The seventh day was reward for work done; the first day was preparation for work yet to do.
9. The seventh day was obligatory; the first day is voluntary.
10. On the seventh day God said, "Give me this day and I will bless you"; on the first day the Christian says to God, "Because thou has blessed me I will give Thee this day."
11. The seventh day was a shadow of things to come; the first day is the substance of things that have come.
12. The seventh day was a sign of God's old covenant with His earthly people, the Jews; the first day is a confirmation of God's new covenant with His heavenly people, the church.
13. The seventh day had to do with the first man, Adam; the first day has to do with the Second Man, Christ.
14. The seventh day stands for the earth; the first day stands for heaven.
15. The seventh day is on the other side of the cross and the grave; the first day is on this side of the cross and the grave.

Let us then say, "*This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*" In our search for the right day let us be sure we have found the Lord of all the days.

(The above material taken from Acts of the Apostles , by Roy L. Laurin.)

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TEN:

1. What event is described in Acts 19:1-7? _____

2. What two (2) places did Paul teach in the city of Ephesus? For how long?

3. Who opposed the gospel preachers in Ephesus, for what reason and what was the outcome?

4. Describe Paul's visit to the city of Troas. How long did he stay?

5. At Miletus Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders concerning five (5) looks. What were these?
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

LESSON ELEVEN

MISSIONARY TRIED

INTRODUCTION:



Paul's purpose to preach Christ at Jerusalem had been fulfilled—not miraculously—but providentially. Also, his request at the hand of the Roman Christians that God would deliver him from those that were disobedient at Jerusalem was also fulfilled. Thus God clearly illustrates how any Christian who will fit himself into God's purpose shall find himself caught up in the providential workings of God.

Paul's purpose to go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome (Acts 19:21) has been providentially fulfilled as far as Jerusalem. Three attempts to kill him have been thwarted and Paul has been removed for safekeeping and judgment at the hand of the Roman provincial governor Felix at Caesarea. In this lesson we will see the continuing providence of God in the life and work of Paul as he stands before Felix, Festus and Agrippa.

After presenting his defense and the gospel to Agrippa, Paul challenges Agrippa to believe. Alas, Agrippa refuses with the words, "*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*" (KJV). Where is the "almost" Agrippa and where is "altogether" Paul? Agrippa has vanished from the memory of man except for the brief notations of history. Paul is remembered wherever men call themselves Christians. Oblivion is the price of being "almost." Eternal remembrance is the reward of being "altogether."

LESSON TEXT: Acts chapters 24 through 26

LESSON AIM: To see the vindication and boldness of Paul as he stands trial before three different rulers of Rome.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. See and hear the accusations against Paul by his Jewish accusers and his response to these charges.
 2. View the character of Felix, Festus and Agrippa as revealed in the light of God's word and God's preacher.
 3. Study the continuing dedication of Paul to his commission to witness to the Gentiles.
 4. Learn of the providential oversight of God in the life of Paul in all his times of hardships and trials.
-

GOD'S MISSIONARY ON TRIAL (24:1-26:32)

Caesarea – Three Trials:

A. Paul Before Felix (24:1-27)

1. The prosecution (vs. 1-9).
 - a. The accusers – Ananias, some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus (v. 1).
 - b. The accusation (vs. 2-6a). Three accusations:
 - 1) Sedition – Paul is charged with being “. . . *a troublemaker stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world.*”
 - 2) Sectarianism – “. . . *a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.*”
 - 3) Sacrilege – “. . . *tried to desecrate the temple.*” (See 21:28)
 - c. The testimony of Paul's accusers (vs. 6b-9).
 - d. The defense Paul presents (vs. 10-21).
 - 1) Against sedition (vs. 10-13). Paul had only been in the city 12 days, mostly at worship. Paul argues that his stay in Jerusalem was too short to stir up serious trouble.
 - a) He was not arguing with anyone at the temple.
 - b) He was not stirring up a crowd in the city.
 - c) There is no proof of any of the charges made against him.
 - 2) Against sectarianism (vs. 14-16). Worshiping the one God of his and their ancestors. His focus was a spiritual one.
 - a) He is a follower of “the way.”
 - b) He believes everything that agrees with the Law and Prophets.
 - c) He has the same hope in the “one” God as his accusers.
 - 3) Against sacrilege (vs. 17-21). Refers to Nazarite vow and benevolence.
 - e. The climax (vs. 22-27). Notice the two parties involved.
 - 1) The Judge: Felix was “. . . *well acquainted with the way.*”
 - a) Postponement (vs. 22-23).
 - b) Procrastination (vs. 24-27).
 - 2) The prisoner: His sermon (v. 25). “*As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, ‘That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.’*”
 - a) Righteousness – God's commands.
 - b) Temperance – self-control.
 - c) Judgment to come – the dread penalty of sin.

B. Paul Before Festus (25:1-27)

1. The conspiracy (vs. 1-12).
 - a. Fresh effort (vs. 1-5). A new attempt to kill Paul. *They urgently requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way.*
 - b. Further examination (vs. 6-12).

- 1) Paul's statement: "*I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.*"
- 2) Paul appeals to Caesar.
2. The consultation (vs. 13-27).
 - a. The ruler (v. 13). Herod Agrippa II and Bernice.
 - b. The recapitulation (vs. 14-22). Festus recounts the recent events to Agrippa.
 - c. The review (vs. 23-27). The presentation of Paul to Agrippa by Festus.

C. Paul Before Agrippa (26:1-32)

1. The commencement of Paul's testimony (vs. 1-8).
 - a. Courtesy (vs. 1-3). Paul's introduction – a flattering compliment to the ruler.
 - b. Conduct (vs. 4-5). Paul's Pharisaic heritage shows his alliance with orthodox Judaism.
 - c. Challenge (vs. 6-8).
 - 1) The promise of the resurrection formed the very framework of the identity of the Jewish nation.
 - 2) Why should the Jews be his accusers when his preaching had so much in common with Pharisaic Judaism?
2. The center of Paul's testimony (vs. 9-18).
 - a. Confession – Paul's former zeal against Christians (vs. 9-11). His involvement in persecuting the Christians.
 - b. Conversion – Paul's experience on the road to Damascus (vs. 12-15). His vision of the Lord and conversation with Jesus.
 - c. Commission (vs. 16-18). "*... A servant and witness of what you have seen of me and of what I will show you.*"
3. The culmination of Paul's testimony (vs. 19-23).
 - a. Consecration – Paul's obedience to God (vs. 19-20).
 - b. Capture – Paul's arrest and the reason for it (v. 21).
 - c. Continuance – Paul's continuing preaching of Christ (vs. 22-23).
4. The consequence of Paul's testimony (vs. 24-32).
 - a. Criticism by Festus (v. 24). Accuses Paul of being insane.
 - b. Calmness of Paul (vs. 25-26). Paul insisted that his position was just the opposite of madness. His message was "true and reasonable."
 - c. Call to believe (vs. 27-29). "*Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?*"
 - d. Consultation (vs. 30-32). Agreement between Agrippa and Festus regarding Paul's innocence.

NOTE: It was the fifth time in Acts where Paul's innocence had been affirmed (23:9; 23:29; 25:18-19, 25; 26:32). Paul was no threat to the Roman government.

NOTE: How Paul Faced Trouble:

1. Through fellowship with the Master.
 - a) Paul treads the pathway of suffering and wrong. . .not disheartened or sullen but with courage and kindness. Like Christ before him (Matthew 10:25; John 15:20-21).
 - b) Enforced quiet will give Paul time to ponder deeper truths about Christ's gospel and will produce great epistles.
2. Through faithfulness to the will of God.

Paul had learned to wait as well as work. This was because he had surrendered wholly to the will of God (Compare Ephesians 1:5, 9, 11, 5:17; Colossians 1:9; 1 John 2:17; Psalms 25:3, 5, 21; 37:7; Isaiah 40:28-31).
3. Through faith in God.

The deepest secret of all was Paul's trust and confidence in his God and in His wisdom, love, and power. So, whether working or waiting, serving or suffering, all was well (cf. 2 Timothy 1:12).

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ELEVEN:

1. What was the name of the first man before whom Paul stood trial and the accusations presented against him?

The official: _____

The accusations:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

2. What were Paul's answers to these accusations?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

3. What was the result of this first of three trials?

4. Who was the second man before whom Paul stood trial and what was the verdict?

5. Who was the third man who heard Paul's case? _____

6. What was this man's conclusion concerning the guilt of Paul? _____

7. By what three (3) means did Paul face trouble?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

8. To whom did Paul appeal his case and what gave him the right to do this?

LESSON TWELVE

MISSIONARY TRIUMPHANT

INTRODUCTION:



he final two chapters of Acts deal with Paul's journey to and arrival in Rome. This section of Acts allows Luke to finish his account of how the witness for Christ went all the way to the Imperial City itself. He thus concludes the narrative by showing how Paul fulfilled his mission even in the face of severe hardships (see 19:21; 23:11). These chapters also allow Luke to show that the gospel was victorious, breaking out of the geographical confinements of Palestine and ultimately impacting the whole Roman world.

The story of Paul's journey to Rome is one of the most interesting chapters of the entire book. It contains a document of unusual detail regarding the art of ancient seamanship. It furthermore tells of the enormous contest with physical forces against which the mariners had to battle. It describes the efforts of Paul's official party to survive great hazards in order that they might reach Rome, where Paul expected to present his case before Caesar.

LESSON TEXT: Acts chapters 27 through 28

LESSON AIM: To see how the apostle Paul fulfilled his mission of preaching the gospel in Rome even in the face of severe hardships.

LESSON PREVIEW: You will. . .

1. Journey with Paul and his fellow-workers as they travel by ship to the Imperial City, Rome.
 2. Examine and marvel at the oversight of God as in His providential care He directs affairs even on a pagan ship.
 3. See that even though God's preacher might end up in chains that His word cannot be chained.
 4. Learn that Paul was able to preach the kingdom of God boldly even though a prisoner of the Roman government.
-

MISSIONARY TRIUMPHANT AND CONCLUSION (27:1-28:31)

The purpose of this account is to show God's sovereign protection and direction in Paul's ministry. It was God's will for the apostle to minister the gospel in Rome.

A. Triumph At Sea (27:1 – 28:16)

1. The voyage to Malta (27:1-44). Luke rejoins Paul ("We" first time since 21:18 and continues until the travelers reach Rome in 28:16). Apparently

Luke was included in the journey to Rome, perhaps after spending the two years in Caesarea during Paul's imprisonment.

- a. The start (vs. 1-8). The journey from Caesarea to Sidon.
 - 1) From Caesarea to Sidon – some seventy nautical miles away (vs.1-3).
 - 2) From Sidon to Fair Havens (vs.4-8). Hard trip due to contrary winds.
- b. The stay (vs. 9-12).
 - 1) Right advice – Paul's warning about the coming danger (vs.9-10).
 - 2) Wrong decision (vs.11-12). The majority of the men argued for sailing on to reach Phoenix, a safer place to winter since the harbor faced "both southwest and northwest."
- c. The storm at sea (vs. 13-38).
 - 1) Extremity (vs. 13-20). Attempts to lighten the ship.
 - 2) Exhortation (vs. 21-26). Paul's words of encouragement.
 - 3) Effort (vs. 27-32). The sighting of land and the attempt of the sailors to escape.
 - 4) Encouragement (vs. 33-38). Paul's encouragement of the crew to eat.
- d. The shipwreck (vs. 39-41).
 - 1) Attempted landing (vs. 39-40). The running aground of the ship.
 - 2) Disastrous result (v. 41).
- e. The safety (vs. 42-44). The escape to dry land.
 - 1) Death thwarted (vs. 42-43). As Paul had predicted (v. 24), God was truly sparing those with Paul, who might have been lost.
 - 2) Life assured (v. 44). All persons aboard the vessel "reached land in safety."

NOTE: The only explanation was the providence of God.

2. The voyage to the capital of the world (28:1-31).
 - a. Preservation (vs. 1-6). The welcome by the Barbarians on Malta.
 - 1) Succor (vs. 1-2). The "unusual kindness" of the islanders showed itself in their willingness to build a huge fire around which the passengers could warm themselves in the cold November rain. (The time of the year can be discerned by noting that they waited three months for shipping to begin again (28:11), a time which came in early February for the Romans.)
 - 2) Surprise (vs. 3-6). Paul delivered from a poison snake bite and death.
 - b. Power (vs. 7-10). On Malta.
 - 1) Salutation (v. 7). Paul's reception by Publius, the chief official of the island.
 - 2) Service (vs. 8-10). All the sick on the island healed through Paul.

NOTE: Publius took Paul and others (**us** included Luke) to his estate . . . for three days. One benefit of Paul's ministry was the healing of Publius' father (who had fever and dysentery) and the rest of the sick on the island. Interestingly Paul, besides not being harmed by the viper, was used by God to heal others. No wonder the islanders honored the shipwrecked men in many ways, even giving them supplies before they set sail three months later (v. 11). These supplies were no doubt given in gratitude for Paul's services.

- c. Progress (vs. 11-16).
 - 1) Safety (vs. 11-13). Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli.
 - 2) Sympathy (vs. 14-16). Forum of Appius, Three Taverns, Rome. Paul lived by himself, guarded by a soldier. This arrangement would allow Paul to receive friends, maintain correspondence, perhaps even continue his trade to some extent.

B. Victory In Pagan Rome (28:17-31)

- 1. Preaching (vs. 17-29). Preaching to the Jews.
 - a. By statement (vs. 17-24).
 - 1) Paul's defense (vs. 17-20).
 - 2) The request for further information by the Jews (vs. 21-22).
 - 3) The interview with the Jews (v. 23).
 - b. By scripture (vs. 25-29). See Isaiah 6:9-10. The mixed response: In this last recorded opportunity for them to hear the word from Paul, they showed themselves to be people whose physical senses were functional, but not their spiritual senses.
- 2. Providence (vs. 30-31). Sanction and summary. Luke's final words portray the Apostle Paul still in chains, but the gospel unchained.

C. Final Note: The book of Acts is marked by four great features:

- 1. The predominance of the divine element.
- 2. The universality of the gospel.
- 3. The hostility of the world toward Christianity.
- 4. The continuing victory of the Church.

CONCLUSION

So ends the book of Acts, a book filled with challenge, instruction, hope, and instruction. May the lessons of this book so grip our lives that we in turn will take our places among those who turned the world upside down. Like them may we become disciples who are:

- 1. Committed to the Lord, Jesus Christ.
- 2. Reliant on the power of God.
- 3. Guided by the Spirit of God.
- 4. Absorbed in reaching out to the lost.
- 5. Devoted to the edifying of the saved.

As the church advanced with the gospel, men and women were trained to witness, equipped with a message, committed to the vision of spreading the gospel throughout the world, and humbly yielding themselves to God's will for their lives.

If we would have the same impact today, we too must—

1. See things as Jesus sees them.
2. Have a missionary mentality.
3. Use all resources and giftedness in carrying out the Great Commission.

Finally Read Hebrews 12:1-2.

SUMMARY:

“Perhaps Luke wanted to maintain his emphasis on the unchained gospel. To describe what happened to Paul would have drawn attention to the human instrument in God’s plans for the gospel’s world-wide conquest. So Luke’s final words ring through the corridors of time. The message of Christ can never be locked up. Even when the preachers of God’s salvation are made prisoners of a world which does not know God, the truth of Christ will always run free.”³

³ The College Press NIV Commentary on Acts by Dennis Gaertner, pg 431.

SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWELVE:

1. Who was Julius and what did he allow Paul to do? _____

2. Name at least two (2) co-workers that traveled with Paul to Rome.

3. What warning did Paul give to those who were sailing the ship when the sailing became dangerous? _____
4. How were the shipwreck victims treated by the people of Melita? _____

5. How is the providence of God illustrated in the last two verses of the book of Acts?

6. List the four (4) great features by which the book of Acts is marked.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
 - 4) _____
7. Who did Paul call together after three days in Rome and how did these people respond to Paul and his message?

Study Guide

Richard Rogers



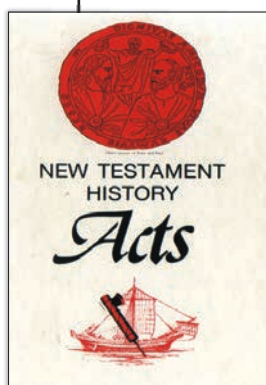
Richard Rogers was born in 1936 in Dallas, Texas. He was educated at Abilene Christian University and Florida Christian College. An avid reader and diligent Bible student, he authored some twenty workbooks and published outlines.

Richard was well known as a gifted evangelist, teacher, and lectureship speaker. He was in great demand as a missionary encourager and world evangelist. He taught for more than three decades at Sunset International Bible Institute, assisting in the training of thousands of preachers and missionaries. Richard mentored church planting teams in the US, Mexico, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Richard preached for local congregations at Blue Ridge, Azle, and Midland, Texas as well as the Sunset Church of Christ in Lubbock. Speaking appointments took him to forty states and thirty foreign countries and to many Christian university campuses as a teacher and lecturer. He was also a frequent speaker at workshops across the nation.

Richard can still be heard proclaiming the word of God via hundreds of audio and video sermons and lessons available through Sunset External Studies.

Richard and his wife, Barbara, were blessed with four children and a number of grandchildren.



☞ The book *New Testament History - Acts* is used as required reading for the SIBI video course *History of the Church in Acts*.

SUNSET
INSTITUTE PRESS

3710 34th Street • Lubbock, TX 79410
800-687-2121 • www.extensionschool.com

