

ACTS

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Material for this class was taken from the Life Application Bible (NIV version), the Discovery Bible (NAS), The Acts of the Apostles by William Barclay, Acts by F.F. Bruce, Acts by I. Howard Marshall, and The Message of Acts by John R.W. Stott.

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This work is dedicated to Sheila Smith, my wife.

William S. Smith

ACTS

The Church in Jerusalem - Part I

- Acts 1:1 - 1:11 **CHRIST'S ASCENSION.** The Gospel of Luke ends with the story of Christ's Ascension (Luke 24: 36-53). Acts begins by repeating this story again. They're told that they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and will be Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and finally the world.
- Acts 1:12 - 1:26 **MATTHIAS CHOSEN TO REPLACE JUDAS.** While waiting in Jerusalem Peter stands up before the believers (who number about 120), and quotes from Psalms to show that they need to choose someone to take Judas' place. The person to be chosen needs to have been with them the whole time, from Jesus' baptism to His ascension, as the person will become a witness to Jesus' resurrection.
- Acts 2:1 - 2:47 **THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** 10 days after Christ's ascension was one of the major Jewish feasts - Pentecost. Jews from all over have come to Jerusalem for the feast. That was the day the Holy Spirit came and clothed them with power. What an experience - a sound like a violent wind fills the house, tongues of fire descend on each of them, they all begin speaking in other languages. A crowd hears the noise and gathers. The crowd is amazed because each person is hearing in their own language. Peter addresses the crowd, and gives the first invitation to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin. 3,000 accept the message and are baptized that very day. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...and the Lord added to their number daily".
- Acts 3:1 - 4:31 **PETER AND JOHN IN JAIL.** Peter heals a crippled beggar, and then addresses the crowd that gathers. The priests and Sadducees seize Peter and John and put them in jail overnight. Peter and John are brought before the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law and are told not to speak about Jesus. Peter and John refuse and continue to speak boldly. (Number of believers now numbers 5,000). The priests and Sadducees were amazed because Peter and John were "unschooled, ordinary men".

SIDE NOTE

Note the order for being witnesses: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the world. The rest of Acts deals with this happening. Pentecost came 50 days after Passover. Christ ascended 40 days after His resurrection.

Note that Jesus' brothers are now believers. During Christ's ministry on earth they did not believe. But Jesus appeared to James during the 40 days (see 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). James probably talked to the other brothers.

Some people think that Peter acted too quickly in calling for a replacement for Judas. They believe that God chose Paul to replace Judas.

120 believers (compared to about 4,000,000 Jews living in Palestine then) is legal number of Jews needed for a new community to have it's own council.

ACTS

The Church in Jerusalem - Part II

- Acts 4:32 - 5:11 **ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.** The believers were sharing everything that they owned. As money was needed, people would sell their property and give the money to the apostles for distribution. One such person was Barnabas. One man and his wife (Ananias and Sapphira) hold back part of their money - but claim that they have given it all. Both die that very day.
- Acts 5:12 - 5:42 **APOSTLES ARRESTED.** These were exciting times! The apostles were healing many people, and performing many miraculous signs and wonders. People would bring sick people and lay them down so that Peter's shadow would fall upon the sick as he walked by - and they would be healed. More and more people were becoming believers. Even those that didn't believe still held the believers in high esteem. But the high priest and Sadducees became jealous. Because of their actions many were afraid to associate with the believers. Finally, the high priest and the Sadducees arrest the apostles and put them in jail. God sends an angel that night to open the doors of the jail and to tell them to return to the temple courts and continue to preach. They're told to stop preaching about Jesus, but they refuse. They would have been put to death except for a Pharisee named Gamaliel (Paul studied under Gamaliel). The apostles were flogged and told to stop preaching. They continue to preach.
- Acts 6:1 - 6:7 **CHOOSING OF THE SEVEN.** The Grecian Jews complain (against the Hebraic Jews) that their widows are being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The twelve apostles say "it would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." It was a matter of priorities. Do we have our priorities right? (This doesn't mean that waiting on tables was less important in God's sight - each of us is called to different ministries - see 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7).
- SIDE NOTE** Did God punish Ananias and Sapphira because they didn't give all of their money to the church? Their sin wasn't keeping money for themselves. The property and the money belonged to them. Their sin was one of hypocrisy. They lied and pretended that they had given all of the money to the church - they wanted to look important. It's important to give, and it's important to worship God - but God wants it to come from our heart - not from wanting to fit in, belong, or maintain community appearances. Also, note that verse 11 contains first use of the word "church" in Acts. Church means assembly.
- Steven, Philip, and the other 5 men are considered by many to be the first deacons. By the way, did you notice that Barnabas was not chosen as one of the seven. If you're not chosen for a position, it doesn't mean you're not a good person or a spiritual person - it just means that someone else was better qualified for that specific job. Barnabas certainly rates high in my book. Barnabas is described as an encourager (4:36), an intercessor (9:27 and 15:37), and as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith (11:24).

ACTS

Extension of Gospel to Samaria - Part I

Acts 6:7 - 8:3

STEPHEN KILLED. "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose...". Stephen is falsely accused of blasphemy and brought before the Sanhedrin. When asked if the charges are true Stephen gives a lengthy speech. He reminds them of the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. He reminds them how their ancestors had refused to obey Moses. He tells them that they are resisting the Holy Spirit just as their ancestors had. He tells them that they had murdered the Messiah. Stephen is dragged out of the city and stoned to death. Among those present is a young man named Saul who agrees with the decision to stone Stephen. "That day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria...Saul began to destroy the church". It's interesting that the apostles weren't scattered too. Did the rulers keep them there so that they could keep their eye on them. Or, is it more likely that they chose to stay there in the face of danger.

Acts 8:4 - 8:25

PHILLIP GOES TO SAMARIA. "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there." Many believed Philip and were baptized. "When the apostles in Jerusalem heard...they sent Peter and John to them." Peter and John prayed that the Samaritan believers would receive the Holy Spirit (they had been baptized, but had not received the Holy Spirit). "Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. There is a side story here about Simon the sorcerer, and how he tried to buy the power of laying hands so that people would receive the Holy Spirit. But the really important story here is that as a result of the persecution, the gospel message was spread. It took the persecution to force the believers into leaving their homes and taking the message out into the world.

SIDE NOTE

Why didn't the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit when Philip baptized them? Some say that only the apostles had the power to lay hands and give the Holy Spirit. I personally believe that God wanted Peter and John to witness the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit so that they could report back to Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit had shown that the Gospel was for the Samaritans as well as the Jews. We have to remember that there was no love between the Judean Jews and the Samaritans. From south to north we have Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Samaria and Galilee made up the Northern kingdom of Israel, while Judea made up the Southern kingdom. The Northern kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians. The Southern kingdom was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Samaria was resettled by foreigners who intermarried with the Jews who were left there. The natural animosity between the two kingdoms was intensified by the Samaritan intermarriages with foreigners. The Samaritans were not considered to be "pure Jews". Remember Jesus' encounter with the women at the well (in Samaria) and his parable about the "good Samaritan".

ACTS

Extension of Gospel to Samaria - Part II

Acts 8:26 - 8:40 **PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.** Philip's work wasn't done. An angel of the Lord tells Philip to go south to the desert road running between Jerusalem and Gaza. Philip obeys, and leaves Samaria (north of Jerusalem) to go to the desert road running from Jerusalem to Gaza (which is south of Jerusalem). On his way he meets an Ethiopian eunuch who was in charge of the treasury for the queen of the Ethiopians. The eunuch is reading the book of Isaiah. The Spirit tells Philip to "Go to that chariot and stay near it". Philip asks the eunuch if he understands what he is reading. The eunuch asks Philip if Isaiah was talking about himself or someone else (Isaiah 53:7-8). Philip tells him about Jesus. The eunuch asks if he can be baptized and gives orders to stop the chariot. "Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him".

Acts 9:1 - 9:31 **SAUL MEETS JESUS.** Meanwhile, Saul was still persecuting the church. He asks for and receives from the High Priest a letter to the synagogues in Damascus so that he can go there and make prisoners of any believers there. But as he nears Damascus "a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' " Saul asks "Who are you Lord", and receives the reply "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting". Saul is told to go into Damascus. Saul gets up from the ground and finds that he can't see. Meanwhile, God tells Ananias to go to Saul and to restore Saul's sight. Saul is baptized, and begins to preach in the synagogues there in Damascus. The Jews there want to kill Saul, but he is lowered in a basket through an opening in the wall and escapes. When he returns to Jerusalem, the believers don't trust him - but Barnabas stands up for him. The Jews in Jerusalem decide to kill Saul - but Saul is taken to Caesarea and then sent on to Tarsus. "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord."

SIDE NOTE Saul was his Hebrew name. Later on, when he and Barnabas begin their missionary journeys, Saul will go by his Roman name, Paul. This is the name that he uses in writing his letters and the name he uses traveling throughout the Roman empire. Here is some more information about Paul:

Galatians 1:18-24 tells us that before going to Jerusalem, Paul first spent three years in Arabia. After the three years were up he then went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter for 15 days. From Jerusalem he went to Caesarea and then to Tarsus which is in Cilicia. Galatians 2:1-11 describes his visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas for the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35), and his disagreement with Peter in Antioch. Paul describes things he suffered, his visions and being caught up to the third heaven, and the "thorn in my flesh" in 2 Corinthians 11:22 - 12:10. Paul describes himself as being from the tribe of Benjamin, and a Pharisee in Philippians 3:4-6. Paul describes his conversion experience in Acts 22:1-21. He also gives us more of his history - a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, he studied the law under Gamaliel. In Acts 23:28 we learn that Paul was born a Roman citizen.

ACTS

Extension of Gospel to Gentiles - Part I

Acts 9:32 - 9:43 **PETER RAISES TABITHA FROM THE DEAD.** Peter is visiting with the saints (believers) in Lydda. While there he heals a man who had been bedridden for eight years. As a result, all those living in Lydda and Sharon turn to the Lord. Peter is called to nearby Joppa when a disciple there named Tabitha dies. Peter raises her from the dead. Many people living in Joppa turn to the Lord. And Peter remains in Joppa for some time, living with Simon the tanner.

Acts 10:1 - 11:18 **PETER AND CORNELIUS.** Living in Caesarea was a gentile named Cornelius. He is a centurion, and he and all his family are devout God-fearing people. One day Cornelius receives a vision. He sees an angel who tells him to "send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter." The angel also tells him where Peter is living. Cornelius immediately sends three people to Joppa for Peter. About noon the next day Peter goes up on the roof to pray and has a vision. Three times a sheet is lowered, containing all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds. Peter would hear a voice saying "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat". Each time Peter would refuse saying that he had never ate anything impure or unclean, and each time the voice would tell him "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean". While Peter is wondering what this all means, the three men from Cornelius arrive at the door. They stay the night and the next day Peter accompanies them to Caesarea to see Cornelius. Cornelius and his friends and relatives are waiting for Peter to arrive. Cornelius tells Peter how God had told him to send for Peter. Peter tells them about Jesus. They receive the Holy Spirit and are baptized. When Peter arrives back in Jerusalem, some of the Jewish believers criticize him for being with and eating with uncircumcised people. Peter tells them everything that had happened, and when they hear how the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit, they praise God saying "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

SIDE NOTE

Read about the impact that Tabitha had on those around her in 9:36 and 9:39. What a legacy to leave behind you. By the way, do you think that this was the reason that God raised her back to life?

Once again we see the Holy Spirit being received as proof that God wants the Gospel extended - this time to the Gentiles. This is the only case I know of where the Holy Spirit was received before baptism. If it hadn't happened that way, baptism might not have been offered.

What's neat about this section of Acts is that we get to deal with two really great people - Tabitha and Cornelius. In my book they rate right up there with Barnabas. Tabitha was always doing good and helping the poor, giving them robes and other clothing that she had made. Cornelius also gave to the poor - he "gave generously to those in need". The angel told him that "his prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God."

ACTS

Extension of Gospel to Gentiles - Part II

Acts 11:19 - 11:30 **THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH.** Meanwhile "those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch". Some of them share the gospel with the Greeks at Antioch, and a great number of people believe. News reaches the church at Jerusalem and Barnabas is sent to Antioch. Under Barnabas' influence, the church there continues to grow. Barnabas goes to Tarsus to find Saul and to bring him back to Antioch with him. They spend a full year there teaching the new believers. During that time some prophets tell that a severe famine is coming which will affect the whole world. The church at Antioch decides to send a gift to the elders of Jerusalem to help them deal with the famine. Barnabas and Saul are chosen to take it.

Acts 12:1 - 12:25 **PETER FREED FROM JAIL.** About this time King Herod arrests some of the believers and has James, the brother of John put to death. This makes him popular with the Jews, so he has Peter arrested as well. "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him". The night before his trial, an angel of the Lord frees Peter. Peter goes to the home where John Mark lives with his mother. Many believers had gathered there to pray for Peter. Peter knocks at the door, and the house servant asks who is there. She is so surprised to hear Peter's voice, that she doesn't open the door to let him in, but leaves him standing outside while she goes upstairs to tell everyone that Peter, the object of their prayers, is standing at the door. No one believes her - they tell her it must be Peter's ghost. Peter continues to knock, and they finally open the door for him - totally surprised that their prayers have been answered. Herod is killed by an angel of God and the word of God continues to spread. Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch, taking John Mark with them.

SIDE NOTE It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians".

Notice the important principal in dealing with money. Two people, both above reproach, are chosen to transport the gift to Jerusalem. Notice too the way God works. Barnabas and Saul spend a full year working together. They get to know each other, and the believers at Antioch get to know them. Also notice how John Mark accompanies them on the journey from Jerusalem to Antioch. This prepares the way for them to take John Mark with them when they start off on their first missionary journey. John Mark is the author of the Gospel of Mark. According to Colossians 4:10 he was also Barnabas' cousin.

Because of Peter and Cornelius, the church was ready to receive the Antioch gentiles into the faith. And along with new people with different backgrounds comes new perspectives. The Antioch church seems to be the first to introduce sending missionaries out into the world.

James, the brother of John was one of the 12 apostles. James and John were called sons of Thunder. James, who wrote the New Testament book of James was James, the brother of Jesus.

ACTS

Paul's 1st missionary journey - Part I

Acts 13:1 - 13:12 **CYPRUS.** One day while the leaders at Antioch were worshipping, the Holy Spirit tells them to "Set apart...Barnabas and Saul" for missionary work. After prayer and fasting, they commission Barnabas and Saul and send them off on their first missionary trip, accompanied by John Mark. They go to Seleucia and then sail over to Cyprus (Barnabas' home). While at Cyprus they have a confrontation with a sorcerer and false prophet. They teach in the synagogues (this becomes a standard practice - to first go to the synagogues with the Gospel message). Verse 9 says "Saul, who was also called Paul". Paul is Saul's Roman or Greek name, and from this point on Luke calls him Paul. It was very common for people to have two names - a Greek name and a Hebrew name. This is also the point where the leadership seems to change from Barnabas to Paul.

Acts 13:13 - 13:52 **PISIDIAN ANTIOCH.** Paul and Barnabas continue on to Pisidian Antioch, and John Mark returns to Jerusalem. On the Sabbath, they attend the synagogue and the leaders invite them to speak. They teach in the synagogue. Some of the people there ask them to come back the following week to tell them more. A large number of town's people come the following week - and the synagogue leaders become jealous and put down Paul's message. Paul then takes his message directly to the Gentiles. The word of the Lord spreads through the whole region, including Jews and Gentiles. The synagogue leaders become jealous and have Paul and Barnabas expelled from the region. (He then goes to Galatia: Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.)

Acts 14:1 - 14:7 **ICONIUM.** Much the same story. A great number of Jews and Gentiles believe. What is new here is that God confirms their message by empowering them to do miraculous signs and wonders. Paul and Barnabas learn of a plot to stone them and flee to Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding areas where they continue to preach.

SIDE NOTE: We don't speak about fasting very often any more. As we see from the text here, fasting isn't an end in itself. Fasting should be accompanied by worship (service) and/or prayer.

There is some speculation as to whether or not the proconsul (in Cyprus) was the first true gentile believer or not.

Why did John Mark return to Jerusalem? There are several possibilities: he never really planned to go on the entire trip, he became homesick, or he became unhappy because his cousin Barnabas was taking a second-fiddle position to Paul. We're not told the reason - and it is fruitless to speculate.

Why didn't Paul and Barnabas stop in Perga (coast) before going on into the mountainous inland area (Pisidian Antioch)? They may have wanted to go directly to Pisidian Antioch because it was a major hub in that area (all 3 journeys passed through here). Or Paul may have been suffering from a form of malaria aggravated by the humid coast climate (See Galatians 4:13).

ACTS

Paul's 1st missionary journey - Part II

Acts 14:8 - 14:21 **LYSTRA & DERBE.** In Lystra Paul heals a crippled man who had been lame from his birth, and who had never been able to walk. Because Paul was able to heal the man, the people think he is a god. They call Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes, and they try to offer sacrifices to them. Paul and Barnabas tell them they are not gods, but men bringing them the good news to turn from worthless things to the true living God. Shortly afterward, some Jews from Antioch and Iconium come and cause trouble for Paul and Barnabas. Paul is stoned and left for dead. The disciples gather around Paul (to see how he is), and he accompanies them back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas go to Derbe where they preach and win a large number of disciples.

Acts 14:21 - 14:28 **RETURN TO ANTIOCH.** They now begin the trip back home. They don't continue on east to complete a circle, but instead they retrace most of their path. This allows them to visit the churches they have planted, to strengthen and encourage them, to warn them of future hardships, and finally, to appoint elders in each church. This time (on the return trip), they do stop and preach the word in Perga. Back home in Antioch they give a report on how their missionary trip went, and what was accomplished.

Acts 15:1 - 15:35 **JERUSALEM COUNCIL.** Some Jews from Judea come down and say that the Gentiles need to be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul and Barnabas disagree with that idea. So they, along with some other believers, go to Jerusalem to discuss this. Paul and Barnabas are warmly received in Jerusalem and they report what God had done through them. The believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said the Gentiles needed to be circumcised and needed to obey the law of Moses. The apostles and elders met to discuss this. Finally, Peter stood up and said that God Himself had sent the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. Barnabas and Paul reported the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. And then James added his endorsement. The day was won! The apostles and elders and the whole church decide to send some men back with Paul and Barnabas, along with a letter telling the Gentile believers that they do not have to be circumcised - but that they should "abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality".

SIDE NOTE Previously, Paul was able to build on the Old Testament scriptures in talking about Jesus. In Lystra Paul and Barnabas had to preach to people who didn't know of God's work or promises. They instead talked about the God who created heaven and earth and who sent us rain and crops.

There was a Latin poem by Ovid which told of a local legend how two gods had visited the region before, and how the gods had not been honored by anyone except for an old man and his wife. The gods rewarded the older couple, and punished everyone else. Apparently, the people thought the gods had returned, and they did not want to repeat that mistake again.

ACTS

Paul's 2nd missionary journey - Part I

Acts 15:36 - 16:5 **DISAGREEMENT.** Paul and Barnabas were talking about going back to visit the places they had preached. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along with them, but Paul did not want to take him since he had left before the last trip was completed. They couldn't agree and parted company. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed for Cyprus. Paul took Silas and visited the churches in Syria and Cilicia. In Lystra Timothy joined Paul and Silas. Timothy's mother was a Jew, and his father was a Greek. Paul circumcised Timothy - not for his salvation, but to avoid problems with the Jews in the area who knew that Timothy's father was a Greek.

Acts 16:6 - 16:10 **TROAS.** Paul traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia. The Holy Spirit would not let him go to Asia or Mysia, so they went to Troas. There Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia asking Paul to "Come over to Macedonia and help us." It is here that Luke starts to say "we".

Acts 16:11 - 16:40 **PHILIPPI.** They arrive at Philippi of Macedonia. Outside the city they speak to some women, and one of them, Lydia (a dealer in cloth from Thyatira) becomes a believer. They encounter a slave girl, possessed by a spirit, who was a fortune-teller. Paul orders the spirit to leave her and the girl's owners become upset. Paul and Silas are jailed. That night an earthquake strikes. The prison doors are opened and the prisoners' chains become loose. The jailer thought everyone had escaped and prepares to kill himself. Paul calls out to him, telling him that everyone is still there. The jailer becomes a believer.

SIDE NOTE **THE DISAGREEMENT.** Capitalized to emphasize it. Amazing that two such Spirit filled men should have had such a major falling out. It serves as a good reminder that we are only human. Also, it helps us understand that different personalities see things differently, based on their personal orientation. We won't always agree with each other - but we can agree to disagree and we can both continue to do the Lord's work.

Later, Paul refers to Mark as a fellow worker who was helpful in Paul's ministry (Philemon 24 and 2 Timothy 4:11). In addition to working with Paul and Barnabas, Mark also worked with Peter (Acts 12:12-13 and 1 Peter 5:13). Tradition says that Peter was the main source for Mark's gospel.

Timothy deserves special mention. To quote William Barclay, "Timothy was a lad with a great heritage. He had had a good mother and a good grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). Often in the days to come he was to be Paul's messenger (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:2-6). He was at Rome with Paul when the apostle was in prison (Phillippians 1:1; 2:19; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1). Timothy was in a very special relationship to Paul. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:17) he called him his beloved son. When he wrote to the Phillipians he said that there was no one whose mind was so much at one with his own (Phillippians 2:19-20)."

ACTS

Paul's 2nd missionary journey - Part II

- Acts 17:1 - 17:9 **THESSALONICA.** Paul spoke in the synagogue on three different Sabbaths. A few of the Jews and many of the God-fearing Greeks become believers, including several prominent women. The Jews become jealous and start a riot. They can't find Paul and Silas, so they take Jason (whose house Paul was staying at) before the city officials and claim that Paul and company are defying Caesar's edicts. Jason is required to post bond.
- Acts 17:10 - 17:15 **BEREA.** That night (after Jason and friends had posted peace bonds) the brothers sent Paul and Silas on to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue as was their usual practice. Many of the Jews in Berea became believers after hearing Paul's message and examining the scriptures to see if the scriptures agreed with what Paul was saying. The Jews from Thessalonica came to make trouble. Paul went to the coast (and then on to Athens) while Silas and Timothy stayed on.
- Acts 17:16 - 17:34 **ATHENS.** In Athens, Paul was distressed to see so many idols. Paul spoke in the synagogues as was his usual practice, plus he spoke in the market-place every day. Paul was invited to speak in the Areopagus, and it was there he started with his reference to the "UNKNOWN GOD". Though some sneered at what he had to say, a few believed.
- Acts 18:1 - 18:17 **CORINTH.** Paul stayed (and worked with) Aquila and Priscilla who, like Paul, were tentmakers. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Berea, Paul devoted himself fully to preaching. While most of the Jews opposed him, Crispus, the synagogue ruler became a believer. The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him not to be afraid, to keep on speaking, and that no one would harm him. Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half. The Jews tried to take Paul to trial - but Gallio the proconsul ruled it to be an internal Jewish problem and refused to rule on it.
- Acts 18:18 - 18:22 **EPHESUS.** Paul spent a short time in Ephesus before heading back for Antioch. Aquila and Priscilla stayed on at Ephesus.

SIDE NOTE

The Bereans were described as "more noble character than the Thessalonians" because they took the time to study the scriptures to see if what Paul was teaching was consistent with the scriptures. This should be our standard practice whenever we come upon a new teaching. Even signs and miracles can be falsified by Satan - so we need to make sure that what we hear is consistent with the teachings in the bible. Another good idea is to make sure that the teaching is consistently applied - if we can only find one reference to something, then it may not be something we should rely upon. Baptism can be found throughout Acts and the epistles.

Gallio's ruling was important. The Jewish religion was "legal" in the Roman empire. Other religions weren't. Since Christianity was viewed as a Jewish sect, it had "legal" standing in the Roman empire as well.

ACTS

Paul's 3rd missionary journey - Part I

Acts 18:23 - 18:28 **GALATIA & PHRYGIA.** Paul started off his third journey, like he did his second, visiting and strengthening churches planted earlier. He went to the Galatia and Phrygia regions. During this same time Priscilla and Aquila, who were still in Ephesus heard Apollos preaching about Jesus. But Apollos didn't know about baptizing people in Jesus' name, he only knew about John's baptism (for repentance). They "invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately". Later Apollos went on to Achaia (Corinth) where he did good work.

Acts 19:1 - 19:41 **EPHESUS.** When Paul arrived in Ephesus he found some believers who had only received John's baptism, and had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus and they received the Holy Spirit. Paul spoke in the synagogue for three months until some of the Jews "publicly maligned the Way." At that point, Paul began to teach daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This daily teaching lasted for two years. Besides his teaching, Paul was working many miracles. Some Jews who made a practice of banishing evil spirits tried to invoke the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches. An evil spirit said he knew Jesus and he knew of Paul, but he didn't know them, and then gave them a beating. A silversmith stirred up a near riot saying that Paul was damaging worship of the local gods. The riot was avoided when the city clerk addressed the crowds and reminded them of the danger of causing a riot.

Acts 20:1 - 20:6 **MACEDONIA & GREECE.** After the uproar in Ephesus was over, Paul left and traveled throughout Macedonia and Greece.

Acts 20:7 - 20:12 **TROAS.** The night before they were going to leave Troas, there was a late night meeting that went on till midnight. A young man fell asleep while sitting on the window ledge, and died when he fell three stories. Paul raised him back to life.

SIDE NOTE We can all learn from Priscilla and Aquila and the way they dealt with Apollos' mistake. Apollos did a mighty work in Corinth. But some of the people there started calling themselves disciples of Apollos, while others called themselves disciples of Paul. Paul dealt with this problem in 1 Corinthians 3:1-23. (The problem wasn't caused by Apollos).

Note that once again the Holy Spirit is confirming something. First it was expanding the faith to include the Samaritans. Then it was expanding the faith to include the Gentiles. Now the Holy Spirit is confirming the importance of being baptized into Jesus' name.

Was it the lack of oxygen in the room (due to the many lamps), or Paul's lengthy speech that put the young man to sleep? I suspect that the lamps caused the room to be too warm, so the young man sat on the window sill to catch the evening breeze, and then dozed off and fell. I appreciate Luke's description of Paul going "on and on". Many of us complain when the sermon lasts a half hour. I wonder if Luke showed this passage to Paul?

ACTS

Paul's 3rd missionary journey - Part II

Acts 20:13 - 20:38 **FAREWELL SPEECH.** From Troas, Paul made several stops, arriving at Miletus. He didn't stop in Ephesus because he wanted to be in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. Instead, he sent for the elders (from Ephesus), and they made the short trip to Miletus to see Paul. He gave them a farewell speech. He told them that the Holy Spirit was compelling him to go to Jerusalem while at the same time preparing him for prison and hardships that would await him. He reminded them that elders need to watch over "the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers", to be shepherds of the church. When he was ready to leave, they all knelt down together and prayed, wept, and embraced him.

Acts 21:1 - 23:35 **JERUSALEM.** On his way to Jerusalem, Paul stopped in Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist (one of the Seven). Agabus, a prophet, foretold that Paul would be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles. Everyone tried to talk Paul out of going to Jerusalem - but Paul would not be dissuaded. When they arrived in Jerusalem Paul was met by James and the other elders. They encouraged Paul to participate in a purification rite to demonstrate to the non-believing Jews that Paul still followed Jewish practices. But some Jews from Asia accused Paul of bringing Greeks into the temple. Paul was seized and dragged from the temple. The Jews would have killed Paul, but the Roman troops commander saved him. Paul gave a speech which became so angered the crowd that the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. Paul would have been flogged - but he reminded them that he was a Roman citizen. Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin and again the commander had him taken into the barracks to avoid a riot. There was a plot to kill Paul, so the commander had him transferred to Caesarea.

SIDE NOTE Paul was carrying gifts that the churches in Asia and Greece had set aside to share with the believers in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-26, 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 Corinthians 8:9).

I like to think how much the elders at Ephesus must have loved Paul. They all came to see him off when he sent for them. And that was probably 30 miles on foot.

Paul told the Ephesian elders that they wouldn't see his face again. He planned on going on to Spain after his visit to Jerusalem (Romans 15:23-29).

Philip had four daughters who were prophets. Other women prophets included Moses's sister Mariam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36-38).

This was the same Agabus who had foretold the famine in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-29).

ACTS

Paul's Journey to Rome

Acts 24:1 - 26:32 BEFORE FELIX, FESTUS, and AGRIPPA. Paul is brought before all three of these rulers. Paul claims his right as a Roman citizen to present his story to Caesar. Some of them said that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar he could have been freed - but it is more likely that the Jews would have arranged for his death. Felix kept Paul in prison for 2 years, hoping that Paul would bribe him. Felix was succeeded by Festus. Festus paid a visit to Jerusalem and the chief priests and Jewish leaders asked that Paul be transferred there for trial (they wanted to have him killed). Festus returned to Caesarea and had Paul brought before him. As before Felix, the Jews accused Paul and Paul defended himself. Festus asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial. It was at this point that Paul appealed to Caesar. Shortly after this, King Agrippa was visiting Festus, and they discussed Paul's case. King Agrippa asked to meet Paul.

Acts 27:1 - 28:15 VOYAGE TO ROME. A Roman centurion takes Paul and some other citizens and sails for Rome. They leave late in the season, and after about 14 days of being driven by a storm they were shipwrecked. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, but the centurion prevented them and had everyone swim to the island of Malta. There Paul is bit by a poisonous snake, but doesn't suffer any harm. The chief official of the island entertains them, and later Paul heals the chief official's father and all of the other sick people on the island who were brought to him. Three months later they sailed on another ship and headed once again for Rome.

Acts 28:16 - 28:31 ROME. Arriving in Italy, Paul is welcomed by some local Christians. Paul arrives safely in Rome where he is allowed to live by himself with a guard. Paul preaches there, and is received by the local synagogue rulers. Some believed and some didn't. Paul stayed there two years.

SIDE NOTE Paul told his story to King Agrippa, in what appears to be slightly more detailed version than what he said to Felix. This may have been because King Agrippa was of Jewish descent and so would be more familiar with what Paul had to say.

The Christians who met Paul encouraged him. Just being with other believers encourages me - that is why fellowship is so important.

THE END This brings to the end of Acts. Luke doesn't tell us what happened to Paul. The Life Application Bible's comment on Acts 28:30 says "Tradition says that Paul was released after two years of house arrest in Rome and then set off on a fourth missionary journey...in his letter to the Philippians, written during his imprisonment in Rome Paul implied that he would soon be released and would do further traveling...early Christian literature talks plainly about other travels by Paul. It may be that during Paul's time of freedom he continued to travel extensively, even going to Spain (see Romans 15:24,28) and back to the churches in Greece. The books of 1 Timothy and Titus were written during this time. Later, Paul was imprisoned again, probably in Rome where he wrote his last letter (2 Timothy)."