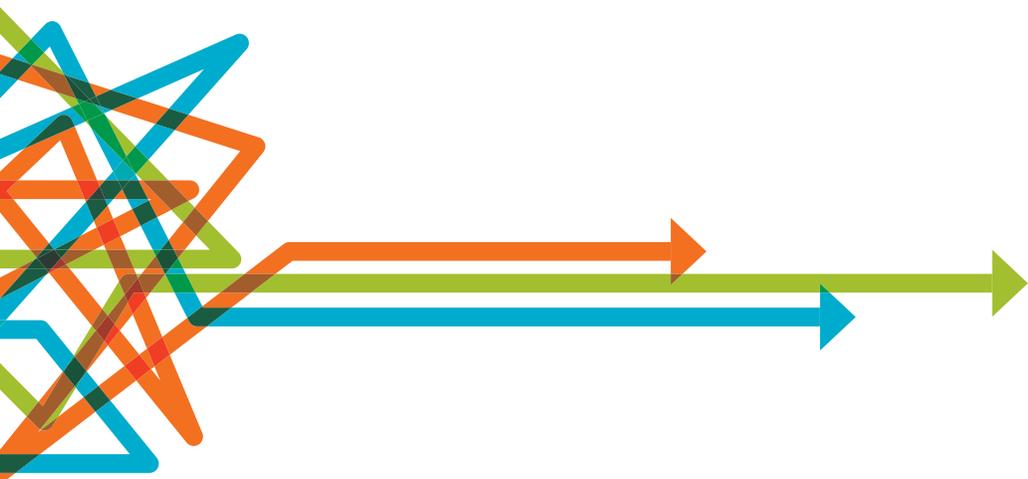


The Wayfinding™ Bible



Helping you
navigate
God's Word.



WELCOME TO

ACTS

The book of Acts is the sequel to the Gospel of Luke, written by the same author. It carefully records the “acts” of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles and the early church. In great detail it tells the story of the church’s beginnings, the Spirit’s arrival to empower God’s people to share the gospel, and the amazing growth of the church from a few people in Jerusalem to thousands in communities throughout the known world. The book begins with Jesus’ ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Then it focuses on the missionary work of Peter and moves on to the conversion and the missionary journeys of Paul. The apostles preach the Good News in Jerusalem before spreading out into Judea and Samaria, to the cities of Damascus and Antioch, and then to “the ends of the earth”—Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Rome.

6
STOPS

ON THE FLYOVER ROUTE: You’ll stop to read six great stories about the early church and two of its greatest leaders: Peter and Paul. Your next stop is on page 1198.

13
STOPS

ON THE DIRECT ROUTE: Your frequent stops in Acts include stories about the early church’s origins, Paul’s missionary journeys, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Your next stop is on page 1198.

18
STOPS

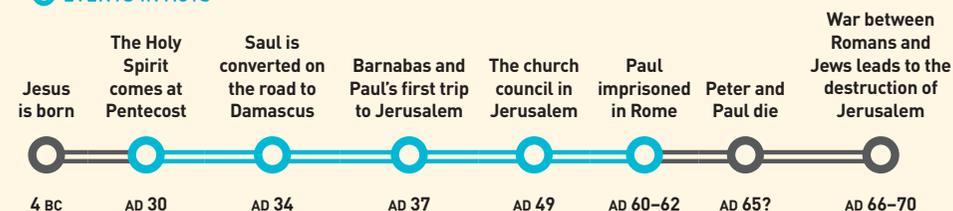
ON THE SCENIC ROUTE: The scenic route takes you through the history of the early church. You’ll find out how it all began, travel with the first missionaries, and learn how the Good News was received in Asia and Europe. Your next stop is on page 1198.



FINDING JESUS IN ACTS

Acts begins with Jesus ascending to heaven, but the whole book is about his activity through his church. Shortly after the Ascension, the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised to his disciples, arrived. Although Jesus was no longer present in body, his Spirit infused the newly founded church with confidence to boldly share his teachings: first in Judea and Samaria, then throughout the Roman world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus worked in the lives of such people as Peter, James, John, Stephen, Philip, Cornelius, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Lydia, Priscilla, Aquila, John Mark, and Luke.

EVENTS IN ACTS



PG 1158 FLYOVER

PG 1194 DIRECT

PG 1194 SCENIC

1:1-11

42

1:1-11

176

1:1-26

317

PG 1200

PG 1200

PG 1200

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

After the resurrection, Jesus continues his ministry for another forty days, appearing to his disciples and clarifying all that has happened. Jesus' time on earth is about to end, but the big story continues. Jesus sends the disciples to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the world. Jesus is returning to the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to be with his disciples. But the disciples do not want to lose him. They don't realize that the indwelling Holy Spirit is far more powerful than they can imagine.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 In my first book* I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. ³During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

⁴Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵John baptized with* water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

⁶So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

⁷He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from you into the same way you saw him go!" → →

MATTHIAS REPLACES JUDAS

¹²Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile.* ¹³When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the Zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

¹⁵During this time, when about 120 believers* were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. ¹⁶"Brothers," he said, "the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. ¹⁷Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us."

¹⁸(Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery. Falling headfirst there, his body split open, spilling out all his intestines. ¹⁹The news of his death spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name *Akeldama*, which means "Field of Blood.")

²⁰Peter continued, "This was written in the book of Psalms, where it says, 'Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.' It also says, 'Let someone else take his position.'*

²¹"So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus—²²from the time he was baptized by John

1:1 The reference is to the Gospel of Luke. 1:5 Or in; also in 1:5b.
1:12 Greek a Sabbath day's journey. 1:15 Greek brothers.
1:20 Pss 69:25; 109:8.

OBSERVATION POINT

Throughout Israel's history, clouds often indicated the presence of God. A pillar of cloud led the Hebrews out of Egypt and through the wilderness. A cloud appeared on Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the law; it filled the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple. A bright cloud appeared at Jesus' transfiguration, and God spoke from within it. At Jesus' ascension the location (a high mountain), the upward movement, and the cloud all indicated that Jesus was ascending into God's presence in heaven, where he would sit at his right hand.

EXPLORATION POINT

Jesus' ascension into heaven concluded his time on earth. By restoring God's relationship with his creation, he had accomplished all that the Father had sent him to do; now it was time for him to return to the Father and sit in a position of honor at his right side in heaven. In no way was Jesus abandoning his followers; the Holy Spirit would come to give them the power and ability to establish the church and spread the Good News throughout the world. The Spirit continues to be present with us today.

until the day he was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection."

²³So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴Then they all prayed, "O Lord, you

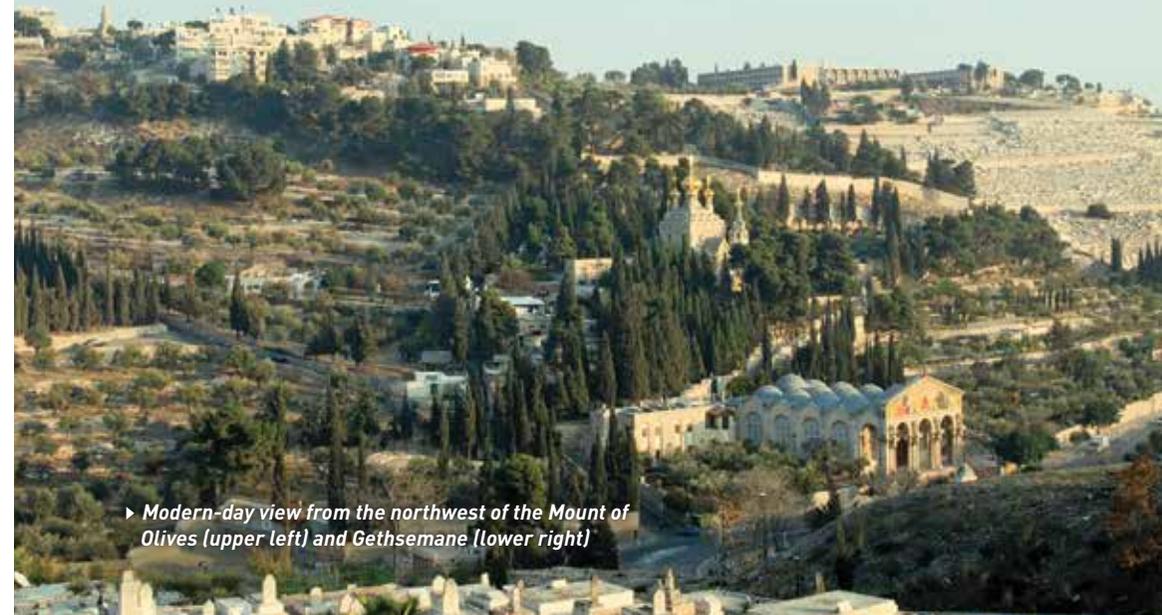
know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen ²⁵as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs." ²⁶Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven. →

MOUNT OF OLIVES

The Ascension took place on the Mount of Olives, a peak on a two-mile-long ridge that rose 250 feet higher than the Temple area in Jerusalem. The garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus had prayed, was located on the lower slopes of this mountain. Since King Solomon's time, this location was used as a lookout point to protect the city.



Acts 1:6-12



► Modern-day view from the northwest of the Mount of Olives (upper left) and Gethsemane (lower right)

PG 1198 FLYOVER

PG 1198 DIRECT

PG 1198 SCENIC

2:1-47

43

2:1-47

177

2:1-47

318

PG 1202

PG 1202

PG 1202

THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES

After Jesus ascends into heaven, his disciples gather in a room in Jerusalem. Not knowing what to expect, they follow Jesus' last instructions and wait. They are about to experience another high point of the big story. God came in human form to live among humans. Now he sends his Spirit to remain with us forever. The Spirit's presence will be a comfort and a strength to every believer throughout the world until Christ comes again.

THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES

2 On the day of Pentecost* all the believers were meeting together in one place. ²Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages,* as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. ⁶When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

⁷They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, ⁸and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!" ¹²They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other.

¹³But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

PETER PREACHES TO THE CROWD

¹⁴Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵These people are not drunk, as some of

you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'In the last days,' God says,
'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young men will see visions,
and your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ In those days I will pour out my Spirit
even on my servants—men and women
alike—
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will cause wonders in the heavens
above
and signs on the earth below—
blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will become dark,
and the moon will turn blood red
before that great and glorious day of the
LORD arrives.

²¹ But everyone who calls on the name of
the LORD
will be saved.*

²²"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene* by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. ²³But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. ²⁴But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip. ²⁵King David said this about him:

2:1 The Festival of Pentecost came 50 days after Passover (when Jesus was crucified). 2:4 Or in other tongues. 2:17-21 Joel 2:28-32. 2:22 Or Jesus of Nazareth.

OBSERVATION POINT

Pentecost was an annual Jewish festival that was established during the time of Moses. Originally it was an agricultural celebration called the Festival of Harvest, falling on the fiftieth day after Passover. During the Hellenistic period (300 BC–AD 300), the Jews dropped the agricultural association of Pentecost and viewed it instead as a day to give thanks for the law of Moses (the Torah). After the coming of the Holy Spirit on this day, Christians designated it as the start of the church. Both Jews and Christians continue to celebrate Pentecost today.

EXPLORATION POINT

Jesus came to earth to restore God's relationship with his people. Adam and Eve had destroyed their relationship with God in the Garden; subsequently, everyone continued to reject God through sinful living. But no one and nothing can ever stop God from fulfilling his plan for the human race. By sending the Holy Spirit to fill believers, God made it possible for us to have fellowship with him until Christ comes again. Living in the Spirit is a precious gift that enables us to be in close relationship with the King of kings and Lord of lords.

'I see that the LORD is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right
beside me.

²⁶ No wonder my heart is glad,
and my tongue shouts his praises!
My body rests in hope.

²⁷ For you will not leave my soul among the
dead*
or allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.

²⁸ You have shown me the way of life,
and you will fill me with the joy of your
presence.*

²⁹"Dear brothers, think about this! You can be sure that the patriarch David wasn't referring to himself, for he died and was buried, and his tomb is still here among us. ³⁰But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised with an oath that one of David's own descendants would sit on his throne. ³¹David was looking into the future and speaking of the Messiah's resurrection. He was saying that God would not leave him among the dead or allow his body to rot in the grave.

³²"God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. ³³Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today. ³⁴For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

'The LORD said to my Lord,
'Sit in the place of honor at my right hand
until I humble your enemies,
making them a footstool under your
feet.'*

³⁶"So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

³⁷Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

³⁸Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away*—all who have been called by the Lord our God." ⁴⁰Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

⁴¹Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

THE BELIEVERS FORM A COMMUNITY

⁴²All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper*), and to prayer.

⁴³A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity*—⁴⁷all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. → → →

2:27 Greek in Hades; also in 2:31. 2:25-28 Ps 16:8-11 (Greek version). 2:34-35 Ps 110:1. 2:39 Or and to people far in the future, or and to the Gentiles. 2:42 Greek the breaking of bread; also in 2:46. 2:46 Or and sincere hearts.

PG 1200 FLYOVER

PG 1200 DIRECT

PG 1200 SCENIC

PG 1204

PG 1204

PG 1204

44

178

319



GETTING YOUR BEARINGS

YEAR:
AD 30

CURRENT WORLD POWER:
Rome

STATUS OF GOD'S PEOPLE:
Free in Christ

THE CHURCH BEGINS

God sent his Son to restore his relationship with his people, which was lost long ago when Adam and Eve disobeyed his command. He came to save the world and to fulfill the promise that all people would be blessed through Abraham's descendants. Jesus was present in a human body, and he chose to minister primarily to people whom he could make direct, often physical, contact with. After his ministry and purpose for coming to earth came to an end, he victoriously returned to his Father in heaven.

Jesus' disciples—witnesses to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—take up Jesus' commission to "go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." They believe in Jesus; they have seen his miracles and heard his teachings. As soon as God's Spirit fills them at Pentecost, they are prepared to go out and share the Good News with others.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

God's people, now equipped with God's Spirit and called the church, preach boldly, heal the sick, and cast out demons in the name of Jesus. God is present with them, and membership in the new church explodes. Thousands believe. Both Jews and Gentiles believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, whose death and resurrection have saved them. The church will grow: first in Judea and Samaria, next into Asia Minor and Greece, and then into Italy, Spain, and other parts of Europe. But challenges will come as the church grows and the Good News spreads.

Wherever Christianity goes, it begins to uproot long-standing cultural traditions and practices. People fear and resist these changes. Many Jews hold firmly to the law and the old ways,

and many Gentiles violently resist giving up their old lifestyles. But God's church will prevail, and Christianity will be firmly established.

JESUS AS TRUE NORTH

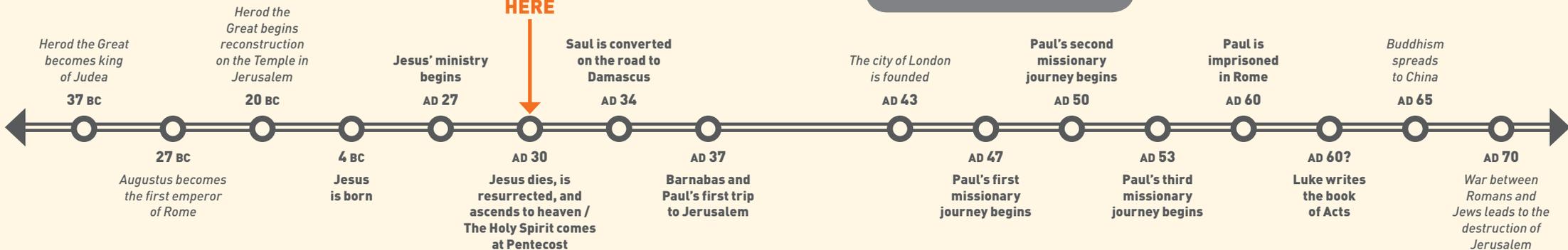
The Spirit of God is the heart of the new church. Christ's followers take on his name and are called Christians. Because of his work—coming to earth, preaching, healing, dying, and rising again—the apostles' message is one of hope. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles proclaim that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not. When Saul begins killing Christians for corrupting Judaism, Jesus appears to him and sets him on a new course. Transformed, this man will explain to the world just how Jesus fulfilled God's laws and set the world free from slavery to sin.

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE WE?



THE NEWS about Jesus' death and resurrection spreads fast. His disciples take the news beyond Jerusalem and Judea, into Samaria. The apostle Paul continues spreading it further to Asia Minor, into Greece, and eventually to Rome.

YOU ARE HERE



3:1-11

45

3:1-11

179

3:1-26

320

PG 1212

PG 1214

PG 1206

PETER HEALS A CRIPPLED BEGGAR

Throughout the big story God has revealed his power through miracles. He showed his control over nature through the ten plagues in Egypt and by dividing the waters of the Red Sea. He provided food and water for his people while they wandered in the wilderness. He displayed his power through the Old Testament prophets and, most clearly, in his Son Jesus. Now that same power is with the apostles. The apostle Peter, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples, continues the tradition of performing miracles, displaying God's power in Christ's name. He then boldly preaches in the Temple about Jesus' life and death.

PETER HEALS A CRIPPLED BEGGAR

3 Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service.² As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple.³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

⁴Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!"⁵ The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. "But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,* get up and* walk!"

⁷Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened.⁸ He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

⁹All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God.¹⁰ When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded!¹¹ They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.

PETER PREACHES IN THE TEMPLE

¹²Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd. "People of Israel," he said, "what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness?¹³ For it is the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him.¹⁴ You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer.¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!

¹⁶"Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes.

¹⁷"Friends,* I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance.¹⁸ But God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that he must suffer these things.¹⁹ Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.²⁰ Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah.²¹ For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets.²² Moses said, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people. Listen carefully to everything he tells you."²³ Then Moses said, "Anyone who will not listen to that Prophet will be completely cut off from God's people.*"

²⁴"Starting with Samuel, every prophet spoke about what is happening today.²⁵ You

3:6a Or Jesus Christ of Nazareth. 3:6b Some manuscripts do not include get up and. 3:17 Greek Brothers. 3:22 Deut 18:15. 3:23 Deut 18:19; Lev 23:29.

OBSERVATION POINT

In Jewish society, imperfection of any kind made a person an outcast. In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to sacrifice only animals that "have no defect of any kind" (Leviticus 22:21). God also required priests to be without blemish. God's law held other people to a high standard as well, but over the centuries Jewish culture had generalized these rules in a way that was harsh and unrealistic. A person had to be practically perfect to be part of the Jewish community. Peter's healing was a great gift. It restored this man physically and socially.

EXPLORATION POINT

Peter and John had been empowered by the Holy Spirit and were energized to see God working through them to spread the Good News. God's power flowed through them so that Peter even healed a lame man in the name of Jesus Christ. This is a wonderful example of how God can do more than we can ask or imagine. The beggar was merely hoping for a coin or two to help him survive one more day. The possibility of being whole again and walking out of the Temple didn't even enter his mind. But it happened. God can, will, and does do what we perceive as impossible.

are the children of those prophets, and you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, "Through your descendants* all the families on earth will be blessed."²⁶ When God raised up his servant, Jesus, he sent him first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways." ~

PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE COUNCIL

4 While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees.² These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead.³ They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning.⁴ But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of believers now totaled about 5,000 men, not counting women and children.*

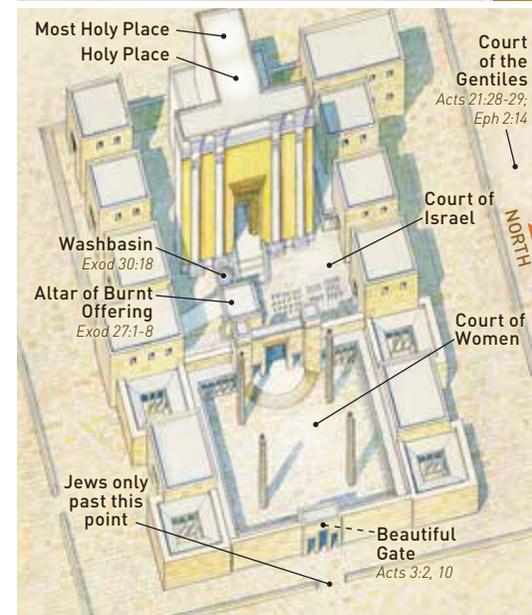
⁵The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem.⁶ Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest.⁷ They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed?"¹⁰ Let me

3:25 Greek your seed; see Gen 12:3; 22:18. 4:4 Greek 5,000 adult males.

THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

The Temple in Jerusalem was like a city within a city. The Temple area was made up of buildings and courtyards surrounded by a high wall. People entered different areas of the Temple by going through various gates. Gentiles were not allowed beyond the outer court. The Beautiful Gate was located on the east side, directly in front of the main entrance to the Temple and near the covered porch of Solomon's Colonnade. After walking through the Beautiful Gate, Jews would have found themselves in the Court of Women.



★ Acts 3:1-26

4:32–5:42

321

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In its early days, the church is a unified group of believers who share their time, their energy, and even their money and possessions. They generously take care of one another and provide for the apostles, who are focused on preaching and prayer. This ideal community structure, however, doesn't work out perfectly for long. The early church still consists of sinful people who can be distracted from the work of Christ because of their own desires.

clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene,* the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.¹¹ For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says,

“The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.”*

¹²There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

¹³The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say.¹⁵ So they ordered Peter and John out of the council chamber* and conferred among themselves.

THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS

The island of Cyprus is a large island in the northeast region of the Mediterranean Sea. It is located about seventy-five miles west of Syria and forty-five miles south of Turkey. Barnabas was a native of Cyprus.

¹⁶“What should we do with these men?” they asked each other. “We can't deny that they have performed a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it.¹⁷ But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to

anyone in Jesus' name again.”¹⁸ So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him?²⁰ We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

²¹The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God²² for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

THE BELIEVERS PRAY FOR COURAGE

²³As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said.²⁴ When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—²⁵you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying,

“Why were the nations so angry?

Why did they waste their time with futile plans?

²⁶ The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the LORD and against his Messiah.”*

²⁷“In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed.²⁸ But everything

4:10 Or Jesus Christ of Nazareth. 4:11 Ps 118:22. 4:15 Greek the Sanhedrin. 4:25–26 Or his anointed one; or his Christ. Ps 2:1–2.

OBSERVATION POINT

Barnabas's contribution to the church was an example of how we should give—generously, willingly and from the heart. The story of Ananias and Sapphira illustrates the opposite. They were not forced to sell their property or to share the proceeds with the church. It was their choice to do so, but they did it with the wrong attitude. Ananias and Sapphira intentionally lied to the church to make themselves look good in the eyes of other believers, but they could not hide their intentions from God.

they did was determined beforehand according to your will.²⁹ And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.³⁰ Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

³¹After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

THE BELIEVERS SHARE THEIR POSSESSIONS

³²All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.³³ The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all.³⁴ There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them³⁵ and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

³⁶For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus.³⁷ He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

5 But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property.² He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest.

³Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for

EXPLORATION POINT

Although extreme, Ananias and Sapphira's punishment was necessary to emphasize that God would not tolerate dishonesty, hypocrisy, and deceit within the church. As shocking as this instantaneous punishment was, it made the current believers realize that they had to be forthright and pure, and it declared to others that this new group was held to very high standards. Giving to the church—whether we give our time, our talents, or our income—must be sincere and motivated by love.

yourself.⁴ The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!”

⁵As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified.⁶ Then some young men got up, wrapped him in a sheet, and took him out and buried him.

⁷About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.⁸ Peter asked her, “Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?”

“Yes,” she replied, “that was the price.”

⁹And Peter said, “How could the two of you even think of conspiring to test the Spirit of the Lord like this? The young men who buried your husband are just outside the door, and they will carry you out, too.”

¹⁰Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.¹¹ Great fear gripped the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened.

THE APOSTLES HEAL MANY

¹²The apostles were performing many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers were meeting regularly at the Temple in the area known as Solomon's Colonnade.¹³ But no one else dared to join them, even though all the people had high regard for them.¹⁴ Yet more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women.¹⁵ As a result of the apostles' work, sick people were brought out into the streets on beds and mats so that Peter's shadow might fall across some of them as

STEPHEN IS ARRESTED

The church is growing. The core group of believers shares the Good News of Jesus in the Temple, in homes, and everywhere they go. Many people believe and join the group, but the Jewish leaders oppose this new teaching. They bring the apostles to trial, flog them, and throw them in jail. Some particularly zealous Jews, fearful that hundreds of years of traditions could be wiped out by this message about Jesus, take extreme measures to preserve their Jewish identity and way of thinking.

he went by. ¹⁶Crowds came from the villages around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those possessed by evil* spirits, and they were all healed.

THE APOSTLES MEET OPPOSITION

¹⁷The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹But an angel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them, ²⁰“Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!”

²¹So at daybreak the apostles entered the Temple, as they were told, and immediately began teaching.

When the high priest and his officials arrived, they convened the high council*—the full assembly of the elders of Israel. Then they sent for the apostles to be brought from the jail for trial. ²²But when the Temple guards went to the jail, the men were gone. So they returned to the council and reported, ²³“The jail was securely locked, with the guards standing outside, but when we opened the gates, no one was there!”

²⁴When the captain of the Temple guard and the leading priests heard this, they were perplexed, wondering where it would all end. ²⁵Then someone arrived with startling news: “The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple, teaching the people!”

²⁶The captain went with his Temple guards and arrested the apostles, but without violence, for they were afraid the people would stone them. ²⁷Then they brought the apostles before the high council, where the high priest confronted them. ²⁸“We gave you strict orders

never again to teach in this man’s name!” he said. “Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about him, and you want to make us responsible for his death!”

²⁹But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than any human authority. ³⁰The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead after you killed him by hanging him on a cross.* ³¹Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior. He did this so the people of Israel would repent of their sins and be forgiven. ³²We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God to those who obey him.”

³³When they heard this, the high council was furious and decided to kill them. ³⁴But one member, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, who was an expert in religious law and respected by all the people, stood up and ordered that the men be sent outside the council chamber for a while. ³⁵Then he said to his colleagues, “Men of Israel, take care what you are planning to do to these men! ³⁶Some time ago there was that fellow Theudas, who pretended to be someone great. About 400 others joined him, but he was killed, and all his followers went their various ways. The whole movement came to nothing. ³⁷After him, at the time of the census, there was Judas of Galilee. He got people to follow him, but he was killed, too, and all his followers were scattered.

³⁸“So my advice is, leave these men alone. Let them go. If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown. ³⁹But if it is from God, you will

5:16 Greek *unclean*. 5:21 Greek *Sanhedrin*; also in 5:27, 41.
5:30 Greek *on a tree*.

OBSERVATION POINT

Under Roman rule, the Jewish authorities (the Sanhedrin) did not have the right to execute anyone. The violent mob interrupted Stephen’s trial, dragged him through the city streets, and illegally stoned him to death outside the city. They followed only a portion of the Old Testament law regarding the consequence for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:11-16). Stoning had to take place outside the city, but only after a careful judicial examination, which they failed to conduct. In their blind rage they failed to carefully uphold their own traditions.

not be able to overthrow them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God!”

⁴⁰The others accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go.

⁴¹The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.* ⁴²And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: “Jesus is the Messiah.”

SEVEN MEN CHOSEN TO SERVE

6 But as the believers* rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

²So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. ³And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. ⁴Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”

⁵Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). ⁶These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

⁷So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

EXPLORATION POINT

God calls prophets, apostles, teachers, and ministers to preach his Word truthfully and sincerely. As representatives of God himself, they are required to say what God wants them to say rather than what the crowd desires to hear. This is exactly what Stephen knew he was called to do. He was not about to tell these people what they wanted to hear. He was telling them what God inspired him to say. The consequences were great, but Stephen was happy to sacrifice his life for the name of Christ.

STEPHEN IS ARRESTED

⁸Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. ⁹But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. ¹⁰None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

SOLOMON’S COLONNADE

Solomon’s Colonnade was the open-air portico on the east side of the Temple’s outer court. It consisted of a double row of beautiful marble columns and a roof to provide shade. Christian believers in Jerusalem frequently met there.

¹¹So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, “We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God.” ¹²This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council.*

¹³The lying witnesses said, “This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. ¹⁴We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth* will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

¹⁵At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel’s.

5:41 Greek *for the name*. 6:1 Greek *disciples*; also in 6:2, 7.
6:12 Greek *Sanhedrin*; also in 6:15. 6:14 Or *Jesus the Nazarene*.

STEPHEN ADDRESSES THE COUNCIL

7 Then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these accusations true?”

²This was Stephen’s reply: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran.* ³God told him, ‘Leave your native land and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.’* ⁴So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live.

⁵“But God gave him no inheritance here, not even one square foot of land. God did promise, however, that eventually the whole land would belong to Abraham and his descendants—even though he had no children yet. ⁶God also told him that his descendants would live in a foreign land, where they would be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ⁷“But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,” God said, “and in the end they will come out and worship me here in this place.*”

⁸“God also gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision at that time. So when Abraham became the father of Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day. And the practice was continued when Isaac became the father of Jacob, and when Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs of the Israelite nation.

⁹“These patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him from all his troubles. And God gave him favor before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God also gave Joseph unusual wisdom, so that Pharaoh appointed him governor over all of Egypt and put him in charge of the palace.

¹¹“But a famine came upon Egypt and Canaan. There was great misery, and our ancestors ran out of food. ¹²Jacob heard that there was still grain in Egypt, so he sent his sons—our ancestors—to buy some. ¹³The second time they went, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers,* and they were introduced to Pharaoh. ¹⁴Then Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, and all his relatives to come to Egypt, seventy-five persons in all. ¹⁵So Jacob went to Egypt. He died there, as did our ancestors. ¹⁶Their bodies were taken to Shechem and buried in the tomb Abraham had bought for a certain price from Hamor’s sons in Shechem.

¹⁷“As the time drew near when God would fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. ¹⁸But then a new king came to the throne of Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. ¹⁹This king exploited our people and oppressed them, forcing parents to abandon their newborn babies so they would die.

²⁰“At that time Moses was born—a beautiful

child in God’s eyes. His parents cared for him at home for three months. ²¹When they had to abandon him, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and raised him as her own son. ²²Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in both speech and action.

²³“One day when Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his relatives, the people of Israel. ²⁴He saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite. So Moses came to the man’s defense and avenged him, killing the Egyptian. ²⁵Moses assumed his fellow Israelites would realize that God had sent him to rescue them, but they didn’t.

²⁶“The next day he visited them again and saw two men of Israel fighting. He tried to be a peacemaker. ‘Men,’ he said, ‘you are brothers. Why are you fighting each other?’

²⁷“But the man in the wrong pushed Moses aside. ‘Who made you a ruler and judge over us?’ he asked. ²⁸‘Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹When Moses heard that, he fled the country and lived as a foreigner in the land of Midian. There his two sons were born.

³⁰“Forty years later, in the desert near Mount Sinai, an angel appeared to Moses in the flame of a burning bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he went to take a closer look, the voice of the LORD called out to him, ³²‘I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses shook with terror and did not dare to look.

³³“Then the LORD said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. ³⁴I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groans and have come down to rescue them. Now go, for I am sending you back to Egypt.*”

³⁵“So God sent back the same man his people had previously rejected when they demanded, ‘Who made you a ruler and judge over us?’ Through the angel who appeared to him in the burning bush, God sent Moses to be their ruler and savior. ³⁶And by means of many wonders and miraculous signs, he led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness for forty years.

³⁷“Moses himself told the people of Israel, ‘God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people.’* ³⁸Moses was with our ancestors, the assembly of God’s people in the wilderness, when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai. And there Moses received life-giving words to pass on to us.*

³⁹“But our ancestors refused to listen to Moses. They rejected him and wanted to return

7:2 Mesopotamia was the region now called Iraq. Haran was a city in what is now called Syria. 7:3 Gen 12:1. 7:5-7 Gen 12:7; 15:13-14; Exod 3:12. 7:13 Other manuscripts read Joseph was recognized by his brothers. 7:31-34 Exod 3:5-10. 7:37 Deut 18:15. 7:38 Some manuscripts read to you.

to Egypt. ⁴⁰They told Aaron, ‘Make us some gods who can lead us, for we don’t know what has become of this Moses, who brought us out of Egypt.’ ⁴¹So they made an idol shaped like a calf, and they sacrificed to it and celebrated over this thing they had made. ⁴²Then God turned away from them and abandoned them to serve the stars of heaven as their gods! In the book of the prophets it is written,

‘Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during those forty years in the wilderness, Israel?’

⁴³ No, you carried your pagan gods—the shrine of Molech, the star of your god Rephan, and the images you made to worship them.

So I will send you into exile as far away as Babylon.*”

⁴⁴“Our ancestors carried the Tabernacle* with them through the wilderness. It was constructed according to the plan God had shown to Moses. ⁴⁵Years later, when Joshua led our ancestors in battle against the nations that God drove out of this land, the Tabernacle was taken with them into their new territory. And it stayed there until the time of King David.

⁴⁶“David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob.* ⁴⁷But it was Solomon

who actually built it. ⁴⁸However, the Most High doesn’t live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says,

⁴⁹ ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that?’

asks the LORD.

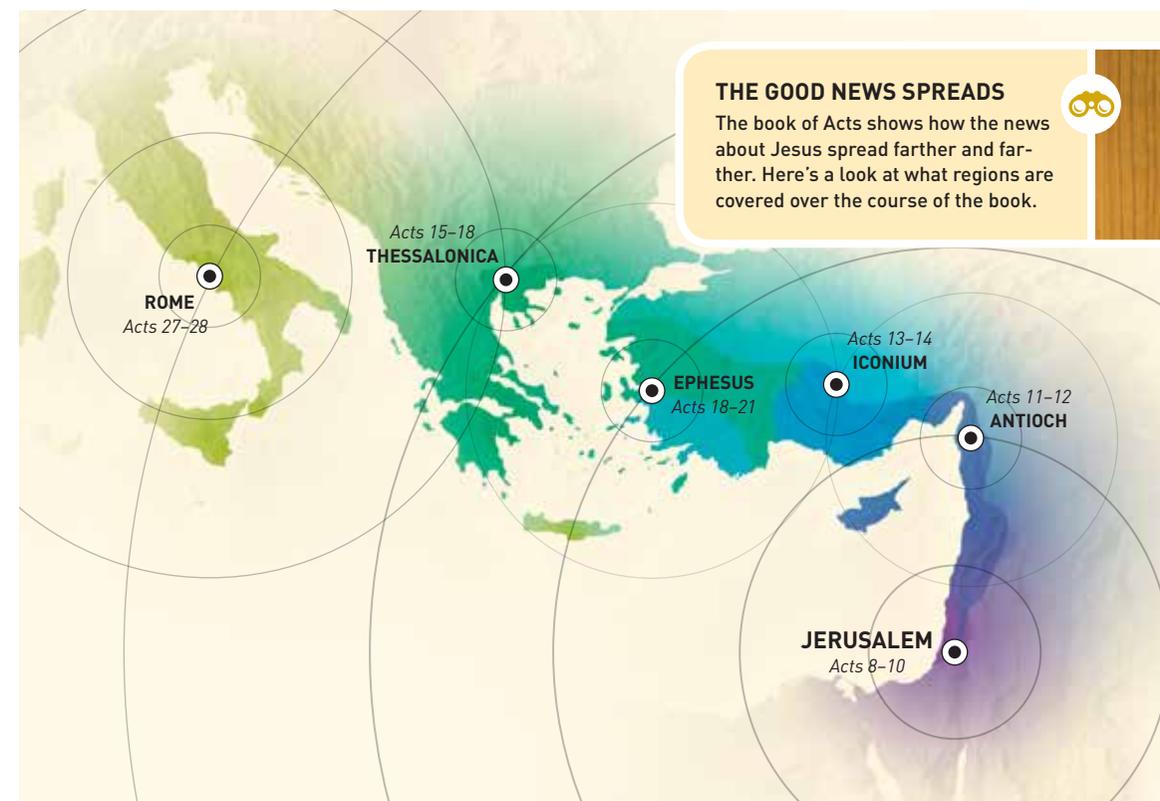
‘Could you build me such a resting place?’

⁵⁰ Didn’t my hands make both heaven and earth?*

⁵¹“You stubborn people! You are heathen* at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That’s what your ancestors did, and so do you! ⁵²Name one prophet your ancestors didn’t persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. ⁵³You deliberately disobeyed God’s law, even though you received it from the hands of angels.”

⁵⁴The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen’s accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage.* ⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. ⁵⁶And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened

7:42-43 Amos 5:25-27 (Greek version). 7:44 Greek the tent of witness. 7:46 Some manuscripts read the house of Jacob. 7:49-50 Isa 66:1-2. 7:51 Greek uncircumcised. 7:54 Greek they were grinding their teeth against him.



THE GOOD NEWS SPREADS

The book of Acts shows how the news about Jesus spread farther and farther. Here’s a look at what regions are covered over the course of the book.

PG 1204 → DIRECT

PG 1208 → SCENIC

PG 1214

PG 1214

8:26-40

8:4-40

180

323

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

Philip and Stephen were selected as two of the first seven deacons in the early church. Their primary role is to take care of widows, orphans, and the poor. Whatever they do, they do in Christ's name, bringing the Good News with them. After Stephen's death, the believers scatter across Judea and Samaria. Philip goes to Samaria, where he teaches and performs miracles. Many people believe the Good News and are baptized. When an angel of the Lord tells Philip to travel south, he obeys.

and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!"

⁵⁷Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him ⁵⁸and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

⁵⁹As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

8 Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.

PERSECUTION SCATTERS THE BELIEVERS

A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. ²(Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.) ³But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison. →

PHILIP PREACHES IN SAMARIA

⁴But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. ⁵Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. ⁶Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. ⁷Many evil* spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many who had

been paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was great joy in that city.

⁹A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great. ¹⁰Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as "the Great One—the Power of God." ¹¹They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic.

¹²But now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. ¹³Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God's message, they sent Peter and John there. ¹⁵As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. ¹⁹"Let me have this power, too," he exclaimed, "so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!"

²⁰But Peter replied, "May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! ²¹You can have no part in this, for your

7:58 Saul is later called Paul; see 13:9. 8:7 Greek unclean.

OBSERVATION POINT

When the Assyrians and later the Babylonians invaded their homeland hundreds of years earlier, the Jews scattered to other countries. Some fled to Africa, settling in Egypt and possibly farther south in the Upper Nile region (then part of Ethiopia). The Ethiopian in this story may have been familiar with the writings of Isaiah because of the Jews in his country. He might have gone to Jerusalem to bring the Lord gifts, just as Isaiah had prophesied (Isaiah 18:2, 7). On his journey home, he encountered Philip on the road to Gaza.

heart is not right with God. ²²Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, ²³for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin."

²⁴"Pray to the Lord for me," Simon exclaimed, "that these terrible things you've said won't happen to me!"

²⁵After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. And they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News.

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

²⁶As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south* down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage."

³⁰Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

³¹The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

³²The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

EXPLORATION POINT

Every Christian is called to share the gospel with others, just as Philip did. The great commission calls us to preach and teach anyone, at any time, and in any place. Philip made a special trip, even though he did not know where he was headed. He was open to the call. We must be just as willing as Philip to share Jesus' name and salvation wherever we are and with whomever we encounter. A person's race, religion, or sexual orientation should not stop us.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia was the name used in this time period to refer to the area south of a boundary marked by the rapids of the Upper Nile, near what would become Aswan, Egypt. Today this region encompasses southern Egypt, Sudan, and South Sudan. The modern nation of Ethiopia is located east of South Sudan.



Acts 8:27

³³ He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."*

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" ³⁵So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

³⁶As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?" ³⁷He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

³⁸When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing. ³⁹Meanwhile, Philip found himself farther north at the town of Azotus. He preached the Good News there and in every town along the way until he came to Caesarea. →

8:26 Or Go at noon. 8:32-33 Isa 53:7-8 (Greek version). 8:36 Some manuscripts add verse 37, "You can," Philip answered, "if you believe with all your heart." And the eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

PG 1133

DEMONS

8:4-23

PG 1232

9:1-31

46

9:1-31

181

9:1-43

324

PG 1216

PG 1216

PG 1216

SAUL'S CONVERSION

In the big story, God revealed himself to Abraham and formed a great nation to be his holy, chosen people. When God sent his Son to earth, he sent him to his chosen people. Many of the Jews rejected Jesus, but others believed in him. After Jesus' return to heaven, Saul, a devoted Jew, vehemently opposes anyone who believes in Jesus. But God transforms this strong and forceful leader. He turns Saul's energies away from evil and toward spreading the Good News throughout the world, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

SAUL'S CONVERSION

9 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers.* So he went to the high priest. 2 He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

5 "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! 6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! 8 Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. 9 He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

10 Now there was a believer* in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

11 The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. 12 I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

13 "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this

man has done to the believers* in Jerusalem! 14 And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

15 But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. 16 And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

17 So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. 19 Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

SAUL IN DAMASCUS AND JERUSALEM

Saul stayed with the believers* in Damascus for a few days. 20 And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!"

21 All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?"

22 Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. 23 After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. 24 They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot. 25 So during the night, some of the

9:1 Greek disciples. 9:10 Greek disciple; also in 9:26, 36.

9:13 Greek God's holy people; also in 9:32, 41. 9:19 Greek disciples; also in 9:26, 38.

OBSERVATION POINT

Light of any kind illuminates and makes sight possible. The bright light that initially blinded Saul did exactly that in a spectacular fashion. This was no ordinary phenomenon. Unlike a bright ray of sun or a flash of lightning, it was supernaturally brilliant and seems to have been localized around only Saul. It was a unique heavenly light, created for this particular event. And while it temporarily blinded Saul physically, it allowed him to finally see Jesus for who he really was: the Son of God.

EXPLORATION POINT

Most conversions to Christianity are not as dramatic as Saul's. A conversion can come as a sudden and radical change or as a gradual coming to faith over years. There is no single "right" way to come to know Christ. The method of receiving Christ may vary, but the result is the same: true faith in Christ as our Lord and Savior. This kind of faith will inevitably change our perspective on the world, and the indwelling Holy Spirit will change the way that we live as a result.

other believers* lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

26 When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! 27 Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

28 So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him. 30 When the believers* heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

31 The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers. →

PETER HEALS AENEAS AND RAISES DORCAS

32 Meanwhile, Peter traveled from place to place, and he came down to visit the believers in the town of Lydda. 33 There he met a man named Aeneas, who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up, and roll up your sleeping mat!" And he was healed instantly. 35 Then the whole population of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas walking around, and they turned to the Lord.

36 There was a believer in Joppa named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas*). She was

always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. 37 About this time she became ill and died. Her body was washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room. 38 But the believers had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, "Please come as soon as possible!"

DAMASCUS

Damascus is about 140 miles northeast of Jerusalem and 60 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea. It is perhaps the oldest continuously occupied city in the world, dating as far back as the time of Abraham (Genesis 14:15). In Bible times it was strategically located between two rivers and along three major trade routes. Today Damascus is the capital city of Syria.

39 So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other clothes Dorcas had made for them. 40 But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! 41 He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he presented her to them alive.

42 The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And Peter

9:25 Greek his disciples. 9:30 Greek brothers. 9:36 The names Tabitha in Aramaic and Dorcas in Greek both mean "gazelle."

PG 1214 FLYOVER

PG 1214 DIRECT

PG 1214 SCENIC

10:1-48

47

10:1-48

182

10:1-48

325

PG 1220

PG 1224

PG 1218

PETER VISITS CORNELIUS

As God guided each chapter of the big story through the centuries, he commanded his chosen people to set themselves apart from other peoples of the world. When Jesus came to earth, everything changed. God's gift of salvation is for everyone. The early church struggles with this concept. To help clarify this issue, God sends a vision to the apostle Peter while he is in Joppa. At about the same time God also sends a vision to Cornelius in Caesarea. God wants to be certain that people of every race and religious background hear of his great gift.

stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a tanner of hides. 

CORNELIUS CALLS FOR PETER

  **10** In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer* named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. ²He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. ³One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.

⁴Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel.

And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! ⁵Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore."

⁷As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of his personal attendants. ⁸He told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa.

PETER VISITS CORNELIUS

⁹The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, ¹⁰and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. ¹²In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. ¹³Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them."

¹⁴"No, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never

eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.*"

¹⁵But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean."

¹⁶The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

¹⁷Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, ¹⁸they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there.

¹⁹Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Three men have come looking for you. ²⁰Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them."

²¹So Peter went down and said, "I'm the man you are looking for. Why have you come?"

²²They said, "We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message." ²³So Peter invited the men to stay for the night. The next day he went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Joppa.

²⁴They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!" ²⁷So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled.

²⁸Peter told them, "You know it is against our

10:1 Greek a centurion; similarly in 10:22. 10:14 Greek anything common and unclean.

OBSERVATION POINT

The law of Moses clearly stated which animals were impure or unclean (Leviticus 11). For centuries the Jews had carefully followed these laws, eating only certain animals and not even touching some birds, reptiles, and animals. The instructions given in Peter's vision represented a radical new way of thinking, not just about food but about the Jewish laws in general. Peter now realized that he should no longer consider anyone impure or unclean. Everyone is saved by God's grace, not by adherence to the law.

EXPLORATION POINT

In the vision he gave to Peter, God made it very clear that he showed no favoritism. Jesus was Lord of all. He saw no differences between the Jews—God's chosen people—and the Gentiles who were outside the Jewish heritage. Jews and Gentiles were equally welcome to the message of salvation and to the church. Christ had fulfilled all the obligations of the law of Moses, so the new believers did not have to follow those requirements. The Good News was for everyone who believed in Jesus.

CAESAREA

Caesarea was a city on the Mediterranean Sea, thirty-five miles north of Joppa. Herod the Great built the seaport in the first century BC and named it for the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus. It remained the capital of the province of Judea for over six hundred years. It was home to the governors of Judea and was the regional headquarters for the Roman army.

Then God allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to the general public,* but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead. ⁴³He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name."

THE GENTILES RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

⁴⁴Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵The Jewish believers* who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in other tongues* and praising God.

Then Peter asked, ⁴⁷"Can anyone object to

10:39 Greek on a tree. 10:41 Greek the people. 10:45 Greek The faithful ones of the circumcision. 10:46 Or in other languages.

laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean. ²⁹So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. Now tell me why you sent for me."

³⁰Cornelius replied, "Four days ago I was praying in my house about this same time, three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man in dazzling clothes was standing in front of me. ³¹He told me, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your gifts to the poor have been noticed by God! ³²Now send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.' ³³So I sent for you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you."

THE GENTILES HEAR THE GOOD NEWS

³⁴Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. ³⁵In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. ³⁶This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism. ³⁸And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

³⁹"And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross,* ⁴⁰but God raised him to life on the third day.



Acts 10:1

PETER'S MIRACULOUS ESCAPE FROM PRISON

Peter returns to Jerusalem and continues to preach the Good News there. Meanwhile, King Herod Agrippa begins persecuting the Christians to please the Jewish population. First, he has the apostle James put to death. Then, during the annual festival of Passover, when Jews from all over stream to Jerusalem to celebrate, Herod imprisons Peter, who must await a public trial. In the middle of the night, God does what appears to be impossible.

their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" ⁴⁸So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterward Cornelius asked him to stay with them for several days.

JOPPA

Joppa was an important harbor in the region. It was a significant port during David and Solomon's reign, but it is best known for its connection to the prophet Jonah, who boarded a ship there to sail to Tarshish. The cedars of Lebanon used in building the Temple were transported to Jerusalem through this seaport. Today it is a suburb of Tel Aviv.

PETER EXPLAINS HIS ACTIONS

11 Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers* in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. ²But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers* criticized him. ³"You entered the home of Gentiles* and even ate with them!" they said. ⁴Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. ⁵"I was in the town of Joppa," he said, "and while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. ⁶When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of tame and wild animals, reptiles, and birds. ⁷And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.' ⁸"No, Lord," I replied. 'I have never eaten

anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure or unclean.*"

⁹"But the voice from heaven spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.' ¹⁰This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven.

¹¹"Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were staying. ¹²The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us. ¹³He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, 'Send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. ¹⁴He will tell you how you and everyone in your household can be saved!'

¹⁵"As I began to speak," Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. ¹⁶Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptized with* water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?"

¹⁸When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH OF SYRIA

¹⁹Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus,

11:1 Greek *brothers*. 11:2 Greek *those of the circumcision*. 11:3 Greek *of uncircumcised men*. 11:8 Greek *anything common or unclean*. 11:16 Or *in*; also in 11:16b.

OBSERVATION POINT

God released Peter from prison for reasons besides keeping him safe from King Herod's injustice. God displayed his power over the Roman guards and chains and declared Peter "not guilty" of any government charges. By freeing Peter from prison, God also demonstrated that his will could not be hindered by human powers. When Peter preached and healed in Jesus' name, he was being obedient to the divine authority of God; the commands of King Herod did not discourage him.

EXPLORATION POINT

The church was being persecuted—James had been killed, and Peter was in prison. It was a dangerous time to be together, but the church members gathered and prayed. They believed in the power of prayer and held firm to Jesus' promise: "Ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!" (John 14:14). Their earnest prayers were answered, but the answer surprised them. When we pray earnestly and sincerely in Christ's name, we too may be surprised with the way God answers.

and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews. ²⁰However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles* about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.

²²When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw this evidence of God's blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. ²⁴Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. ²⁶When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers* were first called Christians.)

²⁷During this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters* in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. ³⁰This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

JAMES IS KILLED AND PETER IS IMPRISONED

12 About that time King Herod Agrippa² began to persecute some believers in the church. ²He had the apostle James (John's

brother) killed with a sword. ³When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish people, he also arrested Peter. (This took place during the Passover celebration.)* ⁴Then he imprisoned him, placing him under the guard of four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring Peter out for public trial after the Passover. ⁵But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

PETER'S MIRACULOUS ESCAPE FROM PRISON

⁶The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. ⁷Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter. The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, "Quick! Get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. ⁸Then the angel told him, "Get dressed and put on your sandals." And he did. "Now put on your coat and follow me," the angel ordered.

⁹So Peter left the cell, following the angel. But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. ¹⁰They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him.

¹¹Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel

11:20 Greek *the Hellenists* (i.e., those who speak Greek); other manuscripts read *the Greeks*. 11:26 Greek *disciples*; also in 11:29. 11:29 Greek *the brothers*. 12:1 Greek *Herod the king*. He was the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great. 12:3 Greek *the days of unleavened bread*.

← PG 1216 → DIRECT
 ← PG 1218 → SCENIC

13:4-52

183

13:4-52

327

PG 1292

PG 1296

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The Holy Spirit urges the church in Antioch of Syria to commission Saul (now named Paul) and Barnabas to preach the gospel in Cyprus and Pisidia. They preach in the synagogues of towns all over the island of Cyprus. Then they sail to the mainland and stop in Pisidia, a district of the Roman province of Galatia. They travel inland to Antioch of Pisidia and preach the Good News in the Jewish synagogue. This is Paul's first missionary journey.

and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders* had planned to do to me!"

¹²When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. ¹³He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!"

¹⁵"You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed. ¹⁷He motioned for them to quiet down and told them how the Lord had led him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.

¹⁸At dawn there was a great commotion among the soldiers about what had happened to Peter. ¹⁹Herod Agrippa ordered a thorough search for him. When he couldn't be found, Herod interrogated the guards and sentenced them to death. Afterward Herod left Judea to stay in Caesarea for a while. 🌊

THE DEATH OF HEROD AGRIPPA

²⁰Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they sent a delegation to make peace with him because their cities were dependent upon Herod's country for food. The delegates won the support of Blastus, Herod's personal assistant, ²¹and an appointment with Herod was granted. When the day arrived, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to them. ²²The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!"

²³Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died.

²⁴Meanwhile, the word of God continued to spread, and there were many new believers.

²⁵When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned,* taking John Mark with them.

BARNABAS AND SAUL ARE COMMISSIONED

13 Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"*), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas*), and Saul. ²One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." ³So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

→ PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

4 So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. ⁵There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.

⁶Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷He

12:11 Or the Jewish people. 12:25 Or mission, they returned to Jerusalem. Other manuscripts read mission, they returned from Jerusalem; still others read mission, they returned from Jerusalem to Antioch. 13:1a Greek who was called Niger. 13:1b Greek Herod the tetrarch.

† OBSERVATION POINT

Devout converts to Judaism were called proselytes. These were Gentiles who chose to follow the laws of Moses and serve God as revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. The men also submitted to the rite of circumcision to become full members of the Jewish community. The Jews were jealous when Paul's message in their synagogue drew large crowds; they recognized that he was preaching a different message and possibly "stealing" their converts.

had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.

⁹Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. ¹⁰Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? ¹¹Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him.

¹²When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

PAUL PREACHES IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA

¹³Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴But Paul and Barnabas traveled inland to Antioch of Pisidia.*

On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services. ¹⁵After the usual readings from the books of Moses* and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it."

¹⁶So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. "Men of Israel,"

🌐 EXPLORATION POINT

The Jews embraced much of what Paul said: the summary of their history as God's chosen ones, and the idea of being made right with God. But they clung fiercely to their traditions and didn't like the idea that Gentiles could be included among God's people without converting to Judaism. Just as the Jews had to realize that the Good News was for all people, not just those of the Jewish tradition, so too must modern Christians remain open to welcoming others into our churches and communities of faith.

he said, "and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me.

¹⁷"The God of this nation of Israel chose our ancestors and made them multiply and grow strong during their stay in Egypt. Then with a powerful arm he led them out of their slavery. ¹⁸He put up with them* through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. ¹⁹Then he destroyed seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to Israel as an inheritance. ²⁰All this took about 450 years.

"After that, God gave them judges to rule until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹Then the people begged for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. ²²But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.*"

²³"And it is one of King David's descendants, Jesus, who is God's promised Savior of Israel! ²⁴Before he came, John the Baptist preached that all the people of Israel needed to repent of their sins and turn to God and be baptized. ²⁵As John was finishing his ministry he asked, 'Do you think I am the Messiah? No, I am not! But he is coming soon—and I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the sandals on his feet.'

²⁶"Brothers—you sons of Abraham, and also you God-fearing Gentiles—this message of salvation has been sent to us! ²⁷The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the one the prophets had spoken about. Instead, they condemned him, and in doing this they fulfilled the prophets' words that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸They found no

13:13-14 Pamphylia and Pisidia were districts in what is now Turkey. 13:15 Greek from the law. 13:18 Some manuscripts read He cared for them; compare Deut 1:31. 13:22 1 Sam 13:14.

legal reason to execute him, but they asked Pilate to have him killed anyway.

²⁹“When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross* and placed him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead! ³¹And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel.

³²“And now we are here to bring you this Good News. The promise was made to our ancestors, ³³and God has now fulfilled it for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus. This is what the second psalm says about Jesus:

‘You are my Son.
Today I have become your Father.*’

³⁴For God had promised to raise him from the dead, not leaving him to rot in the grave. He said, ‘I will give you the sacred blessings I promised to David.’* ³⁵Another psalm explains it more fully: ‘You will not allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.’* ³⁶This is not a reference to David, for after David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died and was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed. ³⁷No, it was a reference to someone else—someone whom God raised and whose body did not decay.

³⁸*“Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. ³⁹Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God—something the law of Moses could never do. ⁴⁰Be careful! Don’t let the prophets’ words apply to you. For they said,

⁴¹ ‘Look, you mockers,
be amazed and die!
For I am doing something in your own day,
something you wouldn’t believe
even if someone told you about it.’*”

⁴²As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged them to speak about these things again the next week. ⁴³Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God.

PAUL TURNS TO THE GENTILES

⁴⁴The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said.

⁴⁶Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, “It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For the Lord gave us this command when he said,

‘I have made you a light to the Gentiles,
to bring salvation to the farthest corners
of the earth.’*”

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. ⁴⁹So the Lord’s message spread throughout that region.

⁵⁰Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town. ⁵¹So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium. ⁵²And the believers* were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. → ↪

PAUL AND BARNABAS IN ICONIUM

14 The same thing happened in Iconium.* Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers. ²Some of the Jews, however, spurned God’s message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. ³But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

⁵Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them. ⁶When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia—to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. ⁷And there they preached the Good News.

PAUL AND BARNABAS IN LYSTRA AND DERBE

⁸While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting ⁹and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed. ¹⁰So Paul called to him in a loud voice, “Stand up!” And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.

¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, “These men are gods in human form!” ¹²They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. ¹³Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of

13:29 Greek from the tree. 13:33 Or Today I reveal you as my Son. Ps 2:7. 13:34 Isa 55:3. 13:35 Ps 16:10. 13:38 English translations divide verses 38 and 39 in various ways. 13:41 Hab 1:5 (Greek version). 13:47 Isa 49:6. 13:52 Greek the disciples. 14:1 Iconium, as well as Lystra and Derbe (14:6), were towns in what is now Turkey.

the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, ¹⁵“Friends,* why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. ¹⁶In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, ¹⁷but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.” ¹⁸But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

¹⁹Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But as the believers* gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

PAUL AND BARNABAS RETURN TO ANTIOCH OF SYRIA

²¹After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, ²²where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. ²³Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. ²⁴Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. ²⁵They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia.

²⁶Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. ²⁷Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. ²⁸And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.

14:15 Greek Men. 14:20 Greek disciples; also in 14:22, 28.



PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

- 1** → **FIRST:**
Antioch—Antioch
Acts 13:1–14:28
- 2** → **SECOND:**
Antioch—Antioch
Acts 15:36–18:22
- 3** → **THIRD:**
Antioch—Jerusalem
Acts 18:23–21:16
- R** → **TO ROME:**
Caesarea—Rome
Acts 21:17–28:31



PG 1216 FLYOVER

PG 1368 DIRECT

PG 1370 SCENIC

15:1-35

48

15:1-35

186

15:1-35

332

PG 1274

PG 1226

PG 1226

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM: CONFLICT OVER GENTILES

The successful missionary work of Paul and others among the Gentiles is a cause for the new church to rejoice! The Good News is spreading all over the world, just as God had always planned in the big story. But for some early Jewish Christians, this raises some difficult questions. God had always worked through his chosen people, the Jews. Many believe that Gentiles, in addition to believing in Jesus, should be required to convert to a Jewish lifestyle in order to be saved. This is a significant issue for the leaders of the early church, and they gather in Jerusalem to address it.

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

15 While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers*: “Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.”² Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently. Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.³ The church sent the delegates to Jerusalem, and they stopped along the way in Phoenicia and Samaria to visit the believers. They told them—much to everyone’s joy—that the Gentiles, too, were being converted.

⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church, including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them.⁵ But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, “The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses.”

⁶So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue.⁷ At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: “Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe.⁸ God knows people’s hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.⁹ He made no distinction

between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith.¹⁰ So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers* with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?¹¹ We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.”

¹²Everyone listened quietly as Barnabas and Paul told about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³When they had finished, James stood and said, “Brothers, listen to me.¹⁴ Peter* has told you about the time God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people for himself.¹⁵ And this conversion of Gentiles is exactly what the prophets predicted. As it is written:

¹⁶ ‘Afterward I will return
and restore the fallen house* of David.

I will rebuild its ruins
and restore it,

¹⁷ so that the rest of humanity might seek
the LORD,
including the Gentiles—
all those I have called to be mine.

The LORD has spoken—

¹⁸ he who made these things known so
long ago.*”

¹⁹“And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.²⁰ Instead, we should write and

15:1 Greek *brothers*; also in 15:3, 23, 32, 33, 36, 40. 15:10 Greek *disciples*. 15:14 Greek *Simeon*. 15:16 Or *kingdom*; Greek reads *tent*. 15:16-18 Amos 9:11-12 (Greek version); Isa 45:21.

OBSERVATION POINT

Circumcision had religious significance for Jews as the sign of the covenant that God had established with the people of Israel. It was normally performed on the eighth day of a male infant’s life, but adult converts to Judaism were required to get circumcised, too. Circumcision became a metaphor for the renewal of a person’s relationship with God. But after Jesus’ resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit, faith in Jesus was all that would be required to be in right relationship with God. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the Jewish law, and now all people everywhere relate to God through him.

EXPLORATION POINT

Ethnic background has no impact on how a person relates to God. Faith in Jesus is the only way to have a right relationship with God, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life is clear evidence of that relationship. During their missionary travels, Paul and Barnabas gave clear testimony of the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Gentiles. Peter reminded everyone in Jerusalem that, years earlier, he had been sent by God to preach to a Gentile, Cornelius. No matter where you come from, trust in Jesus! He is the only way to God.

tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood.²¹ For these laws of Moses have been preached in Jewish synagogues in every city on every Sabbath for many generations.”

THE LETTER FOR GENTILE BELIEVERS

²²Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders*—Judas (also called Barsabbas) and Silas.²³ This is the letter they took with them:

“This letter is from the apostles and elders, your brothers in Jerusalem. It is written to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings!

²⁴“We understand that some men from here have troubled you and upset you with their teaching, but we did not send them!²⁵ So we decided, having come to complete agreement, to send you official representatives, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,²⁶ who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁷ We are sending Judas and Silas to confirm what we have decided concerning your question.

²⁸“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these few requirements:²⁹ You must abstain from eating food offered to

idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell.”

³⁰The messengers went at once to Antioch, where they called a general meeting of the believers and delivered the letter.³¹ And there was great joy throughout the church that day as they read this encouraging message.

³²Then Judas and Silas, both being prophets, spoke at length to the believers, encouraging and strengthening their faith.³³ They stayed for a while, and then the believers sent them back to the church in Jerusalem with a blessing of peace.*³⁵ Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. They and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord there. 

PAUL AND BARNABAS SEPARATE

³⁶After some time Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing.”³⁷ Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark.³⁸ But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work.³⁹ Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus.⁴⁰ Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord’s gracious care.⁴¹ Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there.

15:22 Greek *were leaders among the brothers*. 15:33 Some manuscripts add *verse 34, But Silas decided to stay there*.

16:11-40

16:1-40

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PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

After spending some time at his home church in Antioch, Paul sets out on his second missionary journey. He travels with his friend Silas to the churches in Galatia that he established on his first journey, and a young man named Timothy joins them there. The Spirit then instructs Paul to go to Macedonia (northern Greece) to preach the Good News. He travels by boat from Troas to the port of Neapolis, then hikes ten miles over mountain roads to Philippi.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

16 Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. ²Timothy was well thought of by the believers* in Lystra and Iconium, ³so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴Then they went from town to town, instructing the believers to follow the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.

A CALL FROM MACEDONIA

⁶Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. ⁷Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia,* but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. ⁸So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.

⁹That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰So we* decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

LYDIA OF PHILIPPI BELIEVES IN JESUS

¹¹We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. ¹²From there

we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days.

¹³On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. ¹⁵She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.

PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON

¹⁶One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. ¹⁷She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved."

¹⁸This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her.

¹⁹Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. ²⁰"The whole city is in an uproar

16:2 Greek brothers; also in 16:40. 16:6-7 Phrygia, Galatia, Asia, Mysia, and Bithynia were all districts in what is now Turkey. 16:10 Luke, the writer of this book, here joined Paul and accompanied him on his journey.

OBSERVATION POINT

During his missionary travels to new places, Paul usually began by preaching in the local synagogue. In Philippi, he couldn't do this. A city was only able to have a synagogue if ten Jewish men lived there, and the Jewish population in Philippi was too small. Without a synagogue, those who worshiped God gathered outside near running water to pray. Paul located a group down at the river on the Sabbath and preached to them there.

because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. ²¹"They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice."

²²A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. ²³They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. ²⁴So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

²⁵Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. ²⁶Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! ²⁷The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. ²⁸But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." ³²And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. ³³Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. ³⁴He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

³⁵The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, "Let those men go!" ³⁶So

EXPLORATION POINT

God needs all kinds of people to build his church. The church in Philippi was founded on three unlikely individuals: a woman (Lydia), a jailer, and a slave girl. Societies may have different criteria for who best can establish their institutions, but God uses everyone—the rich and influential as well as the weak and the outcasts. Christianity in the first century was for everyone; it's the same today. It is not limited by gender, ethnicity, or social boundaries.

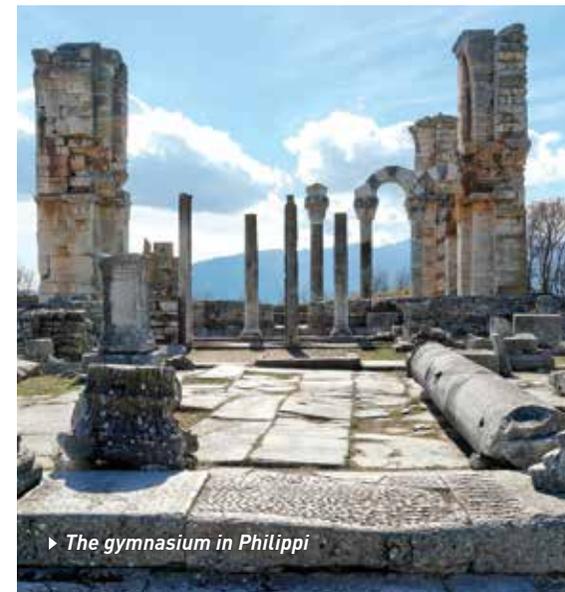
the jailer told Paul, "The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace."

³⁷But Paul replied, "They have publicly

PHILIPPI

Philippi was a settlement for retired Roman soldiers. It was located on the Macedonian plain on a branch of the Strymon River. Named after Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, Philippi was accessible to other Roman cities by the Egnatian Way. As a Roman colony, Philippi had special privileges and its residents received the rights of Roman citizens. A variety of religions flourished there: Thracian, Greek, Egyptian, and with Paul's arrival, Christian.

★ Acts 16:12



► The gymnasium in Philippi

17:1-15

17:1-34

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PAUL PREACHES IN THESSALONICA

Paul and Silas leave Philippi and travel through the mountains, moving southwest. Their destination is the city of Thessalonica, where there is a synagogue that they plan to preach in. Although there is a paved Roman road, the Egnatian Way, connecting the cities, their journey is long and difficult, especially by modern standards. Arriving in the city of Thessalonica, Paul locates the synagogue and begins to preach the Good News of Jesus to all who will listen to him.

beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!”

³⁸When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. ³⁹So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. ⁴⁰When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town. →

of the Jews who listened were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women.*

⁵But some of the Jews were jealous, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of Jason, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd.* ⁶Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers* instead and took them before the city council. “Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world,” they shouted, “and now they are here disturbing our city, too. ⁷And Jason has welcomed them into his home. They are all guilty of treason against Caesar, for they profess allegiance to another king, named Jesus.”

⁸The people of the city, as well as the city council, were thrown into turmoil by these reports. ⁹So the officials forced Jason and the other believers to post bond, and then they released them.

PAUL AND SILAS IN BEREA

¹⁰That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. ¹²As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men.

¹³But when some Jews in Thessalonica

17:4 Some manuscripts read quite a few of the wives of the leading men. 17:5 Or the city council. 17:6 Greek brothers; also in 17:10, 14.

OBSERVATION POINT

Roman rule both helped and hindered the spread of the gospel. The world was at peace and the Romans had constructed roads on which Paul could easily travel. But the influence of the imperial cult was problematic. Everyone was expected to submit to Roman authority and even worship the emperor, who was considered divine. Paul’s preaching about “another king, named Jesus” aroused the suspicion of the Roman citizens, who did not want their benefits and privileges threatened in any way.

learned that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they went there and stirred up trouble. ¹⁴The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. ¹⁵Those escorting Paul went with him all the way to Athens; then they returned to Berea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to hurry and join him. →

PAUL PREACHES IN ATHENS

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. ¹⁷He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there.

¹⁸He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, “What’s this babbler trying to say with these strange ideas he’s picked up?” Others said, “He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods.”

¹⁹Then they took him to the high council of the city.* “Come and tell us about this new teaching,” they said. ²⁰“You are saying some rather strange things, and we want to know what it’s all about.” ²¹(It should be explained that all the Athenians as well as the foreigners in Athens seemed to spend all their time discussing the latest ideas.)

²²So Paul, standing before the council,* addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, ²³for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about.

EXPLORATION POINT

Paul met resistance to the gospel message because it would change everything. This was a scary thought to the Jews who prided themselves on thousands of years of tradition as God’s chosen people. They were also jealous that some Greeks who had been drawn to Judaism were now drawn to Paul’s message. Even today, change is difficult. Resistance to change is inevitable. Our discernment of the truth according to Scripture should temper any emotional reaction to a different way of thinking or to a change in tradition.

²⁴“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, ²⁵and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. ²⁶From one man* he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.

²⁷“His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your* own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ ²⁹And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone.

³⁰“God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. ³¹For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

³²When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, “We want to hear more about this later.” ³³That ended Paul’s discussion with them, ³⁴but some joined him and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the council,* a woman named Damaris, and others with them. →

17:19 Or the most learned society of philosophers in the city. Greek reads the Areopagus. 17:22 Traditionally rendered standing in the middle of Mars Hill; Greek reads standing in the middle of the Areopagus. 17:26 Greek From one; other manuscripts read From one blood. 17:28 Some manuscripts read our. 17:34 Greek an Areopagite.

PAUL PREACHES IN THESSALONICA

17 Paul and Silas then traveled through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As was Paul’s custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people. ³He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, “This Jesus I’m telling you about is the Messiah.” ⁴Some

THESSALONICA

Thessalonica was named after the stepsister of Alexander the Great. Situated on the Aegean Sea and at a major crossroads of the Egnatian Way, the city was strategically placed for commerce. Fertile plains, ideal for planting olive groves and vineyards, lay outside the city. The synagogue, where Paul preached for three Sabbaths, was large and influential in the region.

PG 1228 DIRECT
PG 1228 SCENIC

18:1-17

18:1-17

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PG 1320

PG 1322

PAUL MEETS PRISCILLA AND AQUILA IN CORINTH

Paul and Silas escape from an angry mob in Thessalonica and hurry to Berea, about nineteen miles away. After sharing the Good News there with great success, Paul is pursued by some enemies from Thessalonica, so he decides to move on again. He sails south to Athens to avoid the twelve-day overland trip. Finally he journeys west to Corinth to preach. He remains in that city for the next eighteen months.

PAUL MEETS PRISCILLA AND AQUILA IN CORINTH

18 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.* ²There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome. ³Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers* just as he was.

⁴Each Sabbath found Paul at the synagogue, trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike. ⁵And after Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul spent all his time preaching the word. He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶But when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook the dust from his clothes and said, “Your blood is upon your own heads—I am innocent. From now on I will go preach to the Gentiles.”

⁷Then he left and went to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God and lived next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and everyone in his household believed in the Lord. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers, and were baptized.

⁹One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, “Don’t be afraid! Speak out! Don’t be silent!” ¹⁰For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me.” ¹¹So Paul stayed there for the next year and a half, teaching the word of God.

¹²But when Gallio became governor of Achaia, some Jews rose up together against Paul and brought him before the governor for judgment. ¹³They accused Paul of “persuading

people to worship God in ways that are contrary to our law.”

¹⁴But just as Paul started to make his defense, Gallio turned to Paul’s accusers and said, “Listen, you Jews, if this were a case involving some wrongdoing or a serious crime, I would have a reason to accept your case. ¹⁵But since it is merely a question of words and names and your Jewish law, take care of it yourselves. I refuse to judge such matters.” ¹⁶And he threw them out of the courtroom.

¹⁷The crowd* then grabbed Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him right there in the courtroom. But Gallio paid no attention. →

PAUL RETURNS TO ANTIOCH OF SYRIA

¹⁸Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters* and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.

¹⁹They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews. ²⁰They asked him to stay longer, but he declined. ²¹As he left, however, he said, “I will come back later,* God willing.” Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²²The next stop was at the port of Caesarea. From there he went up and visited the church at Jerusalem* and then went back to Antioch.

18:1 Athens and Corinth were major cities in Achaia, the region in the southern portion of the Greek peninsula. **18:3** Or leatherworkers. **18:17** Greek Everyone; other manuscripts read All the Greeks. **18:18** Greek brothers; also in 18:27. **18:21** Some manuscripts read “I must by all means be at Jerusalem for the upcoming festival, but I will come back later.” **18:22** Greek the church.

OBSERVATION POINT

The Jews were so hostile to Paul and his message that God comforted and encouraged him through a special vision. God appeared to Paul on at least two other occasions: on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6), and in the Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18). As a result of God’s direct encouragement, Paul persevered in his ministry at Corinth and established a strong church in that city.

EXPLORATION POINT

Paul often experienced open hostility to his message. Repeatedly he had to flee a city to protect himself, but his message always stuck with a few people to create a solid foundation for the church. God assured Paul that he didn’t preach the Good News alone—God’s Spirit was working in and through him, and in other people as well. Sharing the gospel message can be as challenging today as it was for Paul. But we too can be assured that we don’t do God’s work alone. His Spirit will provide comfort and strength.

²³After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went back through Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening all the believers.*

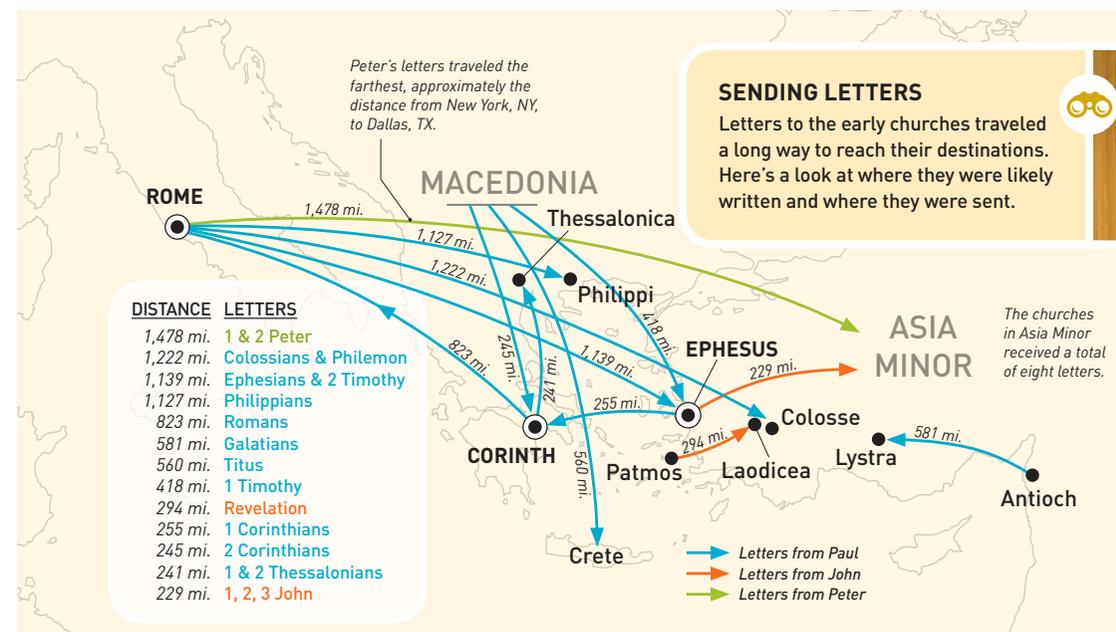
APOLLOS INSTRUCTED AT EPHESUS

²⁴Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. ²⁵He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit* and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John’s baptism. ²⁶When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him

aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.

²⁷Apollos had been thinking about going to Achaia, and the brothers and sisters in Ephesus encouraged him to go. They wrote to the believers in Achaia, asking them to welcome him. When he arrived there, he proved to be of great benefit to those who, by God’s grace, had believed. ²⁸He refuted the Jews with powerful arguments in public debate. Using the Scriptures, he explained to them that Jesus was the Messiah.

18:23 Greek disciples; also in 18:27. **18:25** Or with enthusiasm in the Spirit.



← PG 1326 → DIRECT
 ← PG 1326 → SCENIC

19:1-41

19:1-41

192

339

PG 1268

PG 1274

PAUL MINISTERS IN EPHEBUS

After his lengthy stay in Corinth, Paul completes his second missionary journey by sailing to Ephesus, then to Caesarea, and finally to Antioch of Syria. He begins his third missionary journey by traveling the northern interior road through the region of Phrygia, eventually arriving back in Ephesus. During his three-year stay there, Paul establishes a strong Christian church in a city known for its pagan superstitions and magical practices.

→ PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers.* ²“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked them.

“No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³“Then what baptism did you experience?” he asked.

And they replied, “The baptism of John.”

⁴Paul said, “John’s baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.”

★ EPHEBUS

Few cities in the Roman Empire were as prominent as Ephesus. It was the commercial and educational hub of Asia Minor. This metropolis had streets and buildings made of marble. It boasted an impressive 24,000-seat amphitheater, luxurious baths and fountains, monuments, a town hall, and the colossal temple of Artemis.

⁵As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues* and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.

PAUL MINISTERS IN EPHEBUS

⁸Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. ⁹But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.

¹¹God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. ¹²When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

¹³A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, “I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!” ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. ¹⁵But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?” ¹⁶Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered.

¹⁷The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored.

¹⁸Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. ¹⁹A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bon-

19:1 Greek *disciples*; also in 19:9, 30. 19:6 Or *in other languages*.

† OBSERVATION POINT

The Greek goddess Artemis (also known as Diana) was the patron deity of Ephesus. The Ephesians prided themselves on being the temple keepers for this goddess. The temple in her honor was exceptionally large and was known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Paul’s gospel preaching threatened the Ephesians’ traditions, the status and prestige of their city, and a substantial part of their economy.

🌐 EXPLORATION POINT

Humans are more valuable than money. When he drove demons into a herd of pigs at the region of the Gerasenes, Jesus destroyed two thousand valuable animals (Mark 5:11-13) but restored the life of a demon-possessed man. In Philippi, Paul relieved a slave girl of her demonic spirit, infuriating her owners (Acts 16:16-19). Now in Ephesus, Paul’s preaching threatened the income of silversmiths and encouraged sorcerers to burn their magic books. Even in the ancient world, some individuals desired to make a profit at the expense of others. Christianity challenges that perspective.

fire. The value of the books was several million dollars.* ²⁰So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.

²¹Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit* to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem. “And after that,” he said, “I must go on to Rome!” ²²He sent his two assistants, Timothy and Erastus, ahead to Macedonia while he stayed awhile longer in the province of Asia.

THE RIOT IN EPHEBUS

²³About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. ²⁴It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis.* He kept many craftsmen busy. ²⁵He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows:

“Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. ²⁶But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren’t really gods at all. And he’s done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! ²⁷Of course, I’m not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I’m also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!”

²⁸At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

²⁹Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater,

dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia. ³⁰Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn’t let him. ³¹Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater.

³²Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn’t even know why they were there. ³³The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward and told him to explain the situation. He motioned for silence and tried to speak. ³⁴But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again and kept it up for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

³⁵At last the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. “Citizens of Ephesus,” he said. “Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven. ³⁶Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. ³⁷You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess.

³⁸“If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges. ³⁹And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. ⁴⁰I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting

19:19 Greek *50,000 pieces of silver*, each of which was the equivalent of a day’s wage. 19:21 Or *decided in his spirit*. 19:24 Artemis is otherwise known as Diana.

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUES

After creating an uproar in Ephesus, Paul says goodbye to the believers in that city and travels to Macedonia, preaching to and encouraging people throughout Greece. He visits the churches that he established on his second missionary journey and travels south to stay in Corinth for three months. Then he starts on his journey back to Jerusalem to deliver the offering from the Gentile churches to the suffering Christians there.

by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say."^{41*} Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed. →

PAUL GOES TO MACEDONIA AND GREECE

20 When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers* and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia.² While there, he encouraged the believers in all the towns he passed through. Then he traveled down to Greece,³ where he stayed for three months. He was preparing to sail back to Syria when he discovered a plot by some Jews against his life, so he decided to return through Macedonia.

⁴Several men were traveling with him. They were Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.⁵ They went on ahead and waited for us at Troas.⁶ After the Passover* ended, we boarded a ship at Philippi in Macedonia and five days later joined them in Troas, where we stayed a week.

PAUL'S FINAL VISIT TO TROAS

⁷On the first day of the week, we gathered with the local believers to share in the Lord's Supper.* Paul was preaching to them, and since he was leaving the next day, he kept talking until midnight.⁸ The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps.⁹ As Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, became very drowsy. Finally, he fell sound asleep and

dropped three stories to his death below.¹⁰ Paul went down, bent over him, and took him into his arms. "Don't worry," he said, "he's alive!"¹¹ Then they all went back upstairs, shared in the Lord's Supper,* and ate together. Paul continued talking to them until dawn, and then he left.¹² Meanwhile, the young man was taken home alive and well, and everyone was greatly relieved.

PAUL MEETS THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

¹³Paul went by land to Assos, where he had arranged for us to join him, while we traveled by ship.¹⁴ He joined us there, and we sailed together to Mitylene.¹⁵ The next day we sailed past the island of Kios. The following day we crossed to the island of Samos, and* a day later we arrived at Miletus.

¹⁶Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus, for he didn't want to spend any more time in the province of Asia. He was hurrying to get to Jerusalem, if possible, in time for the Festival of Pentecost.¹⁷ But when we landed at Miletus, he sent a message to the elders of the church at Ephesus, asking them to come and meet him.

¹⁸When they arrived he declared, "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now¹⁹ I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews.²⁰ I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes.²¹ I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting

19:41 Some translations include verse 41 as part of verse 40.
20:1 Greek disciples. 20:6 Greek the days of unleavened bread. 20:7 Greek to break bread. 20:11 Greek broke the bread.
20:15 Some manuscripts read and having stayed at Trogyllium.

OBSERVATION POINT

We are given few details about Eutychus, who is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. Eutychus was a common name among freed slaves. The primary focus of the story is the miracle itself—this is the only person Paul raised from the dead. Eutychus might have fallen asleep for several reasons: Paul's preaching went on for hours, it was midnight, and the lamps in the room (20:8) might have given off fumes and heat that caused drowsiness.

from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"And now I am bound by the Spirit* to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, ²³except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead.²⁴ But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

²⁵"And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again.²⁶ I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault,* ²⁷for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.

²⁸"So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood*—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders.*²⁹ I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock.³⁰ Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.³¹ Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.

³²"And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.

³³"I have never coveted anyone's silver or gold or fine clothes.³⁴ You know that these hands of mine have worked to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me.³⁵ And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working

EXPLORATION POINT

Paul, the greatest missionary of all time, makes a profound statement: "My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me." He had a passion for sharing the Good News. He was convinced that this was his only purpose in life. Most of us will not be world-traveling missionaries like Paul, but God has called each of us to be a witness, wherever we live and whatever we do. He calls us to share the Good News, pass on his love, and be his ambassadors until he comes again.

hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."³⁶

³⁶When he had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them.³⁷ They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye.³⁸ They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship. →

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

21 After saying farewell to the Ephesian elders, we sailed straight to the island of Cos. The next day we reached Rhodes and then went to Patara.² There we boarded a ship sailing for Phoenicia.³ We sighted the island of Cyprus, passed it on our left, and landed at the harbor of Tyre, in Syria, where the ship was to unload its cargo.

⁴We went ashore, found the local believers,* and stayed with them a week. These believers prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem.⁵ When we returned to the ship at the end of the week, the entire congregation, including women* and children, left the city and came down to the shore with us. There we knelt, prayed,⁶ and said our farewells. Then we went aboard, and they returned home.

⁷The next stop after leaving Tyre was Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters* and stayed for one day.⁸ The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men

20:22 Or by my spirit, or by an inner compulsion; Greek reads by the spirit. 20:26 Greek I am innocent of the blood of all. 20:28a Or with the blood of his own [son]. 20:28b Greek overseers.
21:4 Greek disciples; also in 21:16. 21:5 Or wives. 21:7 Greek brothers; also in 21:17.

who had been chosen to distribute food. ⁹He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

¹⁰Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. ¹¹He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'" ¹²When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

¹³But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

PAUL ARRIVES AT JERUSALEM

¹⁵After this we packed our things and left for Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some believers from Caesarea accompanied us, and they took us to the home of Mnason, a man originally from Cyprus and one of the early believers. ¹⁷When we arrived, the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem welcomed us warmly.

¹⁸The next day Paul went with us to meet with James, and all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present. ¹⁹After greeting them, Paul gave a detailed account of the things God had accomplished among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰After hearing this, they praised God. And then they said, "You know, dear brother, how many thousands of Jews have also believed, and they all follow the law of Moses very seriously. ²¹But the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem have been told that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn their backs on the laws of Moses. They've heard that you teach them not to circumcise their children or follow other Jewish customs. ²²What should we do? They will certainly hear that you have come.

²³"Here's what we want you to do. We have four men here who have completed their vow. ²⁴Go with them to the Temple and join them in the purification ceremony, paying for them to have their heads ritually shaved. Then everyone will know that the rumors are all false and that you yourself observe the Jewish laws.

²⁵"As for the Gentile believers, they should do what we already told them in a letter: They should abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality."

PAUL IS ARRESTED

²⁶So Paul went to the Temple the next day with the other men. They had already started the

purification ritual, so he publicly announced the date when their vows would end and sacrifices would be offered for each of them.

²⁷The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, ²⁸yelling, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who preaches against our people everywhere and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and even defiles this holy place by bringing in Gentiles.*" ²⁹(For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus,* and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

³⁰The whole city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. Paul was grabbed and dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the gates were closed behind him. ³¹As they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³²He immediately called out his soldiers and officers* and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, they stopped beating Paul.

³³Then the commander arrested him and ordered him bound with two chains. He asked the crowd who he was and what he had done.

³⁴Some shouted one thing and some another. Since he couldn't find out the truth in all the uproar and confusion, he ordered that Paul be taken to the fortress. ³⁵As Paul reached the stairs, the mob grew so violent the soldiers had to lift him to their shoulders to protect him. ³⁶And the crowd followed behind, shouting, "Kill him, kill him!"

PAUL SPEAKS TO THE CROWD

³⁷As Paul was about to be taken inside, he said to the commander, "May I have a word with you?"

"Do you know Greek?" the commander asked, surprised. ³⁸"Aren't you the Egyptian who led a rebellion some time ago and took 4,000 members of the Assassins out into the desert?"

³⁹"No," Paul replied, "I am a Jew and a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, which is an important city. Please, let me talk to these people." ⁴⁰The commander agreed, so Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people to be quiet. Soon a deep silence enveloped the crowd, and he addressed them in their own language, Aramaic.*

22 "Brothers and esteemed fathers," Paul said, "listen to me as I offer my defense." ²When they heard him speaking in their own language,* the silence was even greater.

21:28 Greek Greeks. 21:29 Greek Trophimus, the Ephesian. 21:32 Greek centurions. 21:40 Or Hebrew. 22:2 Greek in Aramaic, or in Hebrew.

³Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. ⁴And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. ⁵The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

⁶"As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'"

⁸"Who are you, lord?" I asked. "And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene,* the one you are persecuting.' ⁹The people with me saw the light but didn't understand the voice speaking to me.

¹⁰"I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?' "And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything you are to do.'

¹¹"I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led by the hand to Damascus by my companions. ¹²A man named Ananias lived there. He was a godly man, deeply devoted to the law, and well regarded by all the Jews of Damascus. ¹³He came and stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight.' And that very moment I could see him!

¹⁴"Then he told me, 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. ¹⁵For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.'

¹⁷"After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. ¹⁸I saw a vision of Jesus* saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't accept your testimony about me.'

¹⁹"'But Lord,' I argued, 'they certainly know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰And I was in complete agreement when your witness Stephen was killed. I stood by and kept the coats they took off when they stoned him.'

²¹"But the Lord said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!'"

²²The crowd listened until Paul said that word. Then they all began to shout, "Away with such a fellow! He isn't fit to live!" ²³They

yelled, threw off their coats, and tossed handfuls of dust into the air.

PAUL REVEALS HIS ROMAN CITIZENSHIP

²⁴The commander brought Paul inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious. ²⁵When they tied Paul down to lash him, Paul said to the officer* standing there, "Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been tried?"

²⁶When the officer heard this, he went to the commander and asked, "What are you doing? This man is a Roman citizen!"

²⁷So the commander went over and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?"

"Yes, I certainly am," Paul replied. ²⁸"I am, too," the commander muttered, "and it cost me plenty!"

Paul answered, "But I am a citizen by birth!" ²⁹The soldiers who were about to interrogate Paul quickly withdrew when they heard he was a Roman citizen, and the commander was frightened because he had ordered him bound and whipped.

PAUL BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL

³⁰The next day the commander ordered the leading priests into session with the Jewish high council.* He wanted to find out what the trouble was all about, so he released Paul to have him stand before them.

23 Gazing intently at the high council,* Paul began: "Brothers, I have always lived before God with a clear conscience!"

²Instantly Ananias the high priest commanded those close to Paul to slap him on the mouth. ³But Paul said to him, "God will slap you, you corrupt hypocrite!* What kind of judge are you to break the law yourself by ordering me struck like that?"

⁴Those standing near Paul said to him, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?"

⁵"I'm sorry, brothers. I didn't realize he was the high priest," Paul replied, "for the Scriptures say, 'You must not speak evil of any of your rulers.*'"

⁶Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were my ancestors! And I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!"

⁷This divided the council—the Pharisees against the Sadducees—⁸for the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but

22:8 Or Jesus of Nazareth. 22:18 Greek him. 22:25 Greek the centurion; also in 22:26. 22:30 Greek Sanhedrin. 23:1 Greek Sanhedrin; also in 23:6, 15, 20, 28. 23:3 Greek you whitewashed wall. 23:5 Exod 22:28.

the Pharisees believe in all of these.⁹ So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees jumped up and began to argue forcefully. “We see nothing wrong with him,” they shouted. “Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him.”¹⁰ As the conflict grew more violent, the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.

¹¹That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.”

THE PLAN TO KILL PAUL

¹²The next morning a group of Jews* got together and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.¹³ There were more than forty of them in the conspiracy.¹⁴ They went to the leading priests and elders and told them, “We have bound ourselves with an oath to eat nothing until we have killed Paul.”¹⁵ So you and the high council should ask the commander to bring Paul back to the council again. Pretend you want to examine his case more fully. We will kill him on the way.”

¹⁶But Paul’s nephew—his sister’s son—heard of their plan and went to the fortress and told Paul.¹⁷ Paul called for one of the Roman officers* and said, “Take this young man to the commander. He has something important to tell him.”

¹⁸So the officer did, explaining, “Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.”

¹⁹The commander took his hand, led him aside, and asked, “What is it you want to tell me?”

²⁰Paul’s nephew told him, “Some Jews are going to ask you to bring Paul before the high council tomorrow, pretending they want to get some more information.²¹ But don’t do it! There are more than forty men hiding along the way ready to ambush him. They have vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are ready now, just waiting for your consent.”

²²“Don’t let anyone know you told me this,” the commander warned the young man.

PAUL IS SENT TO CAESAREA

²³Then the commander called two of his officers and ordered, “Get 200 soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o’clock tonight. Also take 200 spearmen and 70 mounted troops.²⁴ Provide horses for Paul to ride, and get him safely to Governor Felix.”²⁵ Then he wrote this letter to the governor:

²⁶“From Claudius Lysias, to his Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings!

²⁷“This man was seized by some Jews, and they were about to kill him when I arrived with the troops. When I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I removed him to safety.²⁸ Then I took him to their high council to try to learn the basis of the accusations against him.²⁹ I soon discovered the charge was something regarding their religious law—certainly nothing worthy of imprisonment or death.³⁰ But when I was informed of a plot to kill him, I immediately sent him on to you. I have told his accusers to bring their charges before you.”

³¹So that night, as ordered, the soldiers took Paul as far as Antipatris.³² They returned to the fortress the next morning, while the mounted troops took him on to Caesarea.³³ When they arrived in Caesarea, they presented Paul and the letter to Governor Felix.³⁴ He read it and then asked Paul what province he was from. “Cilicia,” Paul answered.

³⁵“I will hear your case myself when your accusers arrive,” the governor told him. Then the governor ordered him kept in the prison at Herod’s headquarters.*

PAUL APPEARS BEFORE FELIX

24 Five days later Ananias, the high priest, arrived with some of the Jewish elders and the lawyer* Tertullus, to present their case against Paul to the governor.² When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented the charges against Paul in the following address to the governor:

“You have provided a long period of peace for us Jews and with foresight have enacted reforms for us.³ For all of this, Your Excellency, we are very grateful to you.⁴ But I don’t want to bore you, so please give me your attention for only a moment.⁵ We have found this man to be a troublemaker who is constantly stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the cult known as the Nazarenes.⁶ Furthermore, he was trying to desecrate the Temple when we arrested him.*⁸ You can find out the truth of our accusations by examining him yourself.”⁹ Then the other Jews chimed in, declaring that everything Tertullus said was true.

¹⁰The governor then motioned for Paul to speak. Paul said, “I know, sir, that you have been a judge of Jewish affairs for many years, so I gladly present my defense before you.”¹¹ You

23:12 Greek *the Jews*. 23:17 Greek *centurions*; also in 23:23. 23:35 Greek *Herod’s Praetorium*. 24:1 Greek *some elders and an orator*. 24:6 Some manuscripts add an expanded conclusion to verse 6, all of verse 7, and an additional phrase in verse 8: *We would have judged him by our law, but Lysias, the commander of the garrison, came and violently took him away from us, commanding his accusers to come before you.*

can quickly discover that I arrived in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago to worship at the Temple.¹² My accusers never found me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor stirring up a riot in any synagogue or on the streets of the city.¹³ These men cannot prove the things they accuse me of doing.

¹⁴“But I admit that I follow the Way, which they call a cult. I worship the God of our ancestors, and I firmly believe the Jewish law and everything written in the prophets.¹⁵ I have the same hope in God that these men have, that he will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous.¹⁶ Because of this, I always try to maintain a clear conscience before God and all people.

¹⁷“After several years away, I returned to Jerusalem with money to aid my people and to offer sacrifices to God.¹⁸ My accusers saw me in the Temple as I was completing a purification ceremony. There was no crowd around me and no rioting.¹⁹ But some Jews from the province of Asia were there—and they ought to be here to bring charges if they have anything against me!²⁰ Ask these men here what crime the Jewish high council* found me guilty of,²¹ except for the one time I shouted out, ‘I am on trial before you today because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!’”

²²At that point Felix, who was quite familiar with the Way, adjourned the hearing and said, “Wait until Lysias, the garrison commander, arrives. Then I will decide the case.”²³ He ordered an officer* to keep Paul in custody but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to visit him and take care of his needs.

²⁴A few days later Felix came back with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. Sending for Paul, they listened as he told them about faith in Christ Jesus.²⁵ As he reasoned with them about righteousness and self-control and the coming day of judgment, Felix became frightened. “Go away for now,” he replied. “When it is more convenient, I’ll call for you again.”²⁶ He also hoped that Paul would bribe him, so he sent for him quite often and talked with him.

²⁷After two years went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people, he left Paul in prison.

PAUL APPEARS BEFORE FESTUS

25 Three days after Festus arrived in Caesarea to take over his new responsibilities, he left for Jerusalem,² where the leading priests and other Jewish leaders met with him and made their accusations against Paul.³ They asked Festus as a favor to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (planning to ambush and kill him on the way).⁴ But Festus replied that Paul was at Caesarea and he himself would

be returning there soon.⁵ So he said, “Those of you in authority can return with me. If Paul has done anything wrong, you can make your accusations.”

⁶About eight or ten days later Festus returned to Caesarea, and on the following day he took his seat in court and ordered that Paul be brought in.⁷ When Paul arrived, the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem gathered around and made many serious accusations they couldn’t prove.

⁸Paul denied the charges. “I am not guilty of any crime against the Jewish laws or the Temple or the Roman government,” he said.

⁹Then Festus, wanting to please the Jews, asked him, “Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there?”

¹⁰But Paul replied, “No! This is the official Roman court, so I ought to be tried right here. You know very well I am not guilty of harming the Jews.¹¹ If I have done something worthy of death, I don’t refuse to die. But if I am innocent, no one has a right to turn me over to these men to kill me. I appeal to Caesar!”

¹²Festus conferred with his advisers and then replied, “Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!”

¹³A few days later King Agrippa arrived with his sister, Bernice,* to pay their respects to Festus.¹⁴ During their stay of several days, Festus discussed Paul’s case with the king. “There is a prisoner here,” he told him, “whose case was left for me by Felix.¹⁵ When I was in Jerusalem, the leading priests and Jewish elders pressed charges against him and asked me to condemn him.¹⁶ I pointed out to them that Roman law does not convict people without a trial. They must be given an opportunity to confront their accusers and defend themselves.

¹⁷“When his accusers came here for the trial, I didn’t delay. I called the case the very next day and ordered Paul brought in.¹⁸ But the accusations made against him weren’t any of the crimes I expected.¹⁹ Instead, it was something about their religion and a dead man named Jesus, who Paul insists is alive.²⁰ I was at a loss to know how to investigate these things, so I asked him whether he would be willing to stand trial on these charges in Jerusalem.²¹ But Paul appealed to have his case decided by the emperor. So I ordered that he be held in custody until I could arrange to send him to Caesar.”

²²“I’d like to hear the man myself,” Agrippa said.

And Festus replied, “You will—tomorrow!”

PAUL SPEAKS TO AGRIPPA

²³So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived at the auditorium with great pomp,

24:20 Greek *Sanhedrin*. 24:23 Greek *a centurion*. 25:13 Greek *Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived*.

27:1–28:10

27:1–28:10

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PG 1304

PG 1242

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME

Paul's third journey concludes in Jerusalem. There he visits the Temple, where some Jews become furious because they think he preaches against the law of Moses. They start a riot, causing officials to seize Paul and throw him in prison. That night, the Lord appears to Paul and tells him that he will preach the Good News in Rome. His journey to Rome begins with several hearings in front of Jewish and Roman officials. But Paul continues to preach the Good News whether he's in the high courts or on the high seas.

accompanied by military officers and prominent men of the city. Festus ordered that Paul be brought in. ²⁴Then Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are here, this is the man whose death is demanded by all the Jews, both here and in Jerusalem. ²⁵But in my opinion he has done nothing deserving death. However, since he appealed his case to the emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome.

²⁶"But what shall I write the emperor? For there is no clear charge against him. So I have brought him before all of you, and especially you, King Agrippa, so that after we examine him, I might have something to write. ²⁷For it makes no sense to send a prisoner to the emperor without specifying the charges against him!"

26 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak in your defense."

So Paul, gesturing with his hand, started his defense: ²⁸"I am fortunate, King Agrippa, that you are the one hearing my defense today against all these accusations made by the Jewish leaders, ²⁹for I know you are an expert on all Jewish customs and controversies. Now please listen to me patiently!

³⁰"As the Jewish leaders are well aware, I was given a thorough Jewish training from my earliest childhood among my own people and in Jerusalem. ³¹If they would admit it, they know that I have been a member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion. ³²Now I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made to our ancestors. ³³In fact, that is why the twelve tribes of Israel zealously worship God night and day, and they share the same hope I have. Yet, Your Majesty, they accuse me for having this hope! ³⁴Why does

it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead?

³⁵"I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene. ³⁶Indeed, I did just that in Jerusalem. Authorized by the leading priests, I caused many believers* there to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. ³⁷Many times I had them punished in the synagogues to get them to curse Jesus.* I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities.

³⁸"One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests. ³⁹About noon, Your Majesty, as I was on the road, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions. ⁴⁰We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,* 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.*'

⁴¹"Who are you, lord?" I asked.

"And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. ⁴²Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. ⁴³And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles ⁴⁴to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.'

⁴⁵"And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision

^{26:19} Or Jesus of Nazareth. ^{26:10} Greek many of God's holy people. ^{26:11} Greek to blaspheme. ^{26:14a} Or Hebrew. ^{26:14b} Greek It is hard for you to kick against the oxgoads.

OBSERVATION POINT

The people on Malta believed that justice was a personified deity who judged and punished the guilty. When a snake bit Paul, the locals thought he was a murderer who was being punished for his crime. Paul's survival after the bite made the islanders think he was some kind of god. He continued to demonstrate God's power by healing the sick people on the island. In gratitude, the islanders met the missionary's needs and provided supplies.

EXPLORATION POINT

Paul was determined to preach in Rome. The unexpected shipwreck caused a slight detour and a three-month delay, but Paul remained focused on his life's mission by demonstrating God's love and care to the islanders. Every life is filled with detours and delays. In our results-oriented society we often perceive such things as a waste of time. Paul's sojourn in Malta shows us how best to use an unplanned delay in our lives for God's glory. God has a plan for us. Not one "detour" or "delay" will be wasted.

from heaven. ⁴⁶I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do. ⁴⁷Some Jews arrested me in the Temple for preaching this, and they tried to kill me. ⁴⁸But God has protected me right up to this present time so I can testify to everyone, from the least to the greatest. I teach nothing except what the prophets and Moses said would happen—⁴⁹that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God's light to Jews and Gentiles alike."

⁵⁰Suddenly, Festus shouted, "Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!"

⁵¹But Paul replied, "I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. What I am saying is the sober truth. ⁵²And King Agrippa knows about these things. I speak boldly, for I am sure these events are all familiar to him, for they were not done in a corner! ⁵³King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do—"

⁵⁴Agrippa interrupted him. "Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?*"

⁵⁵Paul replied, "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains."

⁵⁶Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others stood and left. ⁵⁷As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, "This man hasn't done anything to deserve death or imprisonment."

⁵⁸And Agrippa said to Festus, "He could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to Caesar."

PAUL SAILS FOR ROME

27 When the time came, we set sail for Italy. Paul and several other prisoners were placed in the custody of a Roman officer* named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment. ²Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was also with us. We left on a ship whose home port was Adramyttium on the northwest coast of the province of Asia;* it was scheduled to make several stops at ports along the coast of the province.

MALTA

Located in the Mediterranean Sea about sixty miles south of Sicily, Malta was a major island under Roman control. On the northeast coast of the island there is a place called St. Paul's Bay, named in commemoration of Paul's unplanned visit.

³The next day when we docked at Sidon, Julius was very kind to Paul and let him go ashore to visit with friends so they could provide for his needs. ⁴Putting out to sea from there, we encountered strong headwinds that made it difficult to keep the ship on course, so we sailed north of Cyprus between the island and the mainland. ⁵Keeping to the open sea, we passed along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, landing at Myra, in the province of Lycia. ⁶There the commanding officer found an Egyptian ship from Alexandria that was bound for Italy, and he put us on board.

^{26:28} Or "A little more, and your arguments would make me a Christian." ^{27:1} Greek centurion; similarly in 27:6, 11, 31, 43. ^{27:2} Asia was a Roman province in what is now western Turkey.

PG 1219

ANGELS 27:1–44

PG 1436



Acts 28:1–10

28:11-31

PG 1302

PG 1240 SCENIC

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PAUL PREACHES IN ROME

Paul and his companions spend three months on the island of Malta, waiting for the winter to pass. When the weather is conducive to sailing, they board a ship heading to Rome. After his long and arduous journey, Paul finally arrives in the capital city. Even though Paul is under house arrest and awaiting trial, God's promise to bring him safely to Rome is fulfilled.

⁷We had several days of slow sailing, and after great difficulty we finally neared Cnidus. But the wind was against us, so we sailed across to Crete and along the sheltered coast of the island, past the cape of Salmone. ⁸We struggled along the coast with great difficulty and finally arrived at Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. ⁹We had lost a lot of time. The weather was becoming dangerous for sea travel because it was so late in the fall,* and Paul spoke to the ship's officers about it.

¹⁰"Men," he said, "I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well." ¹¹But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul. ¹²And since Fair Havens was an exposed harbor—a poor place to spend the winter—most of the crew wanted to go on to Phoenix, farther up the coast of Crete, and spend the winter there. Phoenix was a good harbor with only a southwest and northwest exposure.

THE STORM AT SEA

¹³When a light wind began blowing from the south, the sailors thought they could make it. So they pulled up anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete. ¹⁴But the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength (called a "northeaster") burst across the island and blew us out to sea. ¹⁵The sailors couldn't turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale.

¹⁶We sailed along the sheltered side of a small island named Cauda,* where with great difficulty we hoisted aboard the lifeboat being towed behind us. ¹⁷Then the sailors bound ropes around the hull of the ship to strengthen it. They were afraid of being driven across to the sandbars of Syrtis off the African coast, so

they lowered the sea anchor to slow the ship and were driven before the wind.

¹⁸The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. ¹⁹The following day they even took some of the ship's gear and threw it overboard. ²⁰The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone.

²¹No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage and loss. ²²But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. ²³For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, ²⁴and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' ²⁵So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. ²⁶But we will be shipwrecked on an island."

THE SHIPWRECK

²⁷About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, as we were being driven across the Sea of Adria,* the sailors sensed land was near. ²⁸They dropped a weighted line and found that the water was 120 feet deep. But a little later they measured again and found it was only 90 feet deep.* ²⁹At this rate they were afraid we would soon be driven against the rocks along the shore, so they threw out four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight.

³⁰Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship;

^{27:19} Greek *because the fast was now already gone by*. This fast was associated with the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), which occurred in late September or early October. ^{27:16} Some manuscripts read *Clauda*. ^{27:27} The Sea of Adria includes the central portion of the Mediterranean. ^{27:28} Greek *20 fathoms . . . 15 fathoms* [37 meters . . . 27 meters].

OBSERVATION POINT

The Christians in Rome knew that Paul was coming, though the Jews did not. They traveled long distances to greet him outside the city. Although they knew he was a prisoner, they welcomed him like a dignitary and gathered around him to lead him into Rome on the main highway, the Appian Way.

they lowered the lifeboat as though they were going to put out anchors from the front of the ship. ³¹But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, "You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard." ³²So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.

³³Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. ³⁴"Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish." ³⁵Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. ³⁶Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat—³⁷all 276 of us who were on board. ³⁸After eating, the crew lightened the ship further by throwing the cargo of wheat overboard.

³⁹When morning dawned, they didn't recognize the coastline, but they saw a bay with a beach and wondered if they could get to shore by running the ship aground. ⁴⁰So they cut off the anchors and left them in the sea. Then they lowered the rudders, raised the foresail, and headed toward shore. ⁴¹But they hit a shoal and ran the ship aground too soon. The bow of the ship stuck fast, while the stern was repeatedly smashed by the force of the waves and began to break apart.

⁴²The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to make sure they didn't swim ashore and escape. ⁴³But the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, so he didn't let them carry out their plan. Then he ordered all who could swim to jump overboard first and make for land. ⁴⁴The others held on to planks or debris from the broken ship.* So everyone escaped safely to shore.

PAUL ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA

28 Once we were safe on shore, we learned that we were on the island of Malta. ²The people of the island were very kind to us.

EXPLORATION POINT

Paul did not let his status as a prisoner distract him from his mission of sharing the gospel. For two years while he was under house arrest, he boldly preached and wrote letters to churches he had established. Too often we come up with excuses for why we can't share the gospel or demonstrate Christ's love. Paul had many possible excuses—illness, persecution, imprisonment, disaster, and open opposition—but he never used any of them. We shouldn't either.

It was cold and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome us.

³As Paul gathered an armful of sticks and was laying them on the fire, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, bit him on the hand. ⁴The people of the island saw it hanging from his hand and said to each other, "A murderer, no doubt! Though he escaped the sea, justice will not permit him to live." ⁵But Paul shook off the snake into the fire and was unharmed. ⁶The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw that he wasn't harmed, they changed their minds and decided he was a god.

⁷Near the shore where we landed was an estate belonging to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us and treated us kindly for three days. ⁸As it happened, Publius's father was ill with fever and dysentery. Paul went in and prayed for him, and laying his hands on him, he healed him. ⁹Then all the other sick people on the island came and were healed. ¹⁰As a result we were showered with honors, and when the time came to sail, people supplied us with everything we would need for the trip. → ↪

PAUL ARRIVES AT ROME

¹¹It was three months after the shipwreck that we set sail on another ship that had wintered at the island—an Alexandrian ship with the twin gods* as its figurehead. ¹²Our first stop was Syracuse,* where we stayed three days. ¹³From there we sailed across to Rhegium.* A day later a south wind began blowing, so the following day we sailed up the coast to Puteoli. ¹⁴There we found some believers,* who invited

^{27:44} Or *or were helped by members of the ship's crew*. ^{28:11} The twin gods were the Roman gods Castor and Pollux. ^{28:12} Syracuse was on the island of Sicily. ^{28:13} Rhegium was on the southern tip of Italy. ^{28:14} Greek *brothers*.

us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome.

¹⁵The brothers and sisters* in Rome had heard we were coming, and they came to meet us at the Forum* on the Appian Way. Others joined us at The Three Taverns.* When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and thanked God.

¹⁶When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier.

ROME

The Forum on the Appian Way was forty-three miles outside Rome. The Three Taverns was thirty-five miles from Rome. Both were well-known stopping places on the Appian Way, the “queen of the long roads” that led to Rome.

The capital of the Roman empire was a magnificent, well-established city. It was filled with temples and shrines devoted to the worship of pagan gods and goddesses: Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, and Mars, to name a few.

PAUL PREACHES AT ROME UNDER GUARD

¹⁷Three days after Paul’s arrival, he called together the local Jewish leaders. He said to them, “Brothers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Roman government, even though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors. ¹⁸The Romans tried me and wanted to release me, because they found no cause for the death sentence. ¹⁹But when the Jewish leaders protested the decision, I felt it necessary to appeal to Caesar, even though I had no desire to press charges against my own people. ²⁰I asked you to come here today so we could get acquainted and so I could explain to you that I am bound with this chain because I believe that the hope of Israel—the Messiah—has already come.”

²¹They replied, “We have had no letters from Judea or reports against you from anyone who has come here. ²²But we want to hear what you believe, for the only thing we know about this movement is that it is denounced everywhere.”

²³So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul’s lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. ²⁴Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. ²⁵And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: “The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet,

²⁶ ‘Go and say to this people:

When you hear what I say,
you will not understand.

When you see what I do,
you will not comprehend.

²⁷ For the hearts of these people are
hardened,

and their ears cannot hear,
and they have closed their eyes—

so their eyes cannot see,

and their ears cannot hear,
and their hearts cannot understand,

and they cannot turn to me
and let me heal them.’*²⁸

²⁸So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it.”*

³⁰For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense.* He welcomed all who visited him, ³¹boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him. 

28:15a Greek *brothers*. **28:15b** *The Forum* was about 43 miles (70 kilometers) from Rome. **28:15c** *The Three Taverns* was about 35 miles (57 kilometers) from Rome. **28:26–27** Isa 6:9–10 (Greek version). **28:28** Some manuscripts add verse 29, *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, greatly disagreeing with each other.* **28:30** *Or in his own rented quarters.*

