

# Acts Outlines

William Ardill, M.D.

## Introduction to Acts

### I. Title

- A. “Acts of the Apostles”
  - 1. The only apostles it really discusses are Peter and Paul but it says a lot about Phillip, Stephen, Barnabas and others in the early church.
- B. “Acts of the Holy Spirit” is a better title. Holy Spirit is mentioned 60 times in the book. Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus in 1:4-8 and 10 days later at Pentecost, He came (2:1-4).

### II. Time or date:

- A. Written around 62 AD. Covers a span of 30 years from Jesus’ ascension (30AD) to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome (62 AD). Acts was a bridge between the life of Jesus and the ministry of Paul.

### III. Author

- A. Most scholars agree the author was Luke, the physician and traveling companion of Paul.
  - 1. Both Gospel and Acts written to Theophilus, a distinguished Gentile (Lk 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1) who may have been his patron or sponsor
  - 2. Both books are similar in length (one scroll about 35 feet)
  - 3. Similar in literary style, vocabulary and theological ideas
  - 4. Author was a companion of Paul (10:10-17; 20:6-16; 21; 27; 28)
- B. Acts is the second part of a 2 volume work by Luke
  - 1. His writings compose 30% of NT ( more than Paul or John)
  - 2. Acts starts where Luke leaves off – Jesus’ instructions before his departure.

### IV. Audience: like the gospel of Luke, it was written to a Gentile audience.

### V. Actors: What can we learn from the characters in this book?

- A. Barnabas, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Cornelius, church believers
- B. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things for God.

### VI. Structure of Acts

Chapter	Location	Church Theme	Person	Target	Message	Time
1-7	Jerusalem	Triumph	Peter (Stephen)	Jews	Repent	2 years
8-12	Antioch (Judea and Samaria)	Transition	Philip/Paul/Peter			13 years
13-28	Antioch to Rome (Uttermost Part of World)	13-20 Travels	Paul	Gentiles	Believe	14 years
		21-28 Trials				

### VII. Basic Presuppositions

- A. Acts is a TRANSITION book in a TRANSITION period of church history.
  - 1. Firsts: (like Genesis)
    - a) Revealing of the mystery of the church – the Body of Christ.
    - b) Revealing of the mystery of the Holy Spirit and His indwelling believers
    - c) Revealing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit
    - d) Shift from Jews to Gentiles; Law to grace
  - 2. Examples and one time events are NOT necessarily Models (repeated pattern) for the church today.
  - 3. Remember the context – an emerging church receiving new revelation from God.
  - 4. Principles are the Key to correct interpretation and application

## VIII. Bible Study Method

- I. Observation - "What do I see?"
  - A. Read the passage through
  - B. Atmosphere
  - C. Background
    1. Historical
      - a. people, places, problems, purpose, perspective
      - b. author, audience, date
    2. Cultural
  - D. Literary form
    1. Narrative - setting, characters, plot
    2. Poetry - parallelism
    3. Proverb - principle
    4. Parable - setting, problem, truth, application
    5. Epistle - structural formula (opening, body, closing)
    6. Prophecy - apocalyptic/visionary; types; dispensations
  - E. Structure
    1. Determine major blocks and divisions
    2. Grammatical and mechanical structure (laws of structure)
    3. Outline/chart structure (horizontal, vertical, grid)
    4. Paragraph or block titles
    5. Paragraph relationships/themes/ideas
    6. Overall theme/key verse
    7. Study important terms
- II. Interpretation - "What does it mean?"
  - A. Ask questions and study difficulties
  - B. Historical and cultural context
  - C. Identify principles (Biblical and Contemporary) that transcend time, place and culture
  - D. Integration - put things together
- III. Application - "How does it work?"
  - A. Apply principles to Relationships
    1. God, myself, others, enemy
  - B. Practice principles
    1. What am I trusting God for now?
    2. Plan of action - God, myself, others, enemy
  - C. Evaluate your progress

## Acts 1

### Preparation of the Apostles

#### IX. Jesus Prepares the Apostles (1:1-5)

- A. Observation
  - 1. Convincing proof – minds convinced – to help them through hard times ahead
  - 2. Message - Kingdom of God
  - 3. Obedience - results in power
    - a) Don't leave Jerusalem
    - b) Wait for promise and baptism with the Holy Spirit
- B. Interpretation = Principles
  - 1. Our minds matter
  - 2. Message content is key – Kingdom of God
  - 3. Obey the Holy Spirit
- C. Application
  - 1. Apologetics to new believers to help them stay committed during the hard times
  - 2. Learn Gospel message
  - 3. Obey Holy Spirit
  - 4. Do we wait for the Holy Spirit? Message without Holy Spirit = no power!

#### X. Jesus Commissions the Apostles (1:6-11)

- A. Observation
  - 1. What you don't need to know – timing of restoration of political kingdom
  - 2. What you need to know
    - a) Power from Holy Spirit
    - b) People – YOU; What - Witnesses
    - c) Program – BOTH Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and remotest part of the earth
  - 3. Jesus departed
  - 4. Hope – angels promised Jesus' return
- B. Interpretation = Principles
  - 1. Political kingdom vs. Spiritual kingdom; international and gradual in expansion
  - 2. Power of Holy Spirit necessary for ministry
  - 3. Plan for world evangelization, not wait and stare in the sky for Jesus' return
  - 4. Promised future return of Jesus
- C. Application
  - 1. Emphasize the spiritual kingdom
  - 2. Holy Spirit enables us
  - 3. Commitment and obedience to God's plan
  - 4. Go with hope!

#### XI. Twelfth Apostle Chosen (1:12-26)

- A. Observation
  - 1. Told to wait
  - 2. Prayer (120 people) and unity; number needed in Judaism to establish a new community with its own council
    - a) Prayed before acting, before going
    - b) Developed a prayer support base
    - c) Prayed with women and other followers of Jesus
  - 3. Peter suggested a replacement for Judas – to fulfill Scripture to make up number 12 (patriarchs, tribes, stars, thrones)
    - a) Criteria for Apostleship
      - (1) Been with Jesus during His ministry

- (2) Witness of Jesus' resurrection
- b) Process of Selection
  - (1) Submitted names of eligible candidates
  - (2) Prayer
  - (3) Personal qualifications reviewed – right heart!
    - (a) Experience with Jesus
    - (b) Commitment to Jesus
    - (c) Doctrine – witnessed resurrection and knew Jesus' teachings
    - (d) NOT education, tribe, family, status, wealth or fame!
  - (4) Recognized that they were appointed by Christ
- c) Chose Matthias by lot (Prov 16:33)

## B. Interpretation = Principles

1. Wait for God's timetable?
2. Prayer vital in ministry and decision making – united, persevering
3. Leadership selection process example – team completed to begin ministry

## C. Application

1. Is there a basis for apostolic succession today?
2. Prayer base essential – include women in prayer and decision making
3. Due process in leadership selection - character and reputation count
4. Should we cast lots today? Model?

## Acts 2 Pentecost

### XII. Power of Pentecost 2:1-13

#### A. Observation

1. International Jewish audience from all around the Mediterranean Sea
2. Came for the Feast of Pentecost – the Jewish Feast of Weeks – 50 days after First Fruits
3. Holy Spirit came and filled apostles
  - a) Noise
  - b) Tongues of fire on them
  - c) Spoke of the mighty deeds of God (v.11)
  - d) Spoke in known languages (v.6,11)
4. Not a planned service or campaign – spontaneous
5. Two reactions:
  - a) Mockery
  - b) What does it mean? Sincere inquiry

#### B. Interpretation

1. God fulfills His promises!
2. God's timing in evangelism regarding the international crowds in Jerusalem at Pentecost! Sovereignty and omniscience of God; the making of an international evangelism team!
3. Message focus – God's deeds not their own – evangelistic emphasis (v. 11)
4. Spoke in culturally relevant language
5. Mixed response (v. 12-13)

#### C. Application

1. Is Pentecost an example or model? Should we never plan but sit and wait for God to work?
2. Is open-air campaign God's chosen method for all evangelism?
3. Our message should be God's deeds not ours.
4. Speak the language. Language matters for comprehension of the message
5. Be prepared for mixed response - counsel the seekers and don't be surprised at the mockers

### XIII. Preaching of Pentecost 2:14-36

#### A. Observation

1. Peter was the spokesman for the disciples – Used Old Testament for Jewish audience – NOT in tongues!
  - a) defended the disciples by quoting from the Joel
  - b) defended Jesus by quoting from David
2. Gospel is universal [v.36 Lord [God] (Gentiles) and Christ [Messiah] (Jews)]

#### B. Interpretation

1. Spokesman knew the Jewish Scriptures – the Scriptures of the audience
2. Spokesman knew his audience was mostly Jews but there were some Gentiles
3. Preached to all in the audience even if the focus was Jews
4. Transforming power of the Gospel (e.g. Peter)
5. Centrality of Christ in the Gospel message

#### C. Application

1. Know the Word and relevant passages
2. Use culturally relevant material when presenting the Gospel
3. Preach to all men in the audience, not just one ethnic group. You do not know who is out there!

### XIV. Results of Pentecost 2:37-47

#### A. Observation

1. Some were convicted, repented and were baptized (AFTER preaching)
2. Apostles used signs and wonders in evangelism (v. 43) [ROAD SIGN POINTS TO SOMETHING ELSE]
3. Believers were devoted to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread and prayer. Met needs of the group through sharing all in common (v. 44-45)
4. Marked by unity (v. 46)
5. Church numbers grew daily (v. 47)

B. Interpretation

1. Some respond, not all
2. Balance in ministry – learning, loving, worshipping, evangelism
3. Unity is the “mark” of the Church. Love is the mark of the Christian.
4. Sometimes miracles used in evangelism
5. Expect growth if balanced ministry
6. Sensitive to physical needs of individuals

C. Application

1. Limit expectations in ministry regarding number of responders
2. Evaluate for balance; tongues not mentioned as a “mark” or prerequisite for Holy Spirit
3. Strive for unity – not uniformity; community and meeting physical needs [Is socialism Biblical?]
4. Be available to God for whatever means He chooses to reach the lost [Are signs and wonders the norm?]
5. Expect growth in balanced ministry
6. Be sensitive to physical needs of members
7. Was tongues “saving” or “bait” to attract listeners to the Gospel message? Was it a sign of “spirituality”? Why didn’t Peter speak in tongues for his messages?

## Acts 3

### Healing of a Lame Man

#### XV. The Miracle (3:1-11)

##### A. Observations

1. Peter and John continued to go to the temple for worship. Apostles continued in public worship at the religious centers of their day.
2. A 40 year old lame man was taken to the temple every day to beg. He asked Peter and John for money. Common practice around the temple, like at the mosque.
3. P&J told him to walk and healed him in Jesus' name, not theirs. What was the role of his faith?
4. The lame man walked, entered the temple and praised God. [Cripples not allowed in temple inner court.]
5. The people were amazed.

##### B. Interpretation

1. They saw the man's real need – healing vs. money.
2. Used physical healing as opening for spiritual lesson.
3. Gave God the glory.

##### C. Application

1. Go to places where there are religiously sensitive people.
2. Some people do not know or are afraid to acknowledge their real needs. Be discerning between real needs and felt needs.
3. Helping with physical needs may open doors for spiritual lessons.
4. Faith not a prerequisite for helping others. [Not the size of faith but the object of faith.]
5. Act in Jesus' name and bring glory to Him alone.

#### XVI. The Message (3:12-26)

##### A. Observations

1. Explanation (v. 12-16)
  - a) Peter gave glory to Jesus for miracle
  - b) Said he healed the man because of faith in Jesus' name. His faith or the lame man's?
2. Exhortation (v. 17-26)

Preached repentance and turning to God to the watching crowd of Jews. Repentance leads to sins washed, spiritual refreshment and Jesus' coming.

  - a) Quoted Moses, Samuel and Abraham to support his claim of who Jesus was. Suffering Servant, prophet like Moses, King like David, seed of Abraham.
  - b) Preaching followed the miracle
  - c) Similar message to Pentecost crowd. OT points to Jesus so believe in Him and repent.

##### B. Interpretation

1. Glorify Jesus. Christ-centered preaching
2. Faith is the basis of healing and regeneration. Blessings of repentance.
3. True belief in the prophets leads to a belief in Jesus.
4. Preaching and a miracle = the miracle was the sign to point to the preaching.

##### C. Application

1. Faith:
  - a) Whose faith healed the lame man?
  - b) Is it the size of your faith or the object of your faith that is important?
2. Give God the glory for your "success" in ministry.
3. An understanding of Scripture allows you to point others to Jesus through it. Mastered the Word of God.
4. To the Jews, the message of repentance was clearly given (compare 2:38). It is what they needed to hear.
5. Should we attempt to heal all beggars? Why or why not?
6. What do you think was the purpose of the miracle? Sign? To show unbelieving Jews God's glory as seen through the power of the name of Jesus and to provoke them to repentance for what they had done to Him. God can do miracles today to show His glory and provoke men to repentance. The miracle was a setup for the preaching.

## Acts 4 Persecution

### XVII. Results of the Miracle – Persecution (4:1-22)

#### A. Observation

1. Religious leaders opposed disciples. Sadducees opposed the resurrection message. (v.2). They cooperated with Rome and wanted to maintain the status quo.
2. Disciples were put in jail because it was sundown and night trials were illegal.
3. 5000 conversions; no mention of tongues
4. Peter boldly gave Jesus the glory for the miracle and salvation of all men
5. People marveled because they were not schooled in Greek rhetoric and also noted the disciples “had been with Jesus.”
6. Religious leaders speechless but told Peter and John (P&J) to be silent
7. P&J said couldn’t stop speaking; were set free; people glorified God

#### B. Interpretation/ Application

1. Opposition may come from unlikely sources. In spite of facts, opponents will try to thwart your good works. Let the evidence silence your enemies.
2. Persecution is a real cost of discipleship. Are you willing to go to jail? Disciples weren’t stopped by persecution – remember Jesus’ words “GO”
3. Work of the Spirit is real. Do not be surprised from one miracle, 5000 saved.
4. Peter boldly preached the Gospel when opportunity arose – no compromise.
5. Do people say about us, “They have been with Jesus”?
6. This time Peter was released from jail. God chooses the outcome according to His will, not always our desires.

### XVIII. Response to Persecution – Prayer (4:23-31)

#### A. Observations

1. Peter and John (P&J) reported to church. Together in unity.
2. Church responded
  - a) acknowledged God’s sovereignty
  - b) recognized opposition normal and allowed by God
  - c) asked for boldness and more signs and wonders
3. God answered – place shook, all filled with Holy Spirit, spoke with boldness

#### B. Interpretation

1. Accountability and reporting important in ministry
2. Responded to opposition immediately with prayer to God
3. God answered and empowered them for future ministry

#### C. Application

1. Are we accountable and reporting to our home church?
2. Is our response to opposition or tragedy to acknowledge God’s sovereignty?
3. Do we recognize persecution as normal and in God’s plan?
4. What do we ask God for? wonders or boldness?
5. God will answer prayers that empower us for His ministry.

### XIX. Response to Needs – Portioning (4:32-37)

#### A. Observation

1. Unity marked the early church
2. Met needs by sharing and selling possessions (e.g. Barnabas – a positive example)
3. Witnessed with power – abundant grace upon them all

#### B. Interpretation/ Application

1. Unity basis for growth and power
2. Meeting physical needs was a priority. Was selling all they had a model or example?
3. Meeting needs meant personal sacrifice
4. Offerings were voluntary

## Acts 5 Purging and Persecution

### XX. Purging from Within (5:1-11)

- A. **Observation**
  - 1. Ananias(A) and Sapphira(S) sold property and gave a portion of the proceeds to the church under the false impression it was the full proceeds (deceit, pride, greed)
  - 2. Peter rebuke A for his deception; A died => people feared; S lied => died -> people feared
- B. **Interpretation**
  - 1. Voluntary donations to the church to help the needy
  - 2. Pride, greed, lying and deception can occur in the church. Seeking the applause of men.
  - 3. God hates hypocrisy. God deals seriously with the sin of lying and deception to purify the Body.
  - 4. Leaders recognized sin – exerted church discipline and rebuked those involved. Sin of one can corrupt many. (Achan Joshua 7)
- C. **Application**
  - 1. Are we willing to sacrifice our resources to help others?
  - 2. Are we guilty of lying, deception to create a good impression?
  - 3. God will purify the Body. He treats sin seriously. We are to be clean instruments for His use.
  - 4. As leaders, do we publicly rebuke sin of members? To purify the Body, church discipline is necessary.

### XXI. Persecution from Without (5:12-42)

- A. **Observations**
  - 1. Apostles did signs and wonders at the temple; People respected them; leaders avoided them.
  - 2. Result was more growth, conversions and healings
  - 3. High priest was jealous and put apostles in jail; an angel released them; they returned to the temple; religious leaders were perplexed and recaptured the apostles.
  - 4. Peter answered, “Obey God rather than man.” – Preached Jesus boldly.
  - 5. Religious leaders convicted and angry – intended to kill them
  - 6. Gamaliel came to their defense – if not of God, movement will die; if of God, movement will succeed.
  - 7. Flogged apostles; told to be quiet; they rejoiced they were worthy to suffer and continued preaching and teaching
- B. **Interpretation**
  - 1. Method of evangelism (preaching, healing) => mixed response to message => church grew.
  - 2. Maybe they were getting too content in Jerusalem?
  - 3. Sometimes God delivers us from trouble for His glory. [It gave Peter another opportunity to preach.]
  - 4. Boldness in the face of confrontation. Preached Jesus uncompromisingly.
  - 5. God sometimes uses secular people to protect the church.
  - 6. Rejoice in suffering. (What was the basis of their suffering? Method, Men or Message?)
  - 7. Obey God rather than man and continue preaching.
- C. **Application**
  - 1. Balanced methods to meet needs produced church growth
  - 2. Boldness in spite of risk of persecution and death – uncompromised message
  - 3. God’s methods of deliverance vary (e.g. angel vs Gamaliel)
  - 4. Rejoice in suffering (if for the right reasons). Are we “worthy” to suffer?
  - 5. Obey God rather than man. To do this we must clearly hear the voice of God to obey Him.

## Acts 6 Deacons

### XXII. Choosing Colaborers (6:1-7)

#### Observation

1. Ethnic unrest regarding feeding of widows
2. Division/delegation of responsibilities
  - a) Prayer and teaching of WordServants – meeting physical needs
3. Qualification of servant leaders  
Good reputation  
Full of Spirit  
Wisdom
4. Presented proposal to group for approval
5. They chose Greek Jews to help the offended Greek Jewish widows
6. Seven were brought before congregation, prayed, laid hands on them
7. Word spread, numbers grew (including Jewish priests!)

#### B. Interpretation

1. Ethnic problems and problems with the elderly, women and widows are normal in a mixed congregation – requires an ethnically sensitive answer
  2. Non-autocratic organization (democratic)
  3. Prioritize tasks and delegate
- Group participation in decision making (Public openness)
4. Public confirmation of leaders for their endorsement and accountability
  5. Result of delegation and ownership of program is church growth

#### C. Application

1. Are we sensitive to ethnic tensions? Seek ethnic solutions
2. Non-autocratic leadership style; Delegate and participatory decision making
3. Objectively state qualifications of leaders (not family ties, seniority, wealth, etc.)
4. Involve congregation in endorsement and accountability of leaders
5. Expect church growth “if all things are done decently and in order.”

## Acts 6:8-8:3 Stephen

### XXIII. Stirring of the People 6:8-15

- A. Observations
  - 1. Stephen was blameless – full of grace and power, wonders and signs
  - 2. Opponents
    - Argued with him but couldn't cope with his Spirit and wisdom
    - False witnesses said Stephen blasphemed; stirred up people
    - Brought Stephen to Council on false charges that temple and Law desecrated
  - 3. Stephen's response – peace (the face of an angel!)
- B. Interpretation
  - 1. Even when blameless, false accusers will appear to destroy you
  - 2. During confrontation, remain blameless, not angry or defensive
  - 3. People are fickle
  - 4. Presence and peace of God radiated from the abiding believer
- C. Application
  - 1. Even when blameless, false accusers will appear to destroy you
  - 2. Are we blameless in our response to false accusers? Do we keep calm?
  - 3. Don't measure your success by the response of people but by the peace of God in your life!
  - 4. Assurance of God's peace and presence in persecution

### XXIV. Sermon of Stephen 7:1-53

- A. Observations/Interpretation
  - 1. There is progress and change in God's program. Different people and methods
    - a) Abraham (Mesopotamia) , Joseph + Moses (Egypt), tabernacle, temple
    - b) Temple – God is not bound to the temple
    - c) Law – Jews ignored it
    - d) Jesus came to replace the temple and fulfill the Law
  - 2. The blessings of God are not limited to the land of Israel. God revealed Himself outside Israel.
  - 3. Israel had a pattern of opposition to God's plan and men (prophets) (7:51)
  - 4. Stephen was bold in his criticism of the people of God
- B. Application
  - 1. God's ways are not limited by our expectations. Allow God to be sovereign and work in each generation as He chooses. Sovereignty.
  - 2. God's heart is for all the nations/tribes. Blessings not limited to Israel.
  - 3. God's people are slow to listen and obey. Fickle.
  - 4. God's prophets call God's people to be counter-culture and face opposition.

### XXV. Stoning of Stephen 7:54 - 8:3

- A. Observations
  - 1. Audience was convicted by Stephen's sermon
  - 2. Stephen had a vision of heaven
  - 3. Crowd drove him out of the city and stoned him to death
  - 4. Saul witnessed and agreed with the stoning of Stephen
  - 5. Stephen died forgiving his executors
  - 6. Consequences of Stephen's death
    - a) Gospel went to Samaria and Gentiles (11:19)
    - b) Saul's anger against Christians eventually led to his conversion
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. Response to conviction sometimes is violent and anti-Christian
  - 2. Negative reaction from individuals to Christianity often is evidence of the conviction of the Holy Spirit Conviction can bring repentance or revenge. "The same sun that melts butter hardens clay."
  - 3. No one is 'beyond hope' – even some of the worst enemies of the church
  - 4. What appears a tragedy is often a prelude to triumph.

## Acts 8:4-40 Philip

### XXVI. Preaching in Samaria 8:4-25

#### A. Observations

1. Persecution produced preaching and propagation of the Gospel
2. Philip's strategy with the Gentiles included preaching, signs and wonders. Produced conversions. Samaritans were considered half-breeds.
3. Because of the newness of the outreach to the Gentiles, anointing of the Holy Spirit was confirmation of Philip's ministry by the Jerusalem church leaders. (Peter and John Lk. 9:51-56) Signs, wonders, and unusual manifestations of the Spirit were sometimes used to confirm new things in the unfolding strategy of the church.
4. The Holy Spirit is a gift of God; not something earned or bought.
5. The laying on of hands was a blessing. (Gen. 48:14-20)
6. The Jerusalem church leaders endorsed the outreach to the Gentiles and engaged in preaching to Gentiles themselves.

#### B. Interpretation

1. God uses persecution to send out His people to spread the Gospel. (persecution – dispersion – evangelism)
2. New initiatives sometimes require special signs from God.
3. New initiatives need the blessing/endorsement of the established church leaders.
4. Never portray God's power as something earned or something to be used for selfish gain.

#### C. Application

1. Do we see persecution as progress or a hindrance to the Gospel?
2. Do we demand signs and wonders as the norm in our outreach or are we afraid of the supernatural?
3. Do we solicit the endorsement of the church leaders in our outreach ministries or ignore them and go alone?
4. Do we "market" the Holy Spirit and His power?

### XXVII. Preaching in Gaza 8:26-40

#### A. Observations

1. Sensitive disciple
2. Religious seeker – high and powerful official; wealthy; eunuch (Deut 22:1 – excluded from Israel but accepted by God Is. 56:3-5)
3. Supernatural meeting
4. Natural dialogue about supernatural message
5. Saved seeker – in Jewish view conversion included baptism.
6. Dedicated disciple; personal evangelism (Gaza) vs. mass evangelism (Samaria)

#### B. Interpretation

1. God was responsive to a sincere seeker and sent both His angel and His disciple to him.
2. The disciple was sensitive and obedient to the Spirit and knowledgeable in Scripture. He persuaded the seeker to believe, be baptized, and was committed to telling others the Gospel, including social outcasts.
3. God sometimes uses natural means (walk to Gaza) and sometimes supernatural means (snatched him away) to accomplish His will.
4. First fully Gentile convert to Christianity.

#### C. Application

1. Are the heathen lost? Does God condemn the seeker or seek him?
2. Are we like Philip in his enthusiasm? Obedience? Knowledge?
3. Do we allow God to use both natural and supernatural means?

## Paul's Conversion Acts 9:1-31

### XXVIII. Paul's Conversion 9:1-19 (22:3-16; 26:12-20) 3 accounts

#### A. Observations

1. Saul – powerful angry persecutor turned into humble obedient blind man (150 miles from Jerusalem to Damascus: a one week journey)
2. God – Divine Seeker; sought Saul, blinded him and restored him
3. Ananias – reluctant but obedient midwife in new birth of Saul
4. Saul's conversion: light, sound (voice), blind, healed, Holy Spirit

#### B. Interpretation

1. The fall from pride can be as sudden as a flash of light
2. God seeks sinners to redeem them for His glory
3. Transitioning of former enemies produces sustainable faith
4. God requires our unquestioning obedience. "Tho' He slay me."

#### C. Application

1. Don't be intimidated by proud sinners. Remember Who controls the universe.
2. Ask God to seek the sinners in your world.
3. Is Paul's conversion a model or a unique conversion? Tongues?
4. Don't put new believers, especially high profile celebrities, in the public eye until after they have been disciplined.
5. God wants us to trust and obey

### XXIX. Aftermath of Paul's Conversion 9:20-31

#### A. Observations

1. Paul immediately returned to the synagogues to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God
2. There was a mixed reaction from the crowd – amazement and persecution.
3. Persecutor became the persecuted.
4. Paul left for "Arabia" for 3 years. (Gal 1:17,18)
5. Believers feared Paul – Barnabus was a bold friend (Acts 4:36)
6. Twice Paul escaped from trouble because of his friends' help (2 Cor 11:32,33)
7. Churches in Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace and growth through work of the Holy Spirit.

#### B. Interpretation

1. To reach the lost, you have to go where they are and know them.
2. Good foundations in faith must be established prior to a public ministry.
3. Some new converts need an insider advocate for acceptance.
4. Sometimes it is best to run from trouble.
5. Church growth follows persecution.

#### C. Application

1. There is a balance between the risks of preaching and reaching the lost. Can we discern when to fight and when to take flight?
2. Do we orchestrate organized discipleship training for new converts or abandon the newborn lambs?
3. Overcoming suspicion requires trust and an advocate friend.
4. The fruit of persecution is peace, strength, godliness, encouragement and growth – deep and wide.

## Acts 9:32-10:48 Universality of the Gospel

### XXX. Preparation of Peter 9:32-10:33

#### A. Observation

1. Lydda – Peter heals Aeneas (paralytic 8 years) (like Jesus Mk. 2:11) – many believed
2. Joppa – Peter raises Tabitha (Dorcas) (like Jairus' daughter Mk. 5:41) – many believed
3. Caesarea
  - a) Cornelius – vision to the seeker
  - b) Peter – vision to the messenger – reluctant messenger
  - c) Peter stayed with Simon the tanner – unclean occupation for a Jew (Lev. 11:40)

#### B. Interpretation

1. Miracles produced conversions (Cornelius and Peter) and confirmed Peter's ministry to Gentiles as authentic apostle (like Jesus' miracles)
2. God arranged for truth for the seeker and the messenger – met both of their needs in combination of supernatural and natural means
3. To obey is better than sacrifice.

#### C. Application

1. God may use special events to confirm your ministry
2. Sometimes God is more interested in teaching us through service than the results of the service
3. Be open to God's Word. Obedience is better than loyalty to old habits or practices.

### XXXI. Preaching of Peter 10:34-48

#### A. Observation

1. Peter preached cross-culturally – Gospel to all – to everyone who believes.
2. Basics of Gospel – words and works of Jesus, death and resurrection, judgement, peace
3. Holy Spirit fell on Gentile believers who spoke in tongues and exalted God (like Pentecost for Jews)
4. New believers were baptized

#### B. Interpretation

1. Universality of the Gospel – to all who believe
2. Basic elements of the Gospel essential to proclaim
3. Baptism by Holy Spirit and water at conversion
4. Speaking in tongues was a sign of God's blessing on new Gentile converts. Not a universal experience (e.g. Lydda, Joppa, Jewish believers)

#### C. Application

1. Is there partiality or tribalism in my message or methods or me?
2. Do I preach the whole Gospel? Add to it?
3. Baptism: Holy Spirit – sign to us at conversion; water – sign to the world of conversion
4. What is the role of tongues in the church today?

## Acts 11 An Infant Gentile Church

### XXXII. Plea of Peter 11:1-18

#### A. Observation

1. Apostles challenged Peter's ministry/fellowship with the Gentiles
2. Peter recounted visions and events at Caesarea. His defense rested on what God had done and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
  - a) Divine vision (v. 5-10)
  - b) Divine command (v. 11-12)
  - c) Divine preparation (v. 13-14)
  - d) Divine action (v. 15)
3. Apostles accepted God's agenda and glorified God.
4. God had salvation for the Gentiles in mind all along. He is impartial. It was the Jewish believers who were slow to understand God's plan.

#### B. Interpretation/Application

1. Expect challenges from within church when doing a new thing.
2. Get the facts straight and give God the glory.
3. God desires unity and peace in the church.
4. Are we so in tune with God that we can discern His plan?

### XXXIII. Church at Antioch 11:19-30

#### A. Observation

1. Persecution after Stephen's death drove Christians out of Jerusalem.
2. New church of Gentiles/Greeks started in Antioch by locals.
3. Jerusalem church sent Barnabus to evaluate Antioch church.
4. Barnabus encouraged them and brought Paul from Tarsus to teach for one year.
5. Antioch church marked by evangelism, teaching and famine relief. (Daughter church supported the mother!)

#### B. Interpretation

1. Persecution scatters believers to spread the Word.
2. Men are more passionate toward their own.
3. Accountability of new fellowship to church leaders.
4. Responsibility of church leaders to encourage.
5. Marks of maturity – evangelism, teaching, physical needs.

#### C. Application

1. Are we ineffective because we are all bunched up in one place?
2. Target groups reached by evangelists from target group.
3. Accountability and responsibility in church planting.
4. Healthy church marked by evangelism, teaching and meeting physical needs of others.

## Acts 12

### Final Moments with James and Peter

#### XXXIV. Death of James 12:1-2

- A. Observation
  - 1. King Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod of Great who ruled at the birth of Jesus (his uncle Antipas had tried Jesus), had James (disciple of Jesus and brother of John) put to death. He was a zealous practitioner of Jewish rites.
  - 2. James was the first of the 12 apostles to be martyred.
- B. Interpretation
  - 1. Some will die for their stand for Christ at the hands of sincerely religious people. God is still sovereign.
- C. Application
  - 1. Are we prepared to die for Christ?
  - 2. Do we question when things go wrong? Can we still accept God's sovereignty?

#### XXXV. Deliverance of Peter 12:3-19

- A. Observation
  - 1. King Herod had Peter arrested and imprisoned (for the third time! 4:3; 5:8) under heavy guard.
  - 2. Church prayed and an angel miraculously delivered Peter from prison.
  - 3. Peter went to Mary's house and told praying believers about his escape. Peter's guards were executed.
- B. Interpretation
  - 1. The same God who allowed James to die, rescued Peter. His ways are inscrutable but He is trustworthy.
  - 2. Praying church, doubting church, believing/rejoicing church.
- C. Application
  - 1. God wants us to pray about our needs. His answers, however, are always according to His will.
  - 2. He sometimes answers our prayers in unexpected ways.

#### XXXVI. Death of Herod 12:20-23

- A. Observation
  - 1. Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon
  - 2. During a speech to the people, an angel of God struck him dead because he didn't give God the glory.
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. God controls the rise and fall of kings. He is sovereign and jealous of the glory due Him.
  - 2. Wicked will receive their reward/punishment in God's time.

#### XXXVII. Dissemination of the Word 12:24-25

- A. Observation
  - 1. Word grew and multiplied in spite of persecution and opposition.
  - 2. Barnabus and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch with John Mark after bringing money for food to the Jerusalem church.
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. God's Word will not return void but will grow in spite of opposition.
  - 2. God had been preparing his men for ministry.

## Acts 13-14 Paul's First Missionary Journey

### XXXVIII. Background: Church at Antioch 11:19-30

- A. Observation
  - 1. Persecution after Stephen's death drove Christians out of Jerusalem.
  - 2. New church of Gentiles/Greeks started in Antioch by Gentiles.
  - 3. Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to evaluate Antioch.
  - 4. Barnabas encouraged them and brought Paul.
  - 5. Antioch church marked by evangelism, teaching and famine relief. (Daughter church supported the mother!)
  
- B. Interpretation
  - 1. Persecution scatters believers to spread the Word.
  - 2. Men are more passionate toward their own.
  - 3. Accountability of new fellowship to church leaders.
  - 4. Responsibility of church leaders to encourage.
  - 5. Marks of maturity – evangelism, teaching, physical needs.
  
- C. Application
  - 1. Are we ineffective because we are all bunched up in one place?
  - 2. Target groups reached by evangelists from target group.
  - 3. Accountability and responsibility in church planting.
  - 4. Healthy church marked by evangelism, teaching and meeting physical needs of others.

### XXXIX. New Base of Missions: Antioch 13:1-3

- A. Observation
  - 1. While in worship, a diverse group of prophets and teachers were instructed by the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Paul for special ministry
  - 2. Leaders fasted, prayed and laid hands on them and sent them away
  - 3. Base of outreach was Antioch, not Jerusalem.
  
- B. Interpretation/ Application
  - 1. Holy Spirit led leaders, appointed missionaries, not church or council. Holy Spirit directed program. HS called individuals and asked church to support them.
    - a) God called people individually and they needed the church for accountability
    - b) God called the church and it needs committed people to fulfill the Great Commission
  - 2. Church leaders obeyed, approved missionaries and sent them. Leaders were in tune with God and heard His voice.

### XL. First Missionary Journey: Cyprus 13:4-12

- A. Observation
  - 1. P & B sent by Holy Spirit. Went to Cyprus (Barnabas' home). Went to Jews in synagogue.
  - 2. Gentile Roman diplomat, Sergius Paulus, wanted to hear the Word of God
  - 3. Jewish false prophet, Bar-Jesus/Elymas, opposed them and sought to turn the proconsul away.
  - 4. Paul rebuked Elymas and blinded him. Blinded a Jew to reach a Gentile! Proconsul saw truth and believed.
  
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. God brings truth to the genuine seeker.
  - 2. Sometimes God wants us to rebuke those hindering the Gospel
  - 3. God used a sign to blind the enemy and open the eyes of the seeker.
  - 4. God sometimes has a different agenda for us. Went to Jews – Gentile convert.

### XLI. Galatia 13:13-14:20

- A. Observation
  - 1. Psidian Antioch
    - a) Paul preached to Jews in synagogue on Sabbath

- (1) Preparation for Messiah (13:16-25)
  - (2) Rejection, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (13:26-37)
  - (3) Application and appeal (13:26-37) – forgiveness of sins for all who believe
- b) Good response; next week whole city came to hear; Jews jealous and contradicted Paul
  - c) Paul rebukes Jews and turns focus of ministry to Gentiles; Gentiles rejoiced, many believed; word spread throughout region
  - d) Jews aroused city leaders against B&P and drove them out
2. Iconium
    - a) Disciples filled with joy and the Holy Spirit; went to synagogue and spoke boldly; signs and wonders; many Jews and Greeks believed
    - b) Jews stirred up Gentiles; attempted to stone them so they fled
  3. Lystra (Lycaonia)
    - a) Paul preached and healed man lame from birth
    - b) Crowds reacted by calling B&P Greek gods; worshipped them
    - c) Paul preached to them about the living God, general revelation, to explain miracle
    - d) Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city
  4. Derbe – Paul went with Barnabas; preached; many disciples
- B. Interpretation/Application**
1. Paul tailored the message to his audience – Jews or Greeks
  2. Mixed response to message – some believed, some indifferent, some opposed
  3. If you attack or threaten other religious groups, expect serious opposition (physical threats) because of conviction and jealousy
  4. God sometimes used signs and wonders to confirm the message but sometimes these may be misunderstood
  5. Even after Paul said he was turning to the Gentiles, he still preached to the Jews. Why when they were so opposed to him? Why did he not stay with the Gentiles?
  6. Was healing the lame man culturally appropriate or just inadequate pre-evangelism?

## XLII. Antioch 14:21-28

- A. Observation**
1. Returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to encourage the believers
  2. Appointed elders in cities after prayer and fasting
  3. Returned to Antioch to report to church all God had done and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; spent long time in Antioch
- B. Interpretation/Application**
1. Follow-up of new converts to encourage them essential.
  2. Organized teaching leadership with new fellowships of believers.
  3. Reported to sending church for accountability and encouragement.
  4. Took time out of pressure zone to report, rest and recuperate.

**Acts 15:1-35**  
**Controversy in the Home Church**  
**A Model for Conflict Resolution**

**XLIII. Council at Jerusalem 15:1-29**

- A. Dissension 15:1-5**
1. Observations
    - a) Problem/Issue: Men of Judea (sect of Pharisees) came to Antioch and questioned the role of the Law of Moses and circumcision in salvation
    - b) Decision: Paul, Barnabas and others were sent to apostles in Jerusalem for resolution of problem
    - c) P&B reported problem to apostles in Jerusalem
  2. Interpretation/Application
    - a) Definition of the gospel message is critical
    - b) Furloughing missionaries may face problems in their home church while on furlough
    - c) Missionaries were recognized as leaders
    - d) Believers weren't rebellious but appealed to a higher authority
- B. Discussion 15:6-18**
1. Observations
    - a) Peter
      - (1) It was God's decision to go to Gentiles. They heard, believed by faith, received Holy Spirit. No distinction – saved by grace like Jewish believers.
      - (2) Affirmed by signs and wonders by Paul and Barnabas
    - b) James: appealed to proof of salvation by faith in Gentile converts and Scripture
  2. Interpretation/Application
    - a) Appealed to Scripture and experience to test doctrine.
- C. Decision 15:19-29**
1. Observations
    - a) Apostles agreed to allow Gentile converts by faith alone.
    - b) Gave cautions: abstain from food given to idols, fornication and eating meat from strangled animals.
    - c) Sent witnesses from both sides to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas
    - d) Sent letter supporting decision with them to Antioch.
  2. Interpretation/Application
    - a) Apostles clarified key doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.
    - b) Apostles gave warning to be culturally sensitive in behavior and lifestyle; sensitive to Jews and Gentile unbelievers
    - c) Provided subjective and objective support for key decision

**XLIV. Report to Antioch 15:30-35**

- A. Observations**
1. Jerusalem delegation gathered Antioch congregation to hear report. Antioch believers rejoiced at decision
  2. Judas and Silas encouraged and strengthened them.
  3. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch teaching and preaching.
- B. Interpretation/Application**
1. Made their decision public.
  2. Senior brothers encouraged and strengthened new believers.
  3. Things done in God's way and in His time will result in His blessing.

## Acts 15:36-18:22 Paul's Second Missionary Journey

### XLV. Missionary team chosen (15:36-40)

- A. Observations
  - 1. Paul wanted to visit believers from first journey.
  - 2. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark but Paul disagreed.
  - 3. Paul took Silas while Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus.
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. Follow-up of converts is a good idea and is important to strengthen the church.
  - 2. Disagreements may arise but God can still use them to increase His work.

### XLVI. First journey churches revisited by Paul and Silas (15:41-16:5)

- A. Observations
  - 1. P & S strengthened churches in Derbe and Lystra.
  - 2. Paul wanted Timothy to join his team and so circumcised him to make him more acceptable to the Jews.
  - 3. Paul taught the position of the Jerusalem church on salvation and the churches were strengthened and grew.
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. Strong churches grow because of right teaching and encouragement.
  - 2. Become all things to all men to win some. Be sensitive to culture and avoid unnecessary cultural/religious offense.

### XLVII. Call to Macedonia (16:6-10)

- A. Observations
  - 1. The Holy Spirit directed them to Troas
  - 2. Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia calling them to come and help them.
  - 3. Team determined to go to Macedonia.
  - 4. Luke joined team at Troas. ("we" 16:10)
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. Our strategy should be Spirit directed. Sometimes God uses visions to lead us, sometimes circumstances.
  - 2. Missionaries were obedient to leading of the Holy Spirit.

### XLVIII. Philippi (16:11-40)

- A. Observations
  - 1. By sea, team went from Troas to Samothrace, Neapolis and Philippi.
  - 2. Lydia
    - a) On Sabbath, spoke to women's fellowship at riverside.
    - b) Lydia a fabric seller from Thyatira responded to Paul's message.
    - c) She and her household were baptized and urged Paul to stay in her house a while.
  - 3. Demonic girl
    - a) A demon possessed slave girl annoyed Paul for many days so he cast out the demon from her.
    - b) Owners of the girl were angry with Paul so caught him and dragged him to the authorities, accusing him of promoting unlawful practices.
    - c) Crowd and magistrates were against Paul and ordered him to be beaten with rods and thrown into prison.
  - 4. Prison earthquake
    - a) While other prisoners listened, Paul and Silas prayed and sang in prison.
    - b) At midnight an earthquake destroyed the prison but no prisoners escaped.
    - c) The jailer marveled and asked how to be saved. "Believe .... and be saved."
    - d) Jailer ministered to their wounds fed them and he and his household were baptized.
    - e) In the morning the magistrates released them but Paul demanded fair treatment as a Roman citizen.

- f) Magistrates were afraid and begged them to leave so Paul went to Lydia's house, encouraged believers and then left.

B. Interpretation/Application

1. Don't be afraid to cross cultural and gender barriers with the Gospel.
2. Importance of ministry of hospitality.
3. World has mixed priorities – restoration of demonized slave girl vs. income for masters.
4. Expect fickleness from crowds. Lack of a grasp on the issues.
5. Missionaries rejoiced in their suffering and used it to reach out to new target audience!
6. God can do anything to deliver us, bring men to Himself and gain the glory.
7. Discretion is sometimes the better part of valor. Live to fight another day.
8. Concern for safety of believers who remain not just hit-and-run evangelism.

XLIX. Thessalonica (17:1-9)

A. Observations

1. When Paul came to Thessalonica he reasoned with the Jews in synagogue for 3 Sabbaths.
2. Some Jews, Greeks and women were persuaded and joined Paul.
3. Some Jews were jealous and incited a mob against them.
4. Jews dragged Jason and some believers to the authorities and accused them of activities against Caesar. Stirred up crowd and authorities.
5. When Jason put up a bond, he was released so Paul and Silas were sent at night to Berea.

L. Berea (17:10-15)

A. Observations

1. P&S went to synagogue where the Jews were more "noble minded." They received the Word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily. Many Jews and Greeks believed.
2. Thessalonica Jews followed Paul and came to Berea and stirred up the crowds against him.
3. So, believers sent Paul to Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.

LI. Athens (17:16-34)

A. Observations

1. Paul saw a city full of idols. City of culture and learning.
2. He reasoned in the synagogue and marketplace with the Jews and Gentiles and philosophers. Epicureans though happiness was the chief end of life; Stoics were pantheistic and were rational over emotional.
3. Philosophers took Paul to the Areopagus and asked him to explain his teachings.
4. Paul spoke to them about their "unknown god" who was the Creator, supreme, sovereign Judge and Savior.
5. Some believed and joined him including Dionysius and Damaris.

B. Interpretation/Application

1. There will always be a mixed response to the Gospel – different soils!
2. Satan's goal is to thwart the spreading of the Gospel.
3. Sensitivity to culture produces a contextually relevant message.
4. Sometimes innocent believers suffer for the Gospel's sake during evangelism.
5. Multi-prong strategy – across culture, education, religions, professions.

LII. Corinth (18:1-17)

A. Observations

1. Paul went to Corinth (city of commerce and profligacy about 50 miles away) and met Turkish Jewish tent makers named Aquila and Priscilla and stayed with them.
2. Paul reasoned in the synagogue on Sabbath with Jews and Gentiles and also worked as tent maker.
3. When Silas and Timothy joined Paul, he devoted his full attention to evangelism of Jews. They resisted him so he stated he would go to the Gentiles!
4. Paul moved to the house of Titius Justus. Crispus, a synagogue leader, believed along with many others and was baptized.
5. Lord encouraged Paul to speak out, he wouldn't be harmed and there were many of God's people in the city. So Paul stayed 1 ½ years teaching the Word of God.
6. Jews brought Paul to the roman court saying he was persuading men to worship God contrary to Roman law!
7. Gallio, the proconsul, told them to settle their own religious squabbles and sent them away. So, the Jews took Sosthenes the leader of the synagogue and began beating him.

- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. Again, hospitality of missionaries was important.
  - 2. God reassured missionaries of His sovereign protection for those who obey Him.
  - 3. Sometimes it is better to let others defend your innocence. Know when to keep quiet!
  - 4. Mixed response; many believed but some were hostile.

LIII. Ephesus (18:18-21); Completion of second missionary journey (18:22)

- A. Observations
  - 1. Paul left Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla
  - 2. Paul ended his Nazarite vow and cut his hair in Cenchrea.
  - 3. They went to Ephesus where Paul left Aquila and Priscilla.
  - 4. Paul went to synagogue and reasoned with the Jews and then went to Caesarea, Jerusalem and Antioch.
- B. Interpretation/Application
  - 1. Old habits die hard – still reaching out to Jews!
  - 2. Accountability to report to home churches.

Acts 18:23-21:26  
Paul's Third Missionary Journey

LIV. Ephesus (18:23-19:41)

A. Observations

1. Paul left Antioch, visited believers in Galatia and Phrygia and strengthened them
2. Egyptian Jew named Apollos who was an eloquent and knowledgeable teacher of the Scriptures in the synagogue in Ephesus, knew only of the John's baptism of repentance.
  - a) Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and instructed him in the Word
  - b) Apollos went to Achaia (Athens and Corinth) to encourage believers and refute Jews about who Christ was.
3. Paul came to Ephesus and asked the twelve believers what they knew about the Holy Spirit. The Ephesian believers only knew of John's baptism, not the Holy Spirit. (8:15; 10:44; Eph 1:13; Acts 2:38)
  - a) Paul instructed them, baptized them and laid hands on them.
  - b) They received the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues and prophesied.
4. Paul went to the synagogue and preached for 3 months. When Jewish opposition arose, he withdrew and instructed the disciples for 2 years and wrote the book of 1 Corinthians.
  - a) Many heard the Word through Paul and God performed extraordinary miracles through Paul. (healing, exorcisms)
5. Seven Jewish exorcists attempted to cast out demons in Jesus' name. The spirits recognized Jesus and Paul but not these men.
  - a) The man with the evil spirit overpowered the exorcists who then fled naked and wounded.
  - b) Many heard about this event and were fearful. Jesus' name was magnified.
  - c) Many confessed sin (burned magic books) and believed. Word of Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.
6. Paul intended to go to Achaia, Macedonia and Jerusalem. He sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia.
7. Demetrius, a silversmith who made idols of Artemis, gathered his tradesmen against Paul because Paul discouraged idolatry and it was hurting their business.
  - a) This started citywide confusion and Gaius and Aristarchus (Paul's companions) were dragged to the theater. The disciples kept Paul away.
  - b) Mass hysteria and confusion resulted in praise of Artemis.
8. The town clerk pleaded that Demetrius use the courts to settle his dispute with Paul and then dismissed the assembly.

B. Interpretation/Application

1. Importance of followup of believers
2. Model of confrontation of a believer in doctrinal error. Included private instruction from the Word of God by mature believers, which empowered the corrected believer for more effective ministry.
3. Importance of correct doctrine – not a message that was personality based but Scripture based.
4. Basis for church growth was the discipling of the believers. Biblical teaching results in confession, repentance and growth.
5. Miracles confirmed correct doctrine and right teaching.
6. Beware of the danger of imitators and deceivers in ministry.
7. The gospel will impact the culture and create some enemies, especially when there are financial implications.
8. There is prudence/wisdom in staying out of harm's way.
9. God can use non-believers for His Kingdom to protect His saints.

LV. Greece (Acts 20:1-5)

A. Observations

1. After the uproar in Ephesus, Paul encouraged the disciples and then left for Macedonia where he wrote 2 Corinthians. After visiting Macedonia, he went to Corinth for 3 months where he wrote the book of Romans. (Rom. 15:26 – 16:2)

2. Because of a Jewish plot against him, he returned to Macedonia accompanied by many others including Luke. He then sent them on ahead to Troas.

## LVI. Troas, Ephesus and Elders at Miletus (Acts 20:6-38)

### A. Observations

1. With Luke, Paul's team sailed from Philippi to Troas where they stayed 7 days.
2. Paul led a late service on the first day of the week (Sunday) and communion with the believers.
  - a) At midnight, Eutychus went asleep and fell from a third floor window and died.
  - b) Paul healed him and then talked to the disciples until daybreak.
3. Luke sailed to Assos where they met Paul. They then sailed to Mitylene, Chios, Samos and Miletus.
  - a) Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost, so he decided to avoid Ephesus.
4. At Miletus, Paul called for the elders of Ephesus to come.
5. Paul's message to the elders
  - a) Past ministry – commitment to teaching the whole gospel of repentance and faith.
  - b) Present situation – foresaw affliction and farewell
  - c) Future responsibilities – be on guard to shepherd church, commended them to God and commended them to the Word.

### B. Interpretation/ Application

1. Discernment from the Holy Spirit when to leave in crisis.
2. Repeated followup of believers to encourage them.
3. God can still perform miracles through His people.
4. Basic principles of Paul's ministry:
  - a) Preach the whole counsel of God – repentance toward God and faith in Christ.
  - b) Followup of believers to encourage and warn them.
  - c) Personal commitment and sacrifice for the Gospel.
  - d) Commitment to hard work and compassion for the weak.
  - e) Proper closure of relationships.

## LVII. Miletus to Caesarea (Acts 21:1-14)

### A. Observations

1. Team sailed to Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre. They found disciples in Tyre and stayed with them 7 days. They warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem.
2. Team sailed to Ptolemais and stayed one day with the brethren.
3. Went to Caesarea and stayed with Philip the evangelist who had 4 daughter prophetesses.
4. Agabus, a prophet from Judea, warned Paul that the Jews would bind him in Jerusalem. The disciples begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.
5. Paul said he was ready to be bound and die in Jerusalem for the name of Jesus. (He also wanted to deliver the offering from the Gentile Asian churches to the Jerusalem church. Acts 24:17; 1 Cor 16:3; Rom 15:26)
6. Disciples accepted Paul's decision.

### B. Interpretation/ Application

1. Model of supreme commitment to Christ.
2. Sometimes well meaning Christians have clear differences of opinion. Agree to disagree.
3. Sometimes we may be warned of suffering. It doesn't mean we should necessarily avoid it. Is our motive love for ourselves or love for the Lord?
4. There is a need for a daily walk with God to discern His leading.

## LVIII. Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-26)

### A. Observations

1. Paul left Caesarea with some disciples for Jerusalem. (65 mile two day journey)
2. In Jerusalem he went to see James (church leader) and the elders and then gave them a report of his ministry to the Gentiles.
3. Jerusalem elders glorified God when they heard his report.
4. Some Jewish Christians were still observing the Jewish ceremonial customs and law. There were rumors that Paul was teaching that these should be ignored. These believers were upset with Paul especially since he was ministering to the Gentiles also.
5. In order to appease these Jewish Christians, the elders asked Paul to identify with the Jews by observing some Jewish vows and temple customs. This would affirm his Jewishness and show respect for the Jewish law and placate the Jewish believers.
6. Paul complied by purifying himself, going to the temple and making a sacrifice. This did not deny the completed work of Christ and was not a matter of salvation or sanctification but was an attempt to unify the Jewish Christians.
7. The offering Paul brought from the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church showed his identification with the Gentiles and now this showed his identification with the Jews.

### B. Interpretation/ Application

1. Importance of reporting to the home church. Gave encouragement to supporters and glorified God.
2. Importance of church unity and the need to dispel false reports. Weaker brother principle of 1 Cor. 9:20-22. "And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews... I have become all things to all men, that by all means I might win some."

## Acts 21:27-28:31 Journey to Rome

### LIX. Jerusalem

- A. Paul's Arrest by the Romans and Defense to the Jewish Crowd (21:27-22:29)
  - 1. Asian Jews took Paul while he was in the temple and falsely accused him
  - 2. They agitated the people of Jerusalem against Paul to kill him
  - 3. Roman soldiers intervened and took Paul to the barracks
  - 4. Paul spoke to the crowd in Aramaic and gave his personal testimony of his conversion and commission to the Gentiles
  - 5. Crowd responded that he should die
  - 6. Commander planned to beat Paul but stopped when he found out Paul was a Roman citizen.
- B. Paul brought by Romans before the Sanhedrin (22:30-23:10)
  - 1. Roman commander brought Paul before the chief priests and Council
  - 2. Paul had an angry interaction with the high priest
  - 3. Paul saw both Pharisees and Sadducees so he said he was on trial because of his belief in the resurrection. This divided the Council in argument.
  - 4. Roman commander ordered Paul to be taken back to the barracks
- C. Paul escorted by Romans to Caesarea (23:11-35)
  - 1. God told Paul to take courage and told him he would go to Rome
  - 2. Jews (40+) conspired to kill Paul. Colluded with chief priests and elders.
  - 3. Paul's nephew heard of the plot and told Paul. Paul sent him to the Roman commander.
  - 4. Roman commander escorted Paul at night with 470 soldiers to Felix the Governor in Antipatris, Caesarea.

### LX. Caesarea

- A. Paul's Defense Before Governor Felix (24:1-27)
  - 1. Ananias the high priest came with the elders and lawyer Tertullus and brought charges to the governor against Paul. Charges were as follows:
    - a) Real pest
    - b) Stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world
    - c) Ringleader of sect of Nazarenes
    - d) Tried to desecrate the temple
  - 2. Paul's defense was he went to the temple and there was no dissension or riot and that he believed the Law and prophets and the resurrection
  - 3. Asian Jews stirred up trouble
  - 4. Paul wanted to wait for Lysias, the Roman commander so he was put in house arrest.
  - 5. Paul spoke to Felix's wife Drusilla, a Jewess, about faith in Christ
  - 6. Felix got nervous and sent Paul away. He wanted a bribe from Paul.
  - 7. Paul was kept in prison 2 years as a favor to the Jews.
  - 8. Porcius Festus succeeded Felix.
- B. Paul's Defense Before Governor Festus (25:1-27)
  - 1. Festus went to Jerusalem where the Jewish leaders brought charges against Paul. They wanted Paul brought to Jerusalem so they could ambush him.
  - 2. Festus told them to send the accusers with him to Caesarea.
  - 3. After his return to Caesarea, Jews brought unsupported charges against Paul to Festus.
  - 4. Paul declared his innocence so Festus asked if Paul would go to Jerusalem. Paul appealed to Caesar.
  - 5. Festus agreed but presented the case to King Agrippa who wanted to hear the case.
  - 6. Festus said Paul was not guilty in Roman law but needed a charge to send him to Rome.
  - 7. Festus brought Paul's case before Agrippa to help define the charges against him.
- C. Paul's Defense Before Agrippa (26:1-32)
  - 1. Paul gives his personal testimony of conversion and commission to the Gentiles. Festus said Paul was out of his mind.
  - 2. Agrippa said Paul was innocent and should be free except that he had appealed to Caesar.

### LXI. At Sea

- A. Paul's Voyage and Shipwreck (27:1-44)
  - 1. Paul went with other prisoners to Italy under guard of centurion Julius.
  - 2. They stopped at Sidon (Phoenicia) and Myra in Lycia where they changed ships.

3. Paul warned them of a storm ahead but they went ahead and got caught in the storm and had to jettison the cargo. Paul encouraged them there would be no loss of life.
4. Paul had a vision and God told him he would stand before Caesar.
5. After 14 days at sea, they (276 people) ate food, ran the ship aground and all swam safely to shore at Malta.

#### LXII. Malta and on to Rome (28:1-16)

##### A. Malta

1. Natives of Malta were kind to the shipwrecked men
2. Viper bit Paul's hand. The natives thought he was a criminal but when he was not harmed they thought he was a god.
3. Leader Publius in the island welcomed them. His father had a fever and dysentery. Paul went in, prayed, and laid hands on him and healed him and others. They stayed 3 months.

##### B. On to Rome

1. Stopped at Syracuse (Sicily) for 3 days, then to Rhegium and then to Puteoli for 7 days and then to Rome.
2. Met there by many brethren where Paul was under house arrest.

#### LXIII. Rome (28:17-31)

- A. Paul called the leading Jews to explain why he was brought to Rome
- B. They had not heard of him but had heard of his sect and wanted to hear more about it.
- C. They came to hear about Jesus. Paul explained how salvation was also sent to the Gentiles. Some were persuaded.
- D. Paul stayed in Rome 2 years, teaching and preaching the gospel unhindered.

## Baptism and Filling of the Holy Spirit, Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Tongues

### LXIV. Baptism and Filling of Holy Spirit

#### A. **Baptism** of Holy Spirit

1. First occurred at Pentecost (Acts 11:15-16)

	Acts 2:4	Acts 8:17	Acts 10:44-47	Acts 19:6
Sound of wind	X			
Tongues of fire	X			
Speaking in tongues	X		X	X
Laying on of hands		X		X
Spirit received after salvation	X	X		X
Spirit received at salvation			X	

- a) There is no pattern or model for receiving the Holy Spirit in these passages. Is the episode, then, an example or model?
2. For all believers (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9)
3. Baptism of Holy Spirit once (1 Cor. 12:13)
4. Occurs at salvation
  - a) Otherwise was considered anomalous (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6); 2-stage experience is not a universal norm
  - b) The disciples unique because they became believers before the Holy Spirit's coming.
  - c) Acts 8 – Phillip's evangelism of the Samaritans needed to be verified as authentic. Importance of difference between John's baptism and baptism of Holy Spirit was emphasized and affirmed by apostles.
  - d) Acts 19 – Affirmation of the opening of the gospel to the Gentiles was confirmed by speaking in tongues. It also emphasized the important difference between John's baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
5. Joins believers to Body of Christ (Rom. 6:1-4)
6. Empowered to bring the lost to Christ (Acts 1:8). Work of the Holy Spirit is to guide, enlighten and convict. Jn 16:13

#### B. **Filling** of Holy Spirit

1. Definition: To be controlled by the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Spirit gave power or ability to work for the Lord.
  - a) Ephesians 5:18 "And be not drunk with wine, where in is excess; but be filled (controlled) with the Holy Spirit."
2. Duration
  - a) Old Testament: Temporary: Gideon (Jud. 6:34); Samson (Jud. 14:6)
  - b) New Testament: Continuing: John the Baptist (Lk. 1:15); Stephen (Acts 6:5); Barnabas (Acts 11:22-24); (Dan. 6:3; Micah 3:8)
    - (1) Eph 5:18 "keep on being filled"; Acts 2:4; 4:31
    - (2) Initial filling at salvation and the "re-filling"
3. Purpose
  - a) Brings honor and praise to God. (Jn. 16:13-14)
  - b) Brings blessing to people of God and the person filled with God's Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:7)
4. Bible References
  - a) Old Testament:
    - (1) Bezalel (Ex. 31:2-3); Moses (Num. 11:25); Othneil (Jud. 3:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:34); Jephthah (Jud. 11:29); Samson (Jud. 14:6)

- b) New Testament
  - (1) John the Baptist (Lk. 1:15); Zechariah (Lk. 1:67); disciples (Acts 2:4); Peter (Acts 4:8); Stephen (Acts 7:55); Paul (Acts 13:9-11)
- 5. Conditions of being filled
  - a) Ask God in prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:13)
  - b) Dedication of self to God for His use and control
  - c) Don't grieve the Holy Spirit – sin (Eph. 4:30)
  - d) Life of dependence on Spirit (Gal. 5:16)
- 6. Results of the filling of the Holy Spirit
  - a) Universal signs of the fullness or filling of the Spirit
    - (1) Christ-like character (Gal. 5:22-23)
    - (2) Power-filled prayer life (Rom. 8: 26-27)
    - (3) Worship and praise (Eph. 5:18)
    - (4) Submissiveness (Eph. 5:21)
    - (5) Service for the Lord
    - (6) Strong witness (Acts 1:8)
    - (7) Examples: Stephen (Acts 6:5); Barnabas (Acts 11:22-24)
  - b) Are tongues a sign of the filling of the Holy Spirit?
    - (1) No – In Acts 2, 10, 19 tongues was a sign of the baptism of the Spirit.
  - c) Does filling of Holy Spirit mean sinless perfection?
    - (1) We can be forgiven and purified but not sinless (1 Jn. 1:8-9)
    - (2) Examples: Samson, David, Peter

<b>Baptism of Holy Spirit</b>	<b>Filling of Holy Spirit</b>
Once for all (Eph 4:5)	Continuous (Eph 5:18)
Not experienced – it is something God does for you without your knowing it	Experienced – an experience to be desired and achieved
No command to be baptized	Commanded to be filled (Eph 5:18)
Universal among Christians (1 Cor. 12:13)	Not universal (Eph 5:18)
Unites one to Christ and makes one a member of the Body of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13)	Produces joy, thanksgiving, submission, service and Christian character (Eph. 5:19-21; Gal. 5:22,23)
Conditions: Believe in Christ for salvation (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12)	Conditions: separated from known sin

LXV. Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Ephesians 4:11-12)

- A. What are they? Special abilities given by the Holy Spirit (source) for service; abilities not offices in the church. Given as the Spirit wills and chooses.
- B. Why are they given?
  - 1. To build (strengthen and edify) up the local church (Rom. 12:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:4-20)
  - 2. Diversity in unity. Exercise of the gift should promote unity. (1 Cor. 14:4-12)
- C. To whom are they given? To every Christian (1 Cor. 12:7)
- D. What are the gifts? (Exhaustive list or representative?)
  - 1. Speaking gifts: prophecy (Rom. 12:6); teaching (Rom. 12:7); encouraging others (Rom. 12:8); words of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8); tongues and interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10)
  - 2. Serving gifts: leadership, giving, showing mercy (Rom. 12:8); healing (1 Cor. 12:9); identifying the spirits (1 Cor. 12:10).
- E. How do I discover my gift(s)?
  - 1. Learn what gifts are available
  - 2. Be willing and obedient to God
  - 3. Be active in ministry

## LXVI. Tongues

### A. Definition: What is it?

1. The word “tongues” occurs 25 times in NT.
2. Various definitions:
  - a) The organ of speech
  - b) Known languages; “The ability to speak in known, foreign languages in the public worship of the local church”
    - (1) There are many kinds of languages but they are all known languages
    - (2) God always communicated to His people in an understandable language
    - (3) The gift of interpretation was always associated with tongues (in Corinth) so they must have been known languages
    - (4) If tongues were gibberish, it could easily be done or mimicked by other Christians or unbelievers. Speaking in a language never learned would be a true indisputable miracle – an objective standard.
  - c) Ecstatic utterances - unintelligible sounds uttered in spiritual ecstasy
3. Not unique to Christianity - Criteria in all religions seem to be as follows:
  - a) Person was engaged in religious worship
  - b) He was controlled by a divine being
  - c) He lost control of his mental faculties
  - d) He spoke in a different language
  - e) There was a need for interpretation

### B. Occurrences in New Testament

1. Gospels
  - a) Mk 16:17

17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well. (NIV)

- (1) Why are we not seeing the other “signs” today?
2. Acts
  - a) Acts is a transitional book – book of firsts (apostolic miracles, deacons, martyrdom, missionary journey, church council)
  - b) God often uses a miraculous thing with a new idea or revelation as His seal of approval on it. (Moses – Law; Prophets – message to Israel; John the Baptist – harbinger of the Messiah)
  - c) In Acts, the instances of tongues were to different classes of people. Tongues was a transitional affirming sign of the unique reception of the Holy Spirit by different classes of people
    - (1) Jews (Acts 2:4-11)
      - (a) 12 apostles spoke in known languages at Pentecost which was after their conversion
      - (b) Conversions of unsaved Jews at Pentecost did not happen until after Peter’s sermon. Tongues amazed the crowd but did not convert them.
      - (c) Tongues were a sign to the Jews that Jesus was truly the Messiah and that the apostolic message was true. (Jn 2:18; 1 Cor 14:21)
      - (d) “We must not make the tragic spiritual mistake of teaching the experience of the apostles but rather experience the teaching of the apostles.”

- (2) Gentiles (Acts 10:46)
    - (a) Cornelius and family spoke in tongues after Peter's sermon. The tongues spoken were known languages since others knew they were praising God.
    - (b) Tongues were a sign to the believing Jews that Gentiles were indeed saved.
  - (3) Disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus (Acts 19:6)
    - (a) Tongues authenticated the messenger and the message to these disciples of John.
3. Corinthians
- a) 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14: 2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 29
  - b) In spite of the fact that the church in Corinth had all the spiritual gifts, it was an immature church. So, the presence of the gifts does not imply maturity.
  - c) Paul's message to the Corinthian church on the gifts was a rebuke for their misuses. He did not hold them up as an example of the mature use of gifts but was cautioning them on their misuses.
  - d) Repeatedly Paul has emphasized the importance of the mind in our relationship to God and the world. (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 14:14)

### C. Purpose

- 1. Who is the gift of tongues for? (1 Cor. 12:10)
  - a) For believers
  - b) Given as the Spirit chooses
  - c) It should not be expected that every believer should speak with tongues any more than that they should all be apostles
- 2. Why were tongues given?
  - a) Sign to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:21-22; Is. 28:11)
    - (1) Tongues were not meant to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews but because they "required a sign" to prove the messenger was from God. It was a rebuke to them. (1 Cor. 1:22; 14:21-22)
  - b) Sign to believers - Confirmation of new revelation or truth
    - (1) Tongues after filling of Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:44-47; 19:2-6) to confirm new groups added to church
      - (a) In each case, a new group of people was being included in the church. Tongues were given to confirm to Jewish Christians that the new group was indeed part of the Body of Christ. (Acts 11:15-17; 1 Cor. 1:22)
  - c) Edification of Body - All gifts for edification of Body (1 Cor. 14: 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 17, 19, 26, 31)
    - (1) Some in Corinth were practicing tongues but not having an interpretation. It was for their private exhilaration. Paul condemned this because it was not benefiting the church. (1 Cor. 14:4-19)
    - (2) Use of tongues in personal worship is the individual's decision. Its inappropriate use in public is not biblical. Corporate tongues are still not biblical because there is no interpretation and not according to the restrictions Paul established.
  - d) Tongues are NOT the universal, necessary sign of conversion or baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- (1) Jesus did not mention tongues during His ministry, only the coming of the Holy Spirit.
  - (2) Paul didn't speak in tongues at his conversion
  - (3) Most conversions recorded in Acts were without tongues
  - (4) As there are many members in a body, so in the Body of Christ there are many gifts. Just as the body is not all ears, so the gifts are distributed and not all have the gift of tongues or any other gift.
- D. In both Acts and Corinth, tongues were a known language that was spoken by men under the control of the Holy Spirit, which magnified God and was a sign.
- E. Criteria for tongues
1. Edification – must edify other believers. (1 Cor. 14: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 17, 19, 26, 31)
  2. Interpretation (1 Cor. 14: 13, 27, 28)
    - a) Always an interpreter
    - b) Only one interpreter
    - c) Language was a known language
    - d) Number and order – maximum of three speaking in tongues and one at a time.
- F. Rank of tongues in spiritual gifts
1. Eighth (1 Cor. 12:28)
  2. It was a lesser gift and was not to be desired or coveted. (1 Cor. 12:31)
- G. Temporary vs. Enduring Gifts
1. Some gifts were temporary like the gift of apostle.
  2. Since the New Testament was not written and there were few apostles and prophets around, God revealed himself through gifts like tongues and prophecy. Tongues were given to bring new revelation about God to the early church. Now that the New Testament is complete, there is no longer a need for this avenue of revelation. (1 Cor. 13:8; Rev. 22:18-19)
- H. Tongues Summary
1. God often uses a miraculous thing with a new idea or revelation as His seal of approval on it. (Moses – Law; Prophets – message to Israel; John the Baptist – harbinger of the Messiah)
  2. In the New Testament, God confirmed a new idea and revelation with signs and wonders in order to point to Himself and exalt Himself not an individual.
  3. Signs point to something else. Attention should not be on the sign but on where it is pointing.
  4. One of God's signs to the early church was to give new revelation to the church by having a person speak the new truth in a foreign language. This both affirmed the revelation as from God and gave the new truth about Himself. This may be the case in modern reports of the use of tongues in cross-cultural contexts.
  5. Tongues are not evangelistic. There is no NT evidence of this.
  6. It was not ecstatic utterances or gibberish that could be easily faked or mimicked. As seen in Corinth, ecstatic tongues in public were selfish and a proud exhibit of spirituality and did not edify the Body. The New Testament tongues were a foreign language that the speaker never knew before so was hard to fake.
  7. This "gift" of tongues was indeed a gift from God to some to edify all. Without a translator or interpreter, it was useless. The fact it was a known language spoken by someone who did not know the language proved it was from God and not a faked revelation or faked religious experience.
  8. When the New Testament revelation was complete, the need for tongues to reveal new truth was finished. Miracles continue but this "gift" as a sign of new revelation is no longer necessary.

## References

1. Ferguson, S., Wright, D., Packer, J., New Dictionary of Theology, IVP, 1996
2. Gromacki, R., The Modern Tongues Movement, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Penn., 1967.
3. O'Donovan, W., Biblical Christianity in African Perspective, Paternoster Press, Carlisle, U.K. 1992.
4. Ryrie, C., A Survey of Bible Doctrine, Moody Press, Chicago, 1982