

MASTERING  
THE ENGLISH  
BIBLE

Acts



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# Contents

Introduction to Mastering the English Bible.....	5
Acts .....	12
Acts Introduction.....	12
The Church of Jerusalem (Acts 1-12).....	18
Acts 1 Waiting for the Spirit .....	18
Acts 2 Pentecost .....	20
Acts 3-4 Healing and Persecution.....	35
Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira.....	41
Acts 6-7 Stephen the First Martyr.....	46
Acts 8 Samaritans Receive the Gospel.....	50
Acts 9 Saul's Conversion .....	61
Acts 10-11 Gentiles Receive the Gospel.....	64
Acts 12 Peter's Arrest and Herod's End.....	68
The Church of Antioch (Acts 13-28).....	71
Acts 13-14 First Missionary Journey.....	74
Acts 15:1-32 Jerusalem Council.....	99
Acts 15:33 - 18:22 Second Missionary Journey.....	102
Acts 18:23 - 21:14 Third Missionary Journey.....	130
Acts 21:15 - 28:31 Journey to Rome .....	151
Conclusion.....	166
Acts 29.....	167
Select Bibliography .....	178
Maps & Charts.....	179

# Introduction to *Mastering the English Bible*

*Mastering the English Bible* is a comprehensive survey of the Old and New Testaments, covering the Bible's full history and every book of the Bible.

It consists of the following segments:

- Old Testament History Genesis to the Silent Years
- Old Testament Job and Psalms
- Old Testament Proverbs, Song, Ecclesiastes
- Old Testament Prophetic Books
- The Gospels
- Acts
- Romans to Corinthians
- Galatians to Thessalonians
- Pastoral Epistles
- General Epistles
- Revelation

*Mastering the English Bible* is for beginning Bible students as well as for advanced ones. It is for youngsters (teens and above) and oldsters. In fact, the Bible pictures can be used for children. It is for individuals, homes, and churches. It is for preachers, both for those formally educated and informally.

*Mastering the English Bible* is nearly a complete Bible college curriculum in one course. The aim is to educate the student in **Bible history**, **Bible times** (e.g., Egypt, ancient Babylon, the Hittites, Assyria, neo-Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome), **Bible interpretation** (e.g., context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, defining words, paying attention to details, understanding repetition, interpreting metaphoric language), **Bible doctrine**, **theological terms**, **Bible geography**, **Bible typology** (e.g., the Passover, the Tabernacle, the Levitical Priesthood, the Levitical offerings), **Bible culture**, **Bible biography**, **Bible archaeology**, and **Bible prophecy**, and to teach the fundamentals of the law of Moses, the Gospel, Israel, and the Church. The course aims to give the student a broad comprehension of the Bible as a whole and how that each part fits into the whole.

*Mastering the English Bible* is very practical. There are extensive lessons on prayer, Christian growth, spiritual warfare, the husband-wife relationship, child training, evangelism, church planting, pastors, deacons, church discipline, the woman's ministry, youth discipleship, the church as a body, spiritual gifts, congregational singing, and much more.

*Mastering the English Bible* is accompanied by the **Way of Life Pictorial Bible**, which is an extensive series of multimedia PowerPoints packed with detailed maps, historical backgrounds, treasures from archaeology, Bible pictures, reconstructive drawings of ancient places, charts, video clips, and other visual aids. Many of these were captured by the author in the best archaeological museums in America and abroad, plus research trips to Israel, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Europe, and England.

*Mastering the English Bible* is the textbook, and *The Pictorial Bible* is the multi-media supplement. Both are an essential part of the course.

# Acts

## Acts Introduction

1. The author of Acts is Luke, the same man who wrote the Gospel of Luke. Compare Acts 1:1-4 and Luke 1:1-4.

He was one of Paul's faithful co-workers. He is called "my fellowlabourer" (Phm. 24) and "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).

He was the author of the Gospel of Luke. Though he was not an eyewitness of the life of Christ, he gathered information from those who were. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word" (Lu. 1:1-2). He wrote with "perfect understanding" (Lu. 1:3), meaning by divine inspiration.

He was also the author of the book of Acts, and here he was an eyewitness to many of the events.

- He first includes himself in the action on the second missionary journey at Philippi ("we endeavoured to go ... we came ... we were in that city," Acts 16:10-13, 16). This is where Luke appears in the Scripture record. It appears that Luke stayed in Philippi while Paul finished his second missionary journey.
- Luke then joined Paul at Philippi on the third missionary journey and became a part of his permanent traveling entourage. Luke journeyed with Paul from Philippi to Troas ("we sailed," Ac. 20:6), from Assos to Miletus ("we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos ... And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. And we sailed thence," Ac. 20:13-15), from Miletus to Caesarea (Ac. 21:1-8), and from Caesarea to Jerusalem (Ac. 21:17).
- Luke accompanied Paul from Caesarea to Rome ("when it was determined that we should sail into Italy," Ac. 27:1-7, 15-20, 26-29, 37; 28:10-16).
- He was with Paul in Rome on his first imprisonment (Phm. 1:24; Col. 4:14). And he was with Paul when he was put to death ("Only Luke is with me," 2 Ti. 4:11).

2. The theme of the book

The Bible student must know the theme and basic outline of every book and how it fits into the whole Bible. This cannot be skipped over. It is not a secondary thing. *Mastering the English Bible* is a very good start in this, but it is a lifelong project to learn it better and better. The books can then be used as a manual to refresh your memory as you study. This was emphasized by the pastor in Oregon.

Acts is a major part of God's eternal plan that all things will be one in Christ Jesus. The Old Testament prepared the way by prophecies and the law of Moses, which is the schoolmaster to lead men to Christ. The Gospels describes Christ's coming by the virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His vicarious death, His resurrection, and His ascension back to heaven. Acts describes the firstfruits of the new creation, which is the church.

The Gospels describe Christ's Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mr. 16:15; Lu. 24:44-48; Joh. 20:21) and Acts describes the method of carrying out the Great Commission.

The New Testament church is God's instrument for the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission. This is the church's God-given work, the church's marching orders. The NT church is the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Ti. 3:15).

Acts is very practical. It is a handbook on evangelism, church planting, church building, Christian service, prayer, spiritual warfare.

The things that are emphasized in Acts are not the things that are emphasized in many Baptist and fundamentalist churches today: The power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the gospel, the power of prayer, the power of a sound NT church, the power of holy, pilgrim living, and the power of true discipleship. Instead, there are salesmanship evangelistic programs, very little prayer, very little knowledge of the Holy Spirit and dependence on Him, weak understanding of the gospel, weak churches, rampant worldliness, an emphasis on fun and games, and an emphasis on politics.

### **Acts 1-12 - the focus is on the church at Jerusalem and the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria.**

- The gospel began in Jerusalem and spread widely from there. Though it took some time for the first Jewish converts, including the apostles, to understand that God was going to save the Gentiles *on the same basis as the Jews*, still the gospel traveled widely in Judea, Samaria, and beyond.
- The church at Jerusalem preached the gospel in Jerusalem and Judea (Ac. 2-7; 8:1).
- The church at Jerusalem preached the gospel in Samaria (Ac. 8:4-8), and Peter and John were sent there to oversee the work (Ac. 8:14).
- Philip preached the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch and the gospel was thus carried south to Africa (Ac. 8:26-39).
- Philip preached the gospel along the coast of Judea from Ashdod to Caesarea (Ac. 8:40).
- Peter preached in Lydda and Joppa (Ac. 9:32-43).
- Peter preached the gospel to the first Gentile converts at Caesarea (Ac. 10). The Holy Spirit's ministry to the Gentiles with the speaking of tongues convinced the Jews at Jerusalem of what God was doing (Ac. 10:44-48; 11:15-18). This was the purpose of the sign of tongues (1 Co. 14:20-22; Isa. 28:11-12).
- Members of the church at Jerusalem preached in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and the church sent Barnabas to oversee that work (Ac. 11:19-22).

### **Acts 13-28 - the focus is on the church at Antioch, the first missionary-sending church, and the journeys of Paul to the nations.**

- Antioch is the pattern for every church.
- Paul's journeys are the pattern for every missionary venture throughout the age.

The book could be called the "Acts of the resurrected Christ."

- In the first chapter, the risen Christ gives instructions to the disciples and ascends back to heaven.
- In the second chapter, Christ sends the Holy Spirit to indwell the disciples and to empower them for world evangelism.
- In the rest of the book: Sermons were preached in Christ's name; the sick were healed in Christ's name (Acts 4:30); believers were added to Christ (Acts 5:14); believers were baptized in Christ's name

(Acts 8:16); Christ suffered with those who were persecuted (Acts 9:5); the power of Christ was with those who preached (Acts 11:21); Christ opened sinners' hearts (Acts 16:14); Christ appeared to and encouraged the preachers (Acts 18:9-10); Christ was with the churches every step of the way (Mt. 28:20).

The book could be named "The Acts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

- It defines the gospel as the gospel of grace alone through Christ alone without works (Ac. 15:7-11).
- It shows the amazing power of the gospel. The book covers a period of only about 35 years from Pentecost in AD 29 to the end of Paul's first imprisonment in Rome in AD 64. In that brief period, the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Samaria and beyond, to Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, Spain, Africa, and elsewhere.

The book could be called the "Acts of the Holy Spirit." It is obvious from the book of Acts that the Holy Spirit is a Person, the third Person of the Trinity, and not merely an influence.

- He empowers the churches for Christ's work (Ac. 1:8; 2:1-4).
- He is given as a gift to those who receive Christ (Ac. 2:38).
- He grants wisdom and power for preaching (Ac. 4:8, 31, 31; 7:55).
- He can be lied to (Ac. 5:3).
- He gives boldness and wisdom to the preachers (Ac. 4:8).
- He fills the believers (Ac. 6:3, 5; 11:24; 13:52).
- He leads in the work of evangelism (Ac. 8:29; 10:19-20).
- He comforts (Ac. 9:31).
- He gives prophecies (Ac. 11:28).
- He calls and sends missionaries (Ac. 13:2, 4).
- He directs missionary work (Ac. 16:6-7).
- He calls pastors (Ac. 20:28).

Other major subjects are the baptism of the Holy Spirit, repentance (11 times), water baptism (20 times), faith and believe (56 times), preaching (38 times), teaching (12 times), elders (18 times), ordination (3 times), persecution, apostolic signs (10 times), and angels (more than 20 times).

3. Acts is a book of transition, standing between the Gospels and the Epistles, between the Mosaic age and the Church age.

- Many of the things in Acts are temporary and are not a pattern for today. An example is the sign miracles performed by the apostles and those closely associated with them (2 Co. 12:12).
- By comparing Acts with the New Testament Epistles, we can see what is permanent. It is the teaching of the Epistles that contains the fullness of New Testament doctrine and practice. For example, we will see that the Holy Spirit is received in four different ways in Acts, but the permanent way is found in Ephesians 1:12-14.

4. Most of the New Testament Epistles were written during the period covered in Acts. Following are the dates traditionally assigned to the epistles:

- James - Perhaps the first apostolic epistle in about AD 50.
- 1 Thessalonians - written about AD 54 from Corinth, supposed to be the earliest of Paul's epistles.
- 2 Thessalonians - written about AD 54 soon after the first letter to the church at Thessalonica.

- Beginning of the Antioch church (Acts 11:19-30)
- Peter's imprisonment (Acts 12)

**The Church at Antioch: The Gospel to the nations** (Acts 13-28)

- Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14).
- Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36 - 18:22).
- Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23 - 21:8).
- Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 21:15 - 28:31).

Sample



# The Church of Jerusalem (Acts 1-12)

## Acts 1 Waiting for the Spirit

### Christ with the disciples after the resurrection (Acts 1:1-12)

Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples after His resurrection (Acts 1:3). He showed Himself alive, and He taught them.

#### 1. The evidence of the resurrection (Ac. 1:3)

Belief in Christ's resurrection is not blind religious faith; it is based on "many infallible proofs."

For the evidences, see the study on the Gospels, "Christ's Resurrection."

#### 2. Christ's command to wait for the promise (Acts 1:4-5)

- Pentecost was not an answer to prayer; it was a fulfillment of prophecy (Joh. 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-15). It is not an example for believers to follow today; it was a one-time prophetic event.
- We will see more about the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2.

#### 3. Christ's answer to the question about the kingdom (Acts 1:6-7)

##### a. They asked Jesus about the time of the restoration of Israel's kingdom.

- This tells us that the kingdom of God is yet future and is a literal, earthly kingdom. The church is not the kingdom of God. Compare Lu. 19:11-15; 21:31; Ac. 14:22; 2 Ti. 4:1; Jas. 2:5.
- This tells us that the church has not replaced Israel. God's covenants with Israel will be fulfilled after the church age (Ro. 11:25-27).

##### b. Christ told them not to focus on prophetic signs (Acts 1:7).

- It is important to know Bible prophecy. It motivates us to be diligent in Christian service and to be ready for Christ's coming. Prophecy forms a large part of the Bible, and like the rest of Scripture, the prophetic portions are necessary "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Ti. 3:16-17).
- While it is interesting to look at current events in light of Bible prophecy, it is vain to speculate about such things. Church age believers will not see the Antichrist and the Tribulation and the Third Temple and Gog and Magog, so it is a waste of time to speculate about whether such things are happening now. Many of those who have "prophecy" ministries are not fulfilling the Great Commission; they are consumed with speculative prophecy; they do not understand the New Testament church; they have parachurch ministries; they ignore biblical separation and have interdenominational, ecumenical ministries; they often fall away into doctrinal error. An example is Jack Van Impe, who came to believe that Pope John Paul II was a hero of the faith.

#### 4. Christ's commission of world evangelism (Acts 1:8)

We deal with this in the studies on the Gospels, "Christ's Great Commission," Matthew 28:18-20.

### Christ's Ascension (Acts 1:9-11)

See also Mark 16:19 and Luke 24:50-52.

- He ascended from Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives (Lu. 24:50).

- He ascended bodily. This reminds us that Christ's resurrection was physical. It also teaches us that heaven is a real place. It is different from earth, but it is a real place. It is called "paradise" (2 Co. 12:4) and heavenly country (Heb. 11:16).
- He ascended visibly. He will return in the same manner (Acts 1:11).
- He ascended in a cloud. This is the cloud of glory that is associated with the presence of God (Ex. 16:10; 40:34-35; 1 Ki. 8:10-11; Mt. 17:5). Christ will return in a cloud of glory (Lu. 21:27).
- Two angels appeared. "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The angels exhorted and encouraged the disciples with the proclamation of Christ's second coming. This is a major theme of the epistles and must be a major theme of every preaching ministry. See Ro. 11:26; 13:12; 1 Co. 1:7-8; 4:5; 11:26; 15:51-58; Php. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 3:20-21; 4:5; Col. 3:4; 1 Th. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:2-3, 23; 2 Th. 1:7-8; 2:1, 8; 3:5; 1 Ti. 6:14; 2 Ti. 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13; Jas. 5:7-9; Heb. 9:28; 10:37; 1 Pe. 1:7; 4:7; 5:4; 2 Pe. 1:19; 3:10-13; 1 Jo. 2:28; 3:2; Jude 1:14-15, 21.

### **The Disciples in "One Accord" (Acts 1:12-14)**

Jesus instructed the disciples to "not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me" (Ac. 1:4).

1. Christian unity is important. God is the God of peace, and wants His people to live in peace (Ps. 133:1; Ro. 12:18). Peace among brethren is accomplished by practicing Christian love and forbearance. Paul instructed the church at Corinth that it is better to suffer oneself to be defrauded than to live in disharmony (1 Co. 6:5-7). This shows us how much God loves unity in the churches.
2. In this present world, which is filled with compromise and apostasy, a broad Christian unity is not possible, because true Christian unity requires holding the same beliefs (Ro. 15:5-6; 1 Co. 1:10; Phi. 1:27; 2:2; 1 Ti. 1:3; 2 Ti. 2:2). This is in contrast with the ecumenical philosophy of "unity in diversity."

### **The New Apostle (Acts 1:15-26)**

1. This was a fulfillment of prophecy (Ac. 1:16-20; Ps. 69:25; 109:8). (Judas is also referred to in Ps. 41:5-9; 55:12-14.) Psalm 69:25 is about "them," whereas Acts 1:20 is about "him." The Holy Spirit can modify His own Scriptures and oftentimes does so in the New Testament citations of the Old Testament.

Psalm 69 is a major Messianic Psalm.

- Psalm 69:1-21 describes the Messiah's suffering (e.g., verses 1-4, 8-9, 12, 20-21). Psalm 69:9 is quoted in Joh. 2:14-17. Psalm 69:21 is fulfilled in Mt. 27:34.
  - Psalm 69:22-28 describes the judgment that will come upon Christ-rejecters in the day of the Lord. Compare Isaiah 13:11-13.
  - Psalm 69:30-36 describes Christ's glorious millennial kingdom.
2. The new apostle was a witness of Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:22). Christ's resurrection is irrefutable, being proven by many reputable witnesses.

## The Church of Antioch (Acts 13-28)

This church was destined to be the chief missionary sending church and the pattern for every church throughout the age. Every church should be an Antioch church.

### The City of Antioch

Antioch was located about 300 miles north of Jerusalem. It was situated on the bank of the Orontes River about 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea and the port city of Seleucia.

In Paul's day, Antioch was a prominent city in the Roman province of Syria.

With a population of 100,000 to 300,000, Antioch was the third largest city in the empire, after Rome and Alexandria.

It was founded by Seleucus I Nicator in 301 BC, after the Battle of Ipsus, as the capital of the Seleucid Empire, one of the four major divisions of Alexander the Great's Greek Empire. Its name was derived from Nicator's father Antiochus. The site was located by occultic means by giving an eagle a piece of sacrificial meat and following it to where it lighted.

It was the seat of the Seleucid Dynasty. The most infamous of Seleucus Nicator's successors was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC), who desecrated the temple in Jerusalem in 168 BC.

Antioch was conquered for Rome in 64 BC by Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus) and incorporated into the Roman Empire.

It was built up under various Seleucid and Roman leaders so that it became the "queen of the east." The place was beautified with Roman temples and baths, fountains and groves. "The citizens were a vigorous, turbulent and pushing race, notorious for their commercial aptitude, the licentiousness of their pleasures, and the scurrility of their wit" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

Antioch was a major center of commerce located near a major seaport and straddling major north-south and east-west roads that connected India and Mesopotamia (Persia, Babylon, Assyria) in the east with Asia Minor and Greece and Italy in the west and Africa and Egypt to the south.

It was a center for filthy idolatry. Nearby was Daphne where Diana and Apollos and other gods and goddesses were worshipped in orgies.

Antioch of Syria is not to be confused with Antioch of Pisidia which was one of the first stops on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:14). Antioch of Pisidia was located about 300 miles west of Antioch of Syria, about halfway between Antioch of Syria and the cities on the coast of western Asia where Paul started churches (e.g., Pergamum, Smyrna, Ephesus). Like Antioch of Syria, Antioch of Pisidia was founded by Seleucus Nicator and named in honor of his father Antiochus. Antioch of Pisidia was the capital of the Roman province of Pisidia.

For a pictorial study of Antioch of Syria, see *Cities and Places of Bible Times*, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).

## The Beginning of the Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

### ● See *Mastering the English Bible - Maps & Charts 38 Paul's Missionary Journeys*.

#### 1. The church at Antioch began with the preaching of the gospel (Acts 11:20-21).

- This is how every sound church begins. When we want to start a new church, we have to preach the gospel to as many people as possible in that area and trust the Lord for fruit. Churches aren't started by conducting a Bible study in a home or rented room and hoping that the Lord will bring the people. We have to take the gospel to them aggressively.
- The preaching was done by those who were escaping persecution in Jerusalem. The persecution only made them bolder. Every believer is an ambassador for Christ and should be busy spreading the gospel (2 Co. 5:20).
- The preaching was to the Gentiles (Acts 11:20). In Acts 10, God had shown Peter that the Gentiles were to hear the gospel. A Gentile is someone who is not a Jew. We Gentiles must thank God for His amazing grace.
- A great number believed and turned from their vain idols (Acts 11:21). Jesus said relative "few" will be saved (Mt. 7:14), but at certain times and places God in His grace has saved many.

#### 2. The church was established by the teaching of God's Word and the good example of God-called, qualified leaders (Acts 11:22-25).

#### The church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas.

- He was the right man for the job. The church was wise in this. They didn't send just any man that was available. They sent a capable man. They sent a man who had been proven. He was one of their best men.
- He was a man of discernment and wisdom (Acts 11:23).
- He was a man who loved the work of God, loved to see souls saved and lives changed ("Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad," Ac. 11:23)
- He was a Spirit-filled man ("he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost," Acts 11:24). This is the qualification for every ministry. No man is good in his natural condition ("there is none that doeth good," Ro. 3:12), but a man can be good in the Lord: "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Co. 6:11). Barnabas was good because he was saved and surrendered to God's Spirit.
- He was a man of faith ("full ... of faith," Ac. 11:24). Nothing can be accomplished except by faith (Heb. 11:6). Faith is believing God's Word (Ro. 10:17). Faith is taking God at His Word, believing His promises. We are saved by faith; we live by faith; we minister by faith; we conquer fears by faith; we get answers to prayer by faith; we overcome trials and persecution by faith we quench Satan's fiery darts by faith (Eph. 6:16). Men and women who do great things in God's service are men and women of faith. William Carey said, "expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."
- He was a man who exhorted the people ("and exhorted them all," Ac. 11:23). He was a preacher. God's people must have good preachers.
- He exhorted the people "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23). There is eternal security in Christ for the true believer, but each believer proves his salvation by obedience and by continuing in faith. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart

reveal man's sinful and condemned condition so that he will see that he is lost and needs a Saviour (Ga. 3:24).

c. Felix trembled in fear but refused to repent ("Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," Acts 24:25).

- Felix said he would hear more when it was "convenient." But salvation is never convenient. It always requires entering the narrow gate of humbling oneself and acknowledging one's sin before a holy God and repenting of one's rebellion against God and confessing Jesus Christ before the world.

- Felix ignored the Holy Spirit's conviction and hardened his heart. Though he heard Paul at different times after that, we are not told that he trembled again. It is dangerous to put off salvation because there is no promise of tomorrow and the heart grows hard if the gospel is put off (Heb. 2:3; 3:7-11; Pr. 1:24-31; 29:1).

d. Felix pretended to be interested in Paul's message, but in reality, he was looking for a bribe (Acts 24:26). Many men who appear to be interested in the gospel have carnal motives. This is one reason why churches must be careful about accepting professions of faith and receiving church members. The professors should give biblical evidence of their salvation by a changed mind and a changed life.

e. Felix lost his position as governor in AD 60, was brought to trial in Rome and barely escaped death. After that, he was exiled in disgrace.

f. Felix and Drusilla perished in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the south of Italy in AD 79. Drusilla was only about 41 years old. She had used her physical beauty to gain riches and position, but it all perished instantly in the flowing lava, and she was cast out into eternity to face a holy God. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt. 16:26). She and Felix will have eternity to think about Paul's preaching in the pleasant city of Caesarea.

### 3. Paul appears before **FESTUS** (Acts 25:1-12).

a. "Porcius Festus was appointed Roman governor of Judea by the Emperor Nero in the autumn of AD 60" (*Believer's Bible Commentary*). Very little is known about Festus beyond what is written in Acts 25.

b. The Jews tried again to kill Paul. The Jews had not forgotten Paul, and they tried to get Festus to bring him back to Jerusalem so they could kill him (Acts 25:1-3). Festus refused to do this and demanded that the Jews go to Caesarea and give their charges against Paul (Acts 25:4-5).

c. The Jews brought many accusations, but they had no proof (Acts 25:7).

d. Even though Festus had no evidence that Paul had done anything wrong, he urged Paul to return to Jerusalem (Acts 25:9). This was done purely with a wicked political motive to please the Jews. Here, we see the supernatural character of the Bible, in that it not only records man's deeds but also the thoughts and motives of his heart. Purely human writings cannot do this.

e. Paul appealed to Caesar's judgment seat (Acts 25:10-12).

- Paul knew that Festus was planning to turn him over to the Jews so they could take him before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and he knew they would put him to death. He told Festus plainly that he was acting contrary to his own conscience and to the Roman law (Acts 25:10). In his dealing with authorities, Paul was gracious, but he was also plain-spoken and bold.

- As a Roman citizen, Paul had the right of appeal to Caesar. By exercising this right, he foiled the Jews' plans to kill him and he took himself out of Festus' authority. He also carried out God's will

that he go to Rome. “The Roman governor had misjudged his man. Beneath Paul’s polite and polished exterior and his personal grace and charm, all ennobled by his vital Christianity, there was a strong vein of iron resolution and indomitable will. ... Suddenly Festus found himself checked. ‘Ad Caesarem Provoco,’ said Paul, ‘I appeal to Caesar’” (Phillips).

- The Caesar at the time was Nero, but he had not yet shown his insanity or his persecuting spirit. He was still under the tutelage of the Stoic philosopher Seneca who taught Nero to be just in his dealings and to keep his sensual appetites under check. Later, he would kill his wife and his beloved tutor and burn Rome and treat Christians with great cruelty, but for now he appeared to be a fairly good emperor.

f. Paul used much wisdom in these matters, and God protected him in spite of all of the forces that were arrayed against him. In an earthly sense, Paul had no power. The government was not for him; the dominant religious leaders hated him; he had no wealth or political power, no friends in high places. He only had God, and that was enough! God’s people and God’s churches are strongest when they are totally dependent on God, though it is tempting to the flesh to seek worldly support.

#### 4. Paul appears before **AGRIPPA AND BERNICE** (Acts 25:13 - 26:32).

##### a. Who was Agrippa?

- He was Herod Agrippa II, a great grandson of Herod the Great who tried to kill the infant Jesus. He was the son of Herod Agrippa I who killed James the brother of John (Acts 12:1-2) and was later eaten of worms (Acts 12:23). “Agrippa II had grown up in Rome, and was a favorite of Emperor Claudius. He was the last in the Herodian dynasty, and has been considered the best of the Herods. He was also a friend to Flavius Josephus, who served as governor of Galilee and a Roman general about this time. Among his other powers, Agrippa II was superintendent of the Jerusalem temple, and he had the power to appoint Israel’s high priests” (*Constable’s Expository Notes*).

- He was the brother of Drusilla, the adulterous wife of Felix.

- He was king over the territory northeast of Judea and lived in the palace at Caesarea Philippi. He renamed the city *Neronias* in honor of Nero.

- Bernice was his sister, but there is testimony from history that they lived together as husband and wife.

- Agrippa II was the last of the wicked Herods to sit on a throne in Israel. All of the Herods had an opportunity to be saved. They were active witnesses of the life of Christ and of the history of the early churches, but they ignored Christ, despised the churches, loved the world instead of God, and lost their souls.

##### b. Festus told Agrippa of Paul’s case and Agrippa desired to hear him for himself (Acts 25:14-21).

- Festus was in a difficult situation due to Paul’s appeal to Caesar. How could he report to Caesar that Paul was falsely condemned by the Jews and that he was going to turn Paul over to the Jews contrary to Roman law? Festus sought Agrippa’s help in this dilemma.

- Festus was a corrupt judge, a liar, and a hypocrite. He is an example of the multitudes of corrupt judges that have populated the courts of this wicked world since man’s fall. On one hand, Festus professed to love justice (Acts 25:14-16). On the other hand, he cared more about appeasing men (in this case the Jewish leaders) than dispensing justice. He knew that if he released Paul according to the law, the Jews would raise a riot and he would be blamed for the ensuing trouble. So though he knew Paul was not guilty of the charges against him, he refused to rule in favor of him and set him free. Festus made no effort to get to the truth of the case. He did not allow Paul

to call witnesses who would have exposed the lies of the Jews about what he was doing in Jerusalem. Festus pretended that he wanted to send Paul to Jerusalem in order to get to the truth (Acts 25:20), but in reality he knew very well that the Jews were liars and that they would attempt to kill him since they had already attempted this.

- Festus was not interested in investigating the truth. The world's most well-known Christian was in his custody, but he gave no serious attention to Paul's witness. To him, Paul was just "a certain man" (Acts 25:14). Festus called the Old Testament Jewish faith "superstition" (Acts 25:19). Though he lived in Israel, it is obvious that he had made no effort to read the Scripture for himself to investigate its veracity. The Ethiopian eunuch will condemn him in the judgment, for he traveled all the way from Africa to investigate the Jewish Scriptures. Festus also made no effort to investigate the claim that Jesus had risen from the dead, lumping it in with "superstition" (Acts 25:19). Festus called him "one Jesus"; to Festus, Jesus was just another man. Living in Israel, Festus could have interviewed the Jews who had seen the resurrected Christ with their own eyes and were still alive (1 Co. 15:6), but he had no interest in the most important things in life. The very purpose of man is to seek God (Acts 17:26-27), but Festus is an example of those who have lived in God's world and enjoyed God's "goodies" while having no interest in seeking God. "Destiny and eternity came and knocked, but Festus could not be bothered to so much as go to the door" (Phillips).

- Festus uses the name "Augustus" for Caesar (Acts 25:21, 25). This was Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus, who reigned from AD 54-68. "Augustus" was a vaunted title that means "venerable" or "majestic" and was first used by Octavius, Julius Caesar's successor and the man who was Caesar when Christ was born (Lu. 2:1). The title *Augustus* was given to Octavius by the Roman senate in 27 BC and was used by succeeding Caesars. *Augustus* is Latin, while the Greek equivalent is *sebastos*. It refers to their claim to Deity and to the Imperial Cult whereby they demanded worship from the people.

- These proud men would not have gone to a humble church service, but they were willing to have Paul appear before them as a lowly prisoner to show off their glory and to satisfy their carnal curiosity. They were not serious seekers; hearing Paul preach was just another entertainment for them. There is no evidence that any of them ever received Paul's witness, but God gave them a magnificent opportunity to their further condemnation. It is not a waste of time to preach the gospel, even to those who aren't sincere, because it is obedience to Christ's command, who said, "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mr. 16:15), and it is a sincere offer of salvation, and it is a glory to God for His goodness in offering salvation to undeserving sinners. "Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?" (2 Co. 2:14-16).

c. Agrippa and Bernice appeared in great pomp (Acts 25:23).

- We must open our eyes to see things in this world by the light of God's Word rather than by natural light.

- The pride and glory of this world is vanity. Carnal men are impressed with it, but God is not impressed and it will soon pass away (1 Jo. 2:17).

- Consider the pomp that was present that day. There was Festus and Agrippa in their most glorious regal garments. There was Bernice in her acclaimed beauty, enhanced with every device known to the fashion industry of that day. There were the chief captains of the powerful Roman

legion stationed at Caesarea in their military glory. There were the principal men of the city in their finery. "What a display of scarlet and purple, burnished brass and glittering steel, silks and jewels, marble and gold" (Phillips).

- The meeting could have taken place in the palace that Herod built out over the sea. It was near the southern end of the hippodrome used for chariot races, Greek athletic games, gladiatorial and other contests. It was a splendid palace made of marble and every expensive and exotic material and featured a large indoor pool carved from the rock of the seabed. The view from the palace porticos and windows would have been spectacular. I have visited Caesarea multiple times, and every time, the sea was a stunning sight, shifting from deep blue to aqua marine depending on the direction one looks and the polarization of the sky. Even in its ruins, Caesarea is beautiful.

- The meeting could also have been held in the splendid theater where Agrippa II's father had been eaten of worms.

(For a pictorial study of Caesarea, including Herod's palace and the theater, see *Bible Times & Ancient Kingdoms*, PowerPoint # 18, "Herod's Temple and the Roman Era.")

- In contrast, Paul was a small man whose bodily presence was described as "weak" (2 Co. 10:10). He was a prisoner. His dress was ordinary. He had no great wealth or social standing. He was hated by the Jews and despised by the Romans. Yet it was this man who was the servant of the most high God, who actually owned everything as an adopted son of God (1 Co. 3:22; 2 Co. 6:10), and who will rule and reign with Jesus Christ forever. But these things can only be seen by faith, and most men, pathetically, live only according to their eyes, not loving and heeding the Holy Scriptures.

d. Paul's sermon (Acts 26:1-23).

- He testified of being raised a strict Jew (Acts 26:4-11).

- He mentioned the 12 tribes of Israel (Ac. 26:7). This refutes the "lost tribes of Israel" heresy. They have never been lost, not to God, nor to man.

- He described Christ's appearance to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:12-15). He saw a light from heaven. This is the testimony of every born again person.

- He related the commission that Christ gave him, which was to turn men from darkness to light (Acts 26:16-20). Here, Paul summarizes his ministry in the brilliant manner in which only the Spirit of God can summarize. Paul's ministry is the standard for every Bible ministry throughout the age (excepting, of course, the apostolic signs, 2 Co. 12:12). Any preacher who does not preach and minister according to the pattern set by Paul is wrong.

- Paul's objective was not to get men merely to believe in Christ and to "have a home in heaven," but that they would experience a radical conversion, life from death, a deliverance from the devil ("to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God").

- Paul emphasized repentance ("that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance," Ac. 26:18). What a contrast this is with the multitude of preachers today who rarely, if ever, mention repentance and who have redefined repentance in a far different manner than Paul's definition! This is a fundamental passage on repentance and salvation. Consider some lessons: (1) Repentance is necessary for salvation. It is required for "forgiveness of sins." (2) Repentance is a turning ("repent and turn to God"). (3) Repentance must be accompanied by faith (Ac. 26:18). Repentance alone does not save; it must be accompanied by faith. "Three things happen when the sinner is brought to see Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and these three are



essentially and inseparably connected: First, the sinner is brought into contact with the HOLINESS of God and repents. Second, the sinner is brought into contact with the LOVE of God and believes. Third, the sinner is brought into contact with the POWER of God and is regenerated” (James Stewart, *The Gospel Message*). (4) Repentance results in a change of life (“and do works meet for repentance,” Acts 26:20). Paul preached the same thing as John the Baptist in the matter of repentance (“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,” Mt. 3:8). Repentance is not a change of life, but it is a change of mind that results in a change of life. The change of life is the evidence. Repentance is what God see; the works are what man sees. “Do you imagine that the gospel is magnified, or God glorified by going to the worldings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their Saviour, while they are wedded to their idols and their hearts are still in love with sin? If I do so, I tell them a lie, pervert the gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness” (C.H. Spurgeon).

- Paul emphasized the completeness of salvation (Acts 26:18). Salvation brings full forgiveness of sins. Salvation brings an eternal inheritance. Salvation is to be sanctified, which means to be set apart as God’s possession.

- Paul described the condition of the unsaved (Acts 26:18). The unsaved is spiritually blind, under the power of the devil, in his sins before God, and has no inheritance in God. He is not a child of God. He is separated from God because of his sin.

- Paul emphasized that the gospel of Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (“saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come,” Acts 26:22). The prophecies are some of the “infallible proofs” upon which the gospel is founded (Acts 1:3). The Christian faith is not a blind leap into the dark. It is a reasonable faith based upon the infallible Word of God.

- Paul preached the death and resurrection of Christ (“That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead,” Acts 26:23). This is the gospel (1 Co. 15:1-4).

- Paul preached that Christ came to be a light to Israel and to the Gentiles (“should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles,” Acts 26:23).

e. The response (Acts 26:24-32)

- There were two different responses to the same gospel message. **Festus** said Paul was mad (Acts 26:24). This is what large numbers of people think about those who preach the gospel. Festus didn’t really believe Paul was mad; he was making an excuse for not believing. When Paul replied that he spoke the words of truth and soberness, Festus was quiet. **Agrippa** said he was almost persuaded to believe (Acts 26:28). Agrippa came closer to salvation than any of the other Herods, but he refused to bow the knee to God and confess Christ as Lord and Saviour. The churches must be patient and cautious and not confuse interest in the gospel, even keen interest, with regeneration.

- Festus and Agrippa admitted that Paul had done nothing worthy of punishment (Acts 26:31-32). Actually, Festus knew this from the earlier “trial” (Acts 25:1-12). He should have released Paul then, but he was a cheap politician who wanted to please the Jews so he offered to send Paul back to Jerusalem. Yet, God was in control of all of these events in spite of man’s conniving plans.

### Paul's Journey to Rome (Acts 27:1 - 28:15)

Now we come to Paul's journey to Rome, which is a notable part of church history. Paul was chosen by God to testify before the emperor of the world. God orchestrated every part of the event, and Paul was His willing and submissive servant.

#### 1. They sailed from Caesarea to Myra (Acts 27:1-5)

- **See *Mastering the English Bible - Maps & Charts 38 Paul's Missionary Journeys.***

- The first ship from Caesarea to Myra was a smaller coastal vessel (Acts 27:2). Myra was a Roman grain storage city.

- Paul was under the charge of Julius, a centurion. Augustus' band was a band of soldiers associated with the emperor. *Augustus* was a title that was first given to Octavius, the adopted son of Julius Caesar. There were more than one band of soldiers called the Augustus or Imperial band. Some bands were couriers responsible for communications between Caesar and his armies in the provinces (William Ramsay). In Julius' case, it appears that he was tasked with accompanying prisoners to Rome to appear before Caesar. It is a position of large responsibility. He had to secure the prisoners so they could not escape on the long journeys, make all travel arrangements, obtain food and lodging, etc.

- Luke was with Paul on the voyage, as the author of Acts uses the pronoun "we" throughout this account (Acts 27:1). The last time we saw Luke, he arrived with Paul in Jerusalem from the third missionary journey (Acts 21:17). Perhaps Luke stayed near Paul in Caesarea during his imprisonment there, or perhaps he was informed by the church in Caesarea that Paul was preparing to travel to Rome. Luke was a dependable man.

- Another of Paul's co-workers, Aristarchus, was with them (Acts 27:2). Aristarchus was of the church of Thessalonica and had been with Paul during the turmoil in Ephesus (Ac. 19:29).

- They stopped at Sidon, where Paul was allowed to meet friends on shore, and then they sailed to Myra.

#### 2. They sailed from Myra to The Fair Havens (Acts 27:6-11).

- The ship they took from Myra was a larger grain ship (Acts 27:6). It was from Alexandria, Egypt, which was a major granary to supply Rome's insatiable need for food. Each year, 420,000 tons of grain had to reach Rome by sea from its far-flung provinces. Paul's ship carried a cargo of wheat plus 276 people (Acts 27:37), which would have been a ship of at least 600 tons. Lucian describes an Alexandrian wheat ship named *Isis* that he saw at the Piraeus seaport near Athens (*Works of Lucian*, vol. iv). It was 180 feet long and 45 feet wide and its cargo hold was 44 feet deep. Named for the goddess Isis, it had a massive mast and mainsail. The ship was colorful with paintings on the hull, a scarlet topsail, and other ornamental features. The crew was described as a small army, and the ship was said to carry enough corn to feed the citizens of the region of Attica (around Athens) for a year. Some ships of that day were much larger. Ptolemy Philopater's personal war galley was 420 feet long by 57 feet wide and was near 5,000 tons. Josephus told of a ship that carried 600 men.

- From the beginning, the winds were not favorable and they made very little progress. God does not promise "smooth sailing" in His will, as we see throughout Scripture.

- The centurion made an unwise decision at this point, and we are told exactly how he did it as a warning to all. **First, the centurion listened to the captain instead of Paul** (Ac. 27:9-11). In the centurion's eyes, the captain was an experienced, responsible man, whereas Paul was a prisoner and a man of no particular wisdom in this matter. Yet Paul was God's man who knew God's Word and

God's will. It is always unwise to ignore Paul, meaning to ignore the council of God's Word! Here, we are reminded of the importance of receiving *wise* counsel, which means godly spiritual counsel based on God's Word (Pr. 12:15; 15:22). "And that is the way it so often is. The scales come down on the side of the expert, on the side of science and scholarship, on the side of the man whose opinion is weighted by his position, by his learning in his particular field. The voice of the humble believer in touch with God is ignored. Darwin is given precedence over Moses; the scientist is preferred before the saint; and all are losers" (John Phillips). **Second, the centurion listened to his fleshly desires to find a comfortable haven** ("the haven was not commodious to winter in," Ac. 27:12). The captain and crew and the centurion were motivated by the fact that The Fair Havens did not have the sensual facilities they longed for. **Third, the centurion was deceived by the south wind that blew softly** (Ac. 27:13). It *looked like* circumstances were in their favor and that all would be well. But circumstances can be manipulated by the devil as well as by God and something that appears to be an "open door" is not necessarily God's will. "Beware when the south wind blows softly, especially when it blows in the teeth of advice given by Paul. Too many have been lured away by the soft south wind. It is all too easy to take seemingly favorable circumstances as the deciding factor in the matter of guidance and ignore the sterner counsel of the Word of God" (John Phillips).

• **See Mastering the English Bible - Maps & Charts 38 Paul's Missionary Journeys.**

3. They sailed from The Fair Havens to the shipwreck on Melita (Acts 27:12 - 28:10).

- Soon after leaving the harbor, they were caught in a powerful storm (Acts 27:14-15).
- After the angel appeared to him, Paul encouraged the ship's captain and crew that God would protect their lives (Acts 27:21-25). Paul states that God was in control of all of these events with the purpose of carrying him to Rome (Acts 27:24).
- They were driven by the storm for two weeks and came to Melita (Acts 27:27). Today, this island is called Malta. It is about 20 miles long and 12 miles wide. Adria is the Adriatic Sea which lies between Italy, Malta, Crete, and Greece.
- All 276 men reached the shore safely (Acts 27:37-44). The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners because they were responsible for them and they would lose their lives if a prisoner escaped. God used the centurion to protect Paul's life (Acts 27:42-43). God had promised him that he would go to Rome (Acts 23:11).

4. Shipwreck on Melita

- On Melita, Paul was miraculously saved from the snake bite (Acts 28:3-6). Compare Mark 16:17-18. The Lord's statement that signs would follow the preaching of the gospel was made to the apostles and was fulfilled in their ministry in Acts. This does not mean that God has stopped doing miracles. It means that He is not doing the same type of "sign miracles" that He did through the apostles. Believers are not instructed to drink poison or to handle poisonous snakes. That would be to tempt God. Paul was not playing with the snake! All people have a sense of sin and judgment. Compare Ro. 2:14-15. Every trouble that comes is not the result of sin. Compare Joh. 9:1-3.
- Paul healed many of the islanders (Acts 28:8-9). He was performing the signs of an apostle. Compare 2 Co. 12:12.

5. They sailed from Melita to Puteoli (Acts 28:11-13).

• **See Mastering the English Bible - Maps & Charts 38 Paul's Missionary Journeys.**

- The sign of Castor and Pollux referred to two favorite gods of ancient mariners. They were supposed to be twin brothers, sons of Jupiter. Every aspect of Roman life was permeated with idolatry.
- They stopped at Syracuse, which was the capital of the island of Sicily. They stopped there for three days.
- They next stopped at Rhegium in Naples, in the south of Italy. The modern name is Reggio.

#### 6. They walked from Puteoli to Rome (Acts 28:13-14).

- Paul spent seven days in Puteoli and met with believers there. Puteoli means “the wells” and was famous for its warm springs. The modern name is Pozzuoli. We see that the gospel had already reached far and wide.
- It appears that two groups of believers went out to meet Paul from Rome. Paul had written his epistle to Rome in about AD 57, which was about five years earlier, and the Christians there were eager to meet him. One group met Paul in **Appii forum** (41 miles from Rome). This means the market place of Appius. It was located on the famous **Appian Way**, which was the road from Rome to Capua. It was built in 312 BC by Appius Claudius, a Roman censor, as the first part of the famed Roman roads built especially to facilitate rapid movement of the legions. It was called the “queen of the long roads.” All of the roads eventually led to Rome, hence the saying, “All roads lead to Rome.” Another group of believers from Rome met Paul in **Three Taverns** (30 miles from Rome) (Acts 28:15). It got its name from way stations where travelers spent the night.
- The Christian fellowship greatly encouraged Paul (Acts 28:15). Godly fellowship is an essential part of the Christian life. Compare Heb. 10:24-25. A Christian alone has been likened to a burning branch that needs to be bunched together with other branches for the brightest flame.

#### **Paul in Rome** (Acts 28:16-31)

1. Paul was given special privileges (Acts 28:16). This was possibly because of his part in the successful recovery of the ship’s crew and also possibly because he was not charged with any particular high crime.
2. Paul called the Jewish leaders in Rome and spoke briefly to them (Acts 28:17-20).
  - They told him that they had not heard of the accusations. It is probable that the Jews in Judea did not think their case would be successful, since it had been rejected by Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Also, the Jews were not favored in Rome.
3. He spoke again to many of the Jews, preaching from morning to evening (Acts 28:23-29).
  - Paul was a hard worker in the Lord’s harvest. No matter what the situation, he was busy for the Lord. This is one reason why he saw so much fruit (Pr. 10:4; 12:24; 13:4; 22:29).
  - Some believed and some rejected (Acts 28:24). This always happens when the gospel is preached.
  - Paul plainly warned them about their hardness of heart (Acts 28:25-27). The Bible says the Jews closed their own eyes to the truth (“their eyes have they closed,” Acts 28:27). God did not “sovereignly” close their eyes. It was God’s will that they turn and obey, but they refused. Paul says that the book of Isaiah was given by the Holy Spirit (“Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esias,” Acts 28:25). Modernists who claim that Isaiah was written by multiple unknown authors are pompous; they do not know more than Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul.
  - Paul told them that the Gentiles would receive God’s salvation (“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it,” Acts 28:28).

#### 4. Paul spent two years in Rome.

- He had his own hired house (Acts 28:30). It does not appear that he was free to go outside of the house, but he could receive visitors.
- He preached the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:31). He would have warned the Jews that the kingdom of God would come and they would be left outside if they did not repent, as Christ also warned (Mt. 8:11-12). Paul was not building the kingdom of God; he was preaching about the coming kingdom.
- He preached with boldness and confidence (Acts 28:31). All preachers are to have this boldness and confidence. Compare 2 Ti. 4:2; Tit. 2:15; 1 Pe. 4:11. When a believer preaches with authority today, he is often charged with being proud. They say, "Who do you think you are to believe that you are right and others are wrong?" The believer is commanded to study the Bible so that he can rightly divide it (2 Ti. 2:15). Why would God command this if He did not intend for the believer to be dogmatic about doctrine? Jesus promised that we can know the truth (Joh. 7:17; 8:31-32). The believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach him (1 Jo. 2:27).
- During his incarceration in Rome, Paul wrote "the Prison Epistles," which are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
- It was probably during this period that the book of Acts was written, with Luke working with Paul on this project
- Paul was released from prison in Rome in AD 64. There are several reasons to believe this. First, in Philemon 22 and Philippians 1:23-25 and 2:24, Paul expressed confidence that he would be released. Second, that he was released was commonly believed by the Christians during the early centuries. Clement and Eusebius stated this in their extant writings. Third, Paul was planning to visit Spain after he went to Rome (Ro. 15:24-29). Fourth, we know that 2 Timothy was written just before Paul was put to death (2 Ti. 4:6-8), and in this epistle Paul mentions things that were not true of his first imprisonment. For example, he says he left Trophimus at Miletum (Miletus) sick (2 Ti. 4:20), but Paul did not go by Miletus on his first voyage to Rome.
- Later, Paul was again imprisoned at Rome. He wrote his final epistle to Timothy (2 Ti. 4:6) and was beheaded in AD 68 in the last year of the reign of Nero.

• For a multi-media presentation on this material see *The Way of Life Pictorial Bible 42 Acts 21-28*.

# Conclusion

1. Acts is a major part of God's eternal plan that all things will be one in Christ Jesus. The Old Testament prepared the way by prophecies and the law of Moses, which is the schoolmaster to lead men to Christ. The Gospels describes Christ's coming by the virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His vicarious death, His resurrection, and His ascension back to heaven. Acts describes the firstfruits of the new creation, which is the church.
2. The Gospels describe Christ's Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mr. 16:15; Lu. 24:44-48; Joh. 20:21) and Acts describes the method of carrying out the Great Commission.
3. The New Testament church is God's instrument for the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission. This is the church's God-given work, the church's marching orders. The NT church is the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Ti. 3:15).
4. Acts is very practical. It is a handbook on evangelism, church planting, church building, Christian service, prayer, spiritual warfare.
5. The main theme of the preaching in Acts is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christ. He died for man's sins and rose from the dead, and He offers the gift of eternal salvation to every sinner who hears the gospel, repents, and believes. Salvation is by God's grace alone through faith alone on the basis of Christ's atonement on Calvary.
6. The leaven of error accompanied the establishment of the first churches. Apostasy continued to increase after the death of the apostles so that after a few hundred years, the false churches outnumbered the true ones. This resulted in the creation of the Roman Catholic Church. See 2 Timothy 3:13; 4:3-4.
7. That sound churches exist today after all of the centuries of persecution and false teaching and sin and compromise is a great miracle. It is a miracle likened to the miracle of God's preservation of Israel as a nation after 2,000 years of the diaspora. It is a testimony of the Lord's omnipotent power. It is a fulfillment of His proclamation that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church (Mt. 16:18) and His promise to be with His churches until the end of the age (Mt. 28:20).
8. Following are some of the things that are emphasized in Acts and should, therefore, be emphasized in every church: Christ's sacrificial death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation; Christ's Great Commission; the Holy Spirit; the gospel of salvation by grace without works; repentance; saving faith; the New Testament church; regenerate church membership; separation of church and state; zealous discipleship; the reality of persecution and suffering in this age; the necessity of dealing with false teaching; the importance of proper training of church leaders; the Second Coming of Christ; the coming Kingdom.
9. Consider some of the things that we do not see in Acts: Denominational organizations, parachurch organizations, churches involved in grand social-justice projects, churches involved in political agendas, masses and other sacramental ceremonies, clergy and laity, a special priesthood, prayers to the dead, images erected in the churches, holy relics, crucifixes, cathedrals, popes, vicars, cardinals, archbishops, patriarchs, metropolitans, archdeacons, territorial bishops, infant baptism, Mary veneration, Mary the Queen of Heaven, prayers to the dead, prayers for the dead, purgatory, churches yoking together with secular government, jazzy worship sessions, par-

ty churches, music evangelism, Spirit slaying, holy laughter, spiritual drunkenness, learning how to speak in tongues, gibberish tongues, unsuccessful attempts to heal, rote sinner's prayers, salvation as a ticket to heaven, lording pastors, ruling deacons, and women pastors.

## Acts 29

Acts 28 does not describe the end of Christ's Great Commission, only the beginning. "Acts 29" is the 2,000 years of evangelism and church planting since Acts 28.

Except for the apostles and the apostolic signs, Acts is the pattern for evangelism and discipleship and church planting to the end of the age. The church at Jerusalem and the church at Antioch are the two main churches that are given for our examples.

Christ's Great Commission is for the entire church age. It will not end until the Rapture. Until then, God's redeemed people are to do exactly what we see in the book of Acts.

There is indication in Scripture that we can expect special blessings AT THE END OF THE AGE, even in the midst of apostasy and even as the mystery of iniquity is running rampant to set the stage for the Antichrist.

### REVELATION 3:7-13

Philadelphia represents churches that keep God's Word (Re. 3:8) and escape the great tribulation (Re. 3:10). It represents the remnant of sound churches that remain true to God until the Rapture.

We see that there will be Philadelphia churches in the darkest hours at the end of the church age. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18), and He promised that He would be with it "even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20).

#### *Christ's revelation of Himself to the church at Philadelphia (Re. 3:7)*

This is the most important part of the messages. We must look at Christ. Looking at Christ is what transforms God's people and God's churches. This revelation was given to encourage a weak, despised church that was keeping God's Word in the midst of a wealthy, proud, sensual society. Christ was saying to the church at Philadelphia, "Keep your eyes on me! Trust me! Keep on keeping on!"

*"These things saith he that is holy"*

- He is the holy one in contrast to the unspeakable wickedness of the pagan society in which the Philadelphia church existed. His people are to live holy lives that shine as light in pagan darkness. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Php. 2:15).

*"he that is true"*

- He is the true God in contrast to the foolish Greek and Roman gods. He is true (Joh. 14:6). His Word is true (Re. 21:5). Pilate, a highly educated, highly placed Roman governor, asked Jesus, "What is truth?" (Joh. 18:38). This is the most important question in life, and the answer is Jesus Christ is truth.

*"he that hath the key of David"*

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## Maps & Charts

Found on the following pages are:

Map 29 - *Israel: Jesus' Ministry*

Map 37 - *Roman Empire AD 117*

Map 38 - *Paul's Missionary Journeys*

Sample



Israel: Jesus' Ministry

The Roman Empire in 117 AD

Legend:

- Senatorial provinces (pink)
- Imperial provinces (green)
- Client states (grey)



