

# The Acts of the Apostles

## Introduction

The Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, the physician, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When we say, “by inspiration of the Spirit” we mean not that the Holy Spirit gave word for word what Luke wrote down, but we say that Luke was guided by the Holy Spirit to write a history of the early church. The stories that he included were stories chosen by Luke but were there for a reason guided by our Heavenly Father. The Acts of the Apostles is part of the inspired New Testament for us today.

It is this author’s position that the Acts of the Apostles was not written to give the church a guidebook for how to organize itself, neither is it a handbook to describe how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers, etc. Christians through the centuries have sometimes said that since Acts contains the story of the new Church after the resurrection of Jesus that we should model our church after what the early Christians do in Acts. Not necessarily! Christians have used the book of Acts to come up with teachings on the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and other doctrines. Narrative sections of scripture are not always the best sources for doctrinal points.

Think about it! What was Luke’s purpose for choosing the stories he recorded? Why did Luke write down the stories that he told in the order that he did? Our first assignment as we begin this study is to read through the Book of Acts in a short time period and ask ourselves what Luke’s purpose (and the Holy Spirit’s purpose) was for writing Acts. Especially focus on the historical and chronological notes in the book of Acts.

Our study has two points. First, if we are sincere in our desire for a closer walk with God, we will desire an improved understanding, or interpretation, of the meaning of Acts. We will not just be trying to “be a peculiar people” with an interpretation that is uniquely ours. Instead, we are looking for an interpretation that is correct. We are seeking the meaning or message that Theophilus received when he read The Acts of the Apostles. We want to answer the question, “What did Luke mean by this?”

Second, we want to ask ourselves, how we can apply The Acts of the Apostles to our Christian walk today. What does the text mean to me personally? How can this make me a better disciple of “The Way” (Acts 9:2; 24:14)? My prayer is that each lesson will accomplish these two goals for you personally. Enjoy.

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# Lesson One: Luke the Physician

**Memory Verse:** “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” Acts 1:8.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 1:1–6:7; Acts 6:8–12:24; Acts 12:25-16:5; Acts 16:6-19:20; Acts 19:21-26:32; Acts 27:1-28:31

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 1:1-11

## Introduction:

Did you read through the book of Acts in preparation for this lesson? Try to do so if you did not.

Luke is known to be the author of The Acts of the Apostles (Acts) and the Gospel of Luke. How do we know that? In the first chapter of Acts, we see that the same author that wrote the Gospel of Luke wrote Acts.

What else do we know? We know that the author of Acts was someone who accompanied Paul on some of his later journeys. For example, look at the use of “we” in Acts 16:10-17; 20:7; 21:1, 17 and 27:1. We also have the testimony of several early Christian writers, who refer to the author as Luke. Irenaeus (A.D. 178), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 190), Tertullian (A.D. 200) and Eusebius (A.D. 325) all record the author as Luke.

When did Luke write Acts? We can assume that the book was not finished until two years after the start of Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, because of the reference in Acts 28:30. That would fix the date about A.D. 63. The time period covered by Acts was from Christ’s ascension into heaven until A.D. 63, or about 30 years.

What was Luke’s source of information for writing Acts? Luke, as a companion of Paul, was an eyewitness of the growth of the early church. His close contact with Paul and other leaders of the church no doubt filled in the gaps as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Who was Luke the Physician? This lesson is going to take a look at who the author was as recorded in Scripture. We are also going to develop some ideas of why Luke chose the stories that are in Acts of the Apostles. Finally, we’ll get started with the study of Acts by looking at chapter one.

## Lesson Questions:

### *Luke the Physician*

1. Review the Scriptures that mention Luke and the introductions to the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Who was Luke and why was he a good choice to write a Gospel and the story of the early church? Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3; Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24.
2. Is “The Acts of the Apostles” an appropriate name for the book?
3. Speculate about Luke’s purpose in writing Acts? Acts 1:1-8; 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:4-5; 19:20. Was Jesus’ statement about the spread of the early church in Acts 1:8 fulfilled?
4. Did Luke write a complete history of the early church and the early church leaders? Romans 15:19; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 1:1.
5. Are the stories described in the Book of Acts to be a model or set a pattern for the church today? What stories in Acts should churches use as models for the church?

### *Acts 1:1-26 The Promise of the Father and the Ascension of Christ*

6. About how many days had passed since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus before His ascension took place? Acts 1:3. How many days was this before the Day of Pentecost? Acts 2:1.
7. How did Jesus prepare His followers for His ascension? John 6:62; 14:2-3; 16:5, 16-18, 28-29.
8. Where did He go? Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Peter 3:22.
9. The apostles were commanded to wait for the “promise of the Father.” When did the apostles receive this promise? Acts 1:4-5; Luke 24:49.
10. What was the requirement for the apostle chosen to replace Judas and why? Acts 1:15-26.

## Question for thought:

It is said by some that Luke spent several years growing the church at Philippi while Paul traveled on to other cities. See Acts 16:10-17 and Acts 20:3-5 versus Acts 18:1-3, 23; 19:1-2. Note the use of the word “us” or “we” in the narration, compared to the lack of “us” in the narration in between. What do you think of this idea?

## Lesson Two: The Day of Pentecost

**Memory Verse:** *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire”* Matthew 3:11.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Numbers 11:16-30; Joel 2:1-32; Acts 2:1-47; Acts 4:23-31; Acts 10:23-48; Acts 19:1-20

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 2:1-13

### Introduction:

The lesson today will examine the events that took place on the Day of Pentecost. We will look at whether this fulfilled the *“promise of the father”* discussed in lesson one. We will look at some of the background stories and teachings from the Old Testament that Jews may have been thinking about as they saw the evidence of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Finally, we will examine the outpouring of the Holy Spirit fulfilling the prophecy of John the Baptist. In Acts, we see four Pentecost-type events where the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred: in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), to Cornelius’ household (Acts 10:44-46), and to the Ephesian believers (Acts 19:1-6). Notice that in each event the baptism of the Holy Spirit falls on all the believers who were present. Also, notice that the outpourings of the Holy Spirit parallel the prediction of the outward movement of the Gospel in Acts 1:8. We see Jerusalem Jews, Judeans, Samaritans, and then Gentile believers, receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. How are we to understand these events? Why did Luke highlight these events?

With this we open what is a controversial subject for some. One of the strengths of the Church of God Seventh Day is the focus on Bible study and a reliance on the word of God for our answers. We strongly believe the Bible and not traditions of men or the teachings of men, to be our authority for our faith and practice. With this focus, the challenge is to remember, in humility, to speak when the Bible speaks and to be silent when it is silent. We cannot have the attitude that we are better than other Christians because of our doctrine. Humbly search the scriptures as you study this lesson.

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 2:1-13 The Coming of the Holy Spirit*

1. Was Jesus guided by the Holy Spirit during His ministry? Acts 1:2; 10:38; Luke 4:1, 18. What about before His baptism? Luke 2:39-40, 46-49; 3:22-23.
2. What prophecy did John the Baptist make about Jesus that was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost? Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 2:4, 33.
3. Does the reference to baptism *“with the Holy Ghost, and with fire”* in John the Baptist’s prophecy in Matthew 3:11 refer to the tongues of fire on the disciples’ heads in Acts 2:3?
4. The apostles were commanded to wait for the *“promise of the Father.”* When did the apostles receive this promise? Acts 1:4-5; Luke 24:49; John 7:37-39; John 20:22.
5. What has fire symbolized in the Old Testament? Exodus 3:2-5; 19:18; 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:36; Hebrews 12:18, 29.
6. What might the *“sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind”* described in Acts 2:2 mean to the Jews? 1 Kings 19:11; Job 38:1; Ezekiel 1:4.
7. What is the symbolism of the Holy Spirit coming at the time of the *Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost*? Leviticus 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:16; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:13-14.
8. What could the symbolism of speaking in tongues represent to the Jews? Acts 2:4, 7-11; Genesis 11:6-7; Isaiah 28:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:21-22.
9. How was this coming of the Spirit at Pentecost different from the Holy Spirit’s working in the Old Testament? Exodus 4:14-16; 18:18; 1 Samuel 16:13-14; 2 Kings 2:9-10, 15; Joel 2:28.
10. What does the phrase, *“filled with the Holy Ghost”* mean in Acts 2:4? What were the evidences of this filling?

### Question for thought:

Is there a difference between the speaking in other languages as described in Acts 2 and the discussion of speaking in tongues described in other scripture references? Acts 2:4-11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30.

## Lesson Three: The Gospel Spreads Through Jerusalem

**Memory Verse:** “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” Acts 2:42.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 2:1–40; Acts 2:41–47; Psalm 16; Psalm 110; 1 Peter 2:9–25; 2 Corinthians 5:1–21

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 2:22–41

### Introduction:

We continue looking at the events on the Day of Pentecost in this lesson. Jesus had commanded His followers to preach His message and had given them the Spirit to do so on the Day of Pentecost. The apostles are filled with power to be Christ’s witnesses. Peter, with the other eleven apostles behind him, stands up to preach the good news about Jesus and His resurrection. The points Peter makes about Jesus are made again and again throughout the rest of Acts.

Peter also refutes the notion that those filled with the Holy Ghost are drunk. It is incredulous that 120 Jews would be intoxicated on the morning of a holy feast day. He quotes Joel 2:28–32 to explain that this is the fulfillment of prophecy by God.

In response to this message, we see the good news of the Gospel spreading to the residents throughout Jerusalem. We also look at what happens after Pentecost. We get an overview of the life of the early church. They had things in common. They sold their possessions to share. They daily praised God and went to the temple together. They were bold in proclaiming the Gospel. They were devoted to prayer and fellowship. They continued in the apostles’ doctrine. And their number was added to daily, “*such as should be saved.*”

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 2:14–41 Peter’s Sermon*

1. What does Peter use to back up his preaching? Acts 2:16, 25, 34.
2. Has Joel 2:28–32 been completely fulfilled? According to Acts 2:33 when are the “*last days*” in Acts 2:17?
3. Along with preaching the facts about Jesus, what else did Peter speak about and what was the response? Acts 2:23, 37.
4. What are the steps to salvation that are described by Peter in his sermon at Pentecost? What steps are not included? Acts 2:37–39.
5. What action was Peter asking for when he asked those who were pricked in their heart to repent? Acts 2:38; Mark 1:4, 15; Luke 3:3; 13:3; 24:47. What is the meaning of the word repentance?
6. Does baptism bring forgiveness of sins? Acts 2:38; Romans 2:25; 6:3–4.
7. What does it mean when Peter said that Jesus is “*both Lord and Christ*”? Acts 2:36.
8. In Acts 2:25–28, 34–35, we see Peter quoting what David said about Jesus from Psalm 16:8–11 and Psalm 110:1. What do these verses tell us about David’s view of the Messiah?

*Acts 2:42–47 The Fellowship of the Believers*

9. What do you think the “*apostles’ teaching*” or “*doctrine*” was that is mentioned in Acts 2:42?
10. In Acts 2:42–47, Luke describes believers who had “*all things common*” and “*sold their possessions and goods....*” Is that an example for us today? Why or why not?

### Question for thought:

It is easy to criticize the modern church when we look at the early church in Acts 2:42–47. Instead, ask yourself which of these characteristics are evident in your life. Do you love the brethren? Are you faithful in study of doctrine, in fellowship and in prayer?

## Lesson Four: Peter and John

**Memory Verse:** “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole” Acts 4:10.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 3:1-10; Acts 3:11-4:31; Acts 4:32-5:16; Acts 5:17-6:7; 1 Peter 2:9-25; 2 Corinthians 5

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 4:13-22

### Introduction:

Luke reports near the end of chapter 2 that many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. One of these wonders is going to be the subject of our study this lesson. Peter and John go up to the temple to pray in the Jewish tradition. They start to walk past a lame man who is at the temple gate. This man was a beggar, earning his living from the generosity of those passing by. **Note** that in the “*name of Jesus*” the lame man rises and walks, not in the power of Peter.

The miracle produces not just a healed man, but the attraction of a crowd ready to hear the Gospel. Peter uses the opportunity to preach the gospel and calls the people to repentance. Peter’s sermon speaks of the resurrection of Christ, which offends the Jewish authorities. They then throw Peter and John into prison.

This lesson, we see challenges being faced by the new church and how they are met. We see the beginning of persecution by Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. We see that some, so called, church members were deceivers. We find that the Grecian widows were being neglected.

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 3:1-4:31 Peter and John Preach in Jerusalem*

1. What is to be our response to those who are physically poor and spiritually needy like the man begging at the temple gate called Beautiful? Acts 3:1-4; Psalm 113:7-8; Isaiah 58:7-10; Galatians 2:10.
2. How would you describe the crippled man’s faith? Acts 3:16.
3. What is the punishment from God for those who commit sins ignorantly? Acts 3:17-20.
4. After Peter and John were released, what did the believers pray? What were the important elements of their prayer? Acts 4:24-30.
5. Did they pray for safety from persecution?

*Acts 4:32-5:11 Ananias and Sapphira*

6. In what way did Ananias and Sapphira “tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” Acts 5:9. Do you think this story helped purify the church?
7. What does the story of Ananias and Sapphira teach us about how we should regard our possessions?

*Acts 5:12-6:7 The Apostles Arrested and Freed*

8. What can we agree with in Gamaliel’s speech in Acts 5:33-39? In what ways would we disagree with him?
9. Who were the “Grecians” referred to in Acts 6:1? Do you think the seven appointed were Grecians or Hebrews? Acts 6:5.
10. Does the story of the appointment of seven men to minister to the Greek widows institute the office of deacon? What were the qualifications of these men? Acts 6:3, 5.

### Question for thought:

We are commanded to obey government authorities, unless their demands clearly violate God’s Word. In what areas might we need to “*obey God rather than men*”? Acts 5:29; Jeremiah 20:9; Amos 3:8; 1 Corinthians 9:16.

# Lesson Five: The Gospel Spreads Through Samaria

**Memory Verse:** “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?” Isaiah 66:1.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 6:8-8:3; Acts 8:3-8:40; Deuteronomy 18:1-22; Isaiah 53:1-12; Isaiah 66:1-24; Amos 5:1-27

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 6:8-15

## Introduction:

This lesson covers the martyrdom of Stephen and the spread of the Gospel to Samaria. Jesus had given His followers a road map to follow. They were to go from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. Notice how God uses persecution to send the disciples outward from Jerusalem. Forced to leave their home, Christians went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

First, the Jews in Jerusalem were reached with the Gospel. In this next phase of spreading the gospel, the word goes out to Jews and others in cities around Jerusalem. Luke gives us the story of Philip to demonstrate this evangelism effort. Philip was one of the seven chosen to serve the Grecian widows.

It is interesting that Philip goes to the “*city of Samaria*” to preach Christ. Given the enmity between Jews and Samaritans, we are amazed at Philip’s success! It once again shows the hand of our Heavenly Father in the spread of the Gospel. Could Jesus have laid the groundwork by the evangelism He did in Samaria? Who knows! We do not know that the area Philip evangelized is the same as Sychar where Jesus preached (John 4:39-41).

In any case, Philip was very successful. Luke records that the crowds “*with one accord gave heed*” to the message Philip spoke. They listened to his message and they were reached by the miracles done through Philip. Philip was seen as the “*great power of God.*”

As we see the example of Jewish Christians going to preach to the despised Samaritans, what is our response? Do we reach out to the “*Samaritans*” in our neighborhood? Is your church segregated with only “*Jews*” or “*Samaritans*”? “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” Galatians 3:27-28.

## Lesson Questions:

*Acts 6:8-7:60 The Martyrdom of Stephen*

1. What might Stephen’s family background be, given his name and his synagogue, and his selection as one of the seven to serve the Grecian widows? Acts 6:5, 8-9.
2. What were the accusations against Stephen and were they true? Acts 6:11-15; 7:51-53.
3. What does Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 say about his views of Abraham’s covenant? Acts 7:2-8. His view of God? Acts 7:9-16. Of the temple? Acts 7:44-50. About Christ? Acts 7:52-56.
4. What did Stephen mean when he called the council members, “*stiffnecked*” and “*uncircumcised in heart and ears*”? Acts 7:51-53; Exodus 32:9, 33:3, 5; Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4.
5. What does it mean that the hearers were “*cut to the heart*”? Acts 7:54. Does it have the same meaning as the words used in Acts 2:37 and 5:33?

*Acts 8:1-25 The Gospel Spreads to Judea and Samaria*

6. Do you think there was an outward manifestation when the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost in Acts 8:14-18?
7. Why was Simon the Sorcerer so wrong when he asked for the power of the Holy Ghost given by the laying on of hands? Acts 8:18-23.
8. Do you think that Simon repented of his sin? Acts 8:24.

*Acts 8:26-40 Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch*

9. What characteristic of the Ethiopian Eunuch, made him willing to accept the Gospel message from Philip? Acts 8:27-31.
10. Does the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch tell us anything about the ordinance of Baptism? Acts 8:36-39 (Refer to the Introduction for comments).

## Question for thought:

What is to be the Christian’s view of martyrdom? Contrast that with the attitude towards martyrdom of a follower of radical Islam. 2 Corinthians 4:11-12; Revelations 2:10, 13; 6:9-10.

## Lesson Six: The Conversion of Saul

**Memory Verse:** “And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Acts 9:4.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 9:1-31; Acts 7:58-8:4; Acts 22:1-23; Acts 26; Philippians 3; Galatians 1:1-24

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 9:1-31

### Introduction:

This lesson focuses on the story of Saul’s conversion. This story is shared by Luke in three locations (Acts 9, 22, 26). This account of Paul’s conversion marks a turning point in the history of the early church. Paul will begin to be the center in Luke’s account of the history of the church. We have seen the Gospel spread to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria. Now we see the seeds planted to begin the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles and to the “uttermost parts of the earth.”

Think about Paul’s persecution of the believers in Jerusalem. God was making use of Paul, even while he was in rebellion, to propel the believers outward into the world! Stephen and other men and women died in Jerusalem as a result of the persecution of their faith. They did not die in vain. Their deaths gave a reason for believers to leave Jerusalem and spread the Gospel to other regions. God is ultimately in control regardless of the actions of sinful men, and in spite of their actions.

When Paul tried to go outside Jerusalem to persecute His people, he was stopped. God had a special purpose for Paul. He had been specially trained to be a witness. And so, when Paul took that road to Damascus he was not just stopped from persecuting God’s people, but he came face to face with his Messiah. In obedience to that command he became a witness of what he had seen and heard on that road. Immediately, he began preaching the Gospel.

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 9:1-31 The Conversion of Saul*

1. Locate Damascus on a Bible map. How far is Damascus from Jerusalem? In what Roman province is it located? What do you think Saul’s concern was with Christianity reaching and flourishing in Damascus?
2. We see the phrase “*the Way*” used to describe Christians in Acts 9:2. From where do you think this name could have come? Could it be a reference to Jesus’ use of the phrase in John 14:6?
3. Think about your conversion. While your conversion may not have been as dramatic as Paul’s, compare the direction of your life before and after your conversion. Are you prepared to tell others about what Christ did for you? Acts 9:3-9; Ephesians 4:17-24; Titus 3:3; 1 Peter 3:15.
4. Describe the vision that Ananias received from the Lord in Acts 9:10-16. Did Ananias know Saul? What was Ananias’ fear in seeking out Saul? How does the Lord Jesus calm his concern?
5. How do you reach out to newcomers to the faith or outsiders who visit your church?
6. Why was the phrase “*wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” used by Ananias in Acts 22:16? See also Acts 9:17-18.
7. Some church denominations use Acts 22:16 to say that Baptism is necessary to wash away sins. Does the act of baptism wash away sins? Romans 2:28-29; Ephesians 2:8-9.
8. What Messianic prophecies might Saul have used to testify that Jesus was the Christ? Acts 9:19-22. Come up with five prophecies from the Old Testament.
9. How many years had passed before Saul went back to Jerusalem in Acts 9:26-30? Why did he return? Galatians 1:18-24. **Note:** it is said by some that the visit written about in Galatians was the one described in Acts 11:30.
10. Is the church progressing towards the goal given to the Apostles by Jesus in Acts 1:8? Acts 9:31

### Question for thought:

Why do verses in the Bible tie the symbol of baptism so closely to the washing away of sins? Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12.

## Lesson Seven: The Gospel Spreads to the Gentiles

**Memory Verse:** “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” Galatians 3:27, 28.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 9:32-10:23; Acts 10:24-48; Acts 11:1-18; 1 Peter 1 & 2; 1 Peter 3-5; 2 Peter 1

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 10:1-23

### Introduction:

In this lesson we see Peter being challenged to chart new territory for the church. God commanded Cornelius to invite a Jew named Peter to his home; this was not an issue for Cornelius. Not so with Peter. For Peter, a call to go with Gentiles to a Gentile home was against a lifetime of training. Christ is preparing Peter to cross this boundary line.

To accomplish His purpose, Christ uses a vision. Peter is on the rooftop at noontime. He is praying and falls into a trance. What he sees seems like a natural dream for someone who was hungry. A voice from heaven invites Peter to “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But there is a problem. At least some of the animals Peter sees are ceremonially unclean for the Jew. Israel was given detailed dietary instructions to follow in Deuteronomy 14:3-21. Certain animals, including those in Peter’s vision, were unclean. These rules made a distinction between God’s People and the pagan cultures around them. By these rules, God built a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile.

Now Peter is being invited by God to kill and eat animals he has been taught were unclean. The meaning is not clear to Peter, but it soon will be.

Where is God challenging you to change your habits today? Are you responding in faith to that call?

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 9:32-43 Peter Heals Aeneas and Dorcas*

1. What were the good works that Dorcas was known for?
2. What was the effect on others of her being brought back to life?

*Acts 10:1-48 Peter and Cornelius*

3. What was the character of Cornelius? Acts 10:1-2, 30-31. How about from God’s perspective? Acts 10:4.
4. Who came to Cornelius in his vision and what was his message? Acts 10:3-5, 30-32; 11:13.
5. What were the animals that Peter was commanded to eat in his vision and what was Peter’s response? Acts 10:9-16; 11:6
6. What was the direct message that Peter took from his vision? Acts 10:28-29, 34-35; 11:12.
7. In Peter’s vision, Peter addresses the voice who spoke to him as “Lord.” Some red-letter editions of the Bible reference these as words of the Lord Jesus. Is this the Lord Jesus that is speaking in Peter’s vision? Acts 10:13-15, 28; 11:8-9.
8. What was the meaning of the Holy Spirit coming on the Gentile believers? Acts 10:44-48.

*Acts 11:1-18 Peter Reports to the Church*

9. Who criticized Peter for eating with uncircumcised believers? Acts 11:1-3, Galatians 2:12.
10. Was the church satisfied with the explanation Peter gave them? Acts 11:18. Did that end the discussion on the subject?

### Question for thought:

On what law was the “circumcision party” basing the rule that Peter and others are not to eat with those that are uncircumcised?

# Lesson Eight: The Antioch Church and the First Missionary Journey of Paul

**Memory Verse:** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” Romans 1:16.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 11:19-30; Acts 12; Acts 13; Acts 14; Isaiah 53; Psalm 22

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 11:19-30

## Introduction:

As we progress through Acts, things start moving at a faster rate. Persecution becomes more frequent. Herod Agrippa I kills James by the sword and throws Peter in prison. Paul is stoned at Lystra. (According to Deuteronomy 13:6-18, if someone entices a Jew to engage in idolatry, he must be put to death by stoning. If someone entices an entire city to serve other gods, then he is killed with a sword.)

We also see the church having leaders called elders. Churches are organized and share gifts with each other. The Holy Spirit acts to call the church at Antioch to send Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles with the Gospel message. They go across Cyprus and then Asia Minor on what is commonly referred to as Paul’s first missionary journey.

As we study the accelerating spread of the Gospel in Acts and as we live in a world where change is accelerating, ask ourselves how we are doing our part. How are we reaching our community with the Good News? Are we sharing needed gifts with other churches? Are the elders in our churches actively seeking the Lord’s guidance? What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do? Prayerfully seek guidance from the Holy Spirit to be a light in your community and world. Be the light on the hill that shows God’s light to the world.

## Lesson Questions:

*Acts 11:19-30 The church at Antioch*

1. Who was Barnabas and why was he a good choice for the Jerusalem church to send to Antioch? Acts 4:36-37; 11:22-24; 13:1-2.
2. How do the prophets in the New Testament differ from Old Testament prophets? Acts 11:27-30; 15:32; 21:10-11; 1 Corinthians 14:3 versus Isaiah 42:1-4; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 12:10; Malachi 4:1-2.
3. Do you think the actions of the Gentile church at Antioch in sending a gift would have helped break down any barriers between Jew and Gentile Christians? Acts 11:27-30; 12:25.

*Acts 12:1-19 James killed and Peter in Prison*

4. Acts gives several instances where angels intervene on behalf of God’s people. What is the role and position of angels? Acts 12:7-10; Hebrews 1:4, 14; 2:9, 16.
5. Why were the believers surprised when God answered their prayers and released Peter? Acts 12:13-17.

*Acts 12:20-25 Death of Herod*

6. Why do you think Luke takes time to tell the story of the death of Herod? Acts 12:20-24.

*Acts 13:1-14:34 Barnabas and Saul Sent to the Gentiles*

7. Comment on the calling and sending of Barnabas and Paul to the mission field. Acts 13:2-4.
8. What is said about Jesus in the message by Paul in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia? Acts 13:23, 28-39. What Old Testament prophecies are quoted in this message? Acts 13:33-35.
9. What actions by the residents of Lystra were so offensive to Paul and Barnabas? Acts 14:11-18.
10. How did Paul and Barnabas select elders in each city? Acts 14:22-23.

## Question for thought:

What is the witness that demonstrates God’s goodness towards all nations and all people so that nobody has an excuse? Psalms 19:1-6; Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-28; Romans 1:18-23.

## Lesson Nine: The Council at Jerusalem

**Memory Verse:** “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood” Acts 15:19-20.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Exodus 20; Psalms 119; Acts 14:24-15:21, Acts 15:22-35; Acts 15:36-16:5; Romans 14

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 15:1-21

### Introduction:

Throughout history, the church has faced many controversies. These controversies were present in the early church as well. Luke did not try to gloss over these disagreements. In this study, we find a doctrinal dispute that still goes on today in churches.

In the First Century, this dispute was great enough that the church convened a council of elders to address it. The outcome was positive for both sides of the argument. The council, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, produced a decision that was well received by both Jews and Gentiles.

What was the dispute? It begins when some Jewish Christians come to Antioch from Jerusalem. These Christians are concerned that for Gentiles to be saved they must receive the sign of circumcision. Paul and Barnabas “had no small dissension and disputation with them...” Do we have any disagreements today over what is necessary for a person to be saved? To describe the disagreement in our modern language, “once a person has accepted Jesus as his Savior, what must he do to be a sanctified growing Christian?” This is an often-discussed topic in our church. How about yours?

Our author Luke seems to hold the same opinion on the argument as Paul and Barnabas, as is seen by his comment about the joy the conversion of the Gentiles brought to the believers at Phoenicia and Samaria on the trip to Jerusalem.

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 14:23-28 Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch*

1. The Bible shows that God takes care of the spiritual state of His people through godly men. Do you have elders in your church who are a blessing on your life? Numbers 11:16-17; Acts 14:23; 20:26-31; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

*Acts 15:1-21 The Jerusalem Council*

2. Were the men from Judea commissioned by the Apostles to go to Antioch to preach to the church there? Acts 15:1-2, 24.
3. Did the teachings of the men from Judea match the Apostles’ teachings? Acts 10:47-48; 13:39; 15:7-8.
4. What do you think was the argument made by the men from Judea for circumcision? Genesis 17:7-14.
5. What was wrong with requiring circumcision of the Gentiles? Romans 2:25-29, 1 Corinthians 7:17-19, Galatians 5:1-5.
6. Do we have deeply ingrained beliefs and customs that seem right, but that may be only followed because they are comfortable? How do we know that we are making His ways, our ways?
7. What was the guide for the leaders at the Jerusalem Council in making their decision? Acts 15:28. Did they have any other indication that God was behind their decision? Acts 15:7-9.
8. Who was the James who speaks in the meeting? Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12.
9. In Acts 15:19-20 we see James giving instructions to the Gentile Christians. This instruction is also given in Acts 15:28-29. Since we are Gentile Christians, are we following these rules today? Why or why not?
10. What steps did the apostles and elders take to be sure that the right message got back to the church at Antioch? Acts 15:24-26, 30-34. What were the qualifications of Judas and Silas?

### Question for thought:

Observance of the Sabbath was not mentioned as a requirement for the Gentiles. Would the Gentiles in Antioch have observed the Sabbath? Why or why not?

## Lesson Ten: The Second Missionary Journey of Paul

**Memory Verse:** “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” Acts 17:11.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 15:36-16:40; Acts 17; Acts 18:1-22; 1 Corinthians 9; Galatians 2; Ephesians 2

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 16:1-10

### Introduction:

In our study, we go with Paul on the second missionary journey. The Apostle has several exciting events that take place on this trip. It starts out with a split between Paul and Barnabas. Timothy joins the group and is first introduced to us. The Gospel is carried farther than ever before, into Macedonia. Paul and Silas are put in prison in Philippi and unchained by an earthquake, which doesn't give them their freedom but does result in the conversion of the jailer and his household. We meet those noble Bereans who diligently study the scriptures. Paul preaches in Athens and the Corinthian church is started.

Our author Luke is along on at least part of this journey. See the numerous references to “we” and “us” in Acts 16. Then contrast that with the references to “they” in Acts 17 and 18. If you recall from lesson one, this is where Luke may have stopped along the way to help start the Philippi church.

We see in this section of Acts the conversion of several people, from a wealthy merchant woman to a slave girl. What was Paul's response to the Philippian jailer's question, “What must I do to be saved?” It was “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” And it also says, “they spake unto him the word of the Lord...” A secondary focus to this lesson will be to look at what it takes for a person to be saved.

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 15:36-41 Paul and Barnabas Disagree Over John Mark*

1. Who was John Mark and where else is he mentioned in the Bible? Acts 12:12; 13:13; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13.
2. Did any of these verses suggest that Paul's opinion of Mark later changed?

*Acts 16:1-17:14 Paul at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea*

3. Why was Timothy circumcised if circumcision was not necessary for Gentile believers? Acts 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:20; Galatians 2:3; 5:2.
4. How was Paul “forbidden of the Holy Ghost” to preach the word in Asia? Acts 16:6-7, 9-10.
5. Describe the conversion of Lydia in Philippi. Acts 16:11-15.
6. Describe the conversion of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:25-34.
7. Describe the conversion of Jason in Thessalonica. Acts 17:1-9. Did they suffer for their faith? What stories did the Jews use to rile up the City of Thessalonica?
8. Why were the Jews at Berea *more noble* than those of Thessalonica? Acts 17:10-12.

*Acts 17:15-18:22 Paul at Athens and Corinth*

9. How did Paul use the altar “To The Unknown God” to reach the men of Athens with the Gospel? Acts 17:22-27. Was his message successful? Acts 17:34.
10. Where did Paul first go to preach in Corinth and what was the result? Acts 17:4-6, 8.
11. Describe the vision that Paul received while at Corinth in Acts 17:9-10. Did Paul listen to the Lord? Acts 17:11-18.

### Question for thought:

Several modern translations insert “*Spirit of Jesus*” in the place of “*Spirit*” in Acts 16:7. Why is this phrase used here and in other places, interchangeable to refer to the Holy Spirit? Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19; 1 Peter 1:11.

## Lesson Eleven: The Third Missionary Journey

**Memory Verse:** “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” Acts 20:28.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 18:23-28; Acts 19; Acts 20; Acts 21:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1-3; Ephesians 4:17-30

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 18:22-28

### Introduction:

Today, we find Paul spending some time at Antioch and then off he goes again on the third missionary journey. Paul follows the route of his second trip through Galatia and Phrygia, “*strengthening all the disciples.*”

Paul spends a considerable amount of time at Ephesus during this trip. That is not usual for him. He usually “*plants*” the church and leaves someone else to “*water*” it. Notice that he always, as he says in 1 Corinthians 3, gives credit to God for the increase. After Ephesus, Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece and then stops at Miletus. From Miletus, he sends for the Ephesian elders. He doesn’t take time to stop in Ephesus to see them but sends for them to meet him instead. He is in a hurry because he wants to be back in Jerusalem before the day of Pentecost.

On the way to Jerusalem, Paul is warned several times of the trials waiting for him at Jerusalem. It says that he is going “*bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem*” and that the “*Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me (or await me). But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*” Acts 20:22-23. Luke had earlier told us that Paul was being led by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. See Acts 19:21.

Paul is ready to suffer if the Lord demands it. Paul in his message to the Ephesian elders holds himself up as an example. He is inviting them to follow him to the extent that he follows Christ. In his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:1), Paul tells them “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*” Who are your models? And who are you a model for? In all things, seek to follow Christ and those who follow him.

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 18:23-28 Apollos and Aquila and Priscilla*

1. What are the good qualities of Apollos that Luke describes? Acts 18:24-26.
2. What do you think Luke meant when he said that Apollos only knew “*the baptism of John.*” Acts 18:25; Matthew 3:2-6, 11-12; Luke 3:7-14.
3. What happened to Apollos after he was informed about Christ more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla? Acts 18:26-28; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9.

*Acts 19:1-41 Paul in Ephesus*

4. What happened to the 12 disciples at Ephesus after they were informed about the Holy Ghost? Acts 19:1-7.
5. Do believers know whether they have the Holy Spirit in their heart? The story of the 12 disciples at Ephesus seems to imply that believers do know whether or not they have the Holy Spirit.
6. Compare and contrast this event with the other three occasions where the Holy Spirit came on followers of Christ. Acts 2:4, 11; 8:18; 10:46; 19:5-6.
7. What happened when Jewish believers tried to exorcise demons in the name of Paul or Jesus? Acts 19:13-17. How was it used to spread the gospel?
8. In Acts 19:24-27 we see the silversmiths in Ephesus unhappy because their shrine making business was hurting because of the many conversions to Christianity. Do you think this was the event that Paul spoke of in his second letter to the Corinthians? Acts 19:29-30; 2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

*Acts 20:1-38 Paul in Macedonia, Greece, Miletus, and Tyre*

9. Acts 20:7 is sometimes used to say that we should meet together on the first day of the week. On what day is this meeting held and is there any significance that Luke reports the meeting was “on the first day of the week?” 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.
10. Describe the prophecies that Luke relates concerning the danger Paul was facing by going to Jerusalem. Acts 20:23; 21:4, 10-11. Why do you think Paul received these warnings?

### Question for thought:

Like the residents of Ephesus who practiced magic arts that burned their books, do you have areas of your life that need cleansing? Acts 19:17-19; Luke 3:10-14; Ephesians 4:17-24; 5:8-11. What modern-day event would cause a similar fear in you that would lead to such a drastic change?

## Lesson Twelve: Paul Arrested in Jerusalem

**Memory Verse:** “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” Matthew 10:28.

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 21:15-36; Acts 21:37-22:21; Acts 22:22-23:11; Acts 23:12-35; Acts 24; Numbers 6

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 21:15-26

### Introduction:

Paul becomes a prisoner in this lesson and remains a prisoner of the Romans throughout the rest of the Book of Acts. As a prisoner of the Romans, Paul is given several opportunities to defend himself before the leaders. We also are called upon to defend our faith. We must be prepared to give a defense of our faith at all times. Are you ready and able to defend your faith?

As we go through this lesson, notice the wisdom that Paul uses to put himself in a position to share his faith. He uses his Greek language skills, his knowledge of the Jewish language (most likely Aramaic), and his Roman citizenship to his advantage. He was saved from being beaten to death by the Jews by the quick response of the Roman soldiers.

In his speech to the crowd, he appeals to them as a fellow Jew. He uses the respected name of Gamaliel. He refers to his persecution of the early Christians. In his reference to Ananias, Paul speaks of him as devout and well thought of by the Jews in Damascus. His crowd was quiet until he reports that Jesus had sent him to preach to the Gentiles. This idea was not tolerated by the Jews.

When we jump ahead to Paul’s defense before the Jewish Council, we see him using his knowledge of the disagreement between the Sadducee and Pharisee sects within Judaism to his benefit. He causes dissension when he reported to the group that he was a Pharisee and that it was because of his belief in the resurrection of the dead that he was on trial.

Later, we see that the son of Paul’s sister hears of a Jewish plot to kill Paul while he is in route to another meeting with the council. In each of these situations, we see God’s hand with Paul, helping him survive each encounter so that he would be able to testify of the Lord in Rome (Acts 23:11).

### Lesson Questions:

*Acts 21:15-22:29 Paul Is Arrested and Speaks to the Crowd*

1. What was James’ advice to Paul and why? Acts 21:20-24.
2. What was the meaning of going through this purification? Acts 21:26-27; 24:17-18; Numbers 6:2-12.
3. What were the charges Paul was accused of by the Asian Jews who grabbed him? Acts 21:27-28.
4. Why did Paul ask the chief captain for permission to speak to the crowd? Acts 21:39-40; 23:11. Would this have been your natural response?

*Acts 22:30-23:22 Paul Before the Jewish Council*

5. Why did Paul say it was contrary to the law for the Jewish Council to strike him? Acts 23:3; Deuteronomy 25:1-2; John 7:51.
6. Can you explain Paul’s respect for the high priest in Acts 23:4-5? Exodus 22:28; 2 Samuel 19:21; Ecclesiastes 10:20; Jude 1:8.

*Acts 23:23-24:27 Paul Before Felix*

7. Why do you think the Jewish elders use Tertullus to speak for them about Paul? Acts 24:1-3.
8. Does Tertullus give an accurate representation to Felix of Paul’s crimes? Acts 24:4-6.
9. How did Paul’s speech to Felix refute the charges against him? Acts 24:10-21. Did Paul stand up for his belief in Jesus as Lord?
10. Do you think Felix was feeling convicted about the need for salvation in Paul’s conversation with him that Luke describes in Acts 24:24-27?

### Question for thought:

Paul, in his speech to the Jewish council and before Felix, said that his conscience before God was clear (Acts 23:1 and 24:16). By the council’s response, they obviously did not agree with his statement. Do you have a clear conscience before God? 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Hosea 6:6; Acts 5:29; 26:19; 2 Corinthians 10:5.

# Lesson Thirteen: Paul on Trial

**Memory Verse:** “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” Acts 26:28

**Daily Bible Readings:** Acts 25; Acts 26; Acts 27; Acts 28; Isaiah 55; 1 Corinthians 3

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 25:1-12

## Introduction:

We might think that Paul is spending two wasted years in prison during the period that is covered in this lesson. But, from another perspective, he accomplishes an important ministry during this time period. He brings Christ’s name before two governors and a king, just as he was commanded to do in Acts 9:15.

Governor Felix has been called back to Rome (about A.D. 59) for a job not so well done. Governor Festus has been appointed in his place. In Paul’s defense before Governor Festus, the Governor had offered that Paul go to trial in Jerusalem before the Jews. Paul turned that offer down. It would have ended in a guilty verdict by the Sanhedrin court in Jerusalem and they would have put Paul to death on the grounds that he was a heretic. And so Paul appeals to Caesar. It was the right of every Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar, to have his case heard before the emperor himself.

King Agrippa II makes a visit to Caesarea to pay his respects to the new Governor. Festus is trying to figure out what crime Paul should be charged with and asks Agrippa to hear Paul’s case. Agrippa says he would be happy to listen to Paul.

King Agrippa’s full name is King Herod Agrippa II. The King is part of the Herod dynasty. There was Herod the Great at the time of the birth of Jesus. He was followed by Herod Antipas (the Herod that Jesus called a fox). Next was Herod Agrippa I (who put James to death and had died a violent death in Acts 12). Herod Agrippa II is the great-grandson of Herod the Great. It’s a powerful dynasty. King Herod Agrippa II was sinful. He was wealthy and had high status. It is said that he had a sinful relationship with his sister Bernice.

Agrippa is making a visit with his sister Bernice to Governor Festus to pay his respects to the new Governor. He’s interested in the case of Paul because he is a Jew. All the Herod’s were Jews and were constantly playing two sides. They were Jews, but they were loyal to the Roman Empire.

Paul knows that everyone, small and great, needs to hear the message of salvation. We must become humble before the greatness of God and recognize our need for Him. Paul challenged King Agrippa to hear that message and to change his life. King Agrippa needed to humble himself. He needed to start protecting the poor and weak of his province by making right judgments. Agrippa needed to see the world through God’s eyes and not through the Emperor’s eyes.

## Lesson Questions:

*Acts 25:1-26:32 Paul Before Governor Festus and King Agrippa and Bernice*

1. Why did Festus ask for help from King Agrippa with Paul’s case? Acts 25:13, 26-27.
2. Why do you think King Agrippa wanted to hear Paul? Acts 25:22; Luke 9:9; 23:8.
3. Why do you think Paul shared the testimony of his conversion with the King and the Governor? Acts 26:9-20.
4. Do you think Paul’s message to King Agrippa and Festus convicted them of the need to change? Acts 26:24-29; John 10:20; 1 Corinthians 14:23.
5. What was the meaning of Paul’s statement that, “*this thing was not done in a corner*” in Acts 26:26?

*Acts 27:1-28:15 Paul Journeys to Rome*

6. Why do you think Paul is allowed to visit friends in the town of Sidon? Acts 27:3.
7. On what basis did Paul make the statements he made about the safety of their trip to Rome in Acts 27:9-10 and in Acts 27:21-26?
8. God had promised to save those on the ship, but what were they to do to help? Acts 27:33-38. How does that relate to us in our Christian walk today?

*Acts 28:16-31 Paul in Rome*

9. In Acts 28:20, Paul said to the Jews in Rome that came to visit that it was because of the hope of Israel that he was bound in chains. What did he mean by this statement? Acts 26:6-7; Jeremiah 14:8, 17:13.
10. Had the Jews in Rome heard about the dispute over whether Jesus was the Messiah? Acts 28:22. How did Paul approach them with the message of the Messiah? Acts 28:23.

## Question for thought:

Why did God allow His servant Paul to suffer, especially to bring him to an island where he would have gladly gone, if asked? Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 3:19-21.