

A photograph of a Gothic church entrance, featuring a large, dark wooden door with metal studs. The door is set within a highly ornate stone archway. Above the door, there are several levels of intricate stone carvings, including statues of figures in niches and a large, central relief. The architecture is characterized by pointed arches and detailed tracery. The text "ACTS" is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the top of the image. Below it, "THE CHURCH CONTINUES" and "PART I" are written in smaller, white, serif capital letters.

ACTS

THE CHURCH CONTINUES
PART I

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Acts Timeline

14 - 37 AD

- ❖ **14-37** - Tiberius reigns as Caesar over the Roman Empire.
- ❖ **26-37** - Pontius Pilate is governor of Judea.
- ❖ **30** - Jesus's trials, death, resurrection, and ascension. Matthias is chosen as a replacement for Judas Iscariot. Holy Spirit comes to the disciples in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.
- ❖ **33-36** - Stoning of Stephen. Saul persecutes the church.

37 - 41 AD

- ❖ **37-41** - Caligula reigns as Caesar over the Roman Empire.
- ❖ **37** - Conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus.
- ❖ **37-41** - Saul is in the desert in Arabia for three years, visits Jerusalem, then he goes to Tarsus (Syria & Cilicia).
- ❖ **38** - Peter has the vision and meets Cornelius.
- ❖ **39** - Emperor Caligula removes Herod Antipas as Tetrarch of Galilee and replaces him with his nephew, Herod Agrippa, who had been a childhood companion of Caligula.

41 - 54 AD

- ❖ **41-54** - Claudius reigns as Caesar over the Roman Empire.
- ❖ **42** - Barnabas sent to Antioch. Paul joins him there.
- ❖ **44** - Martyrdom of James, son of Zebedee. Herod Agrippa dies.
- ❖ **44-47** - Believers respond to famine prophesied by Agabus.
- ❖ **46/47-48** - Paul's first missionary journey.
- ❖ **49** - Council at Jerusalem. Book of James is written.
- ❖ **49/50-52** - Paul's second missionary journey. Paul writes 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
- ❖ **53-57** - Paul's third missionary journey. Paul writes 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. Matthew's Gospel account is written around this time.

AD 54 - 70

- ❖ **54-68** - Nero reigns as Caesar over the Roman Empire.
- ❖ **57-59** - Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and imprisonment at Caesarea.
- ❖ **59** - The arrival of Governor Festus and Paul's trip toward Rome.
- ❖ **60-62** - Paul is shipwrecked and spends his first captivity at Rome. Paul writes Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
- ❖ **62** - James, half-brother of Jesus and leaders of the church in Jerusalem, is martyred.
- ❖ **62-64** - John Mark writes his Gospel account. Luke writes his Gospel account and Acts.
- ❖ **64-66** - Peter writes 2 Peter; Paul's second captivity at Rome; Paul writes 2 Timothy.
- ❖ **66** - Paul is martyred in Rome.
- ❖ **67** - Peter is martyred in Rome.
- ❖ **70** - The Fall of Jerusalem

Author / Setting / Recipient



Luke is writing a follow-up or sequel to his Gospel account, which was written to Theophilus. While it is most likely that Theophilus was a real person of high social standing, this name literally means "friend of God." This could mean that the recipient was anyone who wanted to know and be a friend of God. Luke, though, seems to have a particular focus on a Gentile (non-Jewish) audience.

One main difference from the Gospel according to Luke and the book of Acts is that Luke is a part of some of the events recorded here. When you read Acts, look for the "we" sections where Luke is traveling with Paul on his missionary journeys and participating in the ministry of the gospel personally. (c.f. **Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16**)

Outline of Acts

Theme: The Church Continues

- I. Peter and his coworkers witness in Jerusalem and its environs (1:1–12:25)
 - A. “You will be my witnesses” (1:1–11)
 - B. Preparation and equipping (1:12–2:4)
 - C. God-fearing Jews from every nation (2:5–41)
 - D. The Word of God spreads in Jerusalem (2:42–6:7)
 - E. Stephen’s witness sealed in blood (6:8–8:1)
 - F. Philip’s work in Samaria and Judea (8:1–40)
 - G. The conversion of Saul (9:1–31)
 - H. Salvation for the Gentiles (9:32–11:26)
 - I. The Jerusalem church preserved in famine and persecution (11:27–12:25)

- II. Paul and his companions witness in Asia Minor and Europe (13:1–21:16)
 - A. Paul’s first mission tour: Asia Minor (13:1–14:28)
 - B. The council at Jerusalem (15:1–35)
 - C. Paul’s second mission tour: Europe (15:36–18:22)
 - D. Paul’s third mission tour: Asia Minor and Europe (18:23–21:16)

- III. Paul as prisoner witnesses from Jerusalem to Rome (21:17–28:31)
 - A. Jerusalem: Paul’s arrest and trial (21:17–23:31)
 - B. Caesarea: Paul’s witness before kings and governors (23:32–26:32)
 - C. Paul’s voyage to Rome (27:1–28:16)
 - D. Rome: Paul’s ministry as a prisoner (28:17–31)

Alternatively, here is a simpler, three-part outline:

From Jerusalem (1:1–6:7)

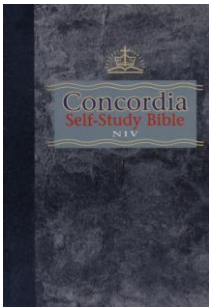
To Judea and Samaria (6:8–9:31)

To the ends of the earth (9:32–28:31)

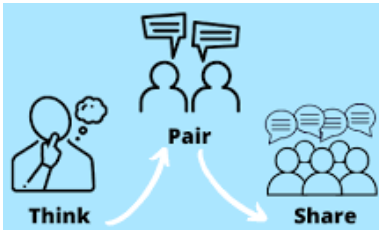


Acts 1:1-11

CONCORDIA SELF-STUDY BIBLE: Theophilus



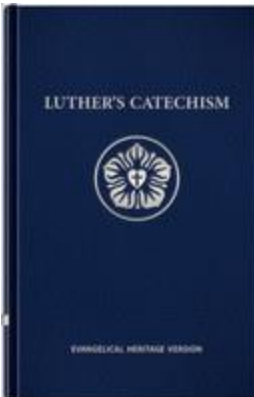
Some think on the basis of **Luke 1:1-4** that Theophilus was a seeker after God and Luke aimed to explain Christianity to him. Others think Theophilus was a recent convert who required instruction in his newfound faith. Still others suggest he was an early church leader for whom Luke provided a summary of events surrounding the rise of Christianity. In any of the above scenarios, it is possible that Theophilus was Luke's patron, financing the publication of Luke and Acts. Though only a maximum of twenty percent of urban men were literate, there was a distinct book culture in the ancient world. Publication involved hand copying an original document to make it available for others. The cost of materials for the initial document plus all subsequent drafts could be expensive, with each copy costing up to four days' wages. As a result, the patronage system was an important factor in making book publication possible in the ancient world.



List as many appearances of the risen Christ as you can recall. For bonus points, note how many involved food. How would these appearances benefit God’s witnesses?

What did Jesus mean saying that in a few days the disciples would be baptized by the Holy Spirit? (c.f. **Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7-8; John 14:26; 16:5-15**)

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (**verse 6**) Why this question? How does Jesus answer it?



THE SECOND PETITION OF THE LORD’S PRAYER

Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean?

God’s kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us and to many others.

How does God’s kingdom come?

God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.

What is the mission plan for the disciples? (**verse 8**) What is our mission plan? (**1 Peter 2:9**)

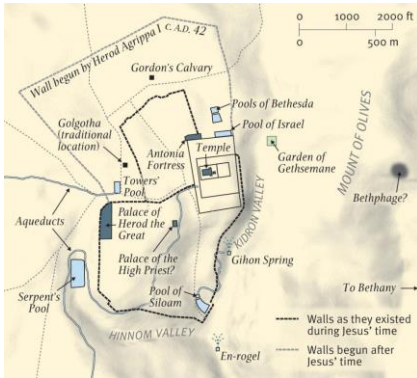
What do the angels promise to the followers?

What is Jesus doing now that he has ascended into heaven?

- **John 14:1-4**
- **1 John 2:1-2**
- **1 Timothy 2:3-6**
- **Ephesians 1:18-23**

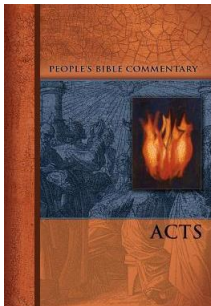
How would this help the disciples in the mission plan? How does this help us?

Acts 1:12-26



Where did Jesus' ascension take place? What else happened there?

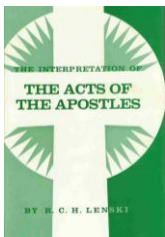
PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: A Sabbath Day's Walk



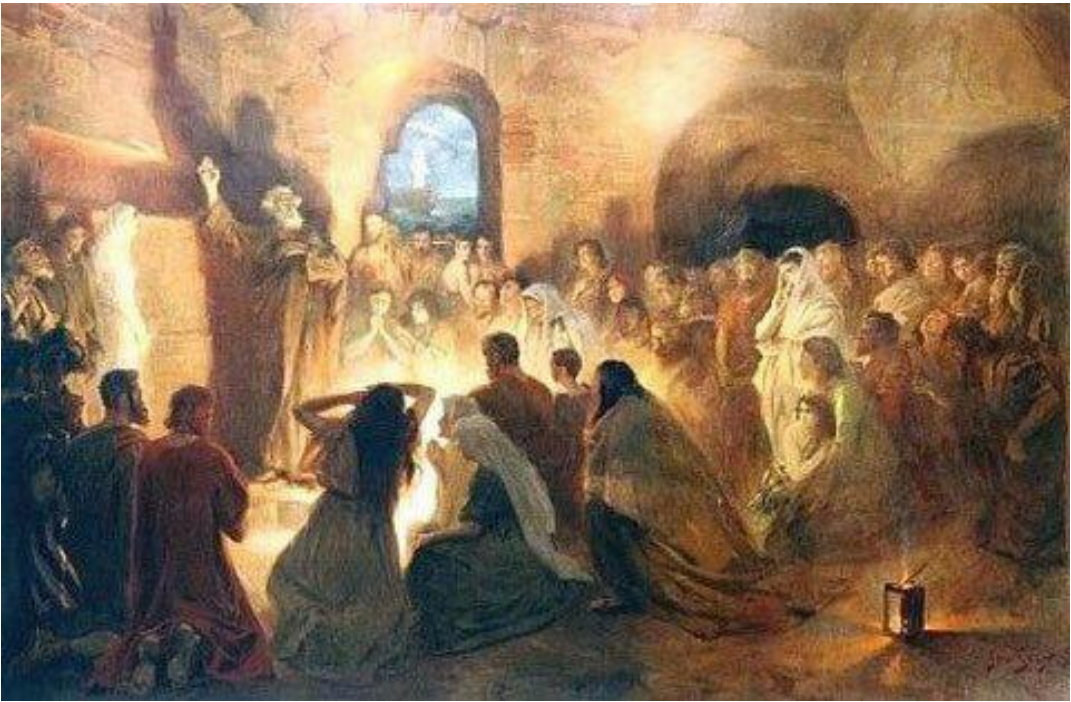
The Sabbath Day's walk was set at 2,000 paces, from one-half to three-quarters of a mile. This expression is thought to date back to the time when Israel was wandering through the desert. The distance was supposed to be calculated from the farthest tent on the fringe of the camp to the place of worship at the center. At the time of Jesus' ministry, the expression and the distance were used to determine how far one could walk without violating the Sabbath prohibition against work. The expression was often used simply to estimate distances, as it is here. It was an expression like our "about a stone's throw." The base of the

Mount of Olives is 2,000 paces from the city. The distance to the vicinity of Bethany is 2,000 paces in the other direction. There is no question of Sabbath violation here, since the Ascension took place on a Thursday, 40 days after Easter.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: Upper Room



Such upper rooms were quite common. Sometimes they were merely booths that were erected on the flat roof of the stone building. The author saw many of them in the Holy Land. We shall note them in the Acts; the body of Dorcas was laid out in one of them. Sometimes they were roomy and even ornate like the one with its tiled floor that is mentioned in **Luke 22:12**. They were used as places for retirement and quiet and, for the company here described, as a place that was free from interruption and disturbance. The fact that the house belonged to a friend of Jesus need scarcely be added. The effort to locate this upper room in the Temple is futile. Nor does abiding in this room contradict **Luke 24:53**, the constant stay in the Temple; the disciples divided their time between the two places.



Following Jesus' ascension, who is all together? What are some unique experiences and personalities within this group?

What are they doing? Why are they doing this?

What do we learn about Judas in these verses? (Compare with **Matthew 26:20-25; 27:5-8; John 13:18-30**) What reasons make this information disconcerting? What comforts can we draw from this information?

Matthew 27:5 records, "So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself." How can this be reconciled with what we read in **Acts 1:18-19**?

What were the qualifications for Judas' replacement?

How did they decide between the two men?

We no longer select men to be "apostles." However, we still call Christians to be sent out to serve in the public ministry. For apostles, Jesus emphasized the importance of being with him and hearing his words (**John 17:6-12**). Read **1 Timothy 3:1-12**. What should we look for in our ministers? What shouldn't we focus on when looking for a minister?

THE CALL PROCESS

OF THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

What happens when a church is without a pastor?

Pre-Call Meeting

The congregation's leadership meets with the **District President** to discuss the congregation's specific needs and what they are looking for in a new pastor.

Call from the Field

If calling from the field, the District President then accesses a database containing information about all current WELS pastors (including personal profiles and self-assessments) to create a list of pastors that may be a good fit for the calling congregation.*

Call Meeting

The District President presents the list to the congregation, who then deliberates, votes, and extends a call to one of the pastors on the list.

Deliberation

That pastor will then prayerfully reflect on both calls he holds (his current call and the new call), deliberate, and choose to either **accept** or **reject** the new call.

Call Accepted

If **accepting**, the pastor will then begin preparing for his new call. He generally will not be eligible for another call for **4 years**.

Call Declined

If **declining**, the congregation will hold another call meeting to extend another call. He generally will not be eligible for another call for **6 months**.



The pastors in our synod receive 4 years of undergraduate education at **Martin Luther College** in New Ulm, MN, and graduate with a Bachelor of Science. The study includes courses in Biblical Greek and Hebrew.

Their formal, graduate-level education then continues at **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary** in Mequon, WI. A total of four years is spent in training, including a one-year internship (**vicar year**) at a WELS congregation.

Each spring (usually in May) on **call day**, pastoral candidates of the graduating class are assigned their initial call by the assignment committee.

FAQs

"Did you request a new call?"

Pastors within our synod do not apply or "candidate" for new positions. When they receive a new call, it is due to the calling congregation and their District President's assessment that they have the gifts and abilities to serve the vacant congregation well. Receiving a call is **not** indicative of a desire to leave.

"Do you have to take the new call?"

There is no limitation on the amount of time a pastor within our synod can remain at a particular congregation. Some pastors move from one congregation to another frequently; others choose to spend their entire ministry in one location. When a pastor receives a new call, he can choose to decline it and remain at his current congregation.

"Will you take a new call to be closer to extended family or live in a warmer climate region or get a bigger paycheck?"

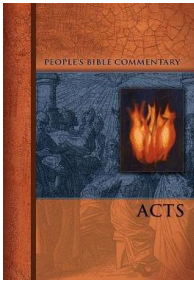
There are times when external factors may play a role in the deliberation process (for instance, if a pastor's health would preclude him from living in certain regions), but the primary consideration during deliberation is where the pastor may best serve God and His people.

"How long will you take to decide?"

In general, it's encouraged that pastors take between 3-6 weeks for deliberation. The decision to accept or return the call is generally announced to the congregation on Sunday morning.

All pending and recently accepted calls in the synod are reported weekly at: <https://wels.net/about-wels/official-reports/call-reports/>

Acts 2:1-13



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: The Day of Pentecost

Pentecost is the Greek name for the important Jewish observance of the Feast of Harvest (**Exodus 23:16**) or, as it was also called, the Feast of Weeks (**Exodus 34:22**). Pentecost means "50th," for the feast took place 50 days after the Passover Sabbath (**Leviticus 23:11, 15, 16**). Every pious Jew tried to be in Jerusalem for this feast. Those who could not come to Jerusalem observed it in the synagogues throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Freewill offerings were brought (**Deuteronomy 16:9-11**).

What came along with the Holy Spirit on this Day of Pentecost?

What were these tongues that they spoke in? How do you know?



What was the basic message being spoken in these foreign languages?

What else do we know about the gift of tongues? Should we expect it still today?

- **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**
- **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**
- **1 Corinthians 14:1-40**

What did the people think was going on here on this Day of Pentecost?



Acts 2:14-36

Acts 2:14–36 (NIV)

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “ ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

²² “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him: “ ‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹ “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” ’ ³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”



ACTS 2:14-36



SERMON REPORT 1

OUTLINE

What's the flow of the sermon?

LAW & GOSPEL

What's the ratio of law to gospel? What do you think that is for this sermon?

EMPHASIS

What's the main point?

APPLICATION

How does he apply his points to his listeners?

WITNESSING

What good principles of witnessing do you detect?

RESPONSE

How did the listeners respond?

Around 870 BC, the prophet Joel not only announced that the Spirit would come in the last days. He also announced the imminent arrival of the end of the world (**Joel 2:28-32**). Where in Joel's words do you find sobering warning for sinners (the law)? Where in Joel's words do you find certain comfort for sinners (the gospel)?

Peter knew that the people had no sense of what they had done. They were not terrified over God's impending wrath because of their rejection of his Son. What did Peter have to do before he could comfort them with the message that their sins were forgiven?

From Jesus' resurrection, Peter moved on to Jesus' ascension. Again, Jesus' ascension is very comforting to us Christians. Yet Peter described it in such a way as to strike fear in the hearts of his audience. How did Peter do this? (**verses 33-35**)

Peter clearly assigned blame and guilt for the crucifixion of Christ to his audience (**verses 36-37**). At the same time, he said that Jesus was handed over to them by God's set purpose and foreknowledge. What comfort does this give Christians when it appears that the forces of evil are succeeding? (See also **Romans 8:28** and **Genesis 45:4-8; 50:20**.)

Acts 2:37-41

What was the response of the people?

What were Peter's instructions?

What is the gift of the Holy Spirit mentioned here?

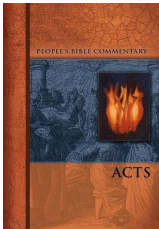
How does this passage favor the baptism of infants and young children?

How do you live out Peter's plea in **verse 40**?

Should we expect a mass conversion of 3000 people today? Why or why not?

Acts 2:42-47

What were the believers devoted to? How would these help them? How can they help us?



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: The Breaking of Bread

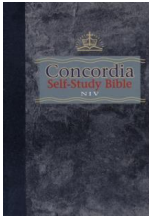
"The breaking of bread" probably includes more than just eating together. It most likely refers to the agape, or love feast, which often preceded the celebration of Holy Communion. Whether receiving the Lord's Supper or simply eating together, this breaking of bread was an expression of the believers' unity in Christ and their joy in his salvation.

What are some other notable characteristics of the believers immediately after Pentecost?

How can we / do we still live these things today?

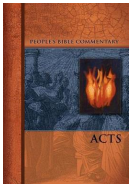
While early Christians did not practice pure socialism (there was still private ownership - see **Acts 4:32-35**), what were they clearly eager and willing to do? Compare their congregational life to your own. In what practical ways might we reflect that early Christian spirit?

Acts 3:1-26



CONCORDIA SELF-STUDY Christian Worship at the Jewish Temple

Peter and John continued practicing Jewish rituals/worship at this time. Christianity was one “sect” (haireisis) of several within Judaism (**24:5**; Josephus used this word of Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots); it taught that Jesus was the Messiah. The progressive split with Judaism was to a large extent mirrored in Acts, with a significant split coming by the time of the first Jewish revolt (AD 66–70) but made definite at the second one (AD 134–135). Between these periods, it was unclear whether rabbinic Judaism would prevail as the standard representative.



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Time

Three in the afternoon—the ninth hour, as the Jews reckoned it—was one of three hours of prayer. The others were 9:00 A.M. and sunset. There was a daily sacrifice at 3:00 P.M. called the evening sacrifice. It was an hour of peak activity at the temple.

EVANGELICAL HERITAGE VERSION STUDY BIBLE: Temple Gate Called Beautiful



The temple gate called Beautiful was probably on the east side of the temple, leading from the court of the Gentiles to the court of women. That is how the first-century Jewish historian Josephus described it. It must have been a busy place if it was a good place for a beggar to sit.



EVANGELICAL HERITAGE VERSION STUDY BIBLE: Solomon's Colonnade



Solomon's Colonnade was a roofed porch that ran along the eastern side (perhaps around all four sides) of the temple wall. It enclosed the outer court of the temple. People assumed it was part of the original temple of Solomon. It may have been built over the rubble of that first temple.



What phrases show that this healing was complete, total, and instantaneous?

The temple crowd saw a lame man walking. To what mistaken conclusion did they come?

Acts 3:12–26 (NIV)

¹² When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

¹⁷ “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’

²⁴ “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”



ACTS 3:12-26



SERMON REPORT 2

OUTLINE

What's the flow of the sermon?

LAW & GOSPEL

What's the ratio of law to gospel? What do you think that is for this sermon?

EMPHASIS

What's the main point?

APPLICATION

How does he apply his points to his listeners?

WITNESSING

What good principles of witnessing do you detect?

RESPONSE

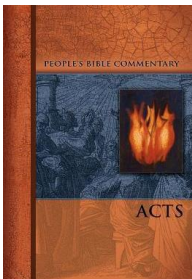
How did the listeners respond?

“Brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.” (**Verse 17**) Looking at the whole of Peter’s sermon, does ignorance excuse you of your culpability to sin? Why or why not?

When Peter reminded the crowd of what they had done to Jesus, he simply could have said, “You killed Jesus.” Instead, he added many details to allow the harsh reality of their evil to sink in. List various thoughts he used to point out the horror of their sin.

Explain how Peter encouraged them to repent. (**Verses 19-26**)

What points does Peter raise to show that it was not a tragic accident or mistake for Jesus to suffer and die on a cross?



PEOPLE’S BIBLE COMMENTARY: You Killed the Author of Life

Here is a great paradox and mystery. The divine originator and guardian of life was put to death. Peter was saying, “That man is God and God died as that man.” What man was required to do and could not do—keep God’s law—God came and did for us. He came as a man to do it. The work of salvation is divine work, and he who lived and died for our salvation is divine. The God-man’s work was successful and accepted by God, for “God raised him from the dead.”



Self-Reflection: How does Jesus give you times of refreshing, particularly when you repent?

Acts 4:1-31

What was so disturbing to the priests and the Sadducees? (Note that the Sadducees denied the immortality of the soul and the bodily resurrection after death. C.f. **Acts 5:17; 23:8**)

EVANGELICAL HERITAGE VERSION STUDY BIBLE: Office of the High Priest



The Lord had set up the office of high priest as a hereditary office for life. By the time of the New Testament it had become something of a political football, with the government elevating and deposing priests. Annas (6–15 AD), Caiaphas (18–36 AD), John (Jonathan), and Alexander (who served after Caiaphas) all had turns at being high priest.



When have you been accused of wrongdoing when your intentions were pure?

Acts 4:8–12 (NIV)

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.” ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”



ACTS 4:8-12



SERMON REPORT 3

OUTLINE

What's the flow of the sermon?

LAW & GOSPEL

What's the ratio of law to gospel? What do you think that is for this sermon?

EMPHASIS

What's the main point?

APPLICATION

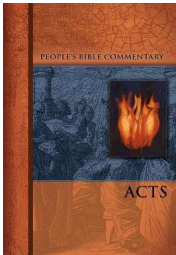
How does he apply his points to his listeners?

WITNESSING

What good principles of witnessing do you detect?

RESPONSE

How did the listeners respond?



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Capstone

The capstone in a building may be the keystone at the top of an arch, without which the arch and the building would collapse. It may also be the cornerstone, which in ancient architecture determined the lines for the whole building. Without a cornerstone or with a badly laid cornerstone, there could be no sound construction. In either case, the capstone was the important stone that the building absolutely needed.

EVANGELICAL HERITAGE VERSION STUDY BIBLE: Cornerstone



The Evangelical
Heritage Version
Study Bible

Quotation from **Psalm 118:22**. The cornerstone was the stone that was placed at the corner where two walls of a building come together. The cornerstone (or foundation stone or setting stone), the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, is important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure. The church can be built only on faith in Christ (**Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6–7**). We are part of God's building only through faith in Christ.

Notice how Peter set up his answer to his accusers ("If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness..."). What can you learn from his example in living among and then talking to the skeptics in your life? Consider also **1 Peter 3:16**.

What about the truth expressed in **verse 12** fills you with such conviction to witness of Christ regardless of the cost?

Why were the Jewish leaders flabbergasted?

What did the leaders do to Peter and John?

How did Peter and the other believers respond to this incident with the Jewish leaders? What insights does this give us when we consider how people respond to our witnessing?

What was all in the believers' prayer (**verses 24-30**)?



Self-Reflection: How will you use the contents of this prayer (**verses 24-30**) in your own prayer life?

What is surprising - and admirable - about the Christians' request in **verse 29**? For what might we have expected them to ask? What lesson does their example teach us?

When confronted with a challenge from the rulers of their day, the believers reminded the Lord - and themselves! - that God had predicted Jesus would die. How might we use the following promises of God in a similar way?

- **Mark 10:29-30**
- **Matthew 24:6-14**



What about the idea of helping to start a church and being more intentional about sharing your faith (e.g., friendship witnessing, canvassing, etc.) intimidates you? What truths from this chapter will help you put those nerves to rest?

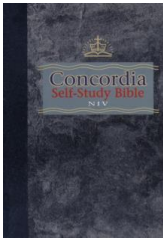
Acts 4:32-5:11

Verses 32-37 describe again the life of these early post-resurrection Christians. How does this clarify or expand what we heard in **chapter 2**?

How was Ananias's and Sapphira's sin a lie and a test against the Holy Spirit? Compare this divine judgment at the beginning of the church era with God's judgments on Nadab and Abihu (**Leviticus 10:2**), on Achan (**Joshua 7:25**) and on Uzzah (**2 Samuel 6:7**).

How does this incident with Annias and Sapphira show us that the Holy Spirit is just as much God as the Father and the Son?

“Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events” (**Acts 5:11**). “The angel said to [the shepherds], ‘Do not be afraid’” (**Luke 2:10**). Does God want us to be afraid? Does God want us not to be afraid? Explain how both are an essential part of our Christian lives.

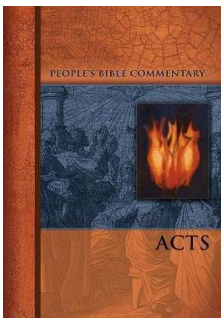


CONCORDIA SELF-STUDY BIBLE: Church

Verse 11 marks the first time the word “church” is used in Acts. It can denote either the local congregation (**8:1; 11:22; 13:1**) or possibly the universal church (**see 20:28**). The Greek word for “church” (ekklesia) was already being used for political and other assemblies (see **19:32, 40**) and, in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT), for Israel when gathered in religious assembly.

Acts 5:12-16

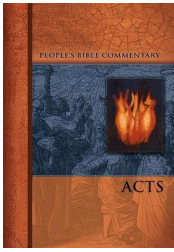
These verses describe yet again the life of the post-resurrection Church. How does this clarify or expand what we heard in **chapters 2 & 4**?



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Shadow Healing?

The author does not say that anyone was healed when Peter’s shadow fell on him. However, we read in **Acts 19:12** “that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him [Paul] were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.” Also, during Jesus’ ministry, “they begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed” (**Mark 6:56**). The Lord, who healed through the hands of the apostles, may well have accomplished his gracious cures through Peter’s shadow too.

Acts 5:17-42



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Jealous

The Sadducees were not only jealous of the popularity of the apostles, they were also zealous for what they considered to be God's honor. They were convinced that the religion of Israel as they understood it was being undermined. The preaching that Jesus is the Messiah and that he has been raised from the dead was a contradiction and confounding of their beliefs. So this time they had all of the apostles arrested, not only Peter and John.

Even though the high priests and all his associates arrested the apostles and put them in jail, what happened?

What kind of influence did the apostles have on the people?

Acts 5:29–32 (NIV)

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."



ACTS 5:29-32



SERMON REPORT 4

OUTLINE

What's the flow of the sermon?

LAW & GOSPEL

What's the ratio of law to gospel? What do you think that is for this sermon?

EMPHASIS

What's the main point?

APPLICATION

How does he apply his points to his listeners?

WITNESSING

What good principles of witnessing do you detect?

RESPONSE

How did the listeners respond?

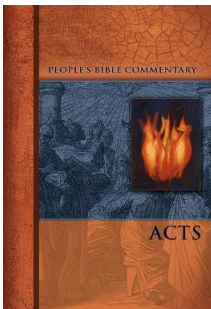


CSB APOLOGETICS STUDY BIBLE: Gamaliel

Gamaliel (Gamaliel I) was Paul's teacher (**22:3**), a major rabbinic leader, a member of the Sanhedrin, and a grandson of Hillel, one of the major interpreters of the Jewish law during the Roman era.

What advice did the Pharisee Gamaliel give? What was wise about his advice? Standing here some 2,000 years later, what do we now know about his advice? How is his advice useful for us as well?

PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Theudas & Judas



The first-century Jewish historian Josephus says that Theudas claimed to be Joshua, who had come back from the dead. He promised to part the waters of the Jordan River, march into Judea, and take the land away from the Romans. The Roman governor killed him. However, Josephus dates this man about 13 years after Gamaliel made this address. Either Josephus was wrong about the date, or Gamaliel was referring to an earlier Theudas. It goes without saying that the inspired writer Luke is not in error as he reports Gamaliel's speech. The same Josephus says that Judas the Galilean led a rebellion at the time of Quirinius' second census

for taxing purposes, in a.d. 6 (this was not the census during which Jesus was born, which took place between 8 and 4 b.c.). Judas and his followers took the position that it was not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. Roman troops under Varus quashed this rebellion.

How did the apostles respond to this encounter with the Jewish leadership? What of their attitudes and actions should we adopt?

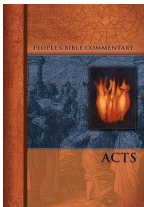
Acts 6:1-7

Here we have more descriptions of the life of the post-resurrection Church. How does this clarify or expand what we heard previously?

What are some beneficial ways for a church to handle complaints?

What lessons can we learn and apply to our congregation from the choosing of the Seven?

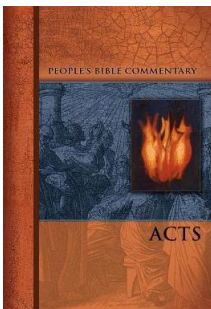
What is the laying on of hands?



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Laying on of Hands

The laying on of hands and prayer was to signify that these men had been elected for a specific responsibility and to ask God's blessing on their efforts. It was a Jewish custom, and it is a custom that is followed today when church officers are installed. It is a fitting rite but not a divinely instituted ceremony.

PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: To Wait on Tables



The expression "to wait on tables" could as well be rendered "to see to meals." They were not claiming that the work of seeing to meals for widows was beneath them. It would be a mistake to think that the apostles thought that waiting on tables was "unspiritual" work. The ministry of the Word of God and waiting on tables are both spiritual when they are done by spiritual persons. That is true of every God-pleasing occupation. Service done for Jesus' sake, done as to the Lord, is spiritual service. But the particular service to which the Lord had called the Twelve was to proclaim the Word.

What are things that you as a member of this congregation can do to prevent your pastor(s) from neglecting the ministry of the Word of God in order to “wait on tables?”

Acts 6:8-8:1

As we read this account, note descriptions of Stephen:

- **6:5**
- **6:8**
- **6:10**
- **6:15**
- **7:55**
- **7:59**
- **7:60**

Verse 9 mentions the “Synagogue of the Freedmen.” The members of this synagogue apparently had served as slaves in distant places (present-day Libya, Turkey, and Egypt) and, given the opportunity, had returned to their native land

What did the opposition say about Stephen?

Acts 7:2–53 (NIV)

²To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. ³‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’

⁴“So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. ⁵He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. ⁶God spoke to him in this way: ‘For four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated. ⁷But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,’ God said, ‘and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.’ ⁸Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹“Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

¹¹“Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. ¹²When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our forefathers on their first visit. ¹³On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph’s family. ¹⁴After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. ¹⁵Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors died. ¹⁶Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

¹⁷“As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. ¹⁸Then ‘a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.’ ¹⁹He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

²⁰ "At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. ²¹ When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. ²² Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

²³ "When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. ²⁴ He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. ²⁶ The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?'

²⁷ "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?' ²⁸ Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹ When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

³⁰ "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. ³¹ When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to get a closer look, he heard the Lord say: ³² 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

³³ "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴ I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.'

³⁵ "This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶ He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

³⁷ "This is the Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.' ³⁸ He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us.

³⁹ "But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. ⁴⁰ They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt—we don't know what has happened to him!' ⁴¹ That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and reveled in what their own hands had made. ⁴² But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the sun, moon and stars. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets: " 'Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel? ⁴³ You have taken up the tabernacle of Molek and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile' beyond Babylon.

⁴⁴ "Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. ⁴⁵ After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, ⁴⁶ who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who built a house for him.

⁴⁸ "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: ⁴⁹ " 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? ⁵⁰ Has not my hand made all these things?'

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—⁵³ you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."



ACTS 7:2-53



SERMON REPORT 5

OUTLINE

What's the flow of the sermon?

LAW & GOSPEL

What's the ratio of law to gospel? What do you think that is for this sermon?

EMPHASIS

What's the main point?

APPLICATION

How does he apply his points to his listeners?

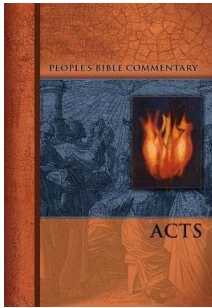
WITNESSING

What good principles of witnessing do you detect?

RESPONSE

How did the listeners respond?

PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Is Stephen Bad at Math?



When we compare Stephen's speech with the Genesis story of Abraham, there might seem to be a problem of arithmetic at this point (**Acts 7:4**). **Genesis 11:26** reads, "After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran." Then **11:32** tells us that Terah died at the age of 205. After that death, said Stephen, God sent Abraham to the Promised Land. **Genesis 12:4** says, however, that Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran to go to Canaan. Seventy years plus 75 years equals 145, not 205. Did Stephen (and other Jewish interpreters of the Scriptures) have a problem with simple addition? Only if Abraham was

Terah's first son. But **11:26** does not say that he was. It only mentions him first because he was the son whose story the author (Moses) was going to tell.

In **Acts 7:6**, Stephen was referring to **Genesis 15:13–16**, and he used the round number of 400 years, which is recorded there. **Exodus 12:40** gives the exact number of years as 430.

In **Acts 7:14**, Stephen was quoting the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament. Where the Septuagint has 75, the Hebrew original has 70. The Hebrew text combines the 66 persons who came from Canaan (**Genesis 46:26**) with Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's two sons (**Genesis 46:27**) to total 70. The Greek translation counts all 9 of Joseph's descendants who were born in Egypt during his lifetime, adds them to the 66 people from **Genesis 46:26**, omits Joseph and Jacob from the count, and arrives at the total of 75. The Hebrew text is the inspired text and the translators should not have changed the number to 75. Stephen was not endorsing their error. He was simply quoting a translation that he and other Grecian Jews regularly used.

It was the Jewish people, not Jesus or Stephen, who rejected God and his representatives. Look at each section of Stephen's sermon, and tell whom the Jews' ancestors had rejected.

- **Verses 2-10 (note verse 9)**
- **Verses 11-29 (note verses 27-29)**
- **Verses 30-36 (note verse 35)**
- **Verses 37-41 (note verses 39-41)**
- **Verses 42-43**

What was the reaction to Stephen's sermon?

The Sanhedrin had a sinful understanding of the temple. They seem to have been more concerned about preserving a structure than they were about preserving the Lord's truth. Explain how we can fall into a similar trap. Then describe a God-pleasing attitude toward worship facilities.

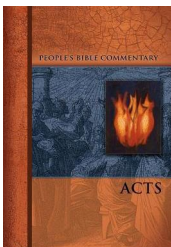
How do the words "he fell asleep" express a wonderful truth about the death of a Christian?

Acts 8:1-25

God works all things for our good. (**Romans 8:28**) How do you see that in the aftermath of Stephen's death?

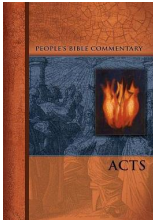
How does the incident with Simon the former sorcerer show that the grace of God cannot be bought?

PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: The Holy Spirit Had Not Yet Come Upon Them



On Pentecost and thereafter the Holy Spirit was received in Holy Baptism. In Samaria there was a unique situation in that the Spirit had not been received. We are not told that there was something wrong with the way Philip baptized or that the Samaritans had failed to meet some standard or fulfill some condition. We are simply told that the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them. The usual and expected thing had not occurred. Their sins were forgiven, but there were no evidences of the Spirit's presence.

Acts 8:26-40



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Ethiopian

The Ethiopian was not from the area we know as Ethiopia today. "Ethiopian" simply means that he was a black man. He was from the kingdom of Nubia, which was located on the upper Nile River between Aswan (in modern Egypt) and Khartoum (in the Sudan). Candace was the official title of all Nubian queens, just as Pharaoh was the title of Egyptian kings.

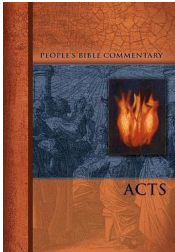
Think of how Philip started the conversation with the Ethiopian official. How will I find out if God is putting me in similar situations?

Why is it understandable that people today - even those who are perhaps interested in learning more about Christ and the Bible - find it difficult to understand what Christianity is all about?

One pastor has said that the place for a person to start reading the Bible is with another Christian. How do you see this as a good and beneficial "starting point" with the Ethiopian official?

The Ethiopian eunuch was reading from **Isaiah chapter 53**. Read **Isaiah 53:2-12**. Pick out phrases that point to the coming Messiah, and explain how Jesus fulfilled them.

Why do you think that the Ethiopian official wanted to be baptized?



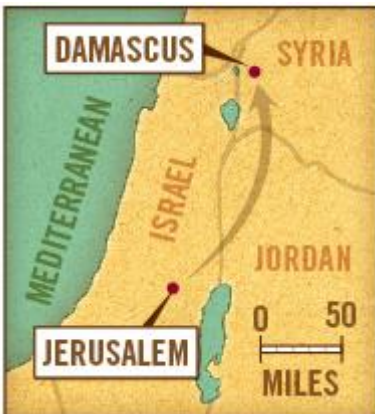
PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Philip's Travel

Azotus was the Old Testament Philistine city of Ashdod, about 20 miles north of Gaza. Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast about 55 miles northwest of Jerusalem, is about midway between modern Tel Aviv and Haifa. It was the residence of the Roman governor. Philip seems to have settled there, for the next time we hear of him (**Acts 21:8**), 20 years after the events we have just read about, he was living in Caesarea.

In starting a new mission effort, a mission will commonly not hold public worship services for its first year or more. Some might question how they're supposed to reach out to people if there's no worship service to which to invite them. Explain why a public worship service is rarely the best first gospel experience for an unchurched/unbelieving individual. What are some better first (and second and third) gospel experiences?

Acts 9:1-19

What is another name introduced for the Lord's disciples here? Why might they be called that? (c.f. **John 14:6**; **Matthew 7:13-14**)



What do we learn about Saul by the fact that he went to Damascus with letters of arrest?

Why do you think that Jesus starts with, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Imagine you are Saul. What frightened you most about the encounter with Jesus? What about the encounter comforted you?

The word "saint" is used in **verse 13**. Who are saints?



Self-Reflection: Why would this be a very difficult task for Ananias? What similarly difficult tasks has God put in front of you? How does Ananias' story help you with them?

What is the significance of Ananias calling him, "Brother Saul"?

Compare the 3 conversion accounts of Saul. What's the same? What's different? What may account for the differences?

Acts 9:3–19 (NIV)

³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

¹¹The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹²In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

¹³“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

¹⁷Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

Acts 22:3–21 (NIV)

Then Paul said: ³“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. ⁴I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, ⁵as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶“About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

⁸“‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. ⁹My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

¹⁰“‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ ¹¹My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

¹²“A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. ¹³He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

¹⁴“Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. ¹⁵You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

¹⁷“When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’

¹⁹“‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. ²⁰And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were

killing him.’ ²¹“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

Acts 26:9–23 (NIV)

⁹“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

¹²“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

¹⁵“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ¹⁶“Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁹“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. ²¹That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²²But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—²³that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

Acts 9:19b-31

What happens to Saul immediately after his conversion?

How does one prove that Jesus is the Christ?

Read **2 Corinthians 11:23-29** and **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**. The Lord would ask Paul to suffer greatly for speaking the truth. Paul did not see this as a curse but as a privilege and honor. Why? Explain how the truths that strengthened Paul can also strengthen us in our suffering. (See also **1 Peter 4:12-14** and **Romans 5:3-4**.)

What hope does the story of Saul give us as Christians?

We will meet up again with Saul in **Acts 11:25**. What happened to him in that interim? Read **Galatians 1:13-2:2**.



Acts 9:32-43

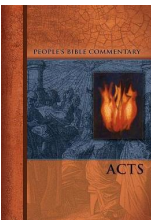
What miracles did Peter do in Lydda? How did these miracles further the gospel work?



How did Tabitha express her faith?



Self-Reflection: How might I be more like Tabitha?



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Peter Stayed with a Tanner

Many Jews looked down on tanners because in their work of turning animal hides into leather, they had regular contact with death and were ceremonially unclean. Peter, who continued to grow in his understanding that Jesus had fulfilled and made obsolete the Old Testament ceremonial law, associated comfortably with this man.

Acts 10:1-11:18

Why do you think Cornelius would be a good pick for this massive confirmation of God's salvation to all people?

What was Peter's vision? What did it mean? Why was this teaching not necessarily new? (C.f. **Mark 7:18-19**)



Self-Reflection: How might this vision of the sheet be applied in your life?

Note Peter's reaction when Cornelius fell at his feet in reverence. What previous lesson in Peter's life is he putting into practice? How can we show the same attitude? (C.f. **John 13:3-17; Matthew 20:20-28**)

Acts 10:34-43 (NIV)

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

³⁹ "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."



ACTS 10:34-43



SERMON REPORT 6

OUTLINE

What's the flow of the sermon?

LAW & GOSPEL

What's the ratio of law to gospel? What do you think that is for this sermon?

EMPHASIS

What's the main point?

APPLICATION

How does he apply his points to his listeners?

WITNESSING

What good principles of witnessing do you detect?

RESPONSE

How did the listeners respond?

How did God prove that he doesn't show favoritism between Jews and Gentiles?

What criticism did Peter receive? When might we receive similar criticism?

Acts 11:19-30

Major Movements and Exchanges of Acts 11 vs 19-30

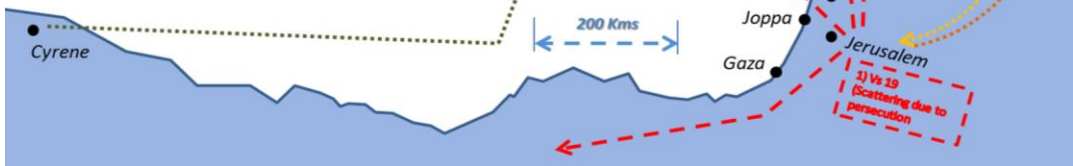
¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. ²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²² News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

²⁷ During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)

²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. ³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.



How was the truth of Peter's vision already playing out in the Church?

How did Barnabas live up to his name and encourage the disciples in Antioch?

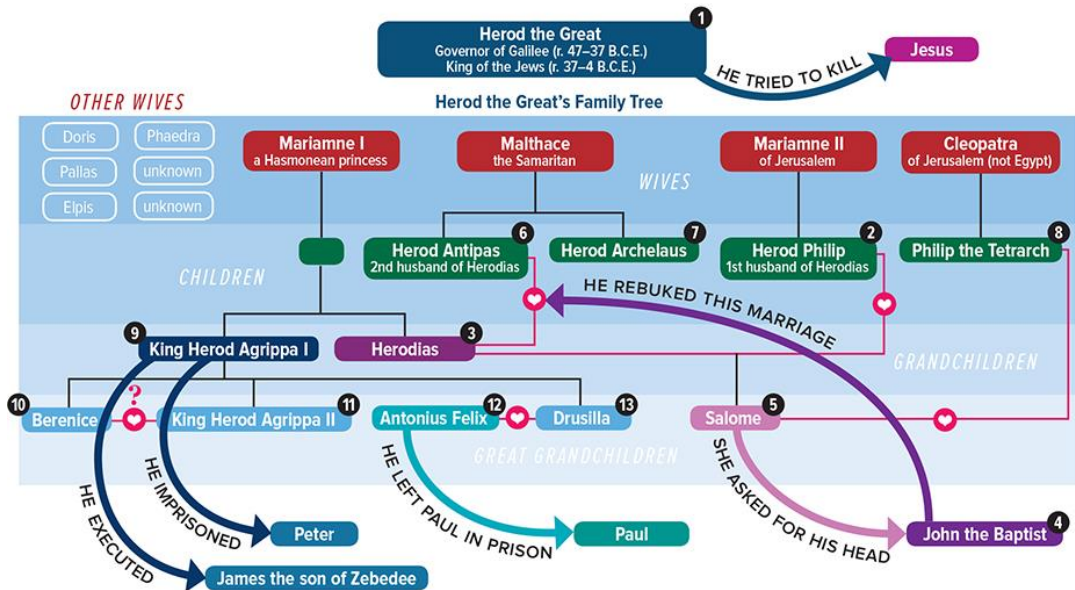


Self-Reflection: How can I be more like Barnabas?

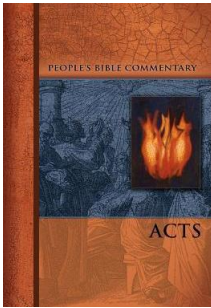
What name do the disciples go by for the first time ever in Antioch? Why is that a fitting name?

Agabus predicted a famine. Explain how Christians used this tragedy as opportunity.

Acts 12:1-25



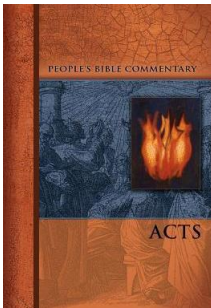
PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: King Herod



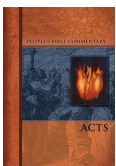
This King Herod is Herod Agrippa I. His grandfather, Herod the Great, was the king who had the infants of Bethlehem slaughtered in an attempt to kill the King of the Jews, Jesus. His uncle, Herod Antipas, was the man who beheaded John the Baptist and who wanted Jesus to do a miracle at his trial. Herod Agrippa was Rome's "puppet" ruler in the province of Judea (including Galilee, Samaria, and Perea, as well as Judea) from A.D. 41 to 44. His treatment of the church of Christ was in the family tradition...

Herod was willing to shed more blood in order to curry the favor of the Jews, most of whom did not recognize him as their legitimate king. What better way to win their approval than by putting to death an "enemy" of their religion? Jerusalem would be crowded with pilgrims at Passover time and religious sentiment would be running high.

PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: The Feast of Unleavened Bread



The Feast of Unleavened Bread was the week that followed the Passover itself. Passover was really the 24-hour period that began with an evening meal to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. For a week after the Passover, the Jews continued to eat bread that had not been leavened. It was during that week that Herod arrested Peter, and it was after that week that he intended to stage the public trial. Luke is using the two terms, "Passover" and "Feast of Unleavened Bread," as synonyms. That was common usage in the first century A.D. Did Herod remember that the trial of Jesus had occurred at the same time of the year?



PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: His Angel

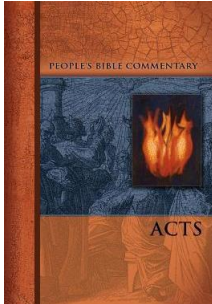
By "his angel" the people meant Peter's guardian angel. Some Jews believed that a person's guardian angel could make himself visible and that when he did he would look like that person.

Give evidence that makes it appear the jailers were well aware of what happened the last time Peter was thrown into prison. (C.f. **Acts 5:18-24**)

Notice the response of the people in Mary's house who were praying for Peter's release. Why is it sometimes surprising when God answers our prayers? Why shouldn't it be? (C.f. **James 1:5-8; 5:13-18**)

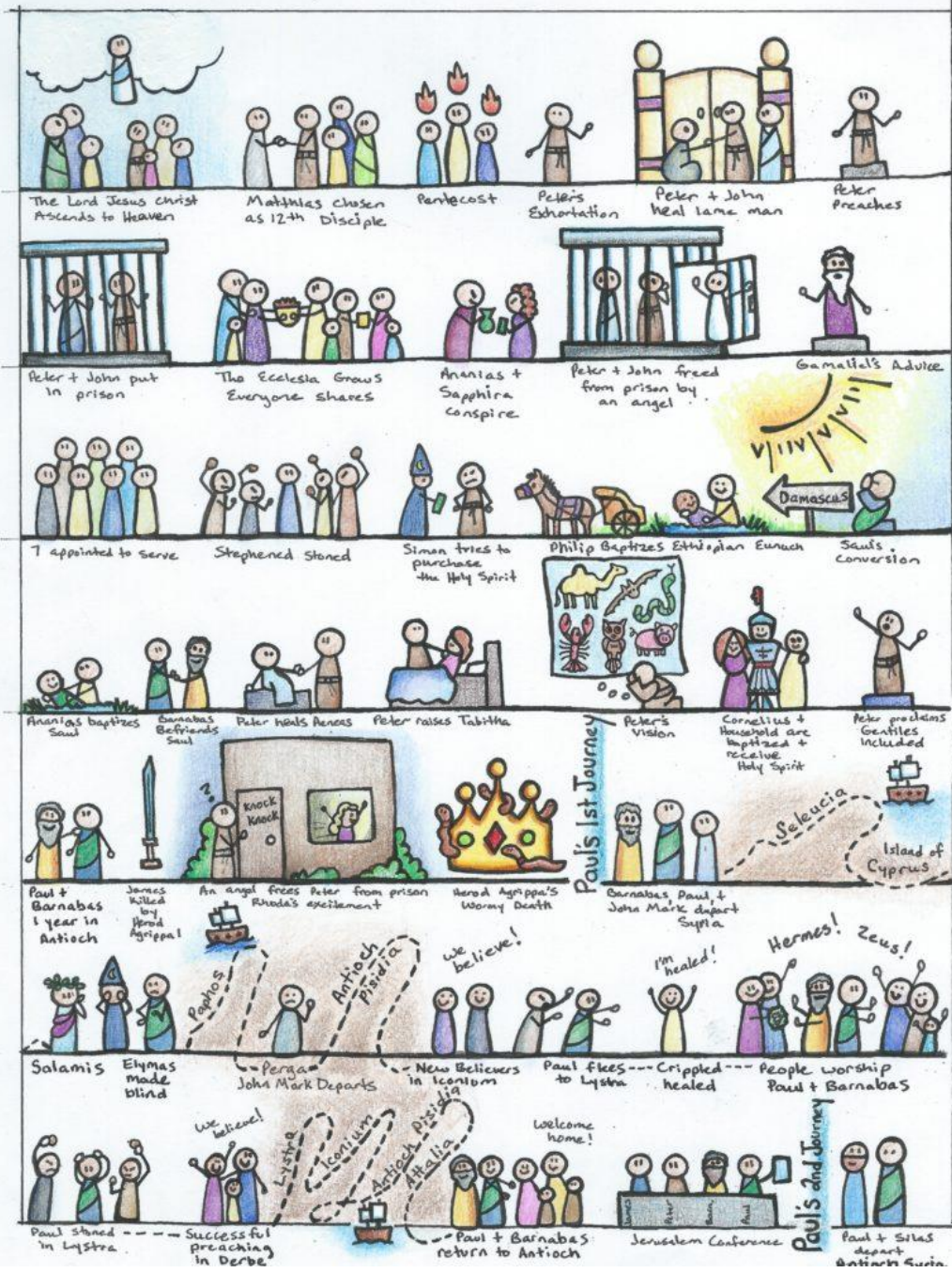
In the past, pastors often remained with their flocks in times of plague or persecution. They wanted to serve their people with the Word. Was it wrong for Peter to leave Jerusalem? Why or why not?

PEOPLE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY: Occasion for Herod's Death



There was no Roman governor at that time, so Herod Agrippa used the city as his capital. Being on the Mediterranean shore, it was cooler in summer than Jerusalem. There may have been other reasons, having to do with his relations with the Jews, that made him prefer Caesarea. Tyre and Sidon were two Roman free cities in Phoenicia. They had depended on Galilee for grain and olive oil since the time of King Solomon (**1 Kings 5:11; Ezekiel 27:17**). When there was a quarrel between those cities and King Herod, their food supply was endangered. They tried to mend the breach with the help of Blastus, probably bribing that official to intercede on their behalf. The Jewish historian Josephus writes that the appointed day was a day of celebration in honor of Emperor Claudius. If it was, then it would seem that Herod intended to use the occasion also to impress the representatives of Tyre and Sidon. While Herod was addressing the people of Caesarea in his splendid royal robes, the cry went up, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." No doubt the representatives of Tyre and Sidon joined in - or even instigated - this blasphemous flattery in order to regain Herod's goodwill.

What comforts does this chapter give us?





LIGHT OF THE VALLEY

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SHINING THE LIGHT OF JESUS

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