

Acts of the Apostles Chapters 13 – 28: PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD

- ♦ Paul's three missionary journeys
- ♦ Gaining guidance from the Holy Spirit
- ♦ Miracles, riots and persecution
- ♦ Teaching a godly lifestyle
- ♦ Arrested in Jerusalem
- ♦ Shipwrecked on the island of Malta
- ♦ A 'prisoner for Christ' in Rome

THIS BOOK describes the three exciting missionary journeys of the apostle Paul in the Middle East and Europe nearly 2000 years ago. This enabled religious and non-religious people to realise that Jesus is the Son of God. Paul's teachings spread quickly around the Roman world by letters and by word of mouth. They remain as a guide for millions of Christians today.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS supply Bible teaching commentaries written by Fred Morris. For many years Fred, and his wife Lorna, travelled round the world teaching and preaching. When they returned home they wrote these notes for printing and selling wherever there was a need for basic foundational Christian teaching.

THIS REVISED UK edition is written in easy-to-read Worldwide English which will add understanding and also speed up translation into other languages. It gives basic teaching for all readers plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

THESE BOOKS are to use on your own or to study in a group. They will teach you God's truth. They will help you to know God's Son, Jesus Christ. They will help you to talk about your faith in God. They will stop you from going the wrong way in life. They will help to lead you closer to Christ. They provide food for life.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you read the Bible and use these commentaries.

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FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE TEACHING COMMENTARIES

'The secret of God's Kingdom has been given to you' (Mark 4:11)



PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD

Acts of the Apostles

A Bible Teaching Commentary in easy-to-read Worldwide English for personal or group study

by Fred Morris



Acts Part 2 Chapters 13 to 28

To the reader or leader

These Bible teaching commentaries explain the truth about God's Word in a way that is easy to read and understand. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. In a group study, each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.

There is a lot of information in this book. Please study it slowly and thoughtfully. Ask God to help you apply the things you learn to your own life and situation.



Now Read: Where you see this, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible passage first before reading the words in this book.



Talk about: Where you see this, there are questions that can be asked in a group study. They also help the reader to understand the Bible verses.



Where you see this sign, the question requires more time and meditation.



Multiple choice questions. Where you see this, there are questions with three possible answers; some are right answers, some are wrong answers. These questions help you to think carefully about what you are reading. The answers to these questions are given at the back of the book. You can use the questions as a personal test.



Where you see **ruled boxes**, the information inside is mainly for Bible students, teachers and preachers.

Additional Bible readings are there to give you important information. God will use them to speak to you. This is why you should check all readings now or later and use them for study at home. Some readings are from the Old Testament (O.T.), which we call 'the holy writings'. That is the part of the Bible written before Jesus Christ lived on this earth. Some readings are from the New Testament (N.T.), the part of the Bible which was written after Jesus Christ lived on this earth.

Manna Bible teaching commentaries give God's truth as a foundation for all believers. The people leading the study should add applications and experiences from their own Christian life and culture.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Acts chapters 13 to 17

1. b 2. a 3. a & c 4. c
5. a 6. b & c

Acts chapters 18 to 22

7. a & c 8. a & c 9. a 10. c

Acts chapters 23 to 28

11. a & c 12. a 13. c 14. a & b
15. a & b 16. a & b

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15. Which are true?
- The people of Malta thought Paul was a murderer.
 - Paul healed the father of the chief man on the island.
 - Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake.
16. When Paul was in Rome —
- he preached both to Jews and to non-Jews.
 - some Jews did not believe Paul.
 - Paul was kept in a Roman prison.

THE RESULT OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

In prison in Rome, Paul was at the centre of the great Roman Empire. This helped the Good News of Jesus Christ to spread throughout the known world (Philippians 1:12–14). This happened because of what Paul said to his visitors and because of what Paul wrote for the churches.

Jesus said, 'Everyone will hate you because of Me. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved' (Mark 13:13). Paul stood firm until his work for God was finished.

During the next few years, after the death of Paul, the writings of Luke (the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts) were copied many times and given to the believers to read. The same happened with the writings of Matthew, Mark, John, Peter, James and the letters of Paul and the other apostles. The believers were encouraged and the churches grew strong through reading these New Testament writings, which gave greater understanding to the Old Testament writings.

We can trust the words of the New Testament writers to tell us about Jesus Christ and his teachings, for they all knew Jesus. The risen Lord Jesus spoke to Paul personally and told him to witness about Him to the world.

So we thank God for the writings of Paul which teach everyone the truth about Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. It is a good thing for every believer to read the letters of Paul and the other apostles. They are an important result of the work of the Holy Spirit described in the Acts of the Apostles which Luke does not tell us about. They are essential for reading in times of church growth, church decline, church disunity or church persecution.

Many people believe that we are near the time of great troubles before Christ returns (Mark 13:4–8). Many will doubt their faith at this time. Many will be deceived by powerful leaders and by other religions. But many will be saved and stay true to God by obeying these teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles, which were written down in the first 60 years after His death and resurrection.

Acts Part 2, Ed 2, English, January 2013

INTRODUCTION: Acts part two, chapters 13 to 28

This is our second Bible commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. 'Acts' is the book in the New Testament part of the Bible that tells us about the first Christians nearly 2000 years ago. It is important for us to learn about the early church and their teaching based on the writings at that time.

In our first Bible commentary on Acts, we read that Jesus (Hebrew name Yeshua) went to heaven to be with His Father, God (Yahweh). He sent His Holy Spirit to be with His followers. This happened in Jerusalem, so the Christian Church first started in Jerusalem. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God enabled the Church to grow daily. The Spirit enabled the apostles of Jesus Christ to preach boldly the Good News about Him. The Spirit enabled them to heal people in the name of Jesus. Peter, James and John were the leading apostles in Jerusalem at that time.

The word 'apostle' means messenger sent by God. The word 'Church' means the group of people whose lives have been changed through believing in Jesus. The word 'believer' here means 'one who trusts God and is a follower of Jesus Christ'.

Through the preaching of the Good News and the work of the Holy Spirit, many thousands of people became followers of Jesus in a short time. They asked God to forgive their sins in the name of Jesus. In this way they were saved from God's judgement. They were baptised and began a new life of faith in God. They received the promise of everlasting life with Jesus.

A JEW CALLED SAUL

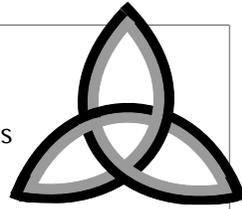
At first it was mostly Jews who heard the Good News. Many believed in Jesus as the Son of God. They believed that He was the Jewish Messiah, the Christ. He was promised by God many years before in the Old Testament writings. The new believers met with the first followers of Jesus and joined the Jews in the Temple in Jerusalem and in the Jewish synagogues elsewhere.

Some of the Jewish leaders disagreed with the teaching of the apostles. A Jewish leader called Saul was given permission to put many Christians into prison. Some were killed. But one day God stopped him doing this. Jesus spoke to him personally on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–6). He, too, became a follower of Jesus. Jesus forgave him and he was given the power of the Holy Spirit (9:17–19).

In this second commentary on Acts, we tell you about the life and journeys of Saul (later called Paul). He travelled around the world preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit the Good News that Jesus is the Son of God who came to live on earth to show us His Father. Saul told the people that God



The HOLY SPIRIT is the third person of the TRINITY



The Bible does not use the word 'Trinity' but it does tell us of the three persons that are one God. (See Matthew 3:16–17; 4:1; 28:19; Acts 2: 38–39; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:3, 13; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Revelation 4:1–3; 5:6–10).

A three-in-one God is a mystery that many people do not understand. Pray for wisdom to understand the teaching of the Trinity and to help others to understand.

This is a picture of a symbol the early Christians in Western Europe used, over 1900 years ago, to help them to understand the Trinity. It is called the Celtic Rope or Knot. It is in three parts but each part is joined with the other two parts: all three parts are one, just as God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit are one.

The Holy Spirit was with God the Father at the beginning of the world (Genesis 1:2). Jesus was also with the Father at the beginning of the world (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 8:12).

God's Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to help His followers to live holy lives (Luke 24:49; John 14:16–17; Acts 1:4–5; Romans 8:9). God gave this promise in the holy writings 600 years before it happened (Ezekiel 36:27; 39:29). John the Baptist said it would happen (Matthew 3:11).

God promised to give His Spirit to all believers who ask (Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is at work all the time.

The Holy Spirit helps people to see their sins. He points people to Jesus Christ to help and forgive.

The power of the Holy Spirit gives great signs and wonders (Acts 2:2–4; 4:31; 8:6–8).

allowed Jesus to be punished for our sins so that we could be forgiven and live with Him for evermore when we die (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). Like us, Saul could not understand these things at first. But he re-read the OT writings and believed that this was God's plan to save the world. If we read our Bibles every day, the Holy Spirit will help us, too, to understand these things.

Saul knew the OT writings very well. They told about the Messiah (Saviour) that God would send to the Jews. After his conversion, Saul believed that Jesus was God's Messiah, the Christ. He also believed that Jesus came to save non-Jews as well as Jews.

Saul then learned all the teachings of Jesus. He taught the Jews and those who were not Jews throughout the Roman Empire. This was the plan of God (Acts 9:15).

the Good News was preached to those who were willing to come and listen. And, through the writings of Paul from prison, the churches were given understanding of the teachings of Christ and the Old Testament writings.



Talk about:

1. Discuss how Paul helped to save the lives of the people on the ship.
2. Discuss how Paul changed the lives of the people of Malta.
3. Discuss how Paul helped to change the world whilst a prisoner in Rome.
4. How did one man in prison help to bring the world to know Christ?



How did God fulfil His purpose to build up the early church in the last days of Paul's life (28:17-30)? How can you use Manna Publications mini Bible teaching books to do the same?



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Based on Acts chapters 23 to 28

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c. There could be one, two or three answers that are correct for each question.

Answers are given at the end of this book

11. The Roman commander sent Paul to Caesarea, because —
 - a) he was afraid that Paul might be killed.
 - b) Paul asked the commander.
 - c) Governor Felix could put him on trial.
12. Felix —
 - a) was afraid when he listened to Paul.
 - b) was a Jew.
 - c) did not want to take a bribe.
13. Paul wanted to —
 - a) go to Jerusalem on trial.
 - b) be kept safe in prison in Caesarea.
 - c) to go to Rome to be tried by Caesar.
14. Which are true?
 - a) Paul told King Agrippa what God had done for him.
 - b) King Agrippa believed the prophets but not Paul.
 - c) King Agrippa believed all that Paul told him.



Now Read: Acts 28:1–31

PAUL ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA

The land was the island of Malta. The people of Malta were very friendly. They made a fire to dry and warm the men. While Paul picked up wood for the fire, a snake attached itself to Paul's hand — possibly by its teeth.

'He must be a murderer,' the people said as they waited for him to swell up and die. When nothing happened to Paul, they said that he was a god (28:6).

The island's chief took Paul and his friends to his big house. He was the chief Roman official. His father was sick in bed, so Paul prayed for him and laid hands on him and God healed him. Many other sick people came to Paul for prayer and healing (28:8–9).

During Paul's stay on the island of Malta, the whole island heard about Jesus. Christianity in Malta dates from this time. Many times Malta has been attacked by the nations around it. But the people of Malta trusted in God for their freedom.

Three months later Paul was put onto a ship to take him to Rome. The winter storms had ended. Before he reached the city, many believers came out to meet him. At the sight of them, Paul was encouraged and praised God (28:15).

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ROME

For two years, Paul stayed in a rented house 'and welcomed all who came to see him' (28:30). On a certain day, from morning until evening, Paul explained the Kingdom of God to the Jews. He used their own holy writings to teach them. And he spoke to them of Jesus and His resurrection (28:23).

Some believed the Good News, but others did not. Then Paul used the words of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10). The same words were used by Jesus (Matthew 13:3–23; Mark 4:3–20; Luke 8:4–15).

During the time Paul waited in Rome, he preached boldly the Good News of Jesus Christ (Acts 28:31). He also wrote letters to some of the Christian churches (Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, Galatians). It was important for Paul to teach the churches that he founded. His writings are also helpful for teaching believers today, in addition to the teachings of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Revelation. They are all part of the New Testament writings.

After that Luke does not tell us what happened to Paul.

Paul's wish to go to Rome had been fulfilled. God allowed Paul to go there as a prisoner, not as a free man. He was a 'prisoner for Christ'. In this way,



Now Read: Acts 13:1–12

SAUL'S FIRST JOURNEY PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST

The Christian Church in Antioch grew strong. Among the leaders were Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul (13:1–2). Also young John



The Messiah or Christ

God's plan was to send His Messiah, His Son, to His chosen people, the Jews. After the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, many more people believed that He was the Son of God, including non-Jews. The Old Testament writings tell about the promised Messiah. Saul (later called Paul) had to learn about these things before he preached the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gave him power and understanding to do this so that Jews and non-Jews could receive God's plan of salvation.

20 things Saul learnt from the Old Testament writings about Jesus. These prophecies all came true at the time of Saul.

1. Jesus is the promised Messiah (Christ), God's Son, our Saviour (Deuteronomy 18:15; Jeremiah 23:5; Isaiah 53:12).
2. Jesus is the promised healer (Isaiah 35:5,6).
3. Jesus came from Abraham and King David's family (Isaiah 9:7).
4. God promised that Abraham's seed would bless all the nations on earth (Genesis 18:18).
5. Jesus was born in Bethlehem from the family/region of Judah/Judea (Micah 5:2).
6. Jesus was born as the Son of God to a young woman while she was engaged to be married and before she had sex with a man (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:35).
7. As a baby, Jesus was taken to Egypt for safe keeping (Hosea 11:1).
8. Jesus moved to the region of Galilee to teach the people (Isaiah 9:1, 2).
9. Jesus was 'the great prophet' spoken of by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15).
10. Jesus is our priest for ever (Psalm 110:4).
11. Jesus was wise and understanding (Isaiah 11:2).
12. Jesus was rejected by many people (Isaiah 53:3).
13. Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as a humble king, riding on a young donkey (Zechariah 9:9).
14. Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples (Psalm 41:9).
15. Jesus was betrayed for 30 silver coins (Zechariah 11:12).
16. Jesus had untrue things said against Him (Psalm 27:12).
17. Jesus did not speak when He was put on trial (Isaiah 53:7).
18. Jesus was put to death with criminals (Isaiah 53:12).
19. The hands and feet of Jesus were pierced through (Psalm 22:16).
20. The people laughed at Jesus and said bad things about him especially as He hung on the cross (Psalm 22:6–8).

Many people were saved and became Christians. Saul helped to start many churches in Europe.

Mark (13:5). Some were teachers, some were preachers and some had the gift of prophecy. These are all gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

As they were worshipping, praying and fasting (13:2) the Holy Spirit spoke to the believers: 'Set Saul and Barnabas apart for the special work I want them to do'.

The church leaders again fasted. They prayed and laid their hands on the heads of Barnabas and Saul. They sent them off to do special work for the Lord (13:3). The Holy Spirit was in charge. He called and led His servants. He went before them to make men's hearts ready to hear the Good News.

Notice these things about the calling of Saul and Barnabas:



Travelling ministers: Acts 13–16

We see many examples in the New Testament of servants of Jesus who are ministers or messengers who visit or write to other churches.

As a **preacher** and **evangelist** Paul travelled a long way to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. He spent many years travelling round the Roman Empire (Europe and Turkey). He started new churches and appointed pastors.

Then Paul went back to visit these churches. He taught them more truths of God and encouraged them to follow in the way of Jesus (Acts 14:21; 15:23; 16:4). He also wrote letters to them to explain God's truth and the teachings of Christ. A person who does this is called a **teacher**. A person who brings words given by the Holy Spirit to believers is called a **prophet**.

Preachers, evangelists, prophets and teachers, who travel from town to town, are called travelling ministers. It can bring much blessing, encouragement and unity to the new believers (14:22; 15:31; 16:5).

These people must be humble people who have been chosen and anointed by the Holy Spirit (13:2).

They must be people who are approved and appointed by their home church (13:3).

They should be prepared to work hard and not expect to get a lot of money by doing this.

They should be supported by their 'home' church who pray for them, guide them and help them to keep faithful to God.

These four guidelines avoid false ministers who travel from place to place.

Questions. Is your church a 'sending church'? Does your church send out and support and encourage travelling ministers? Do you share in the work of encouraging new churches? Do you pray for those who do this work (12:5)? Do you encourage or share in the ministry of writing letters?

Questions. Is your church a 'receiving church'? Does your church receive and welcome evangelists, preachers, prophets and teachers from other churches? Do you work closely with the 'sending' churches? Do you help to pay their expenses or give them a gift?



Now Read: Acts 27:1–44

PAUL LEAVES BY SHIP FOR ROME BUT IS CAUGHT IN A STORM

By this time Paul had been a prisoner for two years. Aristarchus, Paul's friend, went with him to Rome. Paul called him 'a fellow prisoner' (Colossians 4:10). Luke travelled with them also.

Julius, a centurion of the Imperial Regiment, was in charge of one hundred soldiers who guarded Paul and the other prisoners (27:1). Julius knew he could trust Paul, so at Sidon he let Paul go off the ship to visit the believers who lived there (27:3).

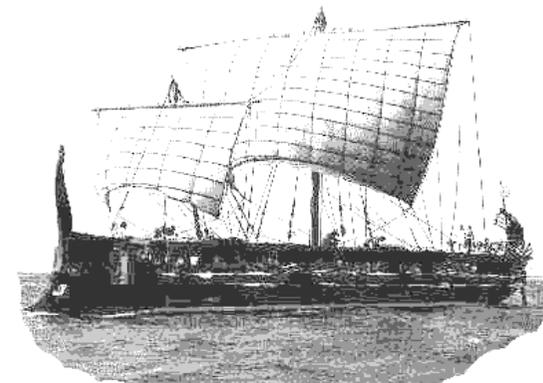
This was after mid-September at the beginning of the stormy season. Most ships stayed in port for the winter months of October to March. Paul knew that sailing would be too dangerous and told the captain (27:10). The owner of the ship would not listen, so they sailed towards Phoenix in the island of Crete (27:12) This was a safe place to stay for the winter.

But very soon the ship was caught in a storm and driven along by the wind. The seamen threw everything into the sea to lighten the ship, and they went without food. They 'gave up all hope of being saved' (27:20).

One night an angel spoke to Paul: 'Don't be afraid,' he said, 'you must stand trial before Caesar; and God will save the lives of all who sail with you' (27:24).

Paul told the men: 'Keep up your courage men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me... We will be saved but we must run the ship onto the beach of an island' (27:25–26).

Soon the water got shallow so they put down anchors to hold the boat there until it was daylight (27:29). Paul told the 276 men that no one would die. They were filled with hope and ate some food (27:34–36). As daylight came, they saw a sandy beach, and tried to run the ship onto the beach. It got stuck in shallow water and was soon breaking up because of the waves. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, but Julius saved them because of Paul. Then some of the men swam to shore. Others held onto pieces of wood; everyone reached land safely (27:44).





Now Read: Acts 25:13 to 26:32

PAUL SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH TO THE KING

A few days later, King Herod Agrippa II came to visit Festus. The Roman Emperor had appointed Agrippa king of the Jewish people. Agrippa said, 'I want to hear Paul speak' (25:22). Agrippa II was the great-grandson of King Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus when He was a child (Matthew 2:16).

The next day, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice met Paul with Festus. This fulfilled the words of Jesus in Mark 13:9 and Acts 9:15. The king knew a lot about the Jews. Paul told them that he was a faithful Jew who lived by the rules of the Pharisees (26:5). He said that the Pharisees believe in the resurrection of those who believe God; they believe in life after death. Paul told them that at first he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. So he punished those people who were followers of Jesus (26:9-11).

Paul then told them how he met the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus (26:12-18) and how he preached about Jesus to the Jews and the non-Jews (26:19-20). Paul said this was why the Jewish leaders tried to kill him (26:21).

He taught the same things that Moses and the prophets had said:

- That the Christ would suffer (Isaiah 53).
- That He would rise from the dead (Psalm 16:10).
- That Jesus came to save His own people first (Luke 1:54-55).
- That God promised to bring His truth and light to all the nations (Isaiah 42:6; Luke 2:32).

Agrippa almost believed in Jesus. 'This man could be set free. But he has appealed to Caesar,' he told Festus (26:32). So Paul was sent to Rome to be tried by Nero, the Roman emperor.

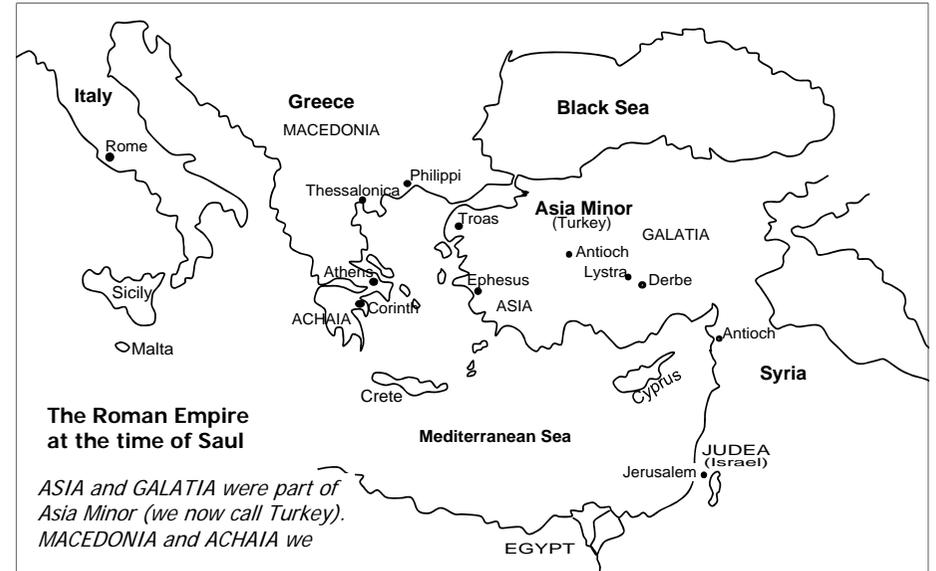


Talk about:

1. Why did Paul speak to king Agrippa (25:14-22)?
2. What did Paul have to help him testify before Festus (26:22-23)?
3. Why did the king stop Paul speaking to him (26:28)?
4. What was Paul's prayer for Festus (26:29)?



What happens when a person believes (26:18)?



1. Saul and Barnabas were trusted leaders in the church (13:1).
2. Time was given to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through the people (13:2).
3. The church leaders fasted and prayed for guidance about Saul and Barnabas. They laid hands on them as a sign of God's blessing (13:3).
4. Saul and Barnabas were sent out guided by the Holy Spirit (13:3,4).

Notice also that the Holy Spirit called Saul and Barnabas but it was the local church that sent them out. The church members showed their support for Paul and Barnabas and also for their church leaders. They were all in agreement. They all met together in unity to witness the laying on of hands.



Why did the apostles lay hands on people's heads?

"Laying on of hands" is an act of blessing that is mentioned several times in Acts. It is also taught in Hebrews 6:2. Jesus touched the sick (Mark 6:5) when He healed them. Paul laid hands on people when he prayed for them to be healed (28:8-9). Timothy received a "gift from God" when Paul touched him (2 Timothy 1:6). And when Paul laid his hands on the heads of believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:6) they received the Holy Spirit, spoke in different languages and prophesied. This also happened when the Apostles laid their hands on believers in Samaria (Acts 8:17).

Church leaders lay their hands on believers when new leaders are chosen for a special work or office, especially as deacons (Acts 6:6) and as missionaries (13:3). The calling and appointing of these people should not be done hastily (1 Timothy 5:22). Only mature Christians and those in leadership should lay hands on believers. No-one troubled by demon spirits should lay hands on people, nor should hands be laid on people troubled by demons spirits.

In this way, Paul and Barnabas were sent out by God through the local church. Later, the church received them back and the members were blessed through listening to the report of Paul and Barnabas (14:27).

Saul and Barnabas took John Mark with them (13:5) and went down to the sea port of Seleucia. Then they sailed to the island of Cyprus. Barnabas was born in Cyprus.

The Roman governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, listened to their preaching. He wanted to hear God's word, but Bar-Jesus, a Jewish magician (also called Elymas) tried to stop him.

It was here that Saul used his Roman name Paul (13:9).

Paul looked straight at Elymas: 'You child of the devil,' he said, 'the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind...' (13:11). And Elymas was blind for a time.

When the Roman governor saw what happened to Elymas he believed in the power of God.

Sometimes we must speak out against Satan and take control over demon powers in the name of Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can show us what to do, as He showed Paul. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit (13:9).



Talk about:

1. What gifts should be encouraged in each church (13:1)?
2. Does your church give time to listening to God? (13:2)?
3. Does your church send out preachers and evangelists (13:3)?
4. What made the Roman governor believe (13:12)?



Describe the work, worship and witness of the early church at Antioch (13:1-5).



Now Read: Acts 13:13–52

PAUL PREACHES TO JEWS AND NON-JEWS

From Cyprus, Paul and his friends went to Asia Minor (see map). There John Mark left them, but we are not sure why (13:13). So Paul was not pleased with Mark (15:38).

When Paul and Barnabas visited other towns, they first visited the Jewish synagogues. That is where Jews met to hear their leaders read the Old Testament writings. At Antioch in Asia Minor, Paul preached a great message (13:16–41).

Paul's preaching was so popular with the Gentiles (non-Jews) that it made the Jews envious (13:42–46).

This is how Paul preached to the crowd using words from the OT writings:



Paul told Felix that he was a faithful Jew and also a follower of Jesus (24:14). Paul had done nothing wrong against the Law of Moses. He believed everything in the Old Testament writings. He tried to do what was right for God and for man (24:16). Felix understood everything that Paul said (24:22) and he sent the Jews away.

Felix let Paul's friends visit him and care for his needs (24:23). Felix and his wife sent for Paul to listen to him. Paul witnessed about his faith in Jesus Christ (24:24). He also spoke about:

1. Righteousness – how to know more about God and live His way in life.
2. Self-control – how to live the right way ourselves and towards each other.
3. Judgement – how God will judge all people.

Felix became afraid to listen to Paul (24:25). Felix also wanted Paul to give him money to set him free (24:26). Paul refused to bribe Felix with money. Instead, Paul talked to Felix about God's truth. Asking for bribes and giving bribes is not God's way.

After two years Porcius Festus became governor. To please the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison (24:27). After Festus became governor, he heard the Jews speak against Paul. They asked Festus to send Paul to the Jewish court in Jerusalem. They would kill him if they could!

Festus did not let them do this. He made the Jews go to the court in Caesarea. So they came from Jerusalem to make their charges against Paul. They brought many charges against him, but they could not prove any of them (25:7).

Finally Paul said, 'I appeal to Caesar'. Festus spoke with his council, then replied, 'You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!' (25:12). Caesar was the Roman emperor Nero, the chief ruler in Rome at that time. Rome ruled over Israel at that time. Later on, Nero persecuted the Christians.



Talk about:

1. Why did the Sadducees argue with Paul and with the Pharisees (23:8)?
2. How did God encourage Paul (23:11)?
3. What did the Roman commander say about Paul (23:29)?
4. How did Paul escape from the Jews (23:12,16,23,35)?
5. Why was Paul sent to Rome (23:11; 25:12)?
6. Why was Felix afraid to listen to Paul (24:25)?



Read what Jesus warned in Mark 13:9 and Acts 9:15-16.



10. In Jerusalem Paul —

- a) was flogged and questioned.
- b) paid a lot of money to be a Roman citizen.
- c) was born a Roman citizen.



Now Read: Acts 23:1–35

PAUL SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH TO THE JEWISH COURT

Paul spoke to the Sanhedrin, which was the highest Jewish court. He spoke of the hope of resurrection of life after death. The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, so they argue with the Pharisees, who believe in the resurrection.

Paul told the court that he was a Pharisee. He believed in life after death and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (23:6). This caused a big argument and fighting. It was easy for Paul to make the religious leaders argue between themselves. People who refuse to believe the whole of God's truth often end up disagreeing and arguing.



Some of the Jews wanted to harm Paul, so the commander ordered his men to take Paul away.

COMFORT AND PROTECTION FOR PAUL

That night, the Lord Jesus came to Paul and said, 'Be brave! You have given witness to me in Jerusalem. You must do the same in Rome' (23:11). This comforted Paul and encouraged him. He remembered these words in the difficult years ahead.

The Jews planned to kill Paul. Paul's nephew heard of this and sent a message to Paul. So the commander ordered his men to take Paul away to Caesarea during the night. There he was made to wait to see Felix, the Roman governor of Judea, the main part of Israel (23:24). Paul would then have a proper trial.

Notice how God protects Paul in 23:24,35.



Now Read: Acts 24:1 to 25:12

PAUL SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH TO THE ROMAN GOVERNORS

Five days later, some of the Jews from Jerusalem came to Caesarea to speak to Felix. They told Felix that Paul had caused a lot of trouble with the Jews all over the world. They told Felix that Paul was a leader of the religious group called 'The Nazarenes' (24:5).

- He reminded them of God's calling for the Jews into the Promised Land of Canaan (13:17–20).
- He explained that, through the family of King David, God brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus (13:23).
- He said that the people put Jesus to death on a cross but God raised Him from death (13:28–30).
- Then he preached the Good News that everyone who repents and believes in Jesus is forgiven and made right with God (13:38–39).
- He finished with a warning not to make fun of this truth (13:40–41). Many non-Jews believed and were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (13:48). But some of the Jews caused a lot of trouble for Paul and Barnabas. They sent them away (13:50).

Paul and Barnabas then went back to visit some of the new churches. This is what they told the believers (14:21,22):

1. They encouraged the believers to grow strong in their faith.
2. They told them to stay true to what they had been taught.
3. They warned the followers of Jesus that they would have many troubles.

Then they chose leaders (elders) who had much faith in God (14:23). They prayed and fasted for these people and left them in God's care. It is essential that churches have elders to help lead, teach and care for the members. Paul knew that it was not sufficient to have preachers in charge of the church groups.



Describe the preaching methods of Paul (13:14-41)



Now Read: Acts 14:1–28

PAUL PREACHES AT ICONIUM AND DERBE

In Iconium Paul preached with great power. 'A great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.' Other Jews did not like this and stirred up trouble. The people were divided. Preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ often divides friends and families; some believe and others do not (Matthew 10:21).

However, Paul and Barnabas stayed a long time there (14:3). They did not 'grow weary doing good' (Galatians 6:9). There were many believers in that city. But after hearing of a plan to kill them, the two apostles left (14:6).

Paul and Barnabas travelled through Asia Minor. They preached the gospel



The meaning of 'church'

The word 'Church' means 'all Christian believers in the world' who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. We often call the believers 'the body of Christ'.

We call each local church group 'a fellowship of believers'. Today the word 'church' is also used to mean the buildings where believers meet to worship. But you do not need a building to worship God.

The first Christian believers met in homes and also in the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath (Saturday). They were popular meeting places for everyone to walk in and listen to the teaching.

boldly and God worked miracles through them. When the crowds saw a man healed they became excited. They called Paul 'Hermes' and Barnabas 'Zeus', the names of Greek gods (14:12). There was a temple of Zeus in that city.

A pagan priest wanted to sacrifice animals to Paul and Barnabas. Paul stopped him doing this. He told the people, 'We are only human like you... turn away from these worthless things to worship the living God' (14:15).

Then Jews from Antioch (Asia Minor) made the crowds angry and they stoned Paul. They thought he was dead and dragged him outside the city but God raised him up. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe (14:20). Here, many believed the Good News of Jesus Christ (14:21).

After a long journey, Paul and Barnabas went back to his own church in Antioch (Syria) and told the believers all that God had done.

It was a long time before God sent Paul out on another journey (14:28). There were other jobs for him to do in the church.



Talk about:

1. What should we do when troubles come to us because of our beliefs (14:6,20,22)?
2. How should new believers be encouraged (14:22)?
3. What kind of people are needed to lead churches (14:23; 1 Timothy 3)?
4. Does your church allow time to listen to what God is doing in the lives of Christian workers (14:27)?



Why was it important to visit the new churches (14:22-23) and to return to his own church in Syria (24-28)?



Now Read: Acts 15:1–35

MEETING OF THE CHURCH LEADERS

Men from Judea came to Antioch and told the believers: 'Unless you are circumcised... you cannot be saved' (15:1). Circumcision is the Jewish custom of removing the spare skin from the male sex organ when a baby boy was 8 days old. God instructed Abraham to do this to all the boys of his family as a sign of His special covenant or agreement with the Jews (Genesis 17:11). Paul taught that faith alone saved men, so some Jewish



Church government

Jewish synagogues had a leader or ruler of the synagogue called 'Rabbi' or Teacher. Under him were deacons and elders who taught and helped the people.

Paul followed this order in setting up the early Christian churches (Acts 14:23). Stephen was a deacon (6:5); there were elders in Jerusalem (15:2) and James was leader of the Jerusalem council of churches (15:13).

Paul and Barnabas returned to the cities where they had preached. They encouraged the believers and appointed elders.



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

based on Acts chapters 18 to 22

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c. There could be one, two or three answers that are correct for each question.

Answers are given at the end of this book

7. In Troas –
 - a) Eutychus died and came to life again.
 - b) Paul fell from a window.
 - c) Paul spoke all night.
8. Paul –
 - a) did not want to go back to Ephesus.
 - b) wanted the church leaders to bring him some money.
 - c) wanted to go to Jerusalem.
9. The prophet Agabus –
 - a) told Paul he would be put into prison by the Jews.
 - b) told Paul not to go to Jerusalem.
 - c) had four unmarried daughters.



When things go wrong

When things appear to go wrong, it feels that God is no longer with us or in control. Throughout a large part of the Bible, it is clear that many times God spoke directly to His people. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus said 'All authority is given to Me' (Matthew 28:18).

Therefore we should remember that God has handed control over to His Son, our Lord Jesus. Through His Spirit we see the Lord guiding Paul (Acts 23:11):

- Jesus spoke in the middle of the night.
- Jesus appeared in bodily form and stood near to Paul.
- Jesus came to comfort and to encourage him.
- Jesus came to praise what Paul had been doing.
- Jesus came to tell him what he will do in the future.

When you have troubles, Jesus will be with you and guide you. Sometimes He will let you know a little of what lies ahead. He does not tell us much about the future, so that we learn to live by faith. Paul did not know much about the future, only that one day he would go to Rome (23:11). God warns us not to try to find out the future from fortune tellers, mediums or spirits of the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10–13). He wants us to trust Him and follow Jesus.

- a) He was a Jew who knew the Law of Moses very well (22:3)
- b) He was given permission to put followers of Jesus into prison and send them to die (22:4–5).
- c) He was met by Jesus on the road to Damascus (22:6–11).
- d) God sent a Jewish believer to speak to him. He told Paul to witness about Jesus (22:12–16).
- e) In Jerusalem, Jesus told Paul to witness about Him in other places around the world and to people who are not Jews (22:17–21).

When the crowds heard this they wanted to kill Paul (22:22). The Roman commander gave orders for Paul to be flogged (22:24). When the commander found out that Paul was a Roman as well as a Jew, they stopped flogging him. (22:29). Then the commander took Paul to the Jewish Court, the Sanhedrin (22:30).



Talk about:

1. How did Paul explain his actions to the angry crowd (22:22)?
2. Why were the Jews so angry with Paul?
3. Why was the Roman commander afraid to flog Paul (22:29)?



Do you have a personal testimony to speak boldly in the same way as Paul (22:1-21)?



The Resurrection of the Body

A very important subject in the Book of Acts is the resurrection of the body. Paul told the believers at Corinth: 'If no one rises from the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, what we preach doesn't mean anything. Your faith doesn't mean anything either' (1 Corinthians 15:13-14). The resurrection of Jesus Christ was so important that it is taught in almost every sermon preached in the Book of Acts (1:22; 2:31; 4:2, 33; 17:18, 32; 23:6; 24:21).

The Sadducees were the upper class of Jews. They opposed Jesus and the gospel. They did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death nor in the resurrection He promised to every believer.

The Old Testament writings speak only a little of the resurrection. Perhaps the best reference is in Daniel 12:1-2. 'At that time... of suffering your people will be saved whose names are written in the Book of Life. Huge numbers of people who lie dead in the dust of the earth will wake up. Some will rise up to life that will never end. Others will rise up to shame that will never end.' See also Acts 24:15.

This promise of 'everlasting life' is mentioned only once in the Old Testament but the New Testament Church was taught to believe in everlasting life through resurrection from death. Everlasting life is not a continuation of our old life on earth but of a new life (John 11:25; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

believers and non-Jewish believers argued against each other about circumcision rules.

Because of the disagreement, the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to the leaders in Jerusalem to ask the apostles and elders what to do (15:2).

On the way they spoke to other Jewish Christians. These people were pleased to hear that the Good News of Jesus Christ was received by non-Jews (15:3). But in Jerusalem, some of the Pharisees were not pleased. They wanted to keep the old ways of religion including circumcision. It is sad when old religious habits hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our churches today.

At Jerusalem, James and the apostles welcomed Paul and the others. Then Pharisees in the group stood up and said that all believers should obey the Law of Moses and be circumcised (15:5). Peter answered, 'God who knows the heart... accepted the non-Jews by giving the Holy Spirit to them... He made their hearts pure by faith... We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved... Those who are not Jews are saved in the same way as Jews' (Acts 15:8–11).

Then the church leaders listened as Paul and Barnabas spoke about the signs and wonders God did among the uncircumcised non-Jews in the towns and cities of Asia Minor. Later Paul wrote, 'God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ' (Ephesians 2:8). 'Salvation is the free gift of God because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done' (Romans 6:23). Many false religions say that you must work hard and obey religious laws to get to heaven. Paul said: 'Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It's God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done... but by the blood of Jesus Christ' (Ephesians 2:8-13).

'The words of the prophets agree with this,' James answered. He used



Church Problems and Church Meetings: Acts 15:1–35

Some church leaders wanted the new believers to have faith in the laws of Moses (15:1). The laws include circumcision. Others said that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ sets them free from their sins (15:11).

The church met to discuss what was right and wrong:

- First the **whole church met** to share what had happened (v.4).
- Then the **church leaders met** to discuss the problems (v.6).
- Then Paul and Barnabas spoke at a **special church meeting** (v.12).
- Then James **read God's words from the Old Testament writings** (v.16, 17).
- Then James, the leader, gave **advice what to do** (v.19–21).
- The whole church **agreed what to do** (v.22).
- Then they **told the other churches** what was agreed (v.23–29).

words from the prophet Amos who told of a time when God would bless all the nations through Jesus Christ. 'This means all the non-Jews who belong to Me, God said' (Acts 15:17; Amos 9:12). Then James warned the church leaders 'not to make it hard for the non-Jews who are turning to God' (Acts 15:19).

The church leaders wrote a letter to the non-Jewish believers to give them correct teaching. They sent it with Judas, Silas, Paul and Barnabas (15:22–23). In the letter they said that they were sorry that some of the believers from Judea had upset the non-Jewish believers. This letter brought unity among the believers and made everyone happy (15:31; Ephesians 2:15). Jesus prayed to Father God for unity among believers through the truth of God's word (John 17:21). He wanted them to be filled with God's love and the Spirit of Christ (John 17:26).



Talk about:

1. Why did the church send leaders to Jerusalem (15:1,2)?
2. Are you excited when people from outside the church are saved (15:3)?
3. What is the way to solve problems (15:4–22)?
4. How do you protect new believers from false teaching (15:30–34)?



Describe ways to help church leaders (15:10-19), church members (20-29) and other churches (30-35).



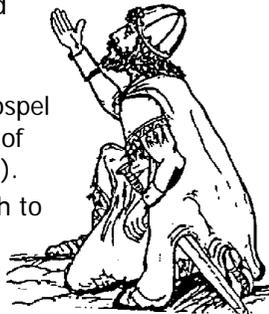
Now Read: Acts 15:36–41; 16:1–40

PAUL'S MISSIONARY WORK GROWS

Soon after this Paul wanted to go back to the new churches in Cyprus and Asia Minor (Turkey). Barnabas agreed but wanted to take his cousin Mark with them (15:37). Paul did not want to take Mark with them. So Paul went with Silas to Asia Minor and Barnabas went with Mark to Cyprus. This disagreement was caused by Paul's refusal to trust a young believer who had left an earlier missionary journey (13:13). Mark was Barnabas's cousin (Colossians 4:10) so Barnabas trusted Mark. Paul and Barnabas could not agree.

We know nothing more of Barnabas, but Mark later worked for Paul (Philemon 24). Mark also wrote his gospel about the teachings and ministry of Jesus. At the end of Paul's life, he asked Mark to help him (2 Timothy 4:11).

When Christian leaders disagree, it is better for both to go separate ways. This avoids dividing the Church. Paul and Barnabas did not divide the believers – they went separate ways and got on with the work of preaching and teaching the Good News.



Pharisees and Sadducees

The Pharisees and Sadducees were two religious groups of Jews. Jesus warned believers not to follow their ways (Matthew 16:6; 23:3).



There were several thousand **Pharisees** at the time of Jesus and Paul. Pharisees were devout Jews obeying the Law of Moses and the Temple laws. They made it difficult for others to follow their example. They believed strongly in God's truth recorded in the Old Testament writings and thought that they were the experts in understanding and applying the truth of God. They told people what to believe and what to do, and what not to do.

They made many more laws of their own. Therefore, it was difficult for the people to obey all their rules and to find peace with God. Jesus said that the Pharisees did not obey their own laws (Matthew 23:3). He knew that we cannot find peace with God by following lots of man-made laws.

The **Sadducees** were wealthy Jews who obeyed the Law of Moses but did not make any new laws. They said that the people should obey the Law but make up their own minds what to do day by day. They obeyed the old religious traditions but did not seek God's guidance from His Word. This is why the Sadducees always argued with the Pharisees about obeying the Law. The Sadducees also refused to believe in angels, spirits and life after death (the resurrection of the body).

The crowds tried to kill Paul, but the Roman commander saved him from them and tied him up with chains. The soldiers carried him away to the Roman fort (21:34–35). There Paul stood on the steps and asked to speak to the crowds (21:39).



Talk about:

1. Explain the work of the Holy Spirit in Paul's journey to Jerusalem (19:21; 20:22–23; 21:4,11–13).
2. What advice did the believers give to Paul (21:4,12)?
3. How did the believers encourage Paul (21:14)?
4. How did the words of the Holy Spirit in 21:11 come true?



When Paul obeyed the Law of Moses (21:26) was this a good thing for Paul?



Now Read: Acts 22:1–29

PAUL SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH TO THE CROWDS

Paul spoke to the crowds in the Hebrew language so that they would fully understand him. He told them:

about the troubles in Jerusalem. They begged him not to go. But Paul believed that the Holy Spirit wanted him to go (20:22).

When the ship came to Caesarea, Paul stayed with Philip the evangelist. While he was there Agabus came from Jerusalem. He took Paul's belt and tied his own hands and feet with it as a sign. He spoke words given to him by the Holy Spirit: 'In this way the Jews... will tie up the owner of this belt' (21:11). Paul, like Jesus, now knew what would happen to him in Jerusalem.

Paul answered Agabus and the believers: 'Why are you weeping? I am ready to be tied up and to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus' (21:13).

The believers knew the danger ahead for all of them, but they went up to Jerusalem with Paul. Paul stayed with Mnason, an old believer from Cyprus who lived in the city. Thousands of people were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They filled every room, but God had a special place for His servant Paul and his friends with Mnason (21:16).

The next day Paul went to see James and the leaders of the Jerusalem church (21:17–18). In Greece and Turkey many thousands of non-Jews had believed. Paul wanted to tell the elders what God had done there.

The elders praised God. But they said to Paul, 'There are thousands of Jews who try hard to obey the Law of Moses. They have heard that you teach the Jews to turn away from Moses. They think you teach them not to circumcise their children and not to live according to our customs. They will hear that you have come, so do what we tell you' (21:20–23).

They told Paul to take four men who were with them to the Temple, to be purified; to have their heads shaved; to pay for them to offer sacrifices. This would be obeying the Law of Moses.

Paul agreed to do this. However, he always preached that men are saved, by God's grace, through faith in Jesus alone (Ephesians 2:8–9). Believers are then helped by the Holy Spirit to keep the meaning of the Law which is fulfilled in us through Christ after our salvation.

PAUL IS ATTACKED BY THE JEWS

It was an easy thing for Paul to obey the Law of Moses. He had done this before. Paul had been under the Nazarite Vow (Numbers 6:1–21). He had shaved his head at Cenchrea (Acts 18:18). The four Jewish Christians in Jerusalem may have been under the same vow. It was time to have their heads shaved (21:24). Paul went with them.

At the Temple some of the Jews from Asia Minor saw Paul. They hated Paul and wanted to kill him. They said he had taken a non-Jew into the Temple. 'He has made this holy place unclean,' they shouted (21:28).

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul and Silas went to Derbe and Lystra. In each place the letter from the church leaders in Jerusalem was read and the believers encouraged.

In Lystra, Paul met a young man named Timothy. Timothy's mother and grandmother were both Jewish believers (2 Timothy 1:5).

Paul loved young Timothy and took him along with them. Timothy's father was not a Jew. Timothy was not accepted by some of the Jews, so Paul circumcised him (16:3). Circumcision is not necessary to make men right with God (Galatians 2:16), but Paul wanted to please the Jews.

Paul, Silas and Timothy visited the churches in that area to encourage them. Their numbers grew daily (16:5). Then they went to towns which Paul had not visited before.

Every day Paul waited on God to find out what he should do. He went to Galatia because the Holy Spirit told him not to go north (16:6). It is always important to know what we should not do and what we should do – where we should not go as well as where we should go.

One night, Paul had a vision. A man from Macedonia called to him, 'Come over and help us.' Next morning they set out for Macedonia (16:10). Paul obeyed the Holy Spirit quickly.

Like Paul, we too must trust the Holy Spirit to guide us. He does this in many ways and at many times:

1. When we ask for the Holy Spirit in our lives (Luke 11:13).
2. When we do what pleases the Lord (Acts 16:5).
3. When we witness to others about Jesus (Luke 21:13–15).
4. When we study God's word (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
5. When we are ready to obey (Acts 16:10).



Demons obey the power of Jesus

Demon spirits or demons recognise Jesus Christ and know that he is more powerful. But they try to deceive believers and those who are seeking God's truth. The demon spirit within the slave girl tried to deceive the people to believe that she knew all about the power of God (Acts 16:17). By shouting out her approval of Paul and Silas she was gaining attention for herself and for her evil masters – as if they were equals to the apostles. (Matthew Henry)

Paul did not want a demon spirit to talk about them. The crowds would not understand who was telling the truth. We must be prepared to order demon spirits to go in the Name of Jesus. Do not do this on your own nor touch people with evil spirits; and ask other Christians to pray for you when you order evil spirits to go. Remember that Jesus sent his followers to work together in pairs (Mark 6:7).

6. When we move forward with the work God has told us to do (16:6). Paul was doing all these things when the Holy Spirit spoke to him and moved him onwards (v.6) and onwards (v.7) and onwards (v.8) and onwards (v.9).

At this time we believe Luke joined Paul and the others. They travelled by boat to southern Macedonia (which is now part of Greece).

There was no Jewish synagogue at Philippi so they went outside the city to the river. There they found a special 'place of prayer' (16:13). Paul and the others spoke to some women who were there. Sometimes it is necessary to find somewhere quiet to talk about Jesus.

A business woman named Lydia listened to God's word. She was not a Jew but believed in God. She accepted Jesus as the Son of God and the Holy Spirit filled her. She and her family believed and were baptized. Then she asked Paul and the others to stay at her house (16:15). Lydia became the first Christian in Europe through Paul's ministry. Over 15 years earlier, visitors from Europe, Africa and Asia became the first followers of Jesus Christ when in Jerusalem (Acts 2:9–11,41).



Talk about:

1. If Christian leaders disagree what is one way forward (15:39)?
2. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy (16:3)?
3. Give two ways the Holy Spirit guides us (16:6–9). How should guidance be checked (16:10)?
4. Do you have a special place where you can talk quietly to others about Jesus (16:13)?



Do you trust God to warn you about going the wrong way and to lead you to people who need to know about Jesus (16:7,10)?

GOD SAVES PAUL AND SILAS FROM PRISON

The apostles often went to the river to pray quietly. One day a slave girl with a demon spirit followed them. 'She made a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling' (16:16). People paid money to hear what the demon spirit in the girl would tell them. These people listened to demon spirits instead of God. Paul was upset when this slave girl followed after them shouting 'These men are servants of the Most High God' (16:17,18). She spoke the truth but Paul knew it came from a demon spirit. Paul was God's messenger, not the slave girl with the demon spirit.

After many days, Paul spoke to the demon spirit in the girl. 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the demon left her (16:18).

The owners saw that the girl had lost her power and they were angry. They could no longer make money through the girl telling the future. They

After this miracle, Paul went back upstairs, shared food and taught the people until it was morning. Then Paul went by boat to Miletus. He did not stop at Ephesus. In this way he saved time on his journey to Jerusalem (20:16).

PAUL SPEAKS URGENTLY TO THE CHURCH LEADERS

While at Miletus, Paul sent for the church leaders from Ephesus. He spoke serious words to them: 'You know that I haven't let anyone keep me from preaching... to you. I have told both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God and turn away from their sins. They must have faith in our Lord Jesus,' he told them. He did not fail to preach the full message of the Good News.

'And now, compelled by the Holy Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. I do not know what will happen to me there' (20:20–22).

'The Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, my life is worth nothing to me. I only want to complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me' (20:23–24).

Paul warned, 'Keep watch over yourselves and all the believers. The Holy Spirit has made you leaders. After I leave you, men will come and try to change God's truth' (20:30).

The Holy Spirit chose the church leaders, and they were responsible to God, not to Paul. Some leaders try to watch over their flock, but do not 'keep watch' over their own lives. If leaders fail in their own personal life then the believers are taught wrong things about God.

When Paul was ready to depart, the church leaders cried and hugged and kissed him (20:37). Paul told them that he would never see them again. Later, some turned away from his teaching (2 Timothy 1:15).



Talk about:

1. What can you do when your life is in danger from people who cause trouble (19:30; 20:3; Matthew 2:14,22)?
2. What can build up our faith (20:32)?
3. Use Paul's words to talk about what a true leader is like (20:28–31).
4. Why did Paul spend so much time teaching and preaching (20:11,27)?
5. Why was it so important for Paul to warn the church leaders (20:28-31)?



When you are in a hurry or busy serving God, do you find time to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying?



Now Read: Acts 21:1–40

PAUL GOES TO JERUSALEM

Paul travelled from Miletus, near Ephesus by ship to Caesarea (21:1–7). Paul met with the believers there. They told Paul what the Holy Spirit said

cause trouble for the followers of Jesus (19:23–29). Paul did not move away from Ephesus at that time. He stayed with the believers. He wanted to help and support them (19:30). Paul stayed with them until the trouble was over (20:1). Then he left to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (Greece) before returning to Troas in Asia Minor (Turkey) (20:1–6).

PAUL MUST DECIDE WHAT TO DO

Paul knew when to stay and when to move on. He was a busy preacher and teacher but he listened to the Holy Spirit to guide him.

Paul knew that he must:

Fulfil his divine calling to preach the good News to the Gentiles.

Plant new churches and teach and encourage the new believers.

Obey his church leaders in Antioch who regularly prayed for him.

Paul also wanted to fulfil his personal desire to visit Jerusalem and then Rome and then Spain.

Paul was prevented from going back to his home church in Antioch (Syria). He learned of a plan to kill him (20:3), so he went back through Macedonia to Asia Minor (Turkey). Paul never saw Greece or Syria again. The others waited for him at Troas. He joined them there and stayed just seven days.

The believers met in an upper room and Paul talked to them until midnight. It was hot and the room filled with smoke from the oil lamps. A young man sat in the open window. He fell asleep and fell to the ground. When they reached him, he was dead. Paul went down and threw his arms around the young man's body and his spirit came into him again (20:10).



Paul was not afraid to tell the truth

Paul preached that the Law of Moses was good but not sufficient to save people from their sins (Romans 3:20). He preached that people are put right with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). He knew that the Law is a guide for telling us what is wrong. It shows what is right and wrong.

Many found this difficult to understand. This is why Paul was in trouble with some of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 21:21). Many believers were trying hard to follow Christ and also to follow the Law of Moses (21:20). Because of this, Paul was asked to show that he believed in the Law of Moses (21:23–24). He wanted to please these men and also to please God. But soon Paul was in trouble with Jews from Asia Minor (21:27).

Then he asked to explain the truth (Acts 21:39). This caused further trouble with the Jews in Jerusalem (22:22). But the Lord Jesus told Paul, 'Be brave! You have given witness to me in Jerusalem. You must do the same in Rome' (23:11).

Always pray for boldness to tell the truth.

took hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them to the marketplace. 'These Jews are doing things which are against the Roman law' (16:21). The city leaders ordered them to be whipped and put into prison. But God brings glory to His name if we continue to trust Him through all difficulties.

In prison, in the middle of the night, Paul and Silas sang hymns and prayed to God. They were bleeding and in much pain. As the other prisoners listened, an earthquake broke the prison open. The head prison officer woke up and saw the doors open. He thought the prisoners had escaped. He drew his sword to kill himself, but Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!' (16:25–28).

GOD SAVES THE PRISON OFFICER

The prison officer was frightened. If the prisoners escaped, he would be in much trouble from the Romans.

The man fell on his knees in front of Paul. He cried out, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will be saved' (16:31). Then they told him and his family about Jesus. The jailor and his family believed. At midnight, he took Paul and Silas and washed their sore backs and gave them food. This showed that he was a changed man.

Paul baptized the prison officer and his whole family. For Paul and Silas, this was the most important thing to do: obey the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19–20, 'Go and teach all people in all countries to believe and follow Me. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do all things I have told you to do'. Their troubles in prison did not stop the power of God from working.

In the morning, the city leaders told the prison officer to set Paul and Silas free (16:35). They also said sorry to Paul and Silas (16:39) because Paul was a Roman. It was wrong to whip Romans. They were forgiven by Paul.

This story shows how we should trust God in all things. This story also gives us a wonderful picture of the love of God. There was no punishment but complete forgiveness from sins for the jailor and for all who believed and followed Jesus, God's Son!

Then Paul and Silas went back to Lydia's house. They stayed there only a short time, then they went on to the next town. They obeyed God's call to preach the Good News in Macedonia.

The believers in Philippi grew strong in their faith. They loved Paul and cared for his needs when few others did (Philippians 1:3–5; 4:14–16).



Talk about:

1. Do you find a quiet place to pray (16:13,16)?
2. What did Lydia do to help those who preached the Good News (16:15,40)?

3. Why is it good to praise God and sing hymns when we are hurt by others (16:25)?

4. What was the prison officer saved from (16:28,30)?

 What was the result of obeying the Holy Spirit (16:11-15) and refusing help from demon powers (16-24)?

 **Now read Acts: 17:1–34**

PAUL PREACHES FROM CITY TO CITY

Paul and his friends went to Thessalonica. On three Sabbath days, Paul went into the synagogue and taught the Jews. He proved from the Old Testament writings 'that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. This Jesus I am reporting to you is the Messiah, the Christ,' he told them (17:3). Some Jews believed. Many non-Jews believed.

Jason opened his house to them. Certain Jews were jealous. They gathered some bad men and rushed to Jason's house looking for Paul and Silas. They could not find them, so they dragged Jason before the city leaders. 'These men have caused trouble all over the world; now they come here and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They disobey Caesar and say that there is another king called Jesus' (17:6,7).

Jason paid money and was freed. At night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to safety.

In Berea many received their message. They studied the OT writings carefully every day. It is important to check all preaching and teaching with the Word of God. Many of the Jews and non-Jews believed (17:11,12). But jealous Jews followed them there, too, in order to make trouble for those who preached the Good News. So the believers took Paul and Silas to Athens.

FEW BELIEVERS IN ATHENS

Athens was the centre of culture and learning in Paul's day. He was greatly troubled to see all the idols in the city. He preached the Good News about Jesus and His resurrection. In the synagogue he talked with those who worshipped Yahweh, the One True God (17:17). He explained to them how Jesus was their Messiah. He also spoke about Jesus to the people in the market place.

Paul spoke with great passion because the people did not have Jesus in their lives. Then some men took him to a meeting of the Areopagus where their law court met. 'What is this new teaching?' they asked him (17:19).

The Greeks had many gods, but did not know the one true living God. Paul told them:

1. The One True God made the world. He is not a god made by the hands of people (17:24).

of the Good News grew stronger (19:20).

 **Talk about:**

1. How can you help believers to fully understand God's truth (18:26)?
2. What is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:38–39)?
3. What did Paul say and do to the believers in Ephesus (19:4–6)?
4. Why is it necessary to burn or destroy all objects used in witchcraft, magic and the occult when we believe in Jesus (19:20)?
5. Why is it important to write to new Christians or new churches?

 How did Paul encourage the churches (18:18-23) and how did the members encourage each other (24-28)?

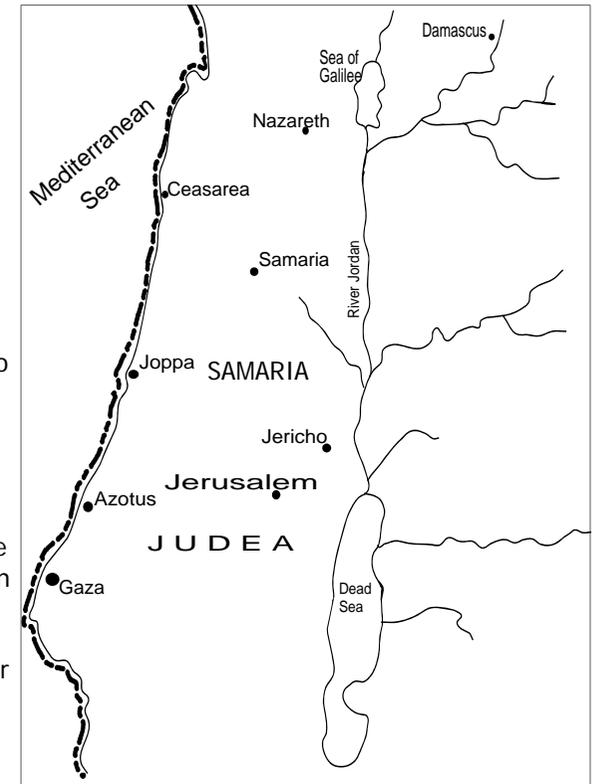
 **Acts 19:21–41; 20:1–38**

PAUL PLANS WHAT TO DO IN EPHESUS

The work of the Holy Spirit in Ephesus became very powerful. The truth of God spread everywhere around (19:20). During this time Paul began to plan where to travel next. He wanted to visit the new churches across the sea in Macedonia and Achaia (now called Greece).

He also wanted to visit Jerusalem and Rome (19:21). Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish people and also the centre of the Christian churches. Rome was the centre of the Roman empire. Achaia was the centre of the old Greek empire. Paul knew that these were important places to visit to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ and to teach and encourage the new believers. He stayed in Ephesus a little longer but sent two of his helpers to Macedonia (19:22). Paul followed them later (20:1).

At this time, the people who made silver idols encouraged the crowds to





Now Read: Acts 18:18–28; 19:1–20

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul went back to Jerusalem and then returned to his home church in Antioch (18:22). After some time in Antioch, Paul travelled again to the churches in Asia Minor. He taught believers in each place (18:23).

During this time, Apollos arrived in Ephesus (18:24) from Alexandria, in Egypt. His knowledge of the Old Testament writings was good and he spoke with great power about Jesus. But he only knew the baptism of John the Baptist (18:25). Paul's friends helped Apollos to gain 'a better understanding of the way of God' (18:26). This included the teaching about the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus for all believers (Acts 1:4-5; 2:38).

When Paul returned to Ephesus, he found some believers had been baptized in the name of John (19:3). Then Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus (19:5). Paul laid his hands on them and prayed for them (19:6). The Holy Spirit came down on them. Some spoke in different languages and some began to prophesy. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are chosen by God for each believer.

Paul spoke in the synagogue at Ephesus for three months. When some people began to speak against him and 'The Way' of Jesus he went to a teaching room owned by Tyrannus. He taught there every day for two years so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in that region heard the word of the Lord (19:10).

While Paul was in Ephesus, he wrote letters to the church in Corinth which are also became part of the New Testament writings. He explained the teachings of Jesus to stop them going the wrong way in life. He strengthened their faith and warned them about false teachings. When Paul started new churches he tried to write to them or visit them.

God did many miracles through Paul, especially healing people who were ill and driving out demon spirits (19:11,12). The sons of a pagan priest were evil magicians. When they saw Paul cast out demons in the name of Jesus, they tried to do the same.

One day they tried using the words they heard Paul use. They found a man with a demon spirit and shouted 'In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out' (19:13).

The demon spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and I know Paul, but who are you?' Then the man jumped on them and beat them, so that they ran out of the house 'naked and bleeding'.

Because of this, many people in Ephesus believed and were sorry for the bad things that they had done. Some burned all their books and evil objects used in witchcraft. 'The word of the Lord spread everywhere' and the power

2. 'God does not need anything.' It is God who gives life and everything else (17:25). He is Lord of all.
3. All people on earth come from one man (Adam) whom God made (17:26).
4. God decided when and where to send the people to live. God did this so that we should look for Him, the One True God, reach out for Him and find Him wherever He sends us (17:27). He is never far from any one of us.
5. God is the creator of life. We live because of Him (17:28). We were created to be His children.
6. God is not made out of gold or silver or stone. Do not think about Him in this way (17:29). It is wrong to worship Him in this way.
7. Now is the time to repent and turn away from your sins (17:30).
8. God sent His Son to save us and He will judge us at the end (17:31; John 3:17; 12:48).

Paul saw that they were 'very religious' people yet did not know God. When the Greeks heard about Jesus being raised from the dead, some laughed. Others said, 'We want to hear you again on this...' (17:32).

The people of Athens were rich, clever and well educated. They loved to talk about religion and worshipped different gods. But not many people believed in Yahweh, the One True and Almighty God and His Son, Jesus (17:34). And few believers knew Him personally.



Work and ministry

Paul had an ordinary job. He repaired and made tents. He sold the tents that he made. He did this work so that he could earn some money. He worked with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth (Acts 18:3). We believe he did this same work when he visited other towns (20:34). He did this to earn money to pay for his food and clothes.

He did not expect others to give him money for his food and clothes. He believed it was good to spend part of his time working and part of his time teaching and preaching. In this way he was not a burden to the people he lived with. He did not ask them to pay him money when he taught them but said it was acceptable to pay him. In this way, the believers could help the churches in Jerusalem and not give all their money to Paul.

We call Paul's ministry a tent-making ministry. He did God's work but he also made tents to sell. He was happy to do both and believed that God wanted him to do that. Paul gave God the glory for all the work that he could do – his tent making, his teaching, his preaching. He repaired tents; he repaired broken lives; he repaired false teaching. He did all things for the glory of God.

Many Bible teachers, ministers, preachers and evangelists have ordinary jobs. They have 'tent-making ministries'. Some work full-time in ministry and are paid by the church or mission. Some work part-time for money and part-time in ministry. All their work glorifies God and blesses the work they do.



Talk about:

1. What did the people do when Paul preached the Good News of Jesus Christ – in Thessalonica (17:4); in Berea (17:12); in Athens (17:32)?
2. What was the difference between the believers?
3. What points in Paul's preaching can we include when we speak to non-believers about Christ?



The believers in **Thessalonica** showed the love of God by helping others. The believers in **Berea** read the Old Testament writings very carefully and understood the truth of God. The believers in **Athens** were very religious but failed to know God personally. What do people think about your church and its members?



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Based on Acts chapters 13 to 17

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c. There could be one, two or three answers that are correct for each question.

Answers are given at the end of this book

1. When the priest of Zeus wanted to worship Paul and Silas —
 - a) they were glad.
 - b) they said they were not gods.
 - c) they said that God was not like Zeus.
2. What did Paul and Silas do everywhere they went?
 - a) Preached the Good News of Jesus.
 - b) Made the people angry.
 - c) Healed everyone who listened.
3. James said that —
 - a) he agreed with what Peter said.
 - b) that only the Jews could be people of God.
 - c) that it should not be made difficult for the non-Jews to believe.
4. Paul and his companions went to Macedonia because —
 - a) they did not want to go to Bithynia.
 - b) they heard it was a good place to go.
 - c) Paul had a vision about Macedonia.
5. Paul went to Berea where —
 - a) the Thessalonian Jews came to make trouble for him.
 - b) nobody would listen to him.
 - c) Silas and Timothy left Paul and went home.
6. Paul told the men of Athens —
 - a) to follow an unknown god.
 - b) about God who made the world.
 - c) that gods are made by man.



Now Read: Acts: 18 1–17

GOD ENCOURAGES PAUL TO PREACH IN CORINTH

Paul did not stay long in Athens. He went to Corinth where God told him to preach boldly. 'Don't be afraid. Keep on speaking. Don't be silent. I am with you. No-one will hurt you.' Why? God had many people in Corinth who would believe the Good News of Jesus and be saved (18:9,10).

Corinth was a busy sea port in southern Greece. It was a city full of very sinful people. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla there. They were Jews who believed in Jesus.

In Rome, Claudius was emperor at that time. The Jews there made trouble for the Christians, so Claudius made all Christians leave Rome. Aquila and Priscilla were Jews who believed in Jesus, so they left Rome. This is why they were living in Corinth. Paul was a tent maker and they were tent makers too, so he stayed with them and they made tents together to earn money. Paul stayed there for one and a half years.

Aquila and Priscilla were man and wife and became church leaders in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19).

The Jewish leaders in Corinth also tried to make trouble for the Christians (18:6). But the Roman governor, Gallio, did not listen to the Jews (18:14–16). When the Jews rejected Paul he preached to people who were not Jews (18:6).

It was in Corinth that Paul wrote his letters to the Thessalonians which later became part of the New Testament writings. Paul praised them, encouraged them and corrected them.



The power of God today (see Acts 19:19)

'We have seen God's power at work. He visited us with miracles. People brought their idols to be burnt and gave their lives to Christ. People's thoughts were uncovered through the preaching of the word of God. At night, some people could not sleep. They came back in the morning to confess the wrong things they had done. It was really a time of God's grace. Now I am receiving phone calls and visits of people to praise God because He has changed their lives. Glory to God!' (*Pastor B., Burkina Faso, September 2004.*)



Talk about:

1. Paul went to Athens (17:15) then to Corinth (18:1). How did Paul know when he was in the right place (18:9–11)?
2. Is it good for teachers, preachers or leaders to have a part-time job to earn money (18:3)?



Paul was prepared to work with women who were church leaders such as Priscilla: are you?