



ACTS

— OF THE RISEN LORD JESUS —
CHAPTERS 17-28

Iudaea Province in the First Century



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Letter from Pastor Ken

Dear WBC,

In Term 4 we are going to finish studying the remainder of the book of Acts.

By the time we get to the final chapters, Gentiles have become an officially accepted and growing part of the church. The ongoing push to take the good news of Jesus further afield continues with the focus remaining on Paul and the team that left Antioch back in 15:36.

Yet the predominately Gentile churches being established are not independent of their wider family. The ongoing connection between the original Jerusalem church and the churches scattered around the world will be further developed and strengthened.

While there are further extraordinary accounts of all manner of people becoming Christians and of churches established, the opposition continues to ramp up. No longer restricted to Jewish persecution, Gentiles and even nature itself will seem to be trying to prevent the spread of the gospel. Yet as Jesus promised in 1:8 "...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Thus, all opposition continues to be overcome.

Much of the final chapters are taken up with the legal proceedings Paul faced and the resultant trip to Rome.

Some believe that having an ordered account showing that there was nothing anti-Roman in Christianity was at least part of the purpose behind Luke writing Acts.

Our ongoing prayer is that as a church we will have our understanding of God's plan clarified and we will enthusiastically get on with our part in that plan – that we will be increasingly bold witnesses and passionate prayers as the Holy Spirit works in and through us.

Looking forward to another term of studying and living out God's word together with you.

Ken

STUDY ONE | ACTS 17

1. v1-4 give us an insight into what motivated Paul's strategy of sharing the gospel. What was the outcome in Thessalonica?
2. "The Jews" are again identified as the opposition (v5), but what strategy do they use to try to have Paul and Silas punished? (v7)
3. Escaping from Thessalonica, Paul and Silas head to Berea (v10). Why are the Bereans held up as a good example? (v11) How can we be more like them?
4. From Thessalonica to Berea is a more than 50km journey. What does the Thessalonians travelling that distance reveal about the extent of their opposition to the gospel?

5. Paul initially travels on without Silas and Timothy. His distress over the idols in Athens led him to reasoning in the synagogue and the marketplace and it is the later which leads to his invitation to the Areopagus. How does he modify his presentation of the gospel in comparison with what we have seen so far? (e.g. ch13)

Gospel to Jewish Audience	Gospel in Athens

6. What response is made to Paul's presentation?
7. What are some existing beliefs of our non-Christian friends/ neighbours/ relatives that may be a helpful point to begin a conversation about Jesus?

Sermon: 15th October
Acts 17

STUDY TWO | ACTS 18

1. Paul is happy to work at his trade and preach in his 'free time', or to preach 'full time'. What determines his approach?
2. While this principle has been termed "tent-making" to describe doing secular work and mission simultaneous, how does it apply more broadly to all of us?
3. As has been the pattern, Paul is initially welcomed in the Synagogue, interest leads to his rejection by the leaders and so he concentrates his ministry to the Gentiles. What is the unique promise Paul is given in Corinth and its result? (v9-11)
4. "The Jews" again attempt to use the Roman official to deal with Paul. Why does it fail this time? (v14-17)

Sermon: 22nd October
Acts 18

STUDY THREE | ACTS 19

1. How much time has passed between 18:19 and 19:1 isn't clear, nor where Priscilla and Aquilla have gone, but 18:25 potentially explains why believers in Ephesus have only heard of John's baptism. What is Paul's first response? (v1-7)
2. Some people suggest that speaking in tongues is prescriptive of what should happen (i.e. water baptism followed by Spirit baptism). What alternative might explain the reason for this order?
3. In comparison to other locations, it is an unusually long period of time that Paul is accepted in the synagogue (v8). What does he do as opposition ramps up? (v9-10)
4. Two years is the longest explicit time in Acts that Paul remains in one location. What is the outcome? (v10)
5. v11-12 contrast with v13-16. Why would 'some Jews' invoke the name of Jesus and what is their misunderstanding that led to it?

6. While clearly an incident impacting Jewish people, there is a wider impact on all of Ephesus. What do believers do in response? (v17)

7. While Paul is having a huge impact in Ephesus and beyond, he remains committed even further afield. What does he do to continue the spread of the gospel? (v21-22)

8. What motivates Demetrius' speech? (v24-27)

9. The resulting riot was seen as a threat by both believers (v30-31) and public officials (v40). How do very different goals sometimes work together in Acts?

Sermon: 29th October
Acts 19

STUDY FOUR | ACTS 20

1. Rather than sailing direct from Greece to Syria, Paul detours back through Macedonia. What does the list of men accompanying Paul indicate? (v4-5)
2. What is 'breaking bread' on the first day of the week (v7) a description of?
3. Clearly Eutychus' healing (v7-12) was not a common occurrence. What does it add to the account?
4. Paul's decisions are partially explained (e.g. v13, 16). What do the details of his meeting with the Ephesian elders tell us about their relationship?
5. What is the danger Paul anticipates for himself and the church? (v23, 29-31)

Sermon: 5th November
Acts 20

STUDY FIVE | ACTS 21-22

1. 21:4 seems to indicate that Paul shouldn't go onto Jerusalem. This conclusion is then reinforced by Agabus (v10-11). Why is Paul so insistent on going anyway? (v13-14)
2. While pleased by the results amongst the Gentiles, in Jerusalem the pressing issue was Paul's relationship with the Jews (v20). What is suggested and why? (v23-25)
3. Though misrepresenting what Paul has done, what results from the Asian Jews' accusations (v30-31)?
4. Paul nearly dies, and it is only the arrival of Roman soldiers that initially prevents it. Why are the crowd so angry?
5. What privilege does Paul's birth give him (v39)?

6. Paul's speech starts with his own history of doing exactly what the crowd are attempting to do to Paul. How has Paul's past uniquely prepared him for this moment?

7. Paul repeats his Damascus Road encounter with Jesus. What differences do you notice from the chapter 9 account and why would Paul emphasise these now?

8. Why is there such a sudden change by the crowd in 22:22?

9. Paul at first emphasised his Jewishness (21:39). What benefit is there from now revealing his Roman citizenship? (22:25)

10. Why should we be so thankful that Paul was willing to risk his life in this way?

Sermon: 12th November
Acts 21-22

STUDY SIX | ACTS 23-24

1. Why would Paul have not recognised the High Priest (23:5)?
2. Why would Paul intentionally start a debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees (23:6)?
3. Though it is the Lord's plan for Paul to testify also in Rome, what is the means by which the next threat against Paul's life is neutralised (23:16)?
4. Though it is true that the Roman commander has saved Paul's life, what spin does he put on the situation and why (23:27)? (c.f. 22:29)
5. Governor Felix follows protocol, holding a hearing. What is the charge made against Paul (24:5-6)?

6. How is Paul's defence much more than just an attempt to clear his name?

7. Felix is already knowledgeable about Christian beliefs (24:22). Why does he refuse to make a judgement? (compare v23, and 25-27)

8. Paul is held in prison in Caesarea for two years. What did he do in that time?

9. It may seem like a waste of time that the one so central to the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles is locked up in prison. How does Paul's situation fulfil Acts 1:8 and reveal a principle we need to understand our own situations?

Sermon: 19th November
Acts 23-24

STUDY SEVEN | ACTS 25-26

1. What is Festus' initial response to their devious request to have Paul transferred (25:4-5)?
2. Why does Paul feel compelled to appeal to Caesar? (25:9 & 11)
3. Just a few days after Paul makes his appeal, King Agrippa and Bernice arrive. Why does Festus discuss Paul's case with them? (25:20)
4. While having a pretence of seeking justice, what is more likely motivating Festus, Agrippa and Bernice?
5. Paul again recounts his background and role as a persecutor of the church. What further differences are highlighted by Paul in comparison to his earlier testimonies? (ch9 & 22)

6. Probably similar to his reaction in 24:25, Festus writes off Paul as insane.(26:24) What is Agrippa's response to Paul's appeal (v28)?

7. Many of us read 26:32 with a feeling of disappointment, that if only Agrippa had turned up earlier then Paul could have been set free. How is this bad outcome actually good and contributing to the fulfillment of 1:8? (c.f. Lk 21:12)

Sermon: 26th November
Acts 25-26

STUDY EIGHT | ACTS 27-28

1. Whilst Paul is a prisoner, in what ways is he cared for as he begins this journey to Rome? (27:3)
2. Why would it have been natural for Julius the centurion to dismiss Paul's advice? (27:10-12)
3. While recounting the facts of the storm (27:13-20; and in hindsight the acceptance of bad advice), how is this contributing to the reinforcement of the fact that God is in control?
4. As a prisoner under escort, how is it that Paul takes on an extraordinary role of leadership? (27:21-26)
5. How does the contrasting of Paul's confidence and the sailors' fear build the tension?

6. 28:1-6 could be characterised as 'out of the frying pan and into the fire'. How does even a snakebite contribute to the acceptance of Paul's message? (28:6)
7. How does Paul's treatment of Publius lead to further opportunities? (28:9-10)
8. Paul is received by 'brothers and sisters' from Puteoli and then Rome (28:13-14). Why would this have encouraged him so much? (c.f. Romans 16)
9. In an age of instant communication, we find it hard to imagine circumstances as recorded in 28:21. How does Paul's interaction with the Jews in Rome follow his normal pattern?
10. While Paul awaited his trial it seems that he was under house arrest rather than in prison. How is his last recorded action the fulfillment of 1:8?
11. Why would Luke finish his account before we find out what happened to Paul?

Sermon: 10th December
Acts 27-28



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