

rockypc SERIES COMPANION

JESUS CHRIST KING of KINGS

THE BOOK OF ACTS



The book of Acts is the story of the gospel spreading from the earliest days after Jesus' resurrection. His fledgling followers suddenly gain confidence to proclaim his resurrection and salvation everywhere they go. We see how this message swells and grows, from 12 scared men to a COMMUNITY that crosses borders and traditional boundaries. The risen Jesus is Lord, the King of Kings, who saves people as they repent and turn to him, receiving forgiveness and his Holy Spirit.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ACTS TO GET STARTED

Acts was written by Luke, who accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys, and it's second in a two part series that shows all Jesus began and continues to do in the world, through and for his people.

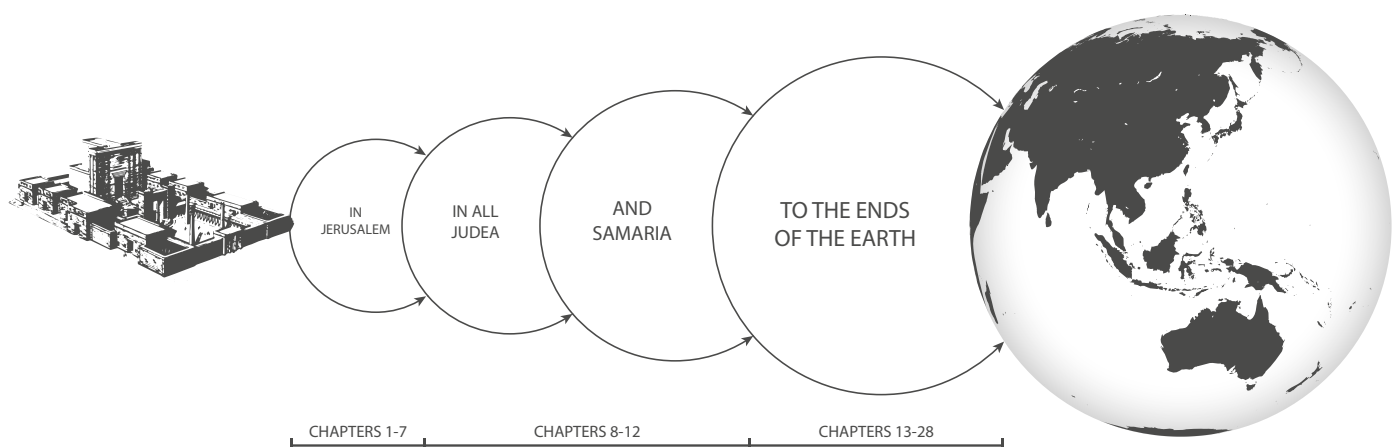
In Luke 1v1-4, we're told:

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have *carefully investigated everything from the beginning*, I too decided to write an *orderly account* for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke carefully investigated all that he wrote down so we may know the certainty of the things taught to us about Jesus and the same method and goal is intended for Acts. In Acts 1v1-11, Luke writes:

¹ In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about *all that Jesus began to do and to teach* ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³... But *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*" ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight."

Where Luke's Gospel is about what Jesus began, Acts is about what Jesus continues through the work of His Spirit and through the witness of His Apostles. Acts tells the story of the gospel, that is, the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, spreading to the ends of the earth. The diagram below shows how the gospel grows and shows how the spread can be tracked through the chapters in Acts.



THEMES

Some important themes to notice as you read are:

- **Jesus is Lord!** Joel foresaw the day of salvation where there were signs and wonders as God's Spirit was poured out far and wide (Joel 2). And it comes true in Jesus' own life, and then as his apostles begin speaking about him. All of these signs point to God's salvation in Jesus. Jesus is named the Lord who saves.
- **Jesus is risen!** The apostles' speeches only touch on the meaning of Jesus' sacrificial and substitutionary death. Rather, they focus on his resurrection. This is what proclaims him to be Lord and Messiah. This is what the apostles witness to. This is what confirms that he is the judge we will answer to.
- **Jesus is at work through his Spirit.** Jesus gives out his Spirit generously as people repent and believe. And we see the Spirit powerfully at work confirming, emboldening, empowering and transforming.
- **Repentance.** The right response to hearing that Jesus is the risen Lord is to repent. Acts shows us this means turning away from false beliefs (whether hatred of Jesus or idol-worship) and turning to the Lord Jesus. He gifts us salvation and forgiveness of sins. Repentance is symbolised in baptism as an outward declaration that Jesus is Lord. And inwardly, we are gifted the Holy Spirit.
- **Church.** We catch glimpses of what the early church was like and how important it is in God's plans. This can help us think more about our own church — the why and the how of our own COMMUNITY. But we do need to remember that we are separated by distance and time from this early church, so things will look different in our context.
- **Israel.** These are the chosen people of God, receivers of God's promises in Abraham and his covenant through Moses. All of this culminates in the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. And Jesus says a new moment is here as he appoints 12 apostles, just as 12 sons of Israel (Jacob) formed the nation. The renewed people of God are marked by turning to Jesus as Lord and receiving the Holy Spirit (like a new temple where God dwells). But many in the traditional religious establishment reject Jesus and his apostles as their ancestors did (often with violence), so they show themselves not to be among God's true people.
- **Gentiles.** Non-Jews are increasingly grafted in to Jesus' church, throughout the story. It seems to be a surprise to the apostles, but they realise that this was always God's plan from the beginning. It causes some tension because, under the law, foreigners entered Israel by being circumcised. Now, they repent and call on Jesus' name, like any Jew, and are saved.
- **Scripture.** Luke points to the way Jesus is the answer to the promises and hopes of the Old Testament. He quotes or alludes to various Scriptures to show more about Jesus and his salvation, and the significance of what is happening as news about him spreads.
- **Jesus is stronger than enemy powers.** As the apostles confront sorcerers and the worship of idols. He is shown to be more powerful and more good. He is also in charge of kings and religious rules, they rage against him in vain.
- **Persecution.** Acts tells of many people who suffer for Jesus' name. But there is great hope for those who do. Jesus is with them, he cares (its as though he himself is being persecuted), he is in control of even this situation, he uses the persecution to spread his gospel and it's a joy to suffer like our Saviour.

KEY THINGS THAT WILL HELP YOU

- **Descriptive not prescriptive.** Acts is recounting the story of what happened in the early days of Christianity. It is a description. But it is not designed to prescribe what we should or shouldn't do. As with any ancient Biblical text, we are wanting to understand what happens and its meaning and then translate that to our context, in a different time and place. For example, the believers met together in the temple courts every day. This is not a command for us to meet every day. But it does make us ask how we can value being a COMMUNITY together.
- **Know the time.** Acts tells us about a unique period in history. It is a description of that time, not setting us an expectation that all of these same things will happen in our time. For example, Jesus appointed 12 apostles, and Paul was an extra apostle as one who saw the risen Jesus and was commissioned by him. We do not expect more apostles today. They were not replaced upon their death. But it was their witness to the resurrection exploded outwards into making churches and believers all over the world.

Week Starting	Passage for Bible Talk	pg. #	Growth Group Study (before Bible Talks)	pg. #
TERM 1				
Sunday 15 February	Acts 1v1-11	1	Witnesses	3
Sunday 22 February	Acts 1v12-2v47	6	Lord & Messiah	8
Sunday 1 March	Acts 2v42-4v31	12	No Other Name	14
Sunday 8 March	4v32-5v1	18	God's Grace at Work	20
Sunday 15 March	Acts 5v12-42	24	It'll Never Fail	26
Sunday 22 March	Acts 6v1-8v1	29	The True People of God	31
Sunday 29 March	Acts 8v1-40	34	The Great Power Of God	36
Sunday 5 April	EASTER WEEKEND			
Sunday 12 April	Acts 9v1-31	40	Seeing Jesus	42
Sunday 19 April	Acts 9v32-12v24	45	The Word Grows (SCHOOL HOLIDAYS)	47
TERM 2				
Sunday 26 April	Acts 12v25-13v52	50	Joy & Jealousy	52
Sunday 3 May	Acts 14v1-28	57	Turning To The Living God	59
Sunday 10 May	Acts 15v1-35	62	No Burdens	64
Sunday 17 May	Acts 15v36-16v40	67	Set Free	69
Sunday 24 May	Acts 17v1-18v22	74	Knowing God	76
Sunday 31 May	Acts 18v23-21v16	79	Word of God's Grace	81
Sunday 7 June	Acts 21v17-26v32	85	Resurrection Hope	87
Sunday 14 June	Acts 27-28	90	In Rome	92

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS SERIES COMPANION

ON YOUR OWN— If you have time, work through the questions before your GROWTH GROUP so that you've started thinking about the passage before you arrive. You can dig deeper into the Old Testament context at home too. There are a number of books and talks etc to check out for more info. There are lots of interesting things we could discuss from each passage, but we're going to focus on the main idea and you can look into the tangents before, or even after the study.

WITH YOUR GROWTH GROUP—Don't be afraid to stop and talk about things that grab your attention or raise questions for you. But also be understanding that your leader might say you'll have to talk about it later.

ON SUNDAY—Make sure you bring your SERIES COMPANION along with you, so that you can keep track of any questions you have and record the way that God's Spirit is helping you to understand His Word and grow in your love for Jesus.

These series companions are designed to be used as either a print version, or interactively on a device. Use whichever method is most helpful for you.

WITNESSES

ACTS 1v1-11

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)



Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GROWTH GROUP STUDY

Have you travelled to somewhere that feels like the 'ends of the earth'? Where was it? What made it feel that way?

Luke wrote a two volume work about Jesus. The first half is named after him, and the second half is called Acts. These companion pieces work together to tell us what Jesus 'began to do and teach', and then what he continued to do after his ascension to heaven. We are meant to see how they fit together. They even overlap in the ending of Luke and the beginning of Acts.

READ LUKE 1v1-4

1. What was Luke's purpose in writing this book?

READ LUKE 24v44-53

2. What do Jesus' disciples need to understand about the Jewish Scriptures?

READ ACTS 1v1-3

3. What happens between the time Jesus rose and when he was taken up to heaven?

Later on, you can explore the links with 2 Kings 2; Exodus 24v15-18; Luke 24v36-43

READ LUKE 4v40-44; 23v36-43; 24v25-26

4. How important is the kingdom of God, to Jesus? When does the kingdom come?

READ ACTS 1v4-8

Jesus reminds the apostles (= sent ones) of his promise to send the Holy Spirit. See Luke 3v15-16; 11v1-13, for example.

5. How will the Spirit continue Jesus' kingdom work?

The apostles ask about the kingdom being restored to Israel, and it's worth thinking about what is behind their question. Are they just a bit doozy and haven't understood what he's been telling them? Do they not believe that Jesus was crowned king at his death and resurrection? Is Jesus just rebuking them in v7?

They are actually asking a natural question. The people of Israel were a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19v5-6), but had suffered exile under God's judgement. The apostles know God's promises of an end to exile, and a hope that stretches beyond one ethnicity and nation.

READ ISAIAH 11v10-13; 32v14-20; 49v5-7

6. What will happen in Israel's restoration?

The nation of Israel split in two after King Solomon's death (1 Kings 12). They became known as Judah (with Jerusalem as its capital) and Israel (with Samaria as its capital). Both nations were eventually exiled from their lands. But God promised a day when both nations would return to the LORD, receiving his Spirit. And what's more, all nations would be drawn in to this salvation. Jesus says this will begin with his apostles. They won't know God's exact timeframe, but the proclamation of Jesus as king would start in Jerusalem and its surrounding countryside, go to Samaria (uniting the divided tribes of Israel) and then to all nations at the ends of the earth. And the journey of this message forms the framework for the book of Acts, as we see the transforming news of King Jesus spread.

READ ACTS 1v9-11

7. What is the promise here?

READ 2 KINGS 2v8-14; DANIEL 7v13-14

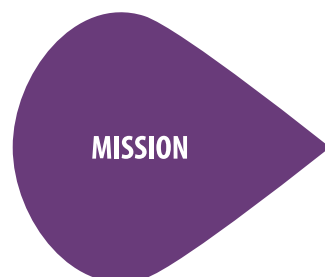
8. What is the significance of Jesus being taken up to heaven, for his apostles? For understanding who he is (his role, title and place in the world)?

growing disciples

At rockypc we have 5 core values — we want to be **growing disciples** who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.



How has your vision of God's kingdom and King Jesus grown today?



How did the message of Jesus come to you? Thank God for those who first shared it with you.

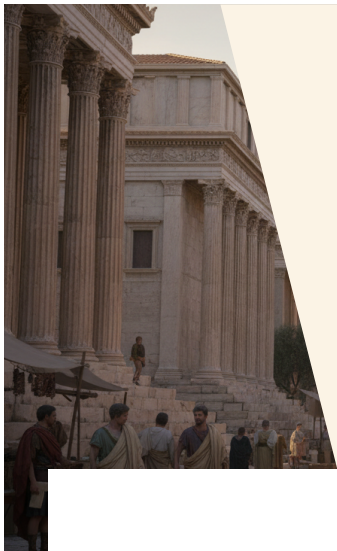


How has the Holy Spirit enabled you to witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus?

What confidence can you have as you do?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus is the risen, ascended and eternal king who will return in majesty. Praise Jesus as the one who has all authority, glory and sovereign power. He deserves the worship of all nations.
- Praise God for giving us his Spirit as a gift. Praise him for the Spirit empowering people us to speak about Jesus resurrection and ascension as king over all the world.
- Thank God that the news of the kingdom has come to us in our part of the world (at the ends of the earth). Pray that we would continue this mission by sharing of King Jesus in our city. Pray too that we would long to see Jesus proclaimed as King of Kings everywhere.



LORD & MESSIAH

ACTS 1v12-2v41

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

They say that for every sign, there is a story of how it came to be needed. Like the ones below. Have you seen a sign that came with a story?



READ ACTS 1v12-26

1. Was Judas' betrayal a surprise to God? How do you know?

2. Why do you think it was important for there to be 12 apostles and witnesses to Jesus' ministry and resurrection?

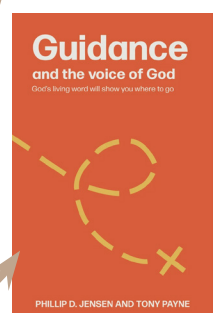
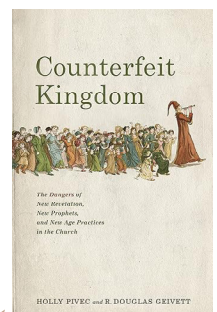
Hint: What is important about the number 12 in the Bible? See Genesis 35v9-26

Jesus had chosen 12 disciples and designated them as apostles (sent ones).

Read about it in Luke 6v12-16. In fulfillment of God's plan, Judas betrayed Jesus. But he needed to be replaced to symbolise that Jesus was making a new Israel, a new people of God. And it would start with these 12 men, and the small group of believers with them. Note that the apostles were not replaced upon their deaths. This was a one-off situation, because from these 12 men who witnessed to Jesus' life, death and resurrection, God would keep adding more and more people to their number, even to this day. There is no sense in Scripture that we should expect new apostles in every generation (as some churches falsely teach). If you want to learn more, go here <https://www.modernreformation.org/resources/interviews/the-novel-apostolic-reformation-an-interview-with-holly-pivec-and-r-douglas-geivett>

Or to take a deeper dive, grab a copy of this book.

Also, don't panic that the apostles had become gamblers and rolled dice to leave the choice of a 12th apostle up to chance. They are following an Old Testament practice that asked God to show his choice (eg Numbers 26v52-56). This is an example of reading Acts as a *description* of what happened in this extraordinary period. It is not a *prescription* of what we should do. There is no promise in Scripture that we will know God's choice by casting lots. If you want to know more about the issue of guidance, check out this book.



READ ACTS 2v1-13; EXODUS 19v16-18

3. What does the coming of the Spirit as wind and fire show?

Note: Pentecost was one of 3 festivals when Israelites were told to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate. Pentecost was also known as the Festival of Weeks/Harvest, celebrating God's provision (Exodus 16v14-19)

We have lots of modern ideas about what 'speaking in tongues' is. If we pay careful attention to this text, we can see that 'tongues' means both the physical organ in a mouth and a language, much as we might use tongue as a synonym for language in English (eg mother tongue or foreign tongue). And it is the same Greek word used in v4, 6 and 11, just translated differently. These are real, understandable languages being spoken, in a supernatural event. We're going to look at Peter's explanation shortly.

If you want to know more about what speaking in tongues might look like today, check out this short clip — Ask Phillip — Speaking in Tongues Today | Phillip Jensen https://youtu.be/L2X_o0ZKQFc?si=zGtnNYregG3r4fG0

Or if you want to know more about whether we should expect gifts of the Holy Spirit, like speaking in tongues, to cease or to continue, check out this longer video — The Chat Room — Cessationism | Phillip Jensen https://youtu.be/v5_tzC3vCo8?si=nuDWRsQkmfFxK2fq

Back to Acts 2, it is worth noticing that the listeners are from all 4 points of the compass, but are ethnically Jewish (or converts to Judaism). As Jesus, told his apostles, his people, would explode out from the 12 apostles to Jerusalem and beyond. But this moment is like a reversal of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11v1-9). At Babel, languages were confusing and dividing. Now, diverse languages are becoming clear and uniting. We get a hint that the kingdom of Jesus is going to go beyond the nation of Israel, to the ends of the earth.

READ ACTS 2v14-21

Peter quotes from the Prophet Joel. He says that there will be signs to show that the 'last days' or 'the day of the Lord' have come. These are specific terms that prophets like Joel used to tell the people of Israel that a day would come when their exile would be over, and God's salvation would come to restore blessing to them, and judgement on God's enemies. He says that there would be 2 signs of this great and glorious day, that would let Israel know it was time to call on the name of the Lord.

Peter is going to continue his speech by showing how these signs are fulfilled and who the saving Lord is.

4. What 2 signs of the does Joel anticipate? v17-18 and v19-20

5. How have they seen the first sign? see also v33

READ ACTS 2v22-24

6. What signs and wonders have they seen?

READ ACTS 2v25-36

Peter pulls together a number of Psalms of King David to expand on the sign of the resurrection. It is a tightly knit argument.

1. David said that his body would not see decay v25-28
2. David died, so he can't have been talking about his own body not decaying v29
3. God had promised David that his descendant would rule forever v30 (see 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 132)
4. So it must be this descendant that David was speaking about as not decaying - the holy one, the Messiah (anointed king) v31
5. Peter and the apostles witnessed Jesus was raised from the dead v32
6. Jesus was exalted to God's right hand, the place of greatest honour and power v33
7. Even David called him Lord v34

8. What conclusion does Peter draw from all of this? v36

9. Looking back through Peter's sermon, what is God's role?

Peter began his sermon by quoting the prophet Joel. He is showing the people that the day of the Lord is here. And they can know for sure because the Holy Spirit is being poured out all different kinds of people (cf Moses desire in Numbers 11v24-29); Jesus performed signs and wonders but most especially in his resurrection. He is the king promised to David, raised up and exalted to sit next to God himself. The people can now know the name of the Lord and call out to him for salvation — Jesus is the Lord!

READ ACTS 2v37-41

10. How does Peter explain what it will mean to call on the Lord and be saved?

The emphasis on baptism here is not so much about water. It follows on from John's baptism (Luke 3v15-18; cf Acts 18v24-28). Jesus' baptism is a sign that you have turned from your sin and have transferred your allegiance to him as Lord, receiving his forgiveness and his Spirit.

11. How does the kingdom grow in 1 day?

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be **growing disciples** who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

SEEKING GOD

What convinces you that Jesus is Lord and Messiah, reigning at God's right hand?

SEEKING GOD

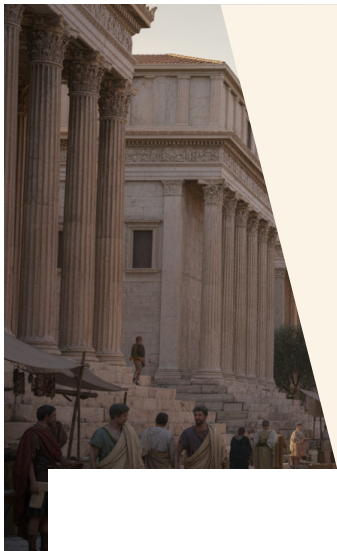
What is your story of turning to Jesus in repentance, calling on his name for forgiveness and receiving his Spirit?

MISSION

What do you think is hardest for your not-yet believing family and friends to come to terms with, in what we've heard today? What is your prayer for them?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that he is in control of everything. It was his deliberate plan and foreknowledge that Jesus would be betrayed and die. But also that he would be raised up. Praise him that all his plans culminated in that day.
- Praise Jesus, the Lord and Messiah. Exalted at the right hand of God, king forever.
- Praise God that as we repent and are baptised into Jesus' name, he forgives our sins.
- Praise him for pouring out his Holy Spirit so generously. Praise God that he is with us, by his Spirit.
- Thank God that his salvation plan was to restore Israel and that all who are far off might receive his promises.
- Pray that our family and friends would call on the name of the Lord and be saved.



NO OTHER NAME

ACTS 2v42-4v31

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

'All religions are basically the same, it doesn't matter which you believe in.' What do you think is attractive about this idea, in our society?

READ ACTS 2v40-47

1. What are the features of the new people of God?

As we saw in Chapters 1-2, God is forming a new people, a renewed Israel. They have 12 patriarchs, they have been saved by the Lord (Jesus) and God is with them in wind and fire (by his Spirit). Compare this with the foundational moment of Israel in Exodus 19-20. But it is by a new Israel that God is completing his purposes, centred on the Lord Jesus, as he works by his Spirit.

As we read the book of Acts, we're seeing a picture of what happened in the early days of this community and the spread of the kingdom. This description is not meant to be a prescription for what we should do as believers in the 21st Century.

For example, we cannot meet daily in the temple courts. Note that breaking bread is about sharing around a meal, as opposed to the practice of the Lord's Supper specifically. However, we can ask how we can value the same things as they did. You may have noticed that we are trying to reflect these in our CORE VALUES of being DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, BEING ON MISSION, and SERVING, all in COMMUNITY TOGETHER. We will think more about the nature of our COMMUNITY next week.

After describing the new community of Jesus' followers, Luke moves to a notable example of 'wonder and sign' and the conflict that arises between the leaders of the traditional and the renewed Israel.

READ ACTS 3v1-10

2. What's so amazing?

READ ISAIAH 35

3. What is this healing a sign of?

READ ACTS 3v11-26

4. What did Jesus go through to save us?

Check out some of the prophets Peter is talking about in v18 later. Psalm 22; 69; Zechariah 12v10; 13v7; Jeremiah 11v18-20; Isaiah 52v13-53v12

5. How is our salvation described as we repent and turn to God?v19-21

6. What is the warning and encouragement for the Israelites listening? v22-26

Later on you can see some of the passages Peter is drawing on. Check out Deuteronomy 18v14-22; 2 Samuel 7; Genesis 12v1-3; 22v15-18

READ ACTS 4v1-12; PSALM 118

7. How does Jesus' story mirror the Psalmists'?

READ EXODUS 3v13-15; ISAIAH 43v10-13

8. What is the astounding thing Peter is declaring in Acts 4v12?

Jesus' name is all over this story (3v6, 16 x2; 4v7,,10, 12, 17, 18, 30). The name 'Jesus' is not magical or some kind of spell. Jesus' name is a symbol of his presence and power. Jesus is the Lord! His name means 'Yahweh Saves'. The LORD, the I AM of Israel, saves through his chosen servant Jesus, and only through him. He is the Lord and Messiah that Joel foresaw (Joel 2v28-32; Acts 2v17-21, 36)

READ ACTS 4v13-22

9. How do the Israelite leaders respond to Peter's message? Does it work?

READ ACTS 4v23-31; PSALM 2

10.How do the early believers interpret what's happened to Peter and John?

11. How has the Holy Spirit been at work through the events of these few days?

The boldness of the believers is a gift of the Holy Spirit. They asked and he answered. The Holy Spirit is often described as filling people. He is not a tide that ebbs and flows in believers. We receive God's Spirit when we believe (Acts 2v38). And he continues to empower all we do in Jesus' name. Luke is drawing our attention to the way God is working through his Spirit in every moment of this extraordinary story.

growing disciples

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How have you seen the power of Jesus' name? Are you convinced that he is the only place to find salvation?



How would you answer someone who asked you, 'Did Jesus really have to suffer? What kind of saviour can he really be?'



Is a lack of boldness your problem when it comes to speaking about Jesus with not-yet-believers? What has encouraged/challenged you as you read the story of these early Christians?



How can you talk to your friends and family about Jesus being the only way of salvation?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God for his salvation in Jesus — his name is powerful to save us.
- Thank Jesus for suffering for us, according to the Father's plan. He was rejected and killed by his enemies, though he is the author of life.
- Praise God for exalting and glorifying Jesus by raising him from the dead. Praise Jesus as Lord of all.
- Thank God that as we repent and have faith in Jesus, we receive forgiveness, the refreshing of God's Spirit, and the hope of the restoration all things when Jesus returns.
- Pray that God's Spirit would give us boldness to speak about Jesus' salvation. Ask that we would be bold even when we're hated or others don't believe.
- Pray that as we speak, God would be adding to the COMMUNITY of his people. Pray that we would listen to his word, pray to our Father with joy, care for one another and be a family together.



GOD'S GRACE AT WORK

ACTS 4v32-5v11

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

You have 2 sentences to convince someone to join **rockypc**. What would you say to them?

Last week, we saw that God is creating a renewed Israel. They are in conflict with the established leaders. And yet, God is adding more and more people to their number. This conflict is sandwiched by descriptions of this new COMMUNITY God is creating. To refresh our memories, we're going to start by reading Acts 2 again, before we move on to the next section.

READ ACTS 2v40-47

1. What do you love about this description of the first Christian COMMUNITY?

READ ACTS 4v23-37

2. What is the vibe of this COMMUNITY?

Later on, check out Deuteronomy 15v1-11 to see the kind of COMMUNITY God wanted Israel to be. It's now fulfilled!

3. What is motivating them? What is empowering them?

READ ACTS 5v1-11

4. How are Ananias' and Sapphira's actions different from Joseph (aka Barnabas)?

5. What is the problem with their actions? v3-5, 9

6. Do you think that we must sell our homes/properties? Is this a command for us?

7. What is the spiritual element that stands behind Ananias' actions? cf Luke 22v1-6

8. What do you make of God's response?

This story maps onto other stories from Israel's history. It's a pattern that is repeated at key moments in the story. This pattern helps us see why Ananias' and Sapphira's actions are met with such swift judgement. Let's see it now.

READ GENESIS 2v23-3v7, 17

9. What is this couple's story?

READ EXODUS 15v19-25; 16v1-4; 17v1-7

10. What is wrong with Israel testing the Lord?

READ LEVITICUS 9v1-4, 22-10v5

11. What is God's purpose in judging these priests, in the moment of their ordination?

READ JOSHUA 1v1-6; 6v15-19; 7v1-5, 10-12, 16-26

12. How do Achan's actions jeopardise all of Israel?

Did you notice the pattern? As a new people are formed, they experience God's salvation, and next, we're told a story of warning. At key points in Israel's story, we hear about those who test the Lord — conspiring together, failing to trust him to provide, coveting, lying and disregarding his holiness. And testing the Lord jeopardises all of God's people. So God acts with swift judgement in each case.

13. How does this pattern from Israel's history help you understand what is happening for Ananias and Sapphira: What is so sinful? What God values? Why he judges so severely?

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be **growing disciples** who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

SEEKING GOD

Are there ways that you test the Lord? Short changing your church family? Seeking approval from others? Questioning God's provision for you? Dishonouring his holiness? Are you lying to him?

How can the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and God's grace to you go to work on your heart? What do you want to ask God to do in you by his Holy Spirit?

COMMUNITY

Does your attitude to our church COMMUNITY match how God values it?

How might you be jeopardising our unity together? Or our care for one another?

COMMUNITY

How will you help build a COMMUNITY that is centred on the Lord Jesus and his MISSION, and that cares for one another?

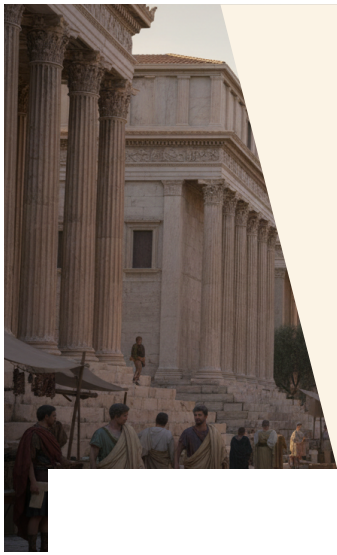
How can you be generous to those in need in our COMMUNITY? How might you be able to accept the generosity of others?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God for bringing us together as a COMMUNITY. Thank him that we are his new people, saved by the Lord Jesus and filled with his Holy Spirit. Pray that we would be one in heart and mind.
- Pray that we would love one another and provide for each other, so that there is no one needy among us. Praise God that we are trusting him to provide for us as we share generously out of his powerful grace.
- Ask forgiveness for not valuing one another and our unity together, as God does. Confess that we sometimes lie so that others will think well of us, or because we're greedy or because we fail to trust God's provision. Pray that we would fear God's holiness.
- Ask that **rockypc** would be centred on the Lord Jesus and his resurrection. Pray that we would be reaching out to our city with this good news, and that God would be adding more people in to our COMMUNITY of believers.

If you want to think more about the issue of lying, check out this short audio clip of Tim Keller talking about different reasons for lying and the root sin of them all:

<https://app.box.com/s/ypp6bfrkyiicrdlqvzqw>



IT'LL NEVER FAIL

ACTS 5v12-42

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Australian media has been reporting for some years now that church attendance is declining, and Christian truths are constantly under fire. Are you worried that Christianity will eventually fade out altogether?

In Chapter 4, Luke told us about the apostles being hauled before the Jewish Sanhedrin to explain by what power or what name they were healing and teaching. They are warned and threatened, but the apostles say they can't stop speaking in Jesus' name. Some time later, the apostles have been continuing to preach and heal, which leads to more conflict with the established Jewish leaders.

READ ACTS 5v12-16

1. How do various people respond to the signs and wonders of the apostles?

2. What are the signs and wonders pointing to? See Acts 2v19-24, 36; 4v29-35 and Luke 5v17-32

READ ACTS 5v17-28

3. What is motivating the Jewish leaders?

4. How are they shown to be powerless?

An angel of the Lord can refer to a supernatural being or a human messenger of God. Or it is possibly a way of speaking about God himself, manifesting his power and presence to save. Later, check out Exodus 3v1-6; 14v15-20; Judges 6v11-24. Either way, the angel demonstrates God's divine intervention to deliver the apostles.

READ ACTS 5v27-32

5. What do you notice about the apostles' message? Compare it with their other speeches in Ch 2 and 4.

6. What is God's purpose in Jesus' suffering, and in the apostles'?

Scott Cunningham says that disciples under persecution in Acts are in continuity with their Lord; the context of persecution is mission; persecution is the occasion of divine triumph; persecution is firmly placed within divine providence; persecution is a manifestation of divided Israel

Cunningham, *Through many tribulations: The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts*

READ ACTS 5v33-42

7. Why does Gamaliel think they shouldn't kill the apostles?

8. Are you convinced by his argument? What do you think he is lacking?

9. What is unexpected about the apostles' reaction to being flogged and threatened again? Also, 5v17-21

growing disciples

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SEEKING GOD

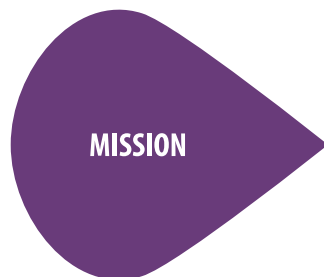
From what we've read today, how would you describe what God's purposes are? What role do we play in this? How can you line up your life's purpose with God's?



SEEKING GOD

Do you ever worry that God's plans could be stopped or delayed? How does this impact you?

What confidence can you draw from the Apostles' story?



MISSION

How have you experienced persecution recently? When have you needed to obey God, rather than human beings? What joy can you have in this?

How can we stand with those who are suffering disgrace for Jesus' name?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God for Jesus, killed under the curse of a cross, but raised and exalted as our Prince and Saviour.
- Thank God that he has brought repentance and forgiveness of sins. Thank God that he is adding more and more to his kingdom, including at **rockypc**. Ask that he would continue to do this, that his kingdom might continue to grow.
- Pray that we would align ourselves with his purposes, delighting to witness to the Lord Jesus, by his Holy Spirit.
- Praise God that he is powerful and nothing can stop his plans. Ask that we would trust him, even when things go wrong or we suffer for his name.
- Pray that we would rejoice to suffer disgrace for Jesus' name. Pray that we would never stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.
- Ask that we would stand with those who are suffering in our city and around the world for Jesus' sake.

THE TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD

ACTS 6v1-8v1

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)



Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Have you ever fallen for a scam? Or are you really good at spotting a fake?

Throughout chapters 4 and 5, the 12 Apostles have been in conflict with the established Jewish leadership. The leaders of Israel find their teaching and witness about Jesus disturbing (4v2) and astonishing (4v13). Then the religious elite are filled with jealousy (5v17) and murderous fury (5v33). They try to order the Apostles to stop speaking about Jesus and have them flogged (4v18; 5v40). But the tension continues to escalate in chapter 6-7. At the start of Ch 6, we are introduced to 2 other Christians, who will take centre-stage in the narrative of the next 3 chapters — Stephen and Philip. They come on the scene in a conflict among Christians themselves.

READ ACTS 6v1-7

1. What problem did the early church encounter? What was their solution? *cf Acts 2v42-47; 4v32-37*

READ ACTS 6v8-15

2. What are the accusations against Stephen? How do they remind you of what happened to Jesus? *see Luke 18v45-48; 21v5-6; 22v66-23v3*

3. Notice how many times we are told Stephen is full of something in Ch 6. How does this fit with what Peter said in Acts 2v14-24? *see also Luke 2v39-40, 52; 3v21-22*

Stephen is given a chance to respond to the accusations against him. He does it by giving a history lesson. The Sanhedrin want to know what he thinks about Moses, the law and the temple that Jesus said would be destroyed. But Stephen's speech doesn't directly answer these charges. Instead, his history lesson actually makes a counter-accusation. He recounts Israel's reaction to God's promises, his fulfillment of them and his salvation of the people. Stephen says that the current Jewish leaders are carrying on the family likeness. As we read through this long speech, we won't chase down each original reference, although you can do that later if you want. Rather, we are going to see God's gracious action and Israel's rebellious response. And then draw it all together at the end. So try to see the grand sweep of what Stephen is recounting, rather than getting lost in the details.

READ ACTS 7v1-8

4. What did God promise Abraham? *Notice also what Abraham sees in v2*

READ ACTS 7v9-16

5. How did God use Joseph to rescue Abraham's family? *Notice what God gives Joseph in v10*

READ ACTS 7v17-29

6. How do Moses' brothers react to him, as God begins his rescue and promise-fulfillment? *Notice how Moses is described in v20-22*

READ ACTS 7v30-35

7. What is special about Moses' encounter in the desert? *Notice who sent Moses in v35*

READ ACTS 7v36-38

8. How does God use Moses to rule and deliver Israel? *Notice what Moses performs in v36 (cf Acts 2v18-19, 22; 6v8)*

READ ACTS 7v39-43

9. How do the Israelites respond to God's salvation through Moses? How does this stem from their hearts?

10. What is God's response in v42-43?

READ ACTS 7v44-50

11. How should Israel have thought about the tabernacle and temple?

READ ACTS 7v51-55

12. How are the Israelite leaders of Stephen's day exactly like their ancestors? *Notice what Stephen sees in v55, cf v2*

Stephen is blatant in his counter-accusations against the religious leaders. Time after time, Israel rebelled against God, failed to worship him alone, and killed prophets who God sent to lead and turn them back. And the Israelites of the day are no different, as they killed the Righteous One, sent from God to rescue and fulfill his promises. They have elevated law-keeping and temple worship, without seeing that God is now dwelling with his people in a new way.

Stephen is much more subtle in making a contrast with the true people of God.

13. As you've been noticing things throughout Stephen's speech, summarise what you think characterises the true people of God.

Hint: Think about what Stephen, the Israelite patriarchs and rescuers, and ultimately, Jesus have in common

READ ACTS 7v54-8v1

14. How is Stephen like his Lord and Messiah in his final moments? *cf Luke 23v34, 46*

15. What is significant about what Stephen sees in v55-56? Where is Jesus when/while his servant is murdered? *cf Daniel 7v13-14*

Throughout his speech, Stephen highlights the promises of God and his faithfulness in keeping them. It is not that God is done with the nation of Israel (whom he loves in covenant faithfulness). Nor that he is replacing them with the church. Rather, Spirit-filled believers are the ones receiving his promises through Christ. They are the continuation of all God that has been doing in the sweeping story of the Bible. As we will see as we keep reading in Acts, God generously gives his Spirit to both Jewish and non-Jewish believers — anyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus.

growing disciples

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How can we know if we're God's true people?

Are you prone to valuing law keeping/sacred spaces? Are you rebelling against God?

What can we value and seek to be like instead?

SEEKING GOD

How can this story help you when you face persecution for Jesus' name:

In what to expect? Our attitude to those who hate us? Who is with us? Or in where Jesus is seated?

MISSION

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God for Jesus, the Righteous One who saves us and fulfills all of God's promises. Praise him as the one full of the Holy Spirit, and his grace and wisdom.
- Thank God for generously gifting us his Spirit too. Pray that we would desire to be full of the faith, grace and wisdom his Spirit brings.
- Ask forgiveness for the times you've thought God desires us to keep laws or treat places as sacred. Ask that we would stand out as God's people who worship him in Christ, who is God with us.
- Pray that many ethnically Jewish people would see that Jesus is their Messiah and turn to him as Lord.
- Praise God that when we are persecuted for Jesus' name, we are not alone. Ask his help to remember that his Spirit is with us, and Jesus is reigning at his Father's right hand.
- Ask God that we might forgive those who hate us, just as we have been forgiven.



THE GREAT POWER OF GOD

ACTS 8v1-40

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Tell the group about someone impressive that you know. What stands out to you about them?

Last week, we saw that the apostles appointed 7 men, full of the Spirit and wisdom to distribute food fairly, to those in need. One was Stephen, who went on to also share the gospel in Jerusalem, and was ultimately killed for it. Philip was another of the 7 who were chosen. We pick up his story as Stephen dies. We're going to read about 2 men who responded to Jesus, and what they needed to know about him.

READ ACTS 8v1-8

1. What good is God doing as a result of Stephen's death?

2. How can we know that this was God's plan? *See also Acts 1v7-8; 1 Kings 11v26-38; 12v15-20; Ezekiel 37v15-28*

Hint: The northern kingdom was known as 'Samaria', 'Israel' or 'Ephraim'; while the southern kingdom was known as 'Jerusalem' or 'Judah'

READ ACTS 8v9-13

3. How is Simon described?

4. What transformation happens when the Samaritans hear the good news?

READ ACTS 8v14-17

5. Why do you think Peter and John are sent to Jerusalem?

When we read the book of Acts, we need to keep asking what Luke is telling us about the spread of the gospel in its earliest days and then what he is communicating about promises and expectations for all believers. The outpouring of the Spirit on Samaritan believers when Peter and John arrived is not setting us up to expect this in our own lives. Rather, it's like the narrative slows down in an important moment. It draws our attention to a key time in the kingdom of God. The apostles begin to realise that the message of Jesus is not just for the Jews in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. This is the time when God is reuniting the two halves of Israel that had been split since the time of Solomon's son. The story slows so that we can see the apostles catching on to the significance of what God is doing. They realise that these former national and religious outcasts really can receive the gift of the Spirit as they repent. The normal pattern for believers in Christ is set up in 2v38-39, turn to Jesus in repentance and faith to receive forgiveness and the Spirit. We should reject any teaching which says we need a second blessing or some kind of two-stage initiation into Christianity.

READ ACTS 8v18-25

6. What do you think is going on in Simon's heart? What does he think about Jesus?

7. What warning and what hope does Peter give Simon?

We're not told if Simon actually repents or if he just thinks Peter has the ability to change God's mind, so he might avoid judgement. The focus of the narrative seems to be more that Jesus is a greater power than Simon or the god he represented. He cannot be manipulated, nor his power be bought. Yet, he invites even a wicked sorcerer to turn to him and be forgiven.

Then the scene switches back to Philip. See the map at the end of the study to trace where Philip goes.

READ ACTS 8v26-40

8. What things do you notice about the man in the chariot?

READ DEUTERONOMY 23v1; ISAIAH 56v1-8

9. What position did eunuchs hold in Israel, under the law? What did Isaiah hear the LORD declare about foreigners and eunuchs, in the coming of his salvation?

This man was an important official to the Queen. He had prestige, power, and a trusted position as a servant. He must have been wealthy to own even a partial copy of a scroll of Isaiah. And he was a Jewish convert who had traveled a great distance from northern Africa to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, where he was considered an outcast — an impure foreigner. But the day of salvation that Isaiah foretold is here. As the LORD returns Israel to himself, he'll gather even more besides. While Philip's ministry focused on the outcast brother-nation, Samaria, we get a glimpse of God's plan to draw in people from the ends of the earth.

READ ISAIAH 52v13-53v12

10. How do you think Philip might have explained the good news of Jesus from this part of Isaiah?

11. How does Simon's view of Jesus differ from the Ethiopian man's?

If you want to think more about God's power in us by his Spirit, check out this talk on Ephesians 3 (praying for his power and the purpose of his power in us) by Don Carson — Praying for Power| TGC Podcast

<https://youtu.be/8oeNIY-IQjc?si=amXRaveyLd59pmO6>

growing disciples

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SEEKING GOD

What has struck you about Jesus today? What do you want to say to him in response?

SEEKING GOD

Do you ever try to manipulate God? Are bitterness and envy ensnaring for you? Do you seek his power for your own gains?

What hope is there in our sinfulness?

MISSION

What can you say to a friend/family member this week about what you've learned today? About Jesus' power? His humble sacrifice? Or his forgiveness?

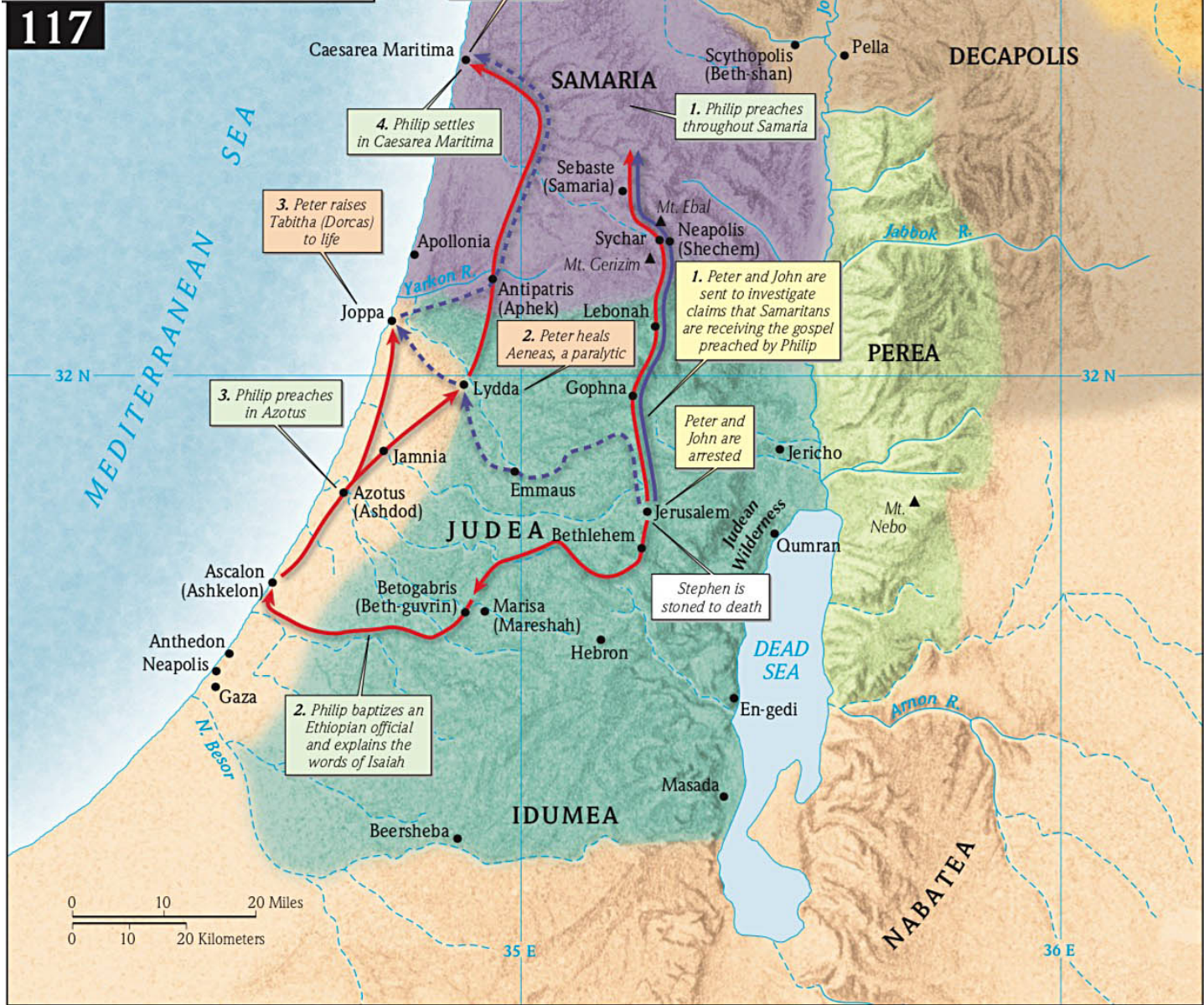
PRAYER IDEAS

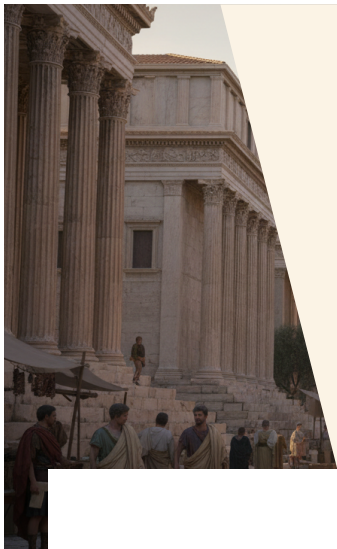
- Praise God that Jesus is the greatest power. He is stronger than any evil power or so-called god. Pray that we would not be scared of spiritual powers, but trust in the one who sets us free by his own might.
- Confess that we do try to manipulate God to get him to do what we want and gain his power for ourselves. Confess that our hearts are often full of bitterness and envy. Praise God for his forgiveness as we turn to him. Ask that we would pray to him in our moments of weakness and wickedness.
- Thank God that his Spirit comes to us as a gift. Praise him that we can have great joy in his salvation.
- Thank him that his salvation reaches out to us, even as those on the margins.
- Thank God that Jesus was humiliated for our sakes, bearing our sin and dying in our place. Praise God that he is the powerful king of kings who bent down and suffered an unjust death so that we might be forgiven.

**EXPANSION OF THE
EARLY CHURCH IN PALESTINE**

ACTS 4-11

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Philip's routes
- Peter and John's routes
- Peter's routes





SEEING JESUS

ACTS 9v1-31

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Of all your friends and family, who is the most antagonistic when it comes to Jesus? What's that like for you?

We've seen the first followers of Jesus experience hostility from the established Jewish leadership time after time, with an escalation in the murder of Stephen. God used this to drive the message of Jesus out of Jerusalem into surrounding areas, including to neighbouring Samaria. God is reuniting his fractured people and drawing those on the fringes near. We are at a pivot point in Luke's story of the spread of the gospel. As Jesus told his disciples, they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1v7-8). Today and next week, we're going to see how the message and kingdom of Jesus will explode out to the ends of the earth.

READ ACTS 7v54-8v3 & 9v1-2

1. What do we know about Saul? What is his mission?

Luke calls Christianity 'the Way' here. Later on, check out these passages for what this name implies, as a shorthand for a bigger concept: Psalm 18v20-24; Hosea 14v9; Acts 16v17; 18v24-26

READ ACTS 9v3-9

2. What strikes you about Saul's encounter with the Lord Jesus?

3. How does the Lord Jesus closely identify with his people? v4

Saul may not be eating or drinking because he is repenting (like Nehemiah in 1v4) or he could be awaiting a further revelation from God (like Moses in Deuteronomy 9v-10).



Damascus was a city in the Decapolis, a prosperous Roman Province, with lots of synagogues for the large Jewish population. It is situated 217km from Jerusalem. Luke doesn't tell us how the message of Jesus reached that far away (although it was unlikely to have been because of the persecution in Acts 8v1).

READ ACTS 9v10-19

4. What is Ananias' hesitation in going to see Saul?

5. What new mission does the Lord Jesus give Saul?

6. How are light and blindness a picture of what happens to Saul?

In 7v60, Stephen prayed that the Lord wouldn't hold his murderers' sin against them. 1 chapter later, we see God answering that prayer, as Saul repents and receives the Holy Spirit (see 2v38-39). The one leading the charge in stiff-necked, Spirit-resisting persecution (7v51-52), is given a mission to both Jews and Gentiles, that will mean his own suffering for Jesus' name.

READ ISAIAH 6v1-13; JEREMIAH 1v4-10

Later on, check out Exodus 3v1-10; Ezekiel 1v27-2v8; Daniel 10

7. How is Saul's experience like that of God's prophets?

READ ACTS 9v20-25

8. What message does Saul immediately preach? How does this match with the other apostles' message?

See also Acts 2v36; 3v19-20; 4v12; 5v30-31; cf Luke 1v30-33

READ ACTS 9v26-31

9. How does Barnabas help Saul in Jerusalem? *See also Acts 4v36-37*

10. How is Saul already suffering for Jesus' name?

The believers experienced a time of persecution from 8v1 onwards.

11. What are they experiencing in v31? What is the cause of this?

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SEEKING GOD

What did you first find compelling/attractive about the message of Jesus — that he is Lord, Messiah, and the Son of God? What *still* draws you to him?

SEEKING GOD

Is Jesus worth following, even if it means we might suffer for his name too?

How does today's passage help you when you are being mocked, ignored or hurt for his name?

MISSION

What do you need to remember when your friends and family are antagonistic about Jesus? What hope does Saul's story give us? Pray for them now, that they might see who Jesus is.

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus is Lord, Messiah and the Son of God. He is glorious and powerful. Pray that we might see him clearly and honour him.
- Praise God that he is able to save anyone. The worst of sinners can be forgiven and restored, just like Saul. Praise God that he gives us his Spirit to transform us from hating Jesus to loving him.
- Thank God for using Saul to carry his name to both Jews and Gentiles. And that the good news of Jesus has come all the way to us, on the other side of the world, 2000 years later.
- Pray for friends and family who are antagonistic towards Jesus. Ask that God would shine his light into their blindness, that they might see how glorious Jesus is.
- Thank God that Jesus sees and cares about us when we suffer for his name. Ask his help to remember that Jesus is more powerful. Ask his help to pray for the salvation of those who mock, ignore or hurt us for following Jesus.

THE WORD GROWS

ACTS 9v32-12v24

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)



Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Is there anything you would absolutely refuse to eat — What & Why?

In Chapter 9, we heard the Lord Jesus' commission to the new convert, Saul — to proclaim his name to the Gentiles (non-Jews) and to the people of Israel. Today we are going to see the moment Peter realises that the good news of Jesus is for Gentiles too. We're picking up the story as Peter is at the borders of Samaria, the very edge of the traditional Promised Land (check out the map on page 39 of this SERIES COMPANION).

READ ACTS 9v32-43

The two healings here remind us of Jesus (check out Luke 7v11-17; 8v51-56). As Peter does what Jesus does, we know that he is healing in Jesus' name and power, confirming that Jesus is the Lord who saves (see Acts 2v14-24).

1. What is the effect of these healings on the people of Lydda and Joppa?

READ ACTS 10v1-23 & LEVITICUS 20v25-26

2. Why was distinguishing between foods so important for Israel? (see the full list of unclean foods in Leviticus 11)

3. How do we know God is behind these events?

READ ACTS 10v24-43

4. How did Peter interpret his vision? v28, 34-35

Later on, check out Deuteronomy 7v7-9; 10v14-22

5. In a couple of sentences, summarise "the good news of peace"? v34-43

Later on, check out Isaiah 52v7-10; 55v6-7

6. How are God's people made clean and holy now?

READ ACTS 10v44-48

7. What astonishes the Jewish (circumcised) believers? What's the significance of this moment?

'A distinctive feature of the apostolic experience at Pentecost was the ability to speak in languages which could be understood by those present from different parts of the world (called xenolalia). There is no indication in the New Testament that this ever happened again ... in Acts it appears that *tongues* did not always accompany the gift of the Spirit. *Praising God* ... describes the content of their speaking in tongues ... 'declaring the mighty works of God'. They were presumably praising God for the fact that, as Gentiles, they too could enjoy the benefits of Christ's saving work.'

p340 *The Acts of the Apostles*, David Peterson 2009

READ ACTS 11v1-18

8. Why do you think Luke recounts Peter's retelling of this story in such detail?

READ ACTS 11v19-30

9. What happens as ordinary Christians begin speaking in Antioch?

Barnabas is described in similar terms to Stephen (Acts 6v5). His visit to Antioch is reminiscent of Peter and John visiting Samaria (8v14-17). God's grace really has been at work among the Gentiles! The barrier between Jew and Gentile has been brought down by the power of this good news. We see it as Gentile believers in other areas help their Jewish brothers and sisters in Judea who are affected by severe famine.

READ ACTS 12v1-19a

10. How does Luke emphasise the Lord Jesus' power in Peter's escape from prison, and near execution?

11. How does this incident reflect on Herod?

The Herod of this story is the grandson of Herod the Great who tried to murder Jesus as a toddler (Matthew 2) and conspired to have Jesus killed (Luke 23v6-12). Agrippa ruled from 41-44 AD. Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes his demise in similar terms to Luke.

READ ACTS 12v19b-24

12. What brings Herod under God's judgment? cf 10v25-26

13. What happens to the word of God in the wake of Herod's death?

We have seen numerous examples today of the way that God's word grew and flourished in this time. As apostles performed signs and wonders, attesting to salvation; as the Jewish believers began to realise that Gentiles could be cleansed and forgiven in the same way as them, receiving God's Spirit, barriers came down; and as Jesus' enemies were humiliated and judged. This is a powerful word!

Sometimes it feels unspiritual to talk about numbers of people turning to the Lord. However, Luke regularly tells about it because it is a sign that God's word is effective and that Jesus has power to save. So let's not be ashamed to celebrate when he is saving people in our day!

growing disciples

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SEEKING GOD

Do you believe in the power of the good news of Jesus? How have you seen it at work recently? Praise God for more and more people turning to the Lord!

MISSION

How do you live out that God does not show favouritism? Who are you avoiding sharing the gospel with? Who are you convinced will never repent and believe? Pray for them now.

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that the good news of Jesus is powerful. He transforms us by his Spirit, enabling us to repent and believe. Praise God for those who we have seen turn to him recently.
- Thank God that he doesn't show favouritism. He wants all people, from all nations to be saved. Thank him that his word has come to us, that we might believe. Praise him for cleansing us and forgiving us as Jesus was hung on a cross and rose victorious.
- Pray that we would share the same message with friends and family. Ask his help to believe that anyone can turn to Jesus, no matter how far away they seem.
- Thank God that the gospel tears down barriers, that Jew and Gentile can both believe. Pray that we would care for others across traditional boundaries in our city too.
- Thank God that he is more powerful than his enemies. They cannot stand against him. Ask his help to believe that he is stronger and will judge those who don't acknowledge Jesus as king.



JOY & JEALOUSY

ACTS 12v25-13v52

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

What kinds of stories do you like? Do you have a favourite genre? Non-fiction, sci-fi, crime or something else?

The first section of Acts (Ch 1-8) focuses on Peter, the leader of the apostles, as he preaches and teaches from Jerusalem, to Judea, and even into Samaria. The middle section of Acts alternates between telling us about Peter and Saul (Ch 9-12). And the last section (Ch 13-28) follows Saul's journeys (soon to be referred to as Paul). We are meant to see the continuity between these two men and their roles as ones sent by Jesus. They have the same message, both see how God is drawing in Gentiles as well as Jews, and both face the same opposition. Saul/Paul is a legitimate apostle, with God's authority to speak and with power in the name of Jesus. Look out for these things as you read today. You can follow along with his journey on the map below.



READ ACTS 12v25-13v3

The story left Saul and Barnabas in Antioch in 11v25-26, as they taught the Christians there. Their fellow leaders in the church of Antioch were ethnically diverse, which reflected the city itself. In line with Jewish practices, they fasted as an aid to prayer. Similarly, placing hands on Barnabas and Saul is a commissioning where they are committed to God for their work.

1. What work has God's Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and Saul to do? see 9v15-16

READ ACTS 13v4-12

2. What is so jarring about this Jewish sorcerer, Bar-Jesus (or Elymas)? see also Deuteronomy 18v9-13

3. What are the contrasting outcomes for the Jewish man and the Gentile politician?

Later on, notice the similarities and contrasts with Simon in 8v9-24 and Saul in 9v1-19

Saul is now known as Paul, as Luke keeps telling the story of the spread of the gospel. Saul didn't change his name when he began following Jesus. Saul is his Jewish name and Paul is his Roman one. This is similar to how someone might have both a Chinese name and an English one, or a Korean name and an English one.

READ ACTS 13v13-25

4. Paul gives a quick history of the people of Israel. Why does he focus on the two kings, Saul (no relation) and David?

We often think that God chose David because he had a heart like God's (Acts 13v22; 1 Samuel 13v14). But God's choice is because his own heart was set on David. Check out an excerpt of a podcast transcript at the end of the study for a longer explanation.

READ ACTS 13v26-37

5. The message of salvation was sent to the children of Abraham, and Gentiles who converted to Judaism. What did they do with this gift?

6. What did God do?

Later on, check out Psalms 2 and 16, and Isaiah 55 to see the royal title of the Messiah as God's son and king, and his noble position secure with God

READ ACTS 13v38-41

7. The apostles have been preaching forgiveness and freedom from sin previously. How does Paul expand on what this means? v39

READ HABAKKUK 1v1-12

8. What is the warning from Israel's history in Acts 13v40-41? How is this playing out in Acts?

Hint: Who were the Babylonians and what did God do through them?

READ ACTS 13v42-52

9. What are the different reactions to the word of God?

10. How are the Gentile believers both a joy and a judgement?

Later on, check out Isaiah 49v1-7; 42v1-9; Luke 4v14-36 and 9v1-6

"...Luke presents further scenes in which Jews reject the gospel and there is a definite shift to ministry among the Gentiles (eg 18v5-7; 19v8-9; 28v23-28). However, he records some success among Jews (eg 17v5,10-12; 21v20) and repeated attempts to win Jews for Christ in new situations. Luke and the characters seem to be driven by the theology expressed in Paul's sermon here. The election of Israel and God's provision of the Saviour Jesus for Israel remain first as foundational truths, despite the rejection of the gospel by many. Here is the impetus for continuing evangelism among Jews, while continuing to share the gospel with ever-widening circles of Gentiles."

David Peterson 2009, *The Acts of the Apostles* p400

Later on, listen to these two stories from Jewish men who have put their faith in Jesus, the Messiah. You can hear more about modern Jewish beliefs and practice, and some thoughts on how to share the gospel with Jewish people we may meet:

Bigger Questions | EP 75: What does a Jew Make of Jesus? | Martin Pakula

<https://thirdspace.org.au/episode/ep-75-what-does-jew-make-jesus>

2025 FIEC Leaders' Conference | "First to the Jew": How can churches get involved in taking the gospel to Jewish people across the world? | Joseph Steinberg (International Mission to Jewish People)

<https://fiec.org.uk/resources/first-to-the-jew>

growing disciples

At **rockypc** we have 5 core values — we want to be **growing disciples** who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

SEEKING GOD

How do you want to respond to God from what you've read today?

DEEP IN THE WORD

How should we think about Jewish Scripture (or the Old Testament)? How does Paul show its importance for Jew and Gentile?

MISSION

How can we approach those who are Jewish by ethnicity and/or religion today? What should our attitude be?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God for his plan and power to save us. Praise God that Jesus was executed that we might be forgiven and set free from every sin. Thank him that Jesus didn't see decay, but was raised and glorified so that we might be justified.
- Thank God that he is saving people all over the world, even now. Thank him that his word came first to Jews as his chosen people. Pray that many Jewish people might hear and believe that Jesus is their Messiah and Saviour today.
- Thank God that his word spread even further to Gentiles, here in Australia. Ask that we might tell our city of God's gift of grace and eternal life, so that all who are appointed might believe.
- Thank God that he spoke in ancient times, and brought his word to fulfillment in Jesus. Ask God's help to see how it all points to Jesus.
- Thank God that Jesus is stronger than evil powers, which can only blind and deceive. Pray that we might trust Jesus' victory over evil at the cross and put all our hope in him.

A Man After God's Own Heart?

#31 — *There's no such thing as 2 Samuel* | *Knowing Faith Podcast* | 9:22 onwards

JT English, Jen Wilkin, Kyle Worley

<https://www.trainingthechurch.com/episodes/episode-x-title-goes-here-3z32t-9m7zm-e5phc-zc87e-gzzbt-hh3rk-5nz8w-k7gtb-zx2br-cnn7t-rzw3j-bm446-8jr2m-539na-hxat6-zlrr-jchkd-r9mg3>

JT: God's people say, we want a king, we want a king like the other nations [1 Samuel 8]. This king is gonna give us economic security, military might, ultimately to establish God's kingdom. But this isn't the way that God had it.

So God anoints another king for himself... [T]hese are two of the major characters in these books, Saul and David, of which one is a king, that is God's king. And how is God going to reign and rule over the nations and bring blessing to the nations?

And so in 1 Samuel, we see Saul's kingdom. And Saul is trying to kind of establish his authority and establish Israel as a kingdom and defeat the Philistines. But ultimately, the shepherd boy, we find, is going to be the king...

Jen: [In 1 Samuel 8] the people say, we want Saul, and Saul's name even means asking.

And so he is the ask of their asking. And then in contrast to that, then you have David, we know him best as a man, what? After God's own heart [1 Samuel 13v14].

But one of the commentators that we got into last semester [John Woodhouse], and honestly, this has really shifted the way I even think about the whole structure of the book, said that a better way to hear that is the man of God's choosing. Which makes sense if you lay him in contrast to Saul, which is exactly what the book is doing. So you have the man of the people's choosing, and then David is the man of God's choosing.

Kyle: Can I just say something too? That's helpful too, because that man after God's own heart line gets thrown around about David so often. And then you have to end up explaining away, a lot of David's life, because you're like, then people are like, but isn't he a man after God's own heart?

And didn't he commit adultery and kill this guy?

JT: And in a lot of ways, his sin is greater than Saul's sin...

Kyle: And you're like, well, who is God if this is a man after God's own heart?...

Jen: [T]hat really makes this whole book make way more, and the story of David make way more sense, because you're able to take him off the pedestal, which is what we need... [W]e think we know these stories, and the way that we have learned them is there's a good guy and there's a bad guy. And David's the good guy, and Saul's the bad guy. And so let's see how many rocks we can throw at Saul, and how many accolades we can give to David.

And that is such an overly simplistic view of how the story plays out.

TURNING TO THE LIVING GOD

ACTS 14v1-28

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)



Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GROWTH GROUP STUDY

Deepak Chopra is a new age mindfulness guru. He says, "Gratitude opens the door to... the power, the wisdom, the creativity of the universe." Do you agree with his assessment of the power of gratitude?

Last week, we saw that the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to preach the good news of Jesus in other places (13v2-3; cf 9v15-16). We heard about the reception they got in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. Some believed and honoured the word of the Lord, while others abused them.

Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. Acts 13v46

Today, we are going to continue following their journey. You can check back with the map on page 52. Despite expecting rejection from the Jewish community, Paul and Barnabas still go there first, because they are still heirs of the prophets and the covenant God made with their forefathers, like Abraham (Acts 3v25).

READ ACTS 14v1-7

1. What are the different reactions to the message of God's grace?

READ ACTS 14v8-10

2. How is Paul in continuity with Peter and the other apostles who were with Jesus before his death and witnessed his resurrection? See Acts 3v1-12; 14v3-4

Note: 14v4 is the first time Paul is explicitly called an apostle (along with Barnabas). This had previously just been reserved for the 12 of 1v15-26

READ ACTS 14v11-13

3. Who are Paul and Barnabas mistaken for?

According to Greek mythology, Zeus was the king of a pantheon of Gods. He is the god of thunder and lightning, as well as law and order. Hermes was Zeus' son and was the messenger of the gods. His winged sandals meant he could travel quickly between the divine and human words. Because he was a trickster, he was the god of merchants and thieves.

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/gods-and-goddesses-greek-and-roman-pantheon>

READ ACTS 14v14-18

4. Compare Paul and Barnabas' reaction in v14 with Herod in Acts 12:21-23. What do you notice?

5. What is unique about Paul's God?

6. What do you think makes all other gods ‘worthless things’? See Isaiah 44v9-20; 2 Kings 19v14-19

7. How has God testified about himself to the whole world?

Later on, check out Psalm 104

8. How do we see God’s kindness even more beautifully? see Acts 13v32-39

9. How do Gentile nations go their own way? How should they respond to God’s kind provision?

Paul and Barnabas’ speech to this Gentile (non-Jewish crowd) is different from his speech to the Jewish synagogue in Ch 13, which was a much more similar message to Peter’s speeches earlier in Acts. In speaking to Jews, the apostles focused on showing that Jesus is their Messiah, promised in their Scriptures. But to Gentiles, Paul points out that they are following worthless gods, when they should be turning to the living Creator God. It seems like this speech is cut short, because they don’t get to mention Jesus at all. In comparison, in Acts 17 Paul speaks to Gentiles again, and after denouncing their false idols, he shows that Jesus’ resurrection means he is Lord and Judge. More on that in a couple of weeks’ time!

READ ACTS 14v19-28

10. How do Paul and Barnabas view being misunderstood, targeted and almost stoned to death?

growing disciples

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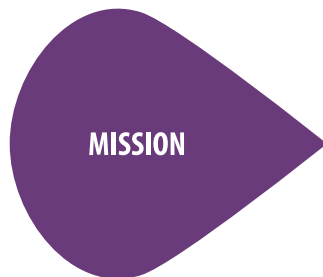
What does idolatry look like for you? What worthless things do you need to turn away from?

In what ways do you worship human messengers? Even Christian ones? How will you keep them in their proper and right place?





How are you showing your gratitude to our generous Creator and Saviour God? What can you do to grow in acknowledging and honouring him?



How can you encourage your friends and family to turn to the living, saving God?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God as the maker of the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything in them.
- Praise God for his abounding kindness in giving us rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. Thank him for providing us with plenty of food. Praise him for filling our hearts with joy.
- Thank God that we can see his kindness most beautifully displayed in Jesus' death and resurrection. What good news that we can have forgiveness of sins! Praise him for his glorious grace towards us.
- Confess that we feel the pull towards worthless idols. We don't naturally turn towards God in gratitude and devotion. Ask forgiveness for worshiping work, family, money, power, sex, comfort, control and many other things. Thank God for his gift of grace to sinners like us. Ask that all of our thankfulness and gratitude would go to the God who deserves it.
- Pray that we would be willing to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. Pray that we would receive boldness from the Holy Spirit to speak about him, to those who don't believe and may even hate us.
- Ask God's help to talk to our friends and family about the living and saving, Creator God. Ask that they might turn from worthless idols and put their trust in him.



NO BURDENS

ACTS 15v1-35

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Who decides what you'll eat for dinner at your house? How are meals chosen?

In Acts 1v8, Jesus told his apostles that they would take the news of his resurrection from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And we have watched that play out as we've kept reading. In Ch 9, Saul met the risen Jesus and was commissioned as his instrument to proclaim his name to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Then in Ch 10-12, Peter had his own moment of clarity, as God gave him a vision and he met a Gentile, Cornelius, who became a believer. In Ch 13-14, we followed Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in numerous cities, and many Gentiles put their faith in Jesus. All along, Jews are hearing and believing too. Now, churches are filled with both Jew and Gentile and an important dispute arises.

READ ACTS 15v1-4

1. What is the dispute?

READ GENESIS 17v10-14; EXODUS 12v43-49

2. Who had to be circumcised?

Note: We meet some circumcised Gentiles (converts to Judaism) in Acts 2v8-11; 6v5; 13v43

3. What does circumcision show?

READ ACTS 15v5-11

4. How are both Jews and Gentiles saved? How many different ways do you see this described here?

5. What image does Peter have of the law and circumcision? What do you think he means?

6. How are the Pharisee party provoking God's anger?

Hint: You could also check out 11v15-17

READ ACTS 15v12-21

7. What is James' verdict? What are his reasons?

Note: We first met James in 12v17. He is Jesus' brother and seems to have a position of authority in the church in Jerusalem.

8. Are v20-21 adding a condition to Gentiles being saved by grace through faith? Are these some laws they have to keep?

Later on, check out the importance of these issues for Jewish people by looking at Genesis 9v4-6; Leviticus 7v26-27; 17v10-14; 18v1-30; 20v1-21; Deuteronomy 12v15-25

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 6v12-20, 8v1-13 & 10v14-11v1

9. What reasons does Paul give to these Gentile Christians for avoiding sexual immorality, and eating/not eating food offered to idols?

10. How might this help you understand the abstinence of Acts 15??

READ ACTS 15v22-35

11. How do the Christians in Antioch receive the letter?

The meeting in Jerusalem agreed that Gentiles don't have to be circumcised and become Jewish in order to be saved by Jesus. They are saved only by putting their faith in Jesus. But the meeting also agreed that Jews, when they are saved by Jesus, don't have to become Gentiles (by ignoring the laws and customs God gave them, and which set them apart). Rather, Gentiles can respect these Jewish practices out of thoughtfulness for their Jewish brothers and sisters, and devotion to the one true God and Lord.

growing disciples

At rockypc we have 5 core values — we want to be **growing disciples** who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

SEEKING GOD

How have you been encouraged by what you've seen of God's character today?



Are there ways you make it difficult for others to turn to God? What barriers do you put up?



What do you abstain from out of love for brothers and sisters? How does that work?

How does your devotion to the Lord Jesus lead you to live differently?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that he doesn't discriminate but that he accepts us all, in the same way. Praise him for purifying our hearts as we put our faith in him.
- Thank him for the grace of our Lord Jesus, gifting us with salvation as we believe in him. Rejoice that we receive God's Holy Spirit!
- Confess that we sometimes make it hard for people to turn to Jesus by adding rules or requirements that God doesn't. Praise God that it is easy for anyone to repent, believe and receive salvation.
- Ask that we would consider our brothers and sisters in what we choose to do. Ask God's help to abstain from anything that would cause them to stumble. Pray that whatever we do, it would be all for God's glory.
- Pray that we would be devoted to the Lord Jesus. Ask that we would be sexually pure in honouring him. Ask that we would worship him alone and flee from idolatry.

We get a snapshot in this chapter of the relationship between Jerusalem and the other churches, particularly Antioch, see the map on page 52. In Ch 11, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch to see what God's grace was doing in this Gentile city. He brought encouragement and teaching (together with Saul/Paul). They returned to Jerusalem with gifts for those suffering in a famine.

In Ch 15, Barnabas and Paul go from Antioch to Jerusalem with a dispute. They return from Jerusalem with a letter of greeting and instruction. The believers are further encouraged and send back a blessing of peace.

This is a picture of the churches working together and submitting to the apostles' instructions.

SET FREE

ACTS 15v36-16v40

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)



Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

When do you want to sing for joy? Can you share a story of when you have, or at least wished you could?

The gospel has been spreading from Jerusalem outwards (Acts 1v8). Beginning with Jews, the message has spread around the Roman world, as Gentiles (non-Jews) come to believe. The question arose, should these Gentiles be circumcised and be required to obey the law? The council of elders and apostles in Jerusalem said 'no', because everyone is saved by God's grace through faith in Christ. The council wrote a letter for Paul and others to distribute to believers. But they also said that Gentile Christians should care about their Jewish brothers and sisters, by not participating in offensive behaviours and caring about purity. As Paul gets ready to set out from the city of Antioch, a disagreement arises between him and his close co-worker, Barnabas.

READ ACTS 15v36-41

1. How does God use this disagreement? See Acts 13v13

You can follow along with Paul's travels in the map below.



READ ACTS 16v1-5

2. Is Paul contradicting the letter from the Jerusalem Council in Ch 15, by circumcising Timothy? What differences can you see in the circumstances of this decision? See also 1 Corinthians 9v19-23

READ ACTS 16v5-10

3. How are Jesus and his Spirit directing the path of the gospel?

Paul is gathering a team for his missionary trips. He now has Silas and Timothy with him. Both men are mentioned regularly in Paul's letters to churches that he wants to strengthen. These letters form most of the second half of our New Testaments. But did you notice that Luke himself has dropped into the story? In v10, he says 'we', as though he joined Paul's team in Troas.

READ ACTS 16v11-15

4. What picture do you get of Lydia?

Philippi is a Roman colony in a Greek region. An outpost of Rome, filled with Roman citizens. It's not a capital city, but it has a powerful reputation and standing.

Paul usually went to a Jewish synagogue, to begin preaching the gospel in a new place. It may be that there was no synagogue in Philippi because 10 Jewish men were required to establish one. Instead, the Jewish women and Gentile-convert women met outside the city.

5. How does the message of the Lord transform Lydia?

READ ACTS 16v16-18

6. Compare this woman with Lydia, before each of them met Paul. How are they different? See also Deuteronomy 18v9-13

7. What reasons could Paul have for wanting to silence this spirit?

8. How is this woman transformed by Jesus' name?

We aren't told whether this woman became a believer in Jesus. This isn't because Luke or Paul don't care about what happens to her. Perhaps she did join in Lydia's house church (16v40). Rather, Luke is focusing us on another demonstration of the power of Jesus' name. We have seen a number of healing stories, and now an impure spirit is cast out, with Jesus' authority. This mirrors what we see Jesus doing in Luke's gospel. Later on, check out Luke 4v31-37 and 8v26-38. Even the evil spiritual realm recognises Jesus is the King of Kings.

READ ACTS 16v19-24

9. What strikes you or stands out to you about the reaction of the slavers? In Paul and Silas' arrest?

READ ACTS 16v25-34

10. Where is the joy in this false imprisonment and natural disaster?

READ ACTS 16v35-40

11. What reasons could Paul have for wanting to be publicly escorted from the prison?

Luke gives us 3 cameos in Philippi. They are 3 quite different people, with different gender, status, family situations and economic strata. And each one is transformed by the name of Jesus. Lydia goes from being outside the city to finding belonging in a community of believers, and using her wealth in generosity and hospitality. A slave woman finds freedom from evil powers and cruel masters. And a despairing jailer finds joy and his whole household rejoices too.

Paul brings the news of Jesus to these people. And he delights in it. Bearing the gospel of Jesus, even into a prison makes him sing for joy at midnight and refuse his freedom twice, so that the gospel might grow and be honoured wherever God's Spirit sends him.

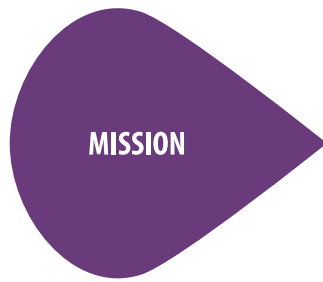
growing disciples

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How has the gospel of Jesus been transforming you?

How have you seen God's Spirit bringing belonging, freedom and joy to all different kinds of people?

SEEKING GOD



Are you joyful in sharing the gospel with your friends and family? Share a recent joyful moment.

How can you grow in the joy of being on MISSION for Jesus' name, even in persecution?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that his salvation is for everyone — rich, poor, slave, free, respectable, subject to evil powers, men, women, young and old.
- Thank God for the way Jesus' salvation has transformed us as we came to believe in him. Thank God that through Jesus, we find belonging, freedom, joy and much more.
- Pray that we would rejoice that God has given us the task of sharing this same powerful message in our city. Ask that we'd have joy, even if we are persecuted. Pray that the gospel would be honoured in our city.
- Ask that our family and friends would respond to the gospel by believing in Jesus. Pray that God would give 8000 new people to Jesus, in our generation, just for a start.
- Thank God that he is directing this MISSION in the power of the Spirit.

HOUSEHOLD BAPTISMS

We saw 2 instances of entire households being baptised in this chapter (v15 and 33). These are not isolated incidents in Acts (see 11v14; 18v8, cf 1 Corinthians 1v16). Households 'might have included small children and family members, as well as slaves...Household baptisms were practiced across the spectrum of people turning to Christ, mirroring the Jewish practice of incorporating families as proselytes through baptism.' p461

'[In v34,] the expression *and his household (panoikei)* belongs with the verb *filled with joy* rather than the following causal participle *because he had come to believe (pepisteukos)*. This gives the sense that 'he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God' (NRSV, ESV). Although it is quite clear from v32 that [the jailer's] entire household was instructed before being baptised, the stress in v34 is on the fact that the head of the house had been brought to faith and that salvation had come to the house by that means.' p470

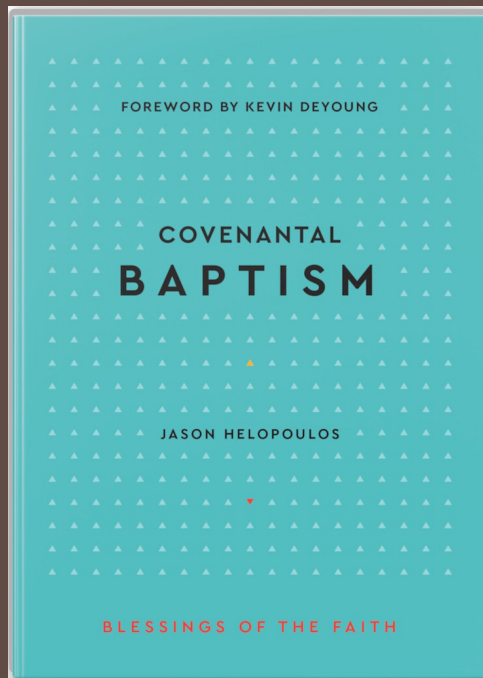
The Acts of the Apostles, David Peterson 2009

Who to baptise and when to perform the rite has been debated by Christians for a long time, and we come to this issue with a range of different experiences and background teachings. In the days of Acts, children and other household members were baptised on the basis of the household head's faith and allegiance to Jesus. (This is a description of what happened, not a rule for what must happen.) However, it does force us to think about which aspects of this practice were cultural and applied in an ancient Roman (and Jewish) context, and which aspects were related to the way we see God acting throughout the whole Bible story. In other words, what is the pattern for how God treats and acts towards his covenant people throughout history?

We also need to understand that while baptism is related to an individual's faith, it is a sign and seal that points away from us to what God has done for us through Jesus Christ and what he promises to do in us by His Spirit as we receive his mercy and grace. It points at God's promises to his covenant people — that they would receive a baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is what Jesus came to give. Water baptism in itself does not save anyone. It is not a guarantee of heaven, nor does it ensure that person has, or will ever, receive the Holy Spirit — these things are according to God's own will and timing. But baptism is a sign and seal of God's covenant of grace to anyone who would believe.

rockypc is a Presbyterian Church where adults and teens who profess faith are baptised, as well as the children of believers. This is a conviction we hold as a church, not simply an historical tradition, because we believe that God is always true to his covenant promises.

If you want to read further on the benefits and joys of covenantal baptism, check out this short and readable book.



You can get a copy at the link below, or it is also available as an audio book.

<https://reformers.com.au/products/9781629957272-covenantal-baptism-jason-helopoulos>

rockypc members do not have to hold to covenantal baptism, because it is not a primary faith issue. Our elders are happy to have conversations about the Biblical reasons for our position with those who are wanting to look into it further. However, our elders urge us all to gentleness, respect and upholding unity whenever we discuss this kind of matter.



KNOWING GOD

ACTS 17v1-18v22

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A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

What do you wish other people knew about you?

Paul is still on his journey throughout Europe, sharing the good news of Jesus with Gentiles (non Jews) and Jewish expats. He continues in Macedonia and on into Greece. You can follow his journey on the map on page 69.

READ ACTS 17v1-9

1. What impact does the news of Jesus the Messiah have in Thessalonica?

2. Are the accusations against Paul and Silas true? Why/why not?

Note: Bringing Jason and others to the crowd (and city officials) was like bringing them to court. The assembly had judicial functions in a free city like Thessalonica.

READ ACTS 17v10-15

3. How are Paul's visits to Berea and Thessalonica contrasted?

READ ACTS 17v16-21

4. What would have been so distressing for Paul as he saw all of the city idols? See also Exodus 20v1-6; Isaiah 42v8-9

EPICUREANS	STOICS
- believed the greatest pursuit in life was simple pleasures like living peacefully with good friends and no worries. - believed that the gods were distant and disinterested and death was the end of your existence.	- believed living virtuously with good morals made you happy, so they focused on being wise, just, courageous and self-controlled. - believed reason was the ultimate god, and when you died you were re-absorbed into the universe.

The Areopagus was the Hill of Ares or Mars. It was the court of the Athenian government. Paul is not being brought there for a friendly chat or exchange of ideas. He is on trial (again!)

Luke seems to be deliberately making comparisons between Paul and the Ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates. Socrates debated in the marketplace and was placed on trial in Athens in 399 BC for 'rejecting the gods acknowledged by the state and of bringing in strange deities'. Socrates acknowledged claims that he must be the wisest person alive, because he was wise enough to know that he knew nothing. In contrast, Paul claims God can be known. If you want to know more, check out the is article:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/paul-new-wiser-socrates/>

The accusations against Paul are more serious than we might realise. Local gods were believed to protect a city and promote its flourishing. Failing to worship those gods risked their wrath. The Athenians thought Paul was endangering their city.

READ ACTS 17v22-34

5. How are the Athenians religious, yet ignorant?

6. How does Paul contrast his God with the local deities? What misunderstandings does he expose?

7. How is God both transcendent (far beyond us) and immanent (near and personal)?

8. What does Jesus resurrection show? What does he want from us?

Sometimes people read Paul's speech and think he is saying 'Just look around at creation and you'll realise there's one true God'. But that misses how all of Paul's argument is soaked in the Bible's story. God is Creator of all and we are dependent on him (Genesis 1); he made humanity to fill and rule the earth (Genesis 1-2); he wants us to seek him, not idols (Deuteronomy 4v27-31); he can't be represented with gold or silver (Exodus 20v4); he doesn't live in temples or need anything from us (1 Kings 8v27-30; Psalm 50v7-13); he is both far beyond us and near (Jeremiah 23v23-24).

Paul references and quotes Greek philosophers (Epimenides of Crete, 6th Century BC — "For in him we live and move and have our being") and likely Aratus c. 315–240 BC (a Stoic) "For we are also his offspring"). But, Paul is proclaiming that the Athenians only know a little bit of the story and that the time for ignorance is over.

Paul's message to Jews (eg 17v3) looks a bit different from what he says to Gentiles, but it culminates in the same way in the powerful, risen, Lord Jesus who will bring justice to the world.

READ ACTS 18v1-22

In a vision to Ananias, the Lord Jesus says that Paul will suffer for his name (9v15)

9. How is Paul's vision different in 18v9-10? See also Exodus 3v12; Joshua 1v5-9; Jeremiah 1v4--8

10. How does this prove true before Gallio?

It is unclear what exactly the Jews are accusing Paul of. It is possible that the Jews were concerned that their security as a legally recognised religion was at stake. They had dispensation under Roman law from having to participate in pagan worship. Perhaps they were worried that Paul and the Christians were muddying the clarity of this law and the protection it afforded them. Gallio maintains his distance and even seems to sanction hostility against the Jews, as the synagogue leader is beaten.

As Paul leaves Corinth, he shaves his head for an unspecified vow. Paul feels free to voluntarily participate in Jewish customs. He then returns to Jerusalem and then his starting point of Antioch.

growing disciples

At rockypc we have 5 core values — we want to be **growing disciples** who are DEEP IN THE WORD, SEEKING GOD, on MISSION, as we SERVE in COMMUNITY together.

SEEKING GOD

What has warmed your heart towards God today as you've heard Paul's speech and seen him in action? How will you respond to him?

MISSION

What motivates you to speak about Jesus with those who don't yet believe? How does Paul's speech help you to be spurred on in MISSION?

MISSION

Do you have friends who think God is unknowable and distant? How can you share Jesus with them?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God who made the world and everything in it. He is far beyond us, ruling over our times and places.
- Praise God that he is invisible and can't be formed into an image. Praise him that he is Lord of heaven and earth and doesn't need us to make him a temple or offer him sacrifices.
- Thank God that he gives us life, breath and everything else — we are dependent on him.
- Praise God that he is near and wants us to seek him in repentance. Thank him that he is our Father.
- Praise Jesus as the one risen from death and appointed as the just judge of the world.
- Ask God's help to share Jesus with our city who are living in ignorance of the Lord. Ask for boldness to keep speaking. Pray that our loved ones might know the true God.
- Thank God that he is with us and directing our lives, through times of both safety and persecution.

WORD OF GOD'S GRACE

ACTS 18v23-20v38

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)



Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

GROWTH GROUP STUDY

Match the following final words with the famous person who spoke them. If you're preparing ahead of time, wait until you can do it with your group!

"I must go in, the fog is rising."	Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)
"Oh wow. Oh wow. Oh wow."	Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
"Either that wallpaper goes, or I do."	Winston Churchill (1874-1965)
"Last words are for fools who have not yet said enough!"	Steve Jobs (1955-2011)
"I'm bored with it all."	Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Last week, we saw the end of Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey as he returned to his base city of Antioch (18v22). Everywhere Paul has been, many people are believing, both Jew and Gentile. Yet, some from both people groups have been seeking to persecute him too. The stories of Paul's travels seem familiar — a mixture of repentance and rejection. You can follow along on the map to see the journey, as you see the powerful word of God's grace in Jesus at work.

READ ACTS 18v23-19v7

1. What do you think is the difference between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism? What did both Apollos and the Ephesians need to know/believe/do? See also Luke 3v1-18

Some churches teach that you can/should be *baptised multiple times* as a sign of repentance. They are missing the point of this passage. It is **Jesus' name** into which we're baptised, as his is the only name of salvation. John was a lead-up to Jesus and his baptism is no longer relevant now that Jesus has come. Anyone who has been baptised into Jesus' name (whether as an infant or an adult) does not need to be baptised again.

Others say that *speaking in tongues and prophesying* are the confirmations that someone has received the Holy Spirit, and that if you do not have these gifts, you are not really a believer. This is a false teaching and misunderstanding of the narrative form of Acts that can leave genuine believers confused and uncertain. Remember that Acts is a *description* of what happened, not a *prescription* of what will happen every time. Notice that the event in v5-7 is like a mini Pentecost (see Acts 2v1-22) where Peter says the prophecy of Joel has come about, so that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus can be saved. It is a sign that the gospel is having a new impact in a new place (similar to the event of Acts 8v14-17). If you didn't check out these 2 resources in Term 1, take a look to see what speaking in tongues might look like today — Ask Phillip — Speaking in Tongues Today | Phillip Jensen https://youtu.be/L2X_o0ZKQFc?si=zGtnNYregG3r4fG0

Or, if you want to know more about whether we should expect gifts of the Holy Spirit, like speaking in tongues, to cease or to continue, check out this longer video — The Chat Room — Cessationism | Phillip Jensen https://youtu.be/v5_tzC3vCo8?si=nuDWRsQkmfFxK2fq

Apollos becomes a key leader and teacher in Corinth in Achaia. He doesn't seem to have crossed over with Paul there or in Ephesus, but ultimately preaches the same message of God's grace to believers. Later, you can check out how Corinthian Christians fought over Paul and Apollos as leaders, but Paul reprimands them for not seeing how God uses different leaders to grow his church (see 1 Corinthians 1v10-17; 3v1-23)

Priscilla and Aquila are a husband and wife team who gently take Apollos aside to explain what he is lacking. Priscilla is another example of how Luke highlights women of faith as having an important role in the unfolding of salvation (along with Lydia in Ch 16 and numerous women in Luke's gospel).

Ephesus was a provincial capital, the first and greatest metropolis of Asia. This Asia is not where we describe as Asia now — it's modern-day Turkey. See the map on the next page.



READ ACTS 19v8-20

2. What power does God's word have in Ephesus?

Luke has been pointing out repeatedly that Paul is in continuity with Peter and the other apostles, and ultimately with Jesus (check out the interesting inversions between Acts 19v13-16 and Luke 4v31-37 & 8v26-39). Paul does what Jesus and the other apostles do, because he is on the same mission for Jesus' name. Later on, see Acts 3v1-10; 5v12-16.

READ ACTS 19v21-41

Luke lets us in on Paul's purposes of going to Jerusalem and then on to Rome. We don't yet know the significance of this decision, but Luke is foreshadowing what will come. Notice, that Paul wants to visit churches that he has previously established, which is a common practice for him. He doesn't get them started and leave them to their own devices. He wants them to be built up and growing.

3. What motivates Demetrius to start a riot? How is the gospel coming into conflict with the Roman world?

"[Artemis] received her name because she made people *artemeas*, safe and sound. This mythical daughter of Zeus and Leto was associated with health and help of various kinds and was worshiped because of 'her lordship over supernatural powers'. She was a virgin who helped women in childbirth, a huntress armed with a bow, the goddess of death... There was a special bond between Artemis and the Ephesians. She was called the founder and guide of the city, and her name and image were found on coins and official documents. Moreover, she was regarded as the protector of the city's fortifications and general welfare." Her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. And it is possible that the scrolls burnt in 19v17-20 were related to her worship (words of power for warding off demons, incantations, hymns and prayers).

p545, 547, Peterson (2009), *The Acts of the Apostles*

READ ACTS 20v1-16

4. How do these Gentile Christian communities mirror the first Jewish one? See Acts 2v42-47

Note again that Paul is like Jesus, later on see Luke 8v49-56

READ ACTS 20v17-27

5. How has Paul set the Ephesian elders an example in the past?

6. What does Paul know about his future? What are his reasons for going anyway?

READ ACTS 20v28-32

7. What is precious to God about his people? What dangers do they face?

8. How will they be protected and built up?

READ ACTS 20v33-38

9. How does Paul's example demonstrate the word of God's grace?

READ ACTS 21v1-16

10. What do you think makes Paul so determined to go to Jerusalem, despite the warnings? See also Luke 9v51-62

growing disciples

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SEEKING GOD

How has the word of God's grace in Jesus been powerfully at work in you?

Where is your life out of line with God's grace? How can his grace transform you?

COMMUNITY

How can you show you value our **rockypc** COMMUNITY as precious to God?

How can we build one another up in the word of God's grace, towards our inheritance and sanctification?

COMMUNITY

When you look at Paul's example, how do you need to grow as a leader (in whatever capacity you lead others)?

How can **rockypc** guard against savage wolves and distortions of the truth?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that our salvation is in the Lord Jesus, and only in him.
- Thank God for the way that his grace in Christ transforms us. Pray that our lives would match his grace to us as we turn from idols to the living God. Pray that God would continue to root out our disobedience and that he would change us, in his power.
- Thank God that we are precious to Him because His Son gave his blood for us. Thank God that his Spirit is with us.
- Pray that our leaders would be humble and giving shepherds who teach the whole will of God with truth and faithfulness.
- Pray that together we would keep testifying to the good news of God's grace.
- Pray that we would guard against those who are greedy, distort the truth and seek to tear us away from Jesus. Ask for discernment and courage for our leaders who protect us.
- Pray that God and the word of his grace would build us up and give us an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

RESURRECTION HOPE

ACTS 21v17-26v32

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)



Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

Have you ever been falsely accused of something? Were you able to defend yourself?

Last week, Paul knew that he would be imprisoned in Jerusalem, yet he was determined to return there anyway. He knew that ultimately he would end up in Rome (19v21). Today we see the first part of how this plays out. There are only 2 cities as settings for the drama, which you can find on the map on page 82. Paul makes 5 speeches in this section — to a Jerusalem rioting crowd; to the Sanhedrin; to the Roman governor, Felix; to his successor, Festus; and to King Herod. We are reading a very large section of narrative today. You could consider listening to the passages being read on a Bible app, in order to save your voices!

READ ACTS 21v17-26

1. Why does Paul follow Jewish purification rites? Is this inconsistent with what he has been teaching elsewhere?

Hint: Remember the outcome of the Jewish council in Ch 15 about requirements of Gentile Christians, and Paul's actions with a Jewish Christian in 16v1-3.

Later on, check out Numbers 19v11-13 to see what the purification rites might be.

READ ACTS 21v27-36

2. What is Paul accused of? Why was this so serious?

READ ACTS 21v37-22v21

3. What's important for the crowd to know about Paul's story? His background? His encounter on the way to Damascus? His mission? His encounter in the temple?

Later on, check out 1 Samuel 3; Isaiah 6 for comparisons of temple encounters with the Lord

READ ACTS 22v23-29

4. What makes the crowd so enraged in what Paul has said?

Paul saves the fact that he's a Roman citizen until the last moment because he's a Jewish Christian first and foremost. As at other times, he only uses this information when he is seeking fair treatment, and when the gospel is being maligned. As a citizen by birth, Paul actually outranked the commander, who would have paid a large bribe to be accepted as a citizen.

READ ACTS 22v30-23v10

5. What does Paul say is the real reason he is on trial? How is this received by the various factions?

Note: This is a different Ananias from 22v12. Both lay hands on Paul, but one is righteous and the other is not. Later on, check out Ezekiel 13v1-16 and Exodus 22v28 to see what Paul is referring to.

READ ACTS 23v11-35

6. What does the protection detail and letter from the commander communicate to Governor Felix about Paul?

Governor Felix was a former slave, rather than being a Roman aristocrat, which was unusual for that position. He became procurator of Judea in 52AD. He was known for putting down insurgencies with ruthlessness, and wielding his power with cruelty. He was married to the daughter of Herod Agrippa I (who we met in Acts 12), Drusilla. Drusilla was previously married and Felix wooed her away to marry him.

READ ACTS 24v1-27

7. What are the new accusations against Paul?

8. What do you notice about the way Paul defends himself? What might his purposes be?

Note: Paul describes himself as a devoted and obedient worshiper of God, in numerous ways.

Note also how Paul is like John the Baptist in Luke 3v19-20

READ ACTS 25v1-12

9. What is Paul's next move in his own defence? Why does he do this? (cf Acts 23v11)

Festus replaced Felix as governor in around 58AD. His tenure was short-lived, when he died in AD60. He also tried to put down rebellions but wasn't noted for the same level of cruelty as his predecessor.

After agreeing that Paul should go to Caesar for trial, Festus consults King Agrippa II who was visiting with his wife, Bernice. Bernice was sister to King Agrippa (and Drusilla). Agrippa ruled over a neighbouring area to the north and east of Judea (modern Lebanon), although he also had responsibility for the temple in Jerusalem and appointing its high priest. Herod was nominally Jewish, but with loyalty to Rome.

READ ACTS 25v13-26v32

10. How has God used Paul's experiences to attest to the resurrection of Jesus, both to Jews and Gentiles? How does this line up with the prophets and Moses?

If you have time, check out Isaiah 25v6-8; 42v6-7; Ezekiel 37v1-14, 24-28; Luke 24v44-48

Note: Paul is declared innocent 3 times in these trials (23v29; 25v25; 26v31). Compare this with Jesus (Luke 23v5, 15, 22)

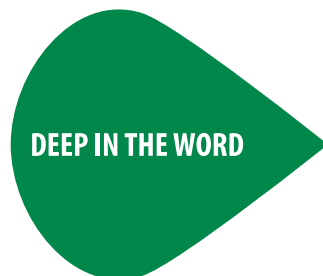
11. What can the gospel of Jesus bring to those who have faith in him?

growing disciples

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How is Jesus' resurrection your hope? What lifts your heart when you hear about the blessings he brings us?



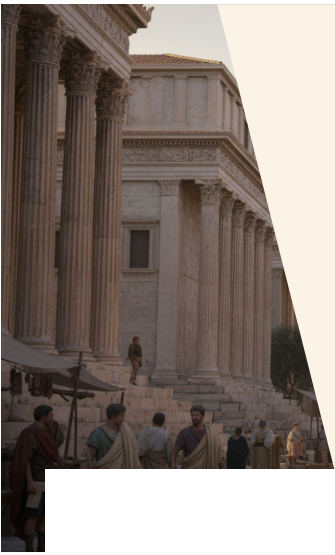
Imagine a friend said to you, 'Why do we need the Old Testament, isn't the New Testament enough?'. How would you respond based on Paul's witness at his trials?



What can we learn from Paul's example in how to share the gospel and defend it? How to respond to governments? Our attitude to suffering for Jesus' sake? God's sovereignty?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus is risen and that is our great hope.
- Thank God that his resurrection brings us blessings in the hope of our own resurrection, in forgiveness, sanctification, a place with his people, freedom from Satan and light in the darkness.
- Thank God that Jesus is the culmination of the Jewish Scriptures and Jewish hopes.
- Praise God that he has not only included Jewish people, but his grace abounds to us too, as Gentiles. Pray that we would love all of God's word about Jesus, the Messiah.
- Pray that we would persevere in preaching Jesus, even when it leads to suffering or injustice. Pray that we would share and defend the gospel and that God would give us wisdom to do this.
- Pray that we'd know when to appeal to government protections and when to challenge them.
- Ask that we'd remember God is in control and sovereign even over persecution. Pray that any persecution we face would lead to the growth of Jesus' kingdom.



IN ROME

ACTS 27-28

IN THE SPACE BELOW YOU CAN TAKE NOTES FROM THE BIBLE TALK. (IF YOU'RE USING THIS ON A DEVICE YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLICK AND START TYPING.)

Something I Never Knew:

Something I Was Reminded About:

A Question I Still Have:

Something I Was Challenged To Think Differently About / Do Differently:

Something I Can Share:

A Key Verse:

My prayer in response to God's word:

What's the worst storm you've been in? Tell the group about it.

We have been tracing the spread of the news of Jesus over the whole book of Acts. In the second half of Acts, we've followed Paul as he's started taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. Everywhere he goes, he preaches first to the Jews, some of whom believed, while many rejected and persecuted Paul — which, time after time, led to him taking the message to the Gentiles as the culmination of God's plans to bless the whole world through the Jewish nation, and specifically through one Jewish man, Jesus. Last week, we saw Paul arrested and on trial as Jewish leaders accused him of going against their law and inciting riots. Paul declares his innocence and appeals to the highest Roman court of Caesar in Rome. Today, we'll see Paul's eventful journey to Rome and how he is received when he arrives. You can follow the map on the next page to get a sense of all of the places.

READ ACTS 27v1-12

1. How do we see God's hand at work in Paul's interactions with others, including Gentiles?

Privately owned ships were commissioned by Caesar to deliver grain to Rome. The owner of the ship may have wanted to risk the dangerous winter travel to get the bonus that was on offer. The Day of Atonement would have been late September/early October. And sea journeys would have been uncommon from mid-September until mid-March.

READ ACTS 27v13-26

2. How do we see the situation get gradually worse for the travelers?

3. What hope does Paul give in the midst of despair? What are his reasons?

READ ACTS 27v27-44

4. Describe what Paul is like in this crisis.

5. How does the story show God is in control of what happens to the ship and its passengers?

READ ACTS 28v1-10

6. What's the relationship like between Paul and the people of Malta?



7. How does the shipwreck story and the events in Malta portray Paul as a prophet, innocent of all the charges against him?

We don't hear about whether Paul denies the claims that he is a god. He strenuously denies the same claim in Lystra (14v14-15). So we can assume he does so here. We don't hear about Paul proclaiming the gospel either, but we can safely assume he does. The focus of the stay in Malta is on God providing for Paul and his companions through the generosity of the islanders and the blessing he gives them in healings.

READ ACTS 28v11-16

8. How is Paul received by Christians he's never met before?

READ ACTS 28v17-22

9. What does Paul want the Jewish leaders in Rome to know?

READ ACTS 28v23-31

10. How does Paul's message to the Jewish people fit with the rest of the book of Acts? v23

11. How are the Jews of Paul's day like their ancestors? What are the consequences?

12. What is Paul's attitude to his time of house arrest in Rome?

The book of Acts seems to end with a cliffhanger. What happened to Paul in his trial?!
'Early Christian tradition indicates that Paul was released and had another period of public ministry ... before being re-arrested and condemned to death by decapitation ... under Nero ... in about 62AD'

p721, Peterson (2009), *The Acts of the Apostles*

We can't know for certain that this is what happened, but Paul's final fate is not Luke's main concern. This is a book about what Jesus continued to do and teach as his apostles, and many others, witnessed to his resurrection. The resurrection declares him Lord and Messiah, and offers forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit to anyone who calls on his name. This gospel movement began in Jerusalem, spreading far and wide, with Rome as a key way-point. But the book is open-ended. It is inviting us as readers to continue sharing the gospel, despite suffering, as the Lord Jesus empowers us to be bold by his Spirit poured out on us.

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SEEKING GOD

God doesn't promise that we will survive all shipwrecks, nor travel to Rome. What are his promises to us, as we seek to share the gospel in a world that can be hostile?

How can we know he is still sovereignly bringing about his plans?

How does Paul's example help you when it's hard to live for Jesus and his gospel?

SEEKING GOD

What has been one thing that has challenged or encouraged you throughout studying the book of Acts?

MISSION

Share someone from your 5 4 Jesus card that you're praying for and speaking with. What will boldness look like for you, in sharing Jesus with them?

PRAYER IDEAS

- Praise God that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings, ruling over God's kingdom. He is the hope of Israel, and all the world as Lord and Messiah.
- Thank God that the gospel message has come to us and that the Law of Moses and the Old Testament prophets testify to it.
- Pray that our friends and family would have ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus, that they might turn and be healed.
- Pray that we would have boldness in speaking about Jesus. Ask that God would grow our trust in him to keep speaking, even when some reject Jesus or seek to harm us.
- Praise God that he is always working out his sovereign and good plan to save people. Praise God for those we've seen saved already this year!
- Pray that what we've learned, what has challenged and encouraged us from the book of Acts, would stick with us. Ask that God's word would keep shaping our to love him and to have his heart for his salvation going to the ends of the earth.