

**Institutes of Theology Session 7**  
**New Testament Survey - Acts–Revelation**  
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I just want to start by reminding you of something I've shared before. And it's true, every time I come to God's Word, it's my joy every week to spend many hours in God's Word, studying and preparing to teach, and for my own soul, separate from my preparation to teach. And as a friend of mine put it years ago, when I come to the Scriptures—and my prayer for you is this tonight—every time I come to the Scriptures, I'm struck with two things. One, God is amazing. And two, I am amazed. Those are two different things, and both are true every time I come to the Scripture. And that's my heart for you tonight, is as we look at the Scriptures together, again, we're flying at 30,000 feet, but my hope is you'll see enough from 30,000 feet to be amazed at God and to see that He is amazing. So let's begin together.

We last time surveyed the Gospels; the ministry of Jesus as is recorded in the Gospels. But think about this for a moment. Jesus' work didn't end with His ascension. You say, yes, Tom, I know He has ascended to the right hand of the Father there. He's our great high priest. He intercedes for us. That's true. But that's not all of His work. When He ascended, Jesus had about 500 disciples. You remember a couple of weeks after the resurrection, He appeared to them in Galilee between Resurrection Sunday and His ascension. Apparently, most of the 500, it's the ones Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 15, where He was seen by more than 500 at one time. Apparently, that gathering in Galilee in a mountain He had designated, not only of the 11, but also His disciples from all over the land of Israel. Most of the 500 were from Galilee, where His ministry was headquarters, because in Acts 1, the core of His followers in Jerusalem met in just one room for prayer, 120 men and women in the upper room. So after three-and-a-half years, think about this, with three-and-a-half years of ministry, our Lord had around 500 committed disciples in the entire land of Israel. Only about 120 in and around Jerusalem. So the question is, how did the Church of Jesus Christ grow from that small group to a massive movement that swept the entire Roman Empire like wildfire?

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Well the rest of the story of Jesus Christ is contained in the fifth and last book of history in the New Testament. The four Gospels are histories, histories of the life of Jesus. The fifth historical book is Acts. The rest of the New Testament books, with the exception of Revelation, are simply a collection of apostolic letters. And most of those letters file neatly, as we'll see in the next session, into the book of Acts. Think of it like this. The book of Acts is like the file cabinet. And all of the epistles file neatly into that file cabinet, or almost all of them, as we will see. That historical account of the early church is called the Acts of the Apostles.

Now, let me remind you and in some cases give you new information about a timeline of New Testament history. We've already talked about the life of Christ, born in 5 or 6 BC, began His ministry around 26 AD, and then in the year 30 AD, likely, there is some debate about that, could have been 33, but likely, I think, 30. In April, His crucifixion and resurrection. In May, the Ascension, 40 days after the resurrection, at the very end. And also in May, 50 days after the Feast of Passover, was Pentecost. Now, that's 30. In around 32, 33, best we can figure from the timeline laid out in Galatians 1 and other places, you have the conversion of the Apostle Paul. 47 to 48, his first missionary journey. A lot of years between that. What happened in those years in Paul's life? We'll talk about that a little bit later. In 49 AD, the Jerusalem Council, 49 to 52, his second missionary journey, including 18 months in Corinth. 52 to 57, his third missionary journey, including almost three years in Ephesus. And then in 57 AD, He sails for Jerusalem. He's arrested, you remember, spends two years on the Mediterranean coast in Caesarea in custody. And you have his first Roman imprisonment from 60 to 62, after He has the journey to Rome and is held until his hearing, and then he's released. 65 to 67 AD is his second Roman imprisonment, and at the end of that imprisonment comes his death, 67 AD, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD, and then you have John the Apostle and the last letters of the New Testament and Revelation coming in the early to mid-90s AD That's the layout of New Testament history.

So that's what we want to examine together. Before we begin to walk through the history of the Book of Acts, let me give you a little introduction to the Book of Acts. First of all, let's talk about the author. The author of the Book of Acts is Luke. There's a lot of external evidence among the early church fathers for that. Irenaeus says Luke was the author of both the third gospel and Acts. The Muratorian Fragment, the earliest list of New Testament books, about 170 AD, says the Acts

of all the Apostles were written in one volume. Luke compiled for most excellent Theophilus, the things that were done in detail in his presence. Clement of Alexander, as Luke in the Acts of the Apostles relates that Paul said, “Men of Athens,” so forth. Tertullian, in the same way, refers to the Book of Acts being written by Luke. There's also internal evidence. It's not quite as easy to follow but stay with me.

In the Book of Acts, there are several sections, and I've given them there to you on the slide, where the author of the Book of Acts suddenly shifts to “we.” We went here, and we did this. And so, what you see in those sections is that the author was at times one of Paul's traveling companions. And all of his companions can be ruled out for those times, except for Luke and Titus. There's no internal or external evidence for Titus, but there is strong evidence for Luke. And so, that's where we land on this. In addition, Acts is obviously a continuation of the Book of Luke. If you look at the last chapter of Luke, you read the first chapter of Acts, they fit together hand in glove. And both of them are addressed to the same person, Theophilus. And this isn't a strong argument, but some like to make it the medical language in Luke and Acts may very well confirm that Luke was the writer. What do we mean by that? Luke shows more interest in disease and sickness, and those sorts of things uses more technical language for illnesses and for medicines and so forth. Not a strong argument, but the rest of them are fairly strong. You put all of it together, we know that Luke wrote the Book of Acts.

So who was this man? Let me just give you a brief biological sketch. In Greek, Luke is Lukas. It's an abbreviation of Lukanus. He was a Gentile. We know that. In Colossians 4, Paul contrasts Luke, Epaphras and Demas with those who were from the Circumcision, meaning Jews. Luke was well-educated in Greek culture and language. As far as where he was from, likely he was from Syrian Antioch. That is, the Antioch, not in Pisidia, another portion of Eastern Europe, but rather Syria, Antioch in Syria, just above the land of Israel, became a key city in the early Church. We'll talk about that more as we go along. Luke joined Paul in Troas on his second missionary journey. You can see that from the “we” passages we just talked about. He stayed in Philippi until Paul came through on his third missionary journey. And then once they're reunited at that third missionary journey, they're almost inseparable from that time forward. Luke was a physician by profession, according to Colossians 4:14.

You know what's interesting about that is in the ancient world, there were three educational centers there in the first century, Athens, Alexandria, and guess what? Tarsus. Luke and Paul may very well have met—there's no evidence for this, we don't know it for sure, but it's certainly possible that they may have met while Luke was at university studying medicine in Tarsus. In 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul identifies Luke as his only companion during his second imprisonment. What happened to Luke? Well, we don't know for sure. One Latin writer, may or may not be true, said Luke was unmarried and died at the age of 74. That's all we can hope to know at this point about the end of his life.

Now, when did he write this book, the Book of Acts? The date of the writing had to have been between 60, 62 AD, probably leaning toward the back end of that, because the events of the Book of Acts do not go beyond 62 AD There's no hint of Nero's persecution or Paul's death. In addition, you see the Roman officials are tolerant toward Christianity, which changed dramatically with Nero. There's no mention of the death of James, the brother of our Lord, which Josephus says took place around 62 AD There's no reference to, and it would be unthinkable to me, that he would mention the death of James, the apostle, in chapter 12 of Acts, but not mention the death of the leading, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, the largest church that most of the first chapters are about. There's no reference to Paul's epistles, silent about the further ministry of Paul. So the book was, the date of the book's events, that is when they occurred, is between 30 with our Lord's post-resurrection ministry all the way up to 62 AD and was likely written at the end of that period of time for obvious reasons.

The recipient of the book is a man named Theophilus. Now, that is a common both Jewish and Gentile name. It means God lover or loved of God, could be the one, depending on how it's interpreted. A Gentile living some distance from Palestine is clear because Luke has to explain things that happen in Palestine where a person who lived there would have known and not needed that explanation. His title is “Most Excellent,” Luke 1:3. Certainly it's a term of respect, but it's also probably true that he held a high governmental position. He's already a Christian by the time that Luke writes him. We know that because in Luke 1:4, he says, the things you have already been literally catechized in about Christ, I'm writing to explain further. So he's already a believer at this point, possibly Luke's patron. In other words, the guy with money paying for Luke to take the time to write this and to travel where he needed to travel even in the land of

Israel to do his research and investigation. The book was clearly intended not only for Theophilus, but to be circulated among other Christians.

How do you outline the book? Well, there are three ways to outline this book. One is by the main characters. You have Peter in chapters 1 to 12. You have Paul in 13 to 28. That's one possibility. I like this one best by Acts 1:8, where Jesus says, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and [ultimately] to the remotest part of the earth." And you see that play out in this book. Chapters 1 to 7, Jerusalem, chapters 8 to 12, Judea and Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth, chapters 13 to 28.

One other way to look at it, I don't think it's a great outline, but there are a series of progress reports throughout the book. I'm not going to go through each of those. They'll be on the slides. You can go back and look at them. But I'll touch on them some as we go through. But you'll see these progress reports where it seems to be a turning point. Where it gives you an update. I'll just look at the first one there, v2:47. "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." And you have these sort of stipulated progress reports throughout this book.

So why did Luke write? Let's start with his gospel. Because I think the two are integrally connected. Turn to Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1. And look at verses 1 to 4. Here, I love it when a writer tells us what its purpose is. You know, that makes life easy for us as interpreters. Not all books are that simple. But some of them do, and Luke does. And by the way, let me just remind you of this, because I'm going to touch on a number of book themes tonight. When you come to books in the Scripture, they may have several points that are made throughout, several different subpoints and subtopics, but a book is always going to have one central purpose, and that's developed throughout that book. And so we're going to look, as we go through, for the purpose, and then there'll be other related, supporting purposes, and we see that even with Luke.

So look at verses one to four. "Inasmuch as many have, undertaken, to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order,

most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

Now in Luke one, one to four, you see four successive stages of the church and of the writing of this book. First of all, you have the historical events. Verse one says, “the things accomplished among us,” talking about Jesus and His life and ministry. Then, those events were passed down by contemporary oral eyewitness accounts, primarily the Apostles. Luke says in verse two, “they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word.” Then, you have Luke's own research and investigation in verse three, “having investigated everything carefully from the beginning.” And I think this happened during those years, Luke is with Paul when Paul is incarcerated in Caesarea, waiting for release, waiting for his case to be heard. Because Caesarea is on the coast of Israel, it's easy to travel to Jerusalem and the other places where Jesus lived and ministered. And I think that's when this took place. I personally think that you have the story of Jesus' birth from an interview that Luke likely did with Mary herself. And so, you have him investigating all of these things.

Then, you have Luke's writing. Verse three says, “It seemed fitting for me as well to write it out for you in consecutive order.” Now, why exactly did Luke write his gospel? Well, he says here in the verses we just looked at, in verse four, “In order that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.” Let me paraphrase that based on the Greek words involved, that you may know with complete certainty that what you have been orally taught has, in fact, an impregnable historical foundation. In other words, you've heard, you've been catechized as the Word taught, but let me lay out the historical events that you have been taught based on the research that I've done from what was passed down to us from the Apostles. So, those are the purposes of, or the purpose of, Luke's Gospel.

Here's the purposes of Acts. First of all, you have two implied purposes. I think when he begins this letter, he's saying the same thing. He's writing to Theophilus in Acts. He's essentially implying that I want you to know the exact truth about the things that you have been taught. I mean, think about it. Thirty-two years have passed since the end of the events of Luke's Gospel before the Book of Acts is written. Thirty-two years. Christianity has spread all over the world. How can Theophilus know that what he sees in his community under the name of Christ is what

Christ intended? Who's Paul? What's a church? Enter the Book of Acts. But I also think you have in the Book of Acts the continuing work of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Go over to Acts chapter 1 and look at how he begins this book. “The first account,” the Book of Luke, “I composed, Theophilus [now watch this strange phrase] about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.” Now what strikes you as odd about that? Luke's gospel is what Jesus began to do and to teach. What does that imply about the Book of Acts? Acts is what Jesus continued to do and to teach. Now doesn't that make sense when you think about the upper room discourse?

What did he say to the disciples? He said, I have many other things to teach you, but I'm not going to be here to do that. And so what am I going to do? I'm going to send the Holy Spirit, and He will remind you of all that I taught you, and He will take all that's mine and disclose it to you.

And so you see the continuing work of Christ through the Holy Spirit. He said He would send His Spirit. And that's exactly what you have. And He talked about, Jesus did to the disciples, the advantage of the Spirit. Remember what He said to them? It's better for you if I go away, because then I can send the Holy Spirit. And so what you see in the Book of Acts is that great reality. So those purposes are implied.

What are the historical purposes? I mean, clearly there's—he intends to lay out history here. So you have the spread of the Gospel, the growth of the Church from its beginnings. You also have the historical setting for Paul and his letters. Acts furnishes the background for ten of Paul's epistles, as well as several of what we call the general epistles. You know, Paul's letters are addressed to people, and they're named after the people or churches they're addressed to. The general epistles tend to be labeled by the author. Hebrews would be the one exception, but the others are James. He's the one who wrote it, not the one receiving it, and so forth. So several of the general epistles are spelled out. But Paul's letters, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians all fit into the framework of the Book of Acts.

Secondary purposes of the Book of Acts. There is a strong apologetic purpose unfolding in the Book of Acts. First of all, it's a defense against pagan religion. You have at least two accounts where Paul contrasts paganism with the worship of the true God, and he shows that reality. That paganism is false, that the God of the Christian faith is the true and living God. It's also a defense

against Judaism, because Christianity, we learn, is the fulfillment of true Judaism. You see it in Stephen's speech in chapter 7. You also see it in the speeches of Paul in chapters 21 to 28.

Thirdly, it's a defense against political accusations. You know, one of the things that heats up in the time period that Luke is writing this book is, there is, it hasn't begun yet, but there's the sense of which the persecution from Rome is coming. It's come primarily from the Jews at the end of this letter, but it's coming from the Romans. And so this book shows that Christianity is innocent of any offense against Roman law. You see that again and again in the responses of the Roman officials in chapter 17 to 28. I was reading it again and thinking, again and again they say, he's innocent. There's no issue with him. He's not subversive to Rome. And then it's also a defense of Gentile evangelization. Christianity is for Gentiles as well as Jews, and there are two chapters, two really foundational key chapters we'll look at that establish that purpose.

And then of course, there's a missionary purpose, both to show the spread of the gospel, but also to encourage us to spread the gospel. Because it wasn't just the first century that was responsible to make disciples of all the nations, we are as well. So it's there to encourage us to continue that work.

Okay, so that's an introduction to the Book of Acts. Let's begin to work our way through it. The first chapter is a kind of introduction. We could just call it preparation. You have the post-resurrection ministry of Christ before His ascension. And in that post-resurrection ministry, Jesus does a couple of things that are really strategic to the growth of the church. First of all, He builds the foundation of the church, and that is the Apostles. Look at Acts chapter 1, verse 2. "Until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the Apostles [watch this] whom He had chosen." And then, verse 3, He proved His resurrection to them. And then, He commissioned them, verse 4, "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, which He said, you have heard from me." He taught them, and then he, as I just read, promised them the Spirit. So He is preparing the foundation of the Church. Remember Ephesians talks about the apostles and prophets, the New Testament Apostles and prophets of the foundation of the Church. Jesus is equipping them during those 40 days between His resurrection and His ascension. He's building that foundation. But he's also establishing the mission of the Church, which is to be witnesses, to be His witness people, verses 6 through 8.



Now, watch in verse 6, you have the disciples' misunderstanding. "So when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Now, notice their misunderstanding. First of all, they were expecting a political kingdom, restore what had already been. Secondly, they were expecting a national kingdom to Israel, and they were expecting an immediate kingdom at this time. Jesus corrects all of those. He, verse 7, look at verse 7, it's key. He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs, which the Father has fixed by His own authority." Notice He does not say, you've got your eschatology all wrong, you need to be amillennialist. No. He says, yes, it's coming. What you're expecting is coming. You're just expecting it at the wrong time. And then He corrects them. Notice He explains the current kingdom manifestation in verse 8. Here's the current kingdom I want you to worry about, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria. And even to the remotest part of the earth. Notice here how He corrects their misunderstanding. He says the kingdom I want you to be concerned about right now is spiritual. The Holy Spirit's at work. It's international, the remotest part of the earth, and it's also gradual. It's going to start with 120 in Jerusalem and spread, like the parable of the leaven in Matthew 13. So, He lays down this responsibility.

Notice the mission of the Apostles. He says, you will be my witnesses. They were to be witnesses of him in their preaching. You know, a witness is one who has personally seen, heard, experienced something, and then tells others. And that happens throughout this book, and they were to be witnesses to him through their writings. Because remember, He talked about even in the High Priestly Prayer of John 17, that there will be many who will believe in Me through their words. And we know that had to be throughout all time and international, because the Great Commission spells that out. So they fulfill that in both ways. The New Testament is their written testimony. Think about this. They are still being His witnesses to you in the pages of the New Testament. It's blanketed the globe. So, He not only builds the foundation and equips the Apostles and lays them down as the very foundation, but He also establishes the mission of the church to be His witnesses.

That's followed in verses 9 to 11 by His ascension, and He disappears into heaven. Why is the ascension important? Why ascend into the sky? Have you ever thought about this? I mean,

they're on the Mount of Olives, and Jesus just starts going up into the sky. Why was that important? Well, for 40 days, Jesus had come and gone, vanishing and reappearing. The Ascension made the point he's gone for good. He's gone back to heaven. This is it. And of course, His words told him that as well, but there was a powerful picture in that image of him ascending into heaven. He's gone, and he's not coming back until the promise He made to come back, and that's not going to be immediate. And he's received into the cloud, and again, almost certainly there it's the glory cloud surrounds him as He ascends into heaven. What was the message? Well, there were several messages in addition to, he's gone for good. One is that he's God. Another is that he's without sin, because here He is, going to heaven, not like us. And in addition, I think the clear evidence is that His sacrifice was accepted. The Lord's receiving him into heaven.

So you have this powerful message. The motivation of the Ascension, look at what they say, verse 11, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched him go into heaven." This Jesus will come. That is the motivation for the church, for every believer since Jesus left. I just want you to let that settle into your soul for a moment, men. We say we believe that, but it's true. This Jesus will come. That's the hope we live in.

So they return three-quarters of a mile into the city of Jerusalem, to the upper room, and they wait. Waiting in the upper room, chapter 1, verses 12 to 26. Now it's interesting, this upper room. You know, in New Testament times, the upper floor of a large home was often a true large open room. It was used as a dining room, a room for guests. Sometimes it was sublet to smaller, to poorer families. This one held a large number of people, 120 people. It's clearly a very wealthy family. It's possible this was the home of John Mark, the place of the Last Supper, the room where the disciples had gathered on the night of the Resurrection. And later, they gather again in Acts 12:12. Peter, after he gets out of prison, that's where he finds them. "He went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying." It's very possible it's the same spot.

Who were those present? The 11, the 12 minus Judas, as well as the replacement that we'll find in a moment. Certain women, Jesus' mother, Mary, and Jesus' brothers. I love that. You know,

they didn't believe in him before the resurrection. But apparently, He appeared to them afterwards, and they put their faith in him. Possibly His sisters were there as well. They're not mentioned. But there's no reason to suspect that at least two sisters weren't there. This is less than eight months after they had rejected His claims in John 7:5. You know, I'm tempted one of these Easter's to preach about James and Judas, Jesus' half-brothers. Because think about this. What does it say for Christ's claims that they were skeptical and rejected him most of His life? But after the resurrection and He appeared to them, they both accept him as Messiah, as Lord, as God. I don't have any younger siblings. I'm number ten. But if I did, that would be a hard sell. You see, Jesus was all that He claimed, and you see it even in the conversion of His brothers.

What were they doing in the upper room? Well, they were praying continually, verse 14 says, and then they were replacing Judas. Why did they need to replace Judas? There's a lot of question about this. You know, Judas had hanged himself, Matthew 27, and apparently either the rope or whatever the rope was tied to broke, and he fell perhaps onto a stake or a jagged rock. We don't know what, but Acts 1:18 says his body was ruptured, and the priest took Judas' money and made the transaction to buy that field where this happened in Judas' name. So they needed to replace him. It was necessary because the Scripture had foretold it, and they quote Psalm 69 and 109. The requirements for his replacement had to be a witness of Jesus from the baptism until the Ascension, and the point there was that they had been taught by Jesus, and they had to have witnessed His resurrection. There are a couple of other requirements. You can read about them in the Cessation Book, but these were key. And two men were qualified to this end, and they allowed Christ to choose the one He wanted by lot. (There are a lot of things, by the way, that happened in the Book of Acts that are not for you to copy. You know, narrative is not command. Narrative is not imperative. And so be very careful in interpreting the Scripture. You'll see that when you read the book that Lance was mentioning earlier. And there will be a number of things like that in the Book of Acts. This would be one of them.)

So, Acts 1:8 then introduces us to the outline. You have Jerusalem in chapters 2 through 7. You have Judea and Samaria in chapters 8 through 12. And the remotest part of the earth in chapters 12 through 28.

So let's begin then with part 1, serving as His witnesses in Jerusalem, chapter 2 through 7. This covers a period of 2 to 3 years. It's roughly from the ascension in May of 30 AD to the conversion of Saul somewhere around 32, 33 AD. You say, how do we know it was 32 or 33 AD? Again, it's based on the timeline that Paul lays out of his life in several places, but primarily in Galatians, where He talks about his visits to Jerusalem after his conversion and all of those things. We can put together that timeline and then subtract from when we know the Jerusalem Council happened and come up with an approximate date. So it was these chapters then cover that period of time.

Of course, first and foremost, you have in Chapter 2, Pentecost. This is how the witness begins. Pentecost was one of four feasts that the Old Testament required Israelites to travel annually to Jerusalem to celebrate. Three is, it's often summarized as three, but there were four separate events. So in verses 1 to 4, you have the descent of the Spirit that Jesus had promised. Now, don't misunderstand. It's not that the Spirit hadn't been here. Spirit's omnipresent. He's always been here. This is the Spirit appearing in a new work, a new effort, a new energy to energize the church to the mission that Christ has given it. Three phenomena, I should say, accompany the descent of the Spirit. You have a noise like a rushing wind fill the house. What's that about? Well, if you read the Old Testament, the word that's used for the Spirit of God is the word ruach. And the word ruach means a powerful, forceful wind. In fact, at times, you see that image used even in describing the Holy Spirit. He is the accomplisher of God, the perfecter of the plans that the Father initiates, the Son accomplishes, the Spirit perfects. He is the ruach, the breath of God, the power of God to accomplish His purposes. And so, you have this noise like a rushing wind that fill the house, like a hurricane, a tornado blows through. You have tongues resembling fire resting on each one. This was showing that the Spirit's presence was now indwelling not, you know, the room, but individual people. And then, you also have speaking in tongues. Now, they spoke in other languages.

Two events related to the Holy Spirit happened to them at this point in time. First of all, chapter 1 verse 5, as Jesus had promised, these were baptized with the Spirit. And then, secondly, in chapter 2 verse 4, they were filled with the Spirit. Now, regarding this issue, you need to understand that the fact that both happened to them at the same time to those who were already Christians is an anomaly. This is a new thing that's starting, and this isn't going to happen this

way again. Because the New Testament makes it clear that for us, the pattern is different. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to 1 Corinthians 12:13, Acts 11, is initiatory. It happens once, and it's connected to salvation. You are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. You are immersed into Christ. There are different ways it's expressed. The filling of the Spirit, according to Ephesians 5:18, comes for believers after conversion. It is ongoing, and it is connected to sanctification. The things that flow out of filling of the Spirit are things like a love for God-centered music, a heart of thanksgiving, a submission to human authorities. And so, you see these two distinct things that in the beginning, when the Spirit first comes to initiate this new church age, both of these happen to those who are already Christians at the same time. But that no longer happens. When you were saved, you were baptized by the Spirit, and 1 Corinthians 12, 13 is clear about this. Every Christian has experienced this, so it has to happen at the moment of salvation. But on the other hand, you are being filled by the Spirit with the Word—Ephesians 5:18, Colossians 3:16. So just don't make the mistake of thinking it happens exactly that way still.

The third phenomenon in this event was speaking in tongues. This was the first occurrence, and it sets the pattern. Whatever happened in Corinth must be a reflection of this. So what exactly happened in Acts 2? Well, when the Scripture uses the expression, other tongues, in Chapter 2, Verse 4, the Greek word is *glossa*. That word is used in only two ways in the New Testament. It's used of that fleshy instrument in your mouth that you use to articulate speech and to move your food around and maybe a few other things, but that instrument in your mouth. And it's used of a language that is known by ordinary people.

I just want you to see this. Look at Acts 2 verse 6. Let's start at verse 4 to just get the run here. “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, [other languages] as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together. [They heard the tornado. They heard the rushing wind sound.] They were bewildered. [Why? Because] each one of them was hearing them speak in his own [*dialectos*, his own dialect, his own] language, [the language to which he was born.]

Look down in verse 8. How is it? Well, go back to verse 7. “They were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Why are not all these who are speaking Galileans?’” How are they doing this? They speak only one language, and, you know, the Galileans had a reputation for not being that well-educated. How can they do this? “They were amazed and astonished.” Verse 8. “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language, [our own *dialectos*] to which we were born?” Couldn't be clearer what's going on here. People from all these different nations with different human languages have gathered for Pentecost, the celebration, and the Spirit enables these uneducated Galileans to speak languages that they shouldn't know how to speak. Languages they had not studied. Look at verse 11. You have, by the way, you have the list of all of them in verses 9 and 10, from all over the world. And verse 11 ends by saying, “We hear them in our own languages speaking the mighty deeds of God.” So again, understandable content, the mighty deeds of God spoken in the languages to which they were born, the dialects to which they were born. That is the first appearance of the gift of tongues and that's what tongues is.

You say, why? Why tongues? Well, there were three basic reasons. The first is an obvious one. Because of the Diaspora, that is the scattering, the spreading of Jews all over the world where they now spoke all kinds of different languages, and they come back for the feast and they're not always able to communicate clearly with each other. And so, God enabled the apostles on this occasion to speak in languages that they could understand.

Second reason, there was miraculous confirmation of the Apostles' message. 2 Corinthians 12:2 says, The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance by signs and wonders and miracles. By the way, in the Book of Acts, whenever there are tongues, an apostle is always present, and the Holy Spirit is introduced for the first time. He's introduced to the Jewish people gathered at Pentecost. He's introduced to the Samaritans. He's introduced to the Gentiles in Chapter 10. He's introduced to the disciples of John the Baptist in Chapter 19. So in every case, you have a new group being introduced. Again, if you want to read a little more about that, I have more information on it in the book on Cessationism, so you can pick that up and read it.

The third reason for tongues at Pentecost was as a judgment on Israel. It was a judgment because they had rejected their Messiah. Back in Isaiah 28:11, God had said that He would judge His people then by their being surrounded by people who spoke other languages. In context, the

Babylonians, those who were going to come and take them into exile. Here we learn in 1 Corinthians 14:21-22 that the languages spoken by the apostles and those around them in the early church were as a statement, a sign of God's judgment on Israel. She had rejected her Messiah, and so now, those who spoke other languages would be those that God reaches and makes His people, not as a replacement for Israel, but through the church age until the fulfillment of His promises to Israel. So that's why tongues.

So what about tongues today? Why not tongues today? Well, they have to reflect the pattern here. You read the Book of Acts, and it says in Chapter 11, what happened with Cornelius, it says what happened to Cornelius is exactly what happened to us at the beginning. Back to what we just looked at in Chapter 2. And so that's the pattern of tongues. And so if there were to be tongues today, they have to reflect this pattern. They're not a private prayer language. They're not, you know, some angelic gibberish, ecstatic speech. That's not tongues. This is tongues. The pattern is laid down here. By the way, Luke was a traveling companion of Paul, and he knew what was going on in Corinth when he wrote this. And there's no hint of anything other than languages, as we just saw.

It's certainly not the norm. I don't want to say that God can never do whatever God chooses to do, but there would be two differences if God did it today. One is, it would not be revelation, because revelation has ended. Secondly, it would be an aberration, not the norm of the church. If God allowed somebody to speak a language, they'd never study. I've never met anybody, never met anybody who's met somebody that that's true of.

In fact, if you read the history of the Charismatic Movement, starting in the early 1900s, what you'll discover is that they thought initially they were speaking foreign languages. That's what they thought. And they went to other nations, thinking they were going to be able to communicate with them, and they discovered it was just gibberish. And that's when they began, when it looked like the entire movement was going to crash and burn, that's when they redefined tongues. But they thought it was going to be exactly what it was in Acts 2. And it wasn't.

Why not? Well, it was confirmation for the apostolic period, as we just saw in St. Corinthians 12:12. Hebrews is very clear. Again, I've dealt with this at length in my book, but Hebrews 2 shows that even in the late 60s AD, just before the destruction of Jerusalem, when Hebrews was

written, the writer of Hebrews is saying, this used to happen but doesn't anymore. You can check out the text. You can read more about it in the book. They decline even during the Apostolic period. Acts 2:4 happens within 10 days of the Ascension. Acts 10:46 in Cornelius, before the year 44 AD and the death of James. Acts 19:6 occurs early in Paul's ministry at Ephesus, in the early 50s. 1 Corinthians, the only book outside of Acts that mentions tongues was written about 55–56 AD

Now, if you align the New Testament letters by chronology based on when they were written, 1 Corinthians was only the fourth inspired letter following Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Paul wrote nine other inspired letters after 1 Corinthians to six different churches, and there's never a mention of tongues again. So even in the inspired documents, the conformational miracles that accompanied the Apostles and their message had already begun to die out.

Look at church history, and you see that the bulk of the testimony of the church fathers argues that speaking in tongues and the other miraculous gifts passed with the Apostles. You will find some practicing or trying to practice miraculous gifts throughout church history. But what you will find invariably is they are attached to false doctrine. There are other aberrations in their doctrine. And so you will find the predominant voice of the evangelical voice throughout church history with this very position. So that's what happens.

Then you have Peter's explanation in Chapter 2, Verses 14 to 21. And he goes back to Joel, Joel 2, and he says, the last days is what Joel predicted. When are the last days? Well, the last days started with the first advent of Christ. The last days will end with the second advent of Christ. And He talks about what's going to happen that the young men and the old men will speak in tongues and prophesy. That portion of Joel's prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost, at the beginning of the last days. And then those verses in Chapter 2, Verses 19 and 20 (rather, 30-31), they talk about these miraculous signs in the heavens. Those are fulfilled at the end of the last days, at the day of the Lord.

Peter's testimony to Christ, I love this. If you look at Chapter 2, Verses 22 to 36, he talks about Jesus' life, that God performed miracles and wonders and signs through him. He talks about Jesus' death, that God delivered him over to death. Jesus' resurrection, God raised him. His exaltation, the Father exalted him. And the conclusion, look at Chapter 2, Verse 36. "Therefore,



let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both [Kurios and Hamashiach, the Messiah.] This is Jesus whom you crucified.” That's the conclusion.

Now, their response was conviction, but it was followed by a call by Peter, an invitation, a call to repentance. Notice what he says in verse 38. Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus, the Messiah, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, and as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself,” both Jews and Gentiles, whomever the Lord will call.

This wasn't all he had to say, verse 40. You don't have his whole message here, which I find some gratification in, because I'm long-winded, and apparently, he was too. This wasn't his whole sermon on the day of Pentecost. And what's the call? It's the call to repentance. And you see this call to repentance several other places. I've listed here on the slide. And that fits perfectly with the Great Commission. You say, well, you know, Matthew says, make disciples. Yeah, but Luke gives us a fuller version of it. And there he says in Luke 24:47, you're to proclaim, “repentance for the forgiveness of sins in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem.” So the Gospel is a message of repentance.

Occasionally, you'll hear people say, you know, repentance is a work, and you should never attach it to faith. That's not what the Scriptures teach. The Scripture teaches that repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. You turn from, that's repentance, but you can't just turn from. You have to turn to, and that's faith. They go together. You can't have one without the other. And that's why sometimes they're both listed, repentance and faith. Other times just repentance is listed. Other times just faith is mentioned because they fit together like, well, like sweet potato casserole and turkey.

So, just to remind you of our context, we're looking at the first part of this letter, or this book, The Witnesses in Jerusalem, chapter 2 to the end of chapter 7. It covers about two to three years. And we just looked at Pentecost, and out of that comes the first Christian church. And how exactly is the first Christian church marked? Well, it's marked, first of all, by a redeemed identifiable membership. You see that in verse 41. In fact, I hope to teach this at our Essentials Conference. This whole passage is really amazing. But you see, a redeemed identifiable

membership, 3,000 were added to the church. Clear priorities, they were continually devoting themselves to instruction, the Apostles' teaching, to fellowship [*koinonia*], to worship at the Lord's table, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Those were great priorities. They were continually devoting themselves to those things. And this passage ends in chapter 2, verse 47, with a progress report. "Praising God and having favor with all the people, and the Lord was adding to their number, day by day, those who were being saved."

So again, Acts 1–8, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, the remotest part of the earth. We're looking at the witnesses in Jerusalem, chapters 2–7. Looked at Pentecost, in chapters 3–5, you have the growth of the Jerusalem Church amid opposition, and then persecution and expansion in chapters 6–9. Stephen is where that persecution ramps up in a big way. You remember, in chapter 6, the apostle chose—by the way, let me say one thing before I go there. The opposition in this time period came from the Jewish leadership, from the Sanhedrin. The Apostles are called in before them.

And as the church grows, the need for help grows, and you're familiar with what happens with the choosing of the seven to serve as kind of prototypical deacons. The office of deacon, the noun doesn't occur in this passage, but the verb does. They were doing the work of deacons. They were leading the ministry of making sure that the widows were cared for. The dispute in verse 1 between the Hellenists, those were Jewish people who had Greek language and Greek culture, and the Hebrews, those were Jewish people who stayed true to their Hebrew background, like Paul did. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. And so there was a dispute about the caring for them. And so, the seven were chosen, and there's so much to learn in that passage. I wish I had time. I dealt with this in the leadership training. You can go back and listen to it, but there's so many lessons about leadership in what they do in those six verses at the beginning of chapter 6. But you have the second progress report in verse 7, and the Word of God kept on spreading, and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Well, you know what was going to happen on the result of that progress, as a result of that progress, Stephen's work brings increasing opposition to the gospel. Look at chapter 6, verses 8 to 10. "And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among

the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen [this was an actual synagogue in first century Jerusalem] including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia rose up and argued with Stephen.” Now, what's interesting about that is Cilicia is the region where Tarsus was. And it's possible, I think even likely, that Saul was a member of this synagogue. You'll notice the false witnesses accused Stephen, beginning in verse 12 and following, and they accused him of two crimes, that he spoke against the law of God and that he maligned the temple. This was the crux of the opposition to Stephen. Beginning in chapter 7, verse 2, Stephen answers those charges. By the way, in this sermon, you'll read it, Stephen responds with respect for Moses and the law, while he demonstrates that the nations and its leaders, before whom he stands, are actually guilty of subverting the law. He doesn't deny the charge that Jesus would supersede the temple, but he defends himself by showing that since God doesn't dwell in a man-made structure, it's impossible to blaspheme a building.

And then he drives home the fact of their rejection in chapter 7. Look at verse 51. Here's where the rubber meets the road. “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit. You are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You who received the laws ordained by angels and yet did not keep it.” Wow. That's a strong message. Stephen's point was that Israel had consistently rejected those God sent to deliver them, now including the Messiah. And they talked about the law, but they never kept it. As a response, of course, Stephen is stoned at the end of this chapter.

By the way, I have to show you something that's so exciting. Verse 54, they rush on him. Verse 55, he's gazing up into heaven, and he sees, notice this, he saw the glory of God and he saw Jesus, what? Standing at the right hand of God. What does the Book of Hebrews say is Jesus' posture? Sitting. What's going on here? There's almost universal agreement that Jesus is standing in honor of the first Christian martyr, the first one who shed His blood in testimony, sealed His witness with His blood, and Jesus welcomes him home.

You know, there's an old story that's told of a missionary who spent his life on the mission field, and he traveled home after a lifetime spent on the mission field. Many of the people who knew

him and loved him weren't able to meet him. Some of them had died. And he lands, the boat docks, and a huge crowd is gathered. And he's wondering, what is this crowd about? And it turns out Teddy Roosevelt was on the ship coming back from a safari in Africa, and that's what the crowd is about, and literally nobody's there to meet him. And he goes to his room and throws himself on the bed, and he said, all of that, that I've spent my life doing, and there's literally no one here to welcome me home. And the story goes, the missionary then realized this text, and he says, wait, you're not home yet. You're not home yet. Jesus welcomes His first Christian martyr, the first witness to seal His testimony with His blood.

That brings us to part two, where we find them being witnesses in Judea and Samaria, chapters eight to 12. This covers a period of about 13 to 14 years from Paul's conversion until his missionary journeys in about 47 AD And this period begins with Saul's consent to Stephen's death. Look at chapter eight, verse one. "Saul was in hardy agreement with putting Stephen to death, and on that day, a great persecution began [that's the fallout] against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen, made loud lamentation over him." By the way, that's a reminder that Christians grieve the death of those we love. We just don't grieve like those who had no hope, as Paul said. "But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison." What happened? Verse 4, "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the Word." Philip was one of those, one of the seven, and he went down to the city of Samaria," north of Jerusalem. You remember that area where the Samaritans were, and there the gospel begins to spread. You see the ministry of Philip, and he evangelizes at Samaria, and then with the Ethiopian as well.

That brings us to the conversion of Paul or of Saul, the conversion and early ministry of Saul in chapter 9. Now, I wish I had time to sort of give you a biography, the Apostle Paul. I don't, but here's what I'd like for you to do. If you never, if you weren't here when I started Romans years ago, go back, I did an entire message on the Apostle Paul, a biography of the Apostle Paul at the beginning of my series on Romans. So go find that, listen to it. It was so encouraging to see how the Lord providentially ordered his life, so much that we can know about him. But here we meet him, verses 1 through 9, his vision of Christ on the Damascus Road as he goes to persecute. By the way, just think about this. We're talking about the same area where all of the war is going on

now. He went to Damascus, an ancient city that's still there, still the center of everything in the Middle East.

The early Christian life of Paul, you can see here in this chapter, after he was converted, he was preaching in Damascus. There was persecution. He had that amazing escape. Then he went to Jerusalem for his first trip and then was sent to Tarsus. And his salvation, of course, verse 31, look at Acts 9:31, meant the church enjoyed peace. “The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace being, built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” So, God builds His church by saving its chief enemy and brings peace to it. Just a reminder, guys, don't ever stop praying for the people in your life, that even the ones that seem really unlikely to come to the faith, God doesn't bank on your opinions of who's savable and who isn't.

So as it continues then, you see the spread of Christianity to the Gentiles. Chapter 9:32 through the end of Chapter 11. It begins with Peter in western Palestine and both Lydda and Joppa. And then the key passage here is the salvation of Cornelius in Chapter 10. Now, guys, I cannot overemphasize how important Chapter 10 is, because it's key in Acts. It's key in the history of the church. Two and a half chapters to tell his story. Why? Because it was with Cornelius that Christianity transitions from Judaism and embraces Gentiles. Both Jewish and Gentile believers needed a defense of exactly how a Jewish sect spreads to the Gentiles. I mean, in our day, it's even worse than this, but it would be like girls joining the Boy Scouts. It's like, what's going on with... This is Jewish. What do you mean Gentiles? So in chapter 10, you have Cornelius' vision. By the way, he was a Jewish proselyte Gentile who had converted to Judaism. And he's praying. Peter has the vision, you remember, where he's taught through the animals not to think of those things as unclean that God had cleansed. And it wasn't just the animals, although that was true. It was the Gentiles. And the messengers arrived from Cornelius in verse 17. And then Peter travels back with them to Caesarea, and he delivers the gospel to the Gentiles in verses 34 to 43. But look at chapter 10, verse 28:27, “As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled.” Cornelius has gathered all of his household friends together, “And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him. And yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.’” And out of that comes the Gospel. Down at verse 34, “Opening his mouth, Peter said, ‘I most

certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation, the man who fears him and does what is right is welcome to him.” And he says, ““The Word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus the Messiah.”” And then he goes on to preach the gospel to them. And Cornelius and many in his household are converted.

Now they received the Spirit in verses 44 to 48, and it's again, it's done in a miraculous way to punctuate, here's a new group that Christ is welcoming into His church. In chapter 2, it was the Jewish believers in Jesus. Here, it's Gentiles who are proselytes who are believing in Christ. Now in chapter 11, Peter has to defend his actions. And the key to his defense, look at chapter 11 verse 17. Here's why he said, it's okay, we need to accept them. “If God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” So he says, look, the same thing happened to them that happened to us. I preached the gospel; God showed me I should go there and preach the gospel. I did that, they believed, and then they received the Spirit in the same way we did, again, as evidence that a new group had been accepted into the Christian Church. Verse 18, “When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.’” There are two points in that verse. One is that repentance, like faith, is a gift. The other is that God had given it to the Gentiles. Most of us in this room are the recipients of this amazing work of God.

Now, this is followed by the development of one city as really a Christian base of operations for most of the rest of the Book of Acts. And that city is Antioch in Syria. It's modern Turkey. You see this in the second half of Chapter 11. The third largest city in the first century Roman world was Antioch of Syria. Rome was first, Alexandria, Egypt was second, and the third largest was Antioch. It was a major population center in the first century. You see here the evangelization of Greeks in verses 19 to 21, Chapter 11. This is a new outreach that is now added. Cornelius was a Gentile, but what had he been? A Jewish proselyte. There's no evidence that these Greeks were that at all. Not all of them were proselytes. And verse 21 says, a large number of them believed. So here we see yet another group being added to the church. You see the endorsement of Barnabas in verses 22 to 24.

And then in verse 25, as the work at Antioch grew, as more people came to faith in Christ, Barnabas needed a colleague. He needed help. This is how the church works, by the way. Church grows. It needs more help. It needs more elders. It needs more leaders. And the Lord adds to His church. So in this case, Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul back to Antioch. Verse 25. The Greek verb there in verse 25, to seek for, implies difficulty in finding a person. That's how it's used in the papyrus, or in the papyri. It is a word that implies, "I searched, and it was really hard to find."

Why was Paul so hard to find? Well, we're not told, but I think there's a hint in Philippians 3.8. You remember where Paul says, I have suffered the loss of all things. Think about Paul. Think about his upbringing as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as a Pharisee. Think of all that was his. Apparently, a part of a wealthy family. It appears that Paul was disowned, disinherited, and truly suffered the loss of all things. So he was no longer had any relationship to his family, disowned by them, and therefore hard to find. But he found him and brings him back to Antioch. And in Antioch, they are called Christians for the first time.

Now that's an important change because it indicates the separation in people's minds of the church from Judaism. The church composed, as Paul says in Ephesians 2, of Jews and Gentiles, now made one new man. Now, we're not Jews, we're not Gentiles, we're Christians. We're followers of Jesus Christ. And the church in Antioch helps with relief, famine relief in Jerusalem. And that brings us to chapter 12.

Herod Agrippa I and the church. Verses 1 to 4 of chapter 12, Herod has a plot. And that is to stamp this out by killing James, the brother of John, and by arresting Peter. He's going for the leaders. That's how the, you know, war works, it's how the enemy works, and it's how Herod worked. But, you know, he arrests Peter. You remember the story. Peter's arrest, Peter's escapes from prison. I love the way this story reads, because, you know, Peter finds himself outside the prison, and he didn't know, verse 9, he didn't know it was real. He thought maybe it was a vision. But when they passed the first and second guard that came to the Iron Gate, which leads, that leads into the city, it opened by itself for them, and they went out and went along the street, and then the angel departs, and finally Peter says, hmm, now I know that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod. And so when he realized this, he goes to the house

of Mary, John Mark's mother. When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant girl came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy, she didn't open the gate but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. I mean, I just love that, right? She's so overwhelmed. She's like, unbelievable. I want to go tell everybody that Peter's out of prison, and he's standing out there, you know, knocking at the gate. Come back, Rhoda. God rescues him.

What's Herod's reaction, verses 18 and 19? He decides to examine the guards in order that they be led away to execution. And then he went away on vacation. But God kills Herod in a gruesome way. There's a lot of description about exactly how Herod died. I won't get into the gory details, but clearly God kills him in a remarkably gruesome way because he had exalted himself equal with God. But you see in verse 24, the continued progress of the Gospel, the Word of the Lord continued to grow and be multiplied, even in the face of the opposition of the leader of that area, Herod Agrippa I, the church continues to grow.

Now, it's at this point that the first inspired letter is written. The first inspired letter, James. It's from James, the half-brother of Christ, written from Jerusalem. It's written to those scattered as a result of the persecution in Acts 12 with Herod, Herod Agrippa. There's no mention of the Jerusalem Council in 49 AD, so it was written sometime between 44 and 49 AD, and it was written between Acts 12 and Acts 15. The purpose of the Book of James is to establish the effects of true saving faith. You see all those paragraphs in James? It's saying, how can you know if your faith is real? He talks about living faith and dead faith. How can you know? Well, each one of those paragraphs is a test of true saving faith.

Part three, then, begins with chapter 13. Witnesses to the remotest part of the earth. Now, we don't know much of what happened to Paul from 32, 33 AD as his conversion to about 45 AD and his ministry in Antioch, Syria. All we know about those years is recorded in eight verses in Galatians 1. And this is what we can piece together. From about 32 to 35 AD, you have his early evangelistic ministry in Damascus and Nabatean Arabia, described in Galatians 1:17. 35, 36 AD, you have his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem, described in Galatians 1:18-20. And then 36 to 45, you have Paul's silent 9 years of ministry in Syria and Cilicia. This is described in one verse in Galatians 1:21.



So what happened during those 9 silent years? There are 3 glimpses in Scripture of what happened during those 9 silent years of the Apostle Paul. First of all, we know that he planted churches in Syria and Cilicia, his home region. Chapter 15:23 says, They sent this letter to them, the apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, who are from the Gentiles. In the previous chapters of Acts, there's no mention of other churches in Syria besides Antioch, and there's no mention of churches at all in Cilicia. So, these were apparently planted by the apostle Paul during those years.

Secondly, we know he suffered persecution. You've read that litany of things he suffered in 2 Corinthians 11, a list of his sufferings. Listen to a couple of them. He says, "Frequent imprisonments." Acts only mentions one imprisonment in Philippi, in Acts 16. It says, "Three times, beaten with rods." But that was a Roman punishment, and only one of those is in the Book of Acts in Philippi. He says "three shipwrecks, including a day and nine in the deep." Only one shipwreck is mentioned in Acts, and it occurs after Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. It's in Acts 27. So, four shipwrecks, and three of them aren't in the Biblical text. Apparently happened during those years. "Five times from the Jews, 39 lashes." Now, these were lashes with a leather whip on a bare back. It was the standard discipline in the local synagogues. Acts mentions none of these. Acts, by the way, does imply, however, that Paul's early years were primarily in synagogues, according to Chapter 13.

And then finally, we know that he had a vision of heaven during this time. In 2 Corinthians 12, he mentions it, and he mentions that it occurred 14 years before he wrote 2 Corinthians. So it would have been about 42, 43 AD during those silent years. So that's all we know of what happened during those nine years when Paul was in obscurity.

That brings us then to the missionary journeys of Paul. They occur about 15 to 16 years after his conversion. Before this, his ministry was primarily Jewish in Syria and Cilicia. But after this, it's primarily Gentile. Here's an overview of his first missionary journey. It's in Acts 13 and 14. It was Paul and Barnabas. They went to Cyprus and Southern Asia Minor. They covered about 1200 miles, a couple of years, and visited these cities that you can see on the slide there. Here's a map of the first missionary journey. Ignore the green arrow. That's John Mark returning. The blue

is going out, and the red is coming back. So you can see kind of the areas to which this first missionary journey went.

That missionary journey was followed by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. About 49 AD, the theological issue is pretty clear. Look at Acts 15 and verse 1. Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren there in Antioch, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” Couldn't be any clearer, right? You have to be circumcised to be saved. When Paul and Barnabas had had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined Paul and Barnabas, some others, should go to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. Verse 5, here's the issue again. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up saying, It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.

Now, this isn't just as a pattern of their obedience. In both cases, it was to be saved. That's what the Judaizers taught. That's what Galatians has written against. (Beware men, there are parts of the Christian world who do the same thing. They add something. Something even God has commanded to how you are saved. For example, baptism can be added as something necessary for you to be saved. If you add baptism to, you must do this to be saved, you've created a false gospel. And that's what unfolds here in chapter 15.)

There's a lengthy debate in verses 16 to 21. Then you have James' summary, look at verse 19. “It is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles. But we're going to ask the Gentiles to do these things. The Gentile Christians to abstain from food sacrifice to idols, from fornication.” Now that's an odd one to throw in because of course fornication is not allowed. There are two ways to look at that. Some say, well this is because it was part of the Gentile pagan worship. You know, you had temple prostitutes and all of that. That's what it's speaking about. Maybe, but I'd lean toward maybe this is a prohibition against close marriages that are spelled out in Leviticus 18. Close relatives, preachers of Jewish marriage law. You can't be absolutely sure. Meats from animals killed by strangling and then blood, probably drinking blood. The reasons for those last two are in Leviticus 17 because the life of the flesh is in the blood. It's a picture of the reality of what God has done.

The council's letter to churches is given to us in verses 22 to 29, and then the letter arrives in Antioch and set things straight. Now, here's where you begin to get context. That's Acts 15. The next book to be written is, guess what? Galatians. Paul's first letter, it's written shortly after the Jerusalem Council in about 49 or 50 AD. It's written to churches in that area of Galatia that he founded on his first missionary journey. Apparently, the Judaizers had spread there after leaving Antioch, and so this letter is to defend justification by faith alone. You can't add anything to the gospel. You can't add circumcision. You can't add keeping the law of Moses as a way to be saved. You've made it another gospel at that point.

That brings us to his second missionary journey. In chapter 15 verse 36 through chapter 18 verse 22, Paul and Silas, and Luke joins them at Philippi. They go to Asia Minor and over into Europe. Cover about 2,800 miles. Now think about traveling in that day. And the dates are about three years, 49 to 52 AD. You can see a list of the cities but notice Corinth. Eighteen of those months, they stayed in Corinth on the second missionary journey. It was there. Here's a map, by the way. You can see how they travel up and land route this time through Galatia, go over into Europe, and then come back to their home church to give a report. These are frontline true biblical missionaries. In Corinth, we meet Aquila and Priscilla in chapter 18, verses 1-4. As I said, Paul spends 18 months there, and then they return to Antioch.

Now, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians were written at this point from Corinth, around 51, 52 AD. 1st Thessalonians, instructions to a model church, a new model church. And then 2nd Thessalonians, correction about the 2nd coming, and comfort about the day of the Lord, that it wouldn't mean their destruction. Then they return to Antioch.

And from there, you have the 3rd missionary journey, chapter 18 through chapter 21. Paul and Timothy, as well as Luke, they go Asia Minor, they go again to Europe, and then back to Palestine. They cover about 1600 miles, and it's a longer journey, 52 to 57 AD. And you can see the map of it here. This was the journey, again, going out and then coming back by sea. Paul's 3rd missionary tour included a 3rd visit to the South Galatian churches. While his friends were there, Aquila and Priscilla, we meet a man named Apollos, whom they shepherd. Why is Apollos mentioned in the Book of Acts? Can everybody else that's mentioned and introduced for any time period has a significant role in Acts or in the New Testament? Why Apollos? Well, I'm

conjecturing here, okay? This is a guess. I think he might have been the writer of Hebrews. When you read the description of him, he fits perfectly the Book of Hebrews. But we'll only find out when we get to heaven.

Paul, on this 3rd missionary tour, spends almost 3 years in Ephesus. By the way, you men that enjoy ministry, if you want to see what a ministry, what the ministry of an elder looks like, one of the clearest descriptions is Paul's description of his own ministry in Ephesus to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. He talks about what his ministry there was like, and it is filled with richness. And so he spends 3 years there as a missionary, but also 3 years as an elder in that local church.

It was in this point of his ministry that he wrote 1 Corinthians. He wrote it from Ephesus during the 3 years he was there, probably about 55 AD, near the end of his 3-year stay, and the purpose was the correction of various problems in this troubled church in Corinth.

He has to leave Ephesus, you remember, because of the riot, the silversmiths, they shout for 2 hours, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. I had the joy of actually having a meeting in that theater. We set it up when I was at Grace to You. We set up a tour for Grace to You listeners to travel with John and with the rest of us and go, and we set up a meeting in that theater where we sang praises to God in the place where they shouted for 2 hours, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. We shouted, Great is our God.

They returned to Macedonia and Greece, and also in this time period, he writes 2 Corinthians, probably from Macedonia, maybe Philippi in 55, 56, and he writes to defend his Apostleship. There have been false apostles who are arguing that Paul is a nobody and nothing, he's a has-been, he can't, his letters are impressive, but his personal appearance is nothing, and Paul has to defend himself for the sake of that church. He hates to do it, but you can read it, he does that for the benefit and blessing of that church.

He also, from Corinth, writes the Book of Romans, around 56 AD, and the theme of Romans is the gospel of God. He does it because you remember he's gonna change ministry. He's gonna go from Eastern Europe, where he's been, all this time in his ministry, he wants to go to Western Europe, and he's gonna go through Rome on his way. He didn't, he's never been to Rome, didn't found the churches in Rome, but he's writing to them, explaining his gospel. And that's why we

have that full description of Romans, so that they will support him as he begins this new phase of his ministry in Western Europe.

Around this time, Matthew and Mark probably also wrote their gospels.

Now, the rest of the book is his journey to Rome, Acts 21 through 28. So here's a sketch of that time frame. In 57, he sails for Jerusalem after the third missionary journey. You remember, he's arrested, he's in custody in Caesarea for a couple of years, and then he has his first Roman imprisonment once he gets to Rome. Those two years end with an innocent verdict from Caesar to whom Paul had appealed, and Acts really ends with that reality. During this journey, he goes from Jerusalem to Caesarea to Malta, and then ultimately to Rome where he spends those two years. Here's a map of what that looked like. You can see there; I think you can see it up there. You see the little storm there on the left between the arrows. Because that's where the shipwreck occurred and where they were. They had to take shelter.

Now, the journey to Rome begins with his arrest in Jerusalem, and he is put on trial. He has to make a defense, first of all, before the people there in Jerusalem, and then a defense before the Sanhedrin in chapter 22. And the Lord appears to him. So this is an overview slide. Paul is on trial in Caesarea after his arrest. You can see the chapters involved there. So what happens in Caesarea when he's taken to the coast? Well, he's first of all before Felix. And look at what Felix does. You talk about, this is just a reminder of how government can be corrupt. Look at Acts 24, verse 26. Felix “was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Festus and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.” So he hasn't even had his case really heard yet. Two years, he languishes in Caesarea, and it's a farce of justice.

So Paul then is taken before Festus, as Festus in chapter 25 comes to power. And when Festus, look at verse 9, “Festus wishing to do the Jews a favor said, do you want to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?” And Paul realized what was going on. He said, no, listen, “I'm standing before Caesar's Tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I've done nothing wrong to the Jews you know very well.” And therefore, he says at the end of verse 11, and “no one can hand me over to them, I appeal to Caesar.” And of course, that locked in his fate for the

next two years. Verse 13, he appears before Agrippa, and he makes his defense before Agrippa in verses 4 through 8. He says, my real, the real issue is the resurrection. He describes his conversion, and when he's done, look at the judge's reaction. You can see it here on my slide. The judge's reaction, Festus' personal opinion, Paul's mad. Agrippa's personal opinion, Paul is really a very persuasive person, but there was mutual agreement by both of them on Paul's innocence. Again, that factors into the history of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Luke's gospel was researched and probably written during Paul's two-year imprisonment in Caesarea, while he was really just waiting to be heard, waiting for a trial. And then he appeals to Caesar, and so he has to travel then to Rome.

The actual journey to Rome takes place in chapters 27 and 28. And you know the story, the difficult voyage, Paul's advice to the Centurion, you better wait. The storms are growing in the Mediterranean. The Centurion decides to go on anyway. They have the storm and shipwreck. They winter in Malta. And then at the end of chapter 28, they finally arrive in Rome.

I want you to see how the Book of Acts ends. Look at chapter 28, verse 30. So remember now, in Caesarea, he was already imprisoned for two years without so much really as a trial. And then he appeals to Caesar. And now he's taking that difficult journey to Rome. Verse 30 says, "And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him." This is, he was imprisoned, but he had to rent his own quarters, had a Roman guard. He was welcoming all who came. But notice verse 31, "Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness". And the Greek word that ends the Book of Acts is an adverb. It's, he was doing this unhinderedly. In other words, the Lord had paved the way for him to bring the Gospel to Rome through these circumstances.

And I just remind you guys that the Lord is at work in your lives in exactly the same way. He's weaving together the circumstances of your life to accomplish His glory and your good. And you can trust him to do that, and even to give you testimony in that process.

While Paul's imprisoned in this first Roman imprisonment, he writes the prison letters, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, from Rome around 60, 62. The purpose of Colossians, the all-sufficiency of Christ. Philemon, a manual on forgiveness. Ephesians, the eternal plan of God. And Philippians, basic Christian living.

From Paul's first Roman imprisonment to his death, it looks like this. You have him returning to several places he had been in the years immediately following his release. And in this time period, Acts is written by Luke. And Paul writes Titus to his young son in the faith from an unknown location. To Titus pastoring on the island of Crete. The purpose is adorning the doctrine of God. What kind of a life adorns the doctrine of God? And he explains that to Titus. First Timothy is written in this time period. Again, from Paul at an unknown location to Timothy in Ephesus, where Paul had been for almost three years. The purpose is a manual for church life. He says, in case I'm delayed, I write these things to you, 1 Timothy 3:15, so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God.

Peter writes his first letter in this same time period. From Peter in Rome, using the code name Babylon, somewhere in the mid-60s, probably shortly after Rome burned, or maybe shortly before it, in July of 64, to Christians in Asia Minor, and he sees the wave of suffering coming out of Nero, and he urges them to stand firm in the face of suffering.

Then in 65 to 67, you have Paul's second Roman imprisonment, and from that second Roman imprisonment in Rome, he writes Second Timothy, and his purpose is to describe the ministry of spiritual combat. Don't give up, Timothy. Be brave. Yes, I'm in prison. Yes, I'm going to die. You be faithful. And in 67 AD, Paul is put to death. As a Roman citizen, he was probably taken outside the city and beheaded, but we're not absolutely sure.

The rest of New Testament history, in 67, 68 AD, you have Peter's death, and shortly before that, he wrote Second Peter to believers scattered in Asia Minor. The purpose there is to teach about genuine and false Christianity. What does it look like? What do false teachers look like? Just before 70 AD, the Book of Hebrews is written. I say just before 70 because it doesn't describe the destruction of the temple, which obviously it would have. You're trying to say the sacrificial system has come to an end, and the temple is destroyed. What are you going to say? Look, God just punctuated this, but he doesn't mention it at all. And so, it was written by an unknown author, I think maybe Apollos, primarily to Jewish believers and to those who were struggling, wanting to kind of put their foot back into Judaism. And the purpose is the superiority of Christ. Don't give up on Christ. He's superior to Moses. He's superior to all of those systems. The covenant he brings is superior to the old covenant. And he drives home that reality.

And then Jude writes in the same time frame, the half-brother of Christ, probably written from Jerusalem to primarily Jewish believers, scattered in the various persecutions. And really, Jude, its purpose is beware the pretenders. Beware those who look and smell from a distance like Christians, but the closer you get, the more you realize they're not because of their lives and what they teach. And then in 70 AD, you had the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and the Romans.

In the 80s AD, in that time period, John probably wrote his gospel from Ephesus to the entire world. And the purpose was to present Jesus as the son of God. Shortly after that, from Ephesus to the churches in Asia Minor, probably in the early 90s AD, before the persecution under Domitian, he wrote 1 John, Tests of Eternal Life. You get that wrong, by the way, on the quiz. Shame on you. There's 2 John, Hospitality and False Teachers, and 3 John, Hospitality and Faithful Servants. And then, of course, in the mid-90s AD, John is in prison on the Isle of Patmos. He writes Revelation to the 7 churches of Asia Minor in modern Turkey, and near the end of Domitian's reign. And the purpose there is to say, Jesus Christ is coming back. So we come back at the end, men, to where we began.

What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story about God redeeming a people by His son, for His son, to His own glory. That's what that Bible you hold in your hands is about. How does it break down? Well, the Old Testament says, he's coming, and here's why He needs to come. Look at how desperately sinful people are, how much we need a priest and a king and a prophet that we can respect and follow. And then the Gospels say He came, and this is what His life was like while He was here. The Book of Acts tells us this is what He continued to do after He left. This is how He continued to build His church even as He promised. The Epistles explain what the life of Jesus was all about, why He came and what He accomplished and how we're to live and what we're to do in light of that. And the Book of Revelation says, he's coming back. This same Jesus will come back even as you have seen him go into heaven. Guys, that's our Bible. Let's pray together.

Father, we truly have flown across the top of the clouds looking down at the masterpiece of your Word tonight. But Father, I pray that you would weave together some of what we've talked about, so that as these men study your Word on their own, as they come to individual books,



they'll capture some of these ideas, they'll see how it fits into the whole. They'll understand that each book has a central idea that is developed, that they will come to your Word.

Lord, as you have by your grace enabled me to do all these years, that they will come to your Word, and they will see that you are amazing. And they, in turn, will be amazed. Amazed so that they love you and love your son, so that they love your Word, so that they love the people you put into their lives, starting with their wives and children, their friends, their family, their co-workers, and that all of us, oh God, would take the mantle of being witnesses for you in our Jerusalem, in our Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the world.

Lord don't let us ever lose sight of the rest of the world. As we pray, and as we support the work of those who go and consider it ourselves. So we just entrust all of this to you. Use it for our spiritual good. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.