THE EARLY CHURCH IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

August 1, 2013 – Conversion of the Gentiles Lecture

Lakeside Institute of Theology

Ross Arnold, Summer 2013

Early Church in the Book of Acts (NT4)

- 1. Introduction To the Book of Acts
- 2. No Class
- 3. The Birth of the Church
- 4. Persecution and Expansion
- 5. Conversion of the Gentiles
- 6. The Council of Jerusalem
- 7. Outreach to the West
- 8. Trials and Witness of Paul; Final Exam

The Acts of the Apostles

- Author: Luke, companion of Paul
- <u>Date</u>: C. AD 62-69
- Theme: Written by a Gentile, Acts tells the story of the Early Church and its growth, especially through the work of the Holy Spirit & the ministries of Peter and Paul.
- Purpose: To show the Old Testament promises of God are fulfilled, and that Jesus was and is the Messiah, as shown in the miraculous way God blesses and expands the Church.
- Outline: *Witness in Jerusalem (1:1-8:4)
 - *Witness in Judea & Samaria (8:5-12:25)
 - *Witness to Ends of the Earth (13:1-28:31)

Cornelius Calls for Peter

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

Acts 10:1-9

Peter's Vision

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. Acts 10:9-16

Peter Welcomes Cornelius' Servants

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." ²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Acts 10:17-23

Peter Visits Cornelius

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. ²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸ He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

³⁰ Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. ³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' ³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Acts 10:23-33

Peter Speaks to Cornelius' Household

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

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

Acts 10:34-43

Cornelius' Household is Saved

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 10:44-48



The Church in Antioch

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

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

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

Acts 11:19-26

James is Killed; Peter Arrested

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

Acts 12:1-5

Peter Miraculously Escapes Prison

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

Acts 12:6-10

Peter Visits the Disciples

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Acts 12:11-19

The Death of Herod Agrippa

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. ²⁰ He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

²¹ On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. ²² They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." ²³ Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

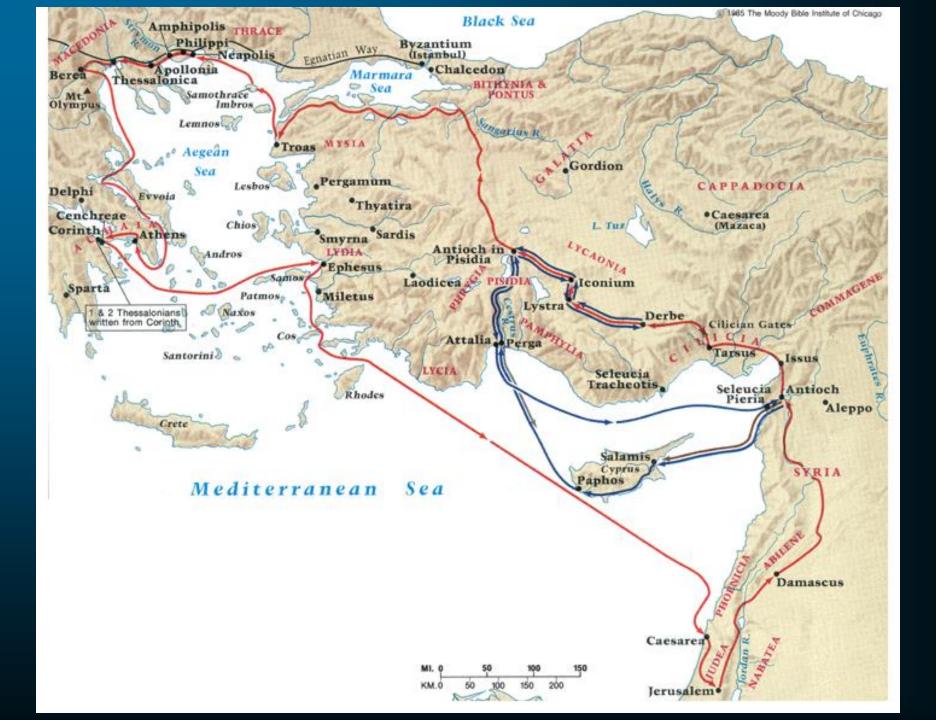
24 But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.

Acts 12:19b-24

Barnabas and Saul

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. 13:1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. Acts 12:25-13:5



Barnabas and Saul/Paul on Cyprus

They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, 7 who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 10 "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun."

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord. Acts 13:6-12

In Pisidian Antioch

From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

¹⁶ Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! 17 The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; 18 for about forty years he endured their conduct in the wilderness; 19 and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years.

Acts 13:13-20

Paul's Sermon in Pisidian Antioch

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹ Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²² After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴ Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

Acts 13:20-25

Paul's Sermon in Pisidian Antioch

"Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. 28 Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

³² "We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: "You are my son; today I have become your father."

Paul's Sermon in Pisidian Antioch

God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David."

³⁵ So it is also stated elsewhere: "You will not let your holy one see decay."

³⁶ "Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. ³⁷ But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. ⁴⁰ Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

41 "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you."

Acts 13:26-37

Opposition and Gentile Conversions

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.

⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Acts 13:42-48

Growth, Opposition and Joy

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. 50 But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. 51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:49-52

At Iconium

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. ⁵ There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel. Acts 14:1-7

Mistaken for Gods in Lystra

In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰ and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. Acts 14:8-13

Paul & Barnabas Protest; Paul is Stoned

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." 18 Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.

¹⁹ Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰ But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. Acts 14:14-20

Paul & Barnabas Return to Antioch

They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, ²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

²⁶ From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. ²⁷ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

Acts 14:21-28





I. The Witness in Jerusalem (1:1-8:4)

- A. The Power of the Church (1:1-2:47)
 - 1. Prologue to Acts (1:1,2)
 - 2. Appearance of the Resurrected Christ (1:3-8)
 - 3. Ascension of Christ (1:9-11)
 - 4. Anticipation of the Spirit (1:12-14)
 - 5. Appointment of Matthias (1:15-26)
 - 6. Filling With the Holy Spirit (2:1-4)
 - 7. Speaking With Other Tongues (2:5-13)
 - 8. Peter Explains Pentecost (2:14-41)
 - 9. Practices of the Early Church (2:42-47)

- I. The Witness in Jerusalem (3:1-8:4)
 - B. The Progress of the Church (3:1-8:4)
 - 1. Peter Heals the Lame Man (3:1-11)
 - 2. Peter's Second Sermon (3:12-26)
 - 3. Peter and John Are Arrested (4:1-4)
 - 4. Peter Preaches to the Sanhedrin (4:5-12)
 - 5. Sanhedrin Commands Peter Not to Preach (4:13-22)
 - 6. Apostles' Prayer for Boldness (4:23-31)
 - 7. Early Church Voluntarily Shares (4:32-37)
 - 8. Ananias and Sapphira Lie (5:1-11)
 - 9. Apostles Mighty Miracles (5:12-16)
 - 10. Apostles' Persecution (5:17-42)
 - 11. Deacons Are Appointed (6:1-8)
 - 12. Stephen is Martyred (6:9-7:60)
 - 13. Saul Persecutes the Church (8:1-4)

II. The Witness in Judea and Samaria (8:5-12:25)

- A. The Witness of Philip (8:5-40)
- B. The Conversion of Saul (9:1-31)
 - 1. Saul is Converted and Blinded (9:1-9)
 - 2. Saul is Filled with the Spirit (9:10-19)
 - 3. Saul Preaches at Damascus (9:20-22)
 - 4. Saul Witnesses in Jerusalem (9:23-31)
- C. The Witness of Peter (9:32-11:18)
- D. The Witness of the Early Church (11:19-12:25)
 - 1. The Witness of the Antioch Church (11:19-30)
 - 2. The Persecution of Herod (12:1-25)

III. The Witness to the Ends of the Earth (13:1-28:31)

- A. Paul's 1st Missionary Journey (13:1-14:28)
 - 1. Barnabas and Paul Sent from Antioch (13:1-3)
 - 2. Ministry at Cyprus (13:4-13)
 - 3. Ministry at Antioch (13:14-50)
 - 4. Ministry at Iconium (13:51-14:5)
 - 5. Ministry at Lystra (14:6-20)
 - 6. Ministry on the Return Trip (14:21-25)
 - 7. Report on the 1st Journey (14:26-28)
- B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)
- C. The 2nd Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
 - 1. Contention Over John Mark (15:36-41)
 - 2. Derbe and Lystra (16:1-5)
 - 3. Troas: Macedonian Call (16:6-10)
 - 4. Philippi: Extensive Ministry (16:11-40)
 - 5. Thessalonica (17:1-9)
 - 6. Berea: Many Receive the Word (17:10-15)
 - 7. Athens (17:16-34)
 - 8. Corinth (18:1-17) 34
 - 9. Return Trip to Antioch (18:18-22)

Outline of the Book of Acts III. The Witness to the Ends of the Earth (13:1-28:31)

D. Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey (18:23-21:16)

- 1. Galatia and Phrygia (18:23)
- 2. Ephesus: Three Years of Ministry (18:24-19:41)
- 3. Macedonia (20:1-5)
- 4. Troas: Eutychus Falls from Loft (20:6-12)
- 5. Miletus: Paul Bids Farewell (20:13-38)
- 6. Tyre: Paul is Warned (21:1-6)
- 7. Caesarea: Agabus Prediction (21:7-16)

E. The Trip to Rome (21:17-28:31)

- 1. Paul Witness in Jerusalem (21:17-23:33)
- 2. Paul Witnesses in Caesarea (23:34-26:32)
- 3. Paul Witnesses in Rome (27:1-28:31)



