

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

ACTS CHAPTERS 16-28

Bible Studies

Acts 16-28

Blacktown Anglican Church

www.bac.org.au

Version 1.0 2026

Luke Thomson

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Over 24 chapters, Luke's Gospel outlines the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In the book of Acts, Luke continues that story as he provides an account of the Acts of the Apostles, and the work of the Spirit of God in the life of his people after the ascension of Jesus.

Here, Luke records a selective history of the early church, as it transforms from a small Jewish sect in Jerusalem, toward a significant movement that reaches the very centre of the Roman Empire. These first witnesses to the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus become witnesses to the world. Through their witness and proclamation, God unites a remarkable spectrum of unlikely converts to be his chosen and precious people. And through these, the message of Jesus carries from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, right to the ends of the earth.

Alongside these studies are moments to consider our own 'life on mission'. Acts is not only an interesting story, it compels us to consider our part in the mission of Jesus as it continues through the world. How will we partner with our brothers and sisters of history to make the news of Jesus known today?

I hope and pray these studies will, among other benefits, assist you in growing in awe and wonder of Jesus.

Luke Thomson
Senior Minister



TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

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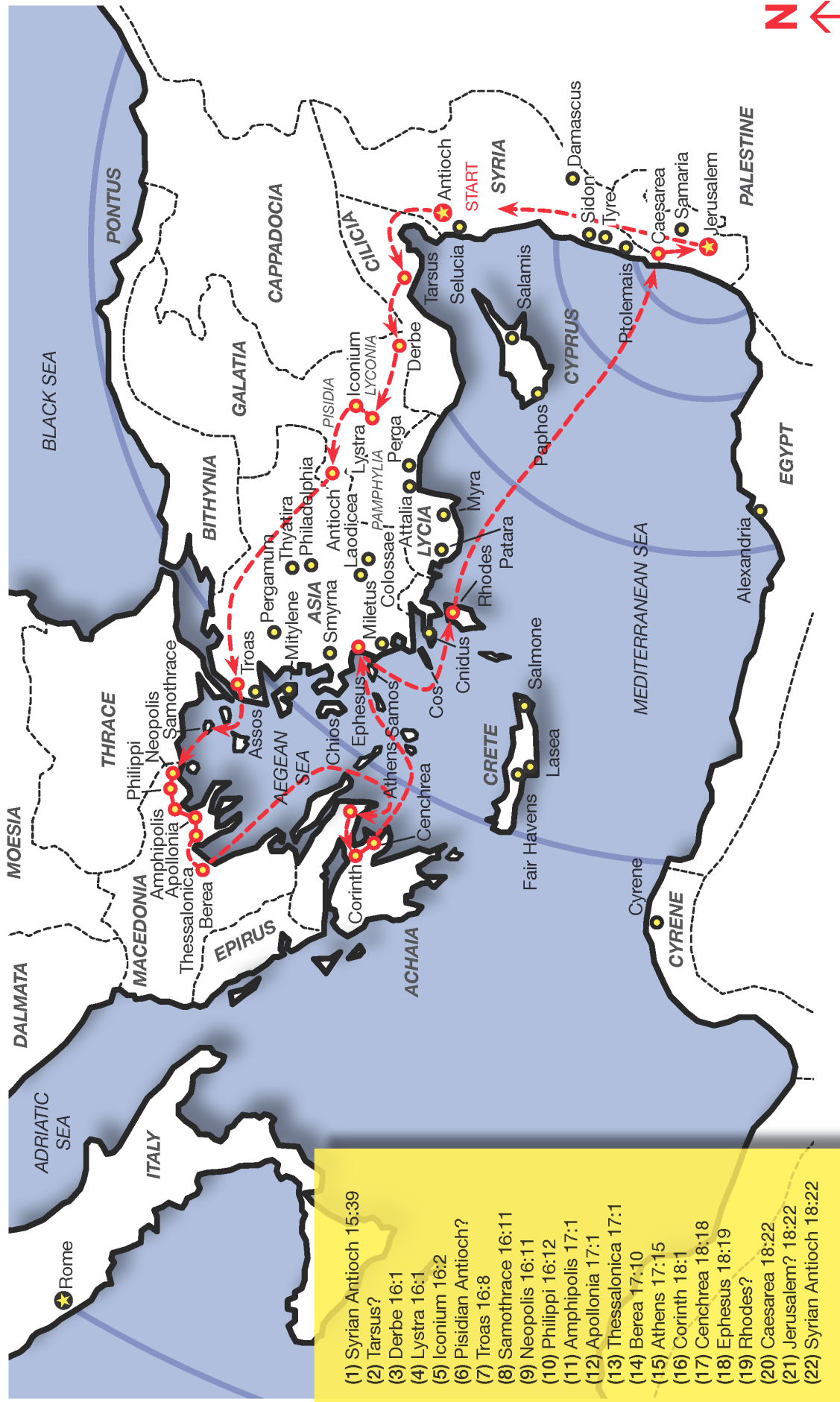
TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Year	Events	Place in Acts	Other New Testament References
A.D. 30	Jesus is crucified, resurrected and appears for 40 days. Pentecost and the initial growth of the church in and around Jerusalem.	Acts 1-2	
A.D. 31-33	Rising tensions between Jewish leaders and Christians. Stephen is killed. Saul is significant in persecuting Christians. Persecution after Stephen's death leads to dispersion of Christians and the spread of the gospel.	Acts 3-8	
A.D. 34	Saul witnesses the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus. He is commissioned as an apostle to the Gentiles.	Acts 9-10	Galatians 1:15-16
A.D. 34-37	Saul is in Damascus. He returns to Jerusalem as a Christian in A.D. 37 and meets with the Apostles.	Acts 9:26-30	Galatians 1:18
A.D. 37-46	Saul ministers in Tarsus, Syria and Cilicia.	Acts 9:30	Galatians 1:21
A.D. 38	Peter visits Cornelius, the first recorded conversion of Gentiles.	Acts 10	
A.D. 43	James (the brother of John) is killed. Peter is imprisoned, rescued by an angel, and leaves Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas return to Jerusalem.	Acts 12	
A.D. 48	Paul's first missionary journey (with Barnabas) from Antioch to Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.	Acts 13-14	
A.D. 48	Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch. Paul confronts Peter for withdrawing from the Gentiles due to pressure from the Judaizers.	Acts 14:26-28	Galatians 2:11-14
A.D. 48-49	Paul writes his letter to the Galatians.		
A.D. 49	The Jerusalem Council, where it is agreed that Gentiles do not have to conform to Jewish laws, such as circumcision.	Acts 15	
A.D. 49-50	Paul and Barnabas part ways over a dispute about John Mark. Barnabas goes to Cyprus, while Paul takes Silas to Syria and Cilicia.	Acts 15:36-41	

Year	Events	Place in Acts	Other New Testament References
A.D. 50-52	Paul's second missionary journey (with Silas) from Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, southern Galatia, Macedonia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Achaia, Athens and Corinth (where he stays for about 18 months). Paul and Silas are joined by Timothy (in Lystra) and Luke (in Troas).	Acts 15:39-18:22	
A.D. 51-52	Paul writes his two letters to the Thessalonians while in Corinth.		
A.D. 52	Paul returns to Jerusalem.	Acts 18:22	
A.D. 53-57	Paul's third missionary journey from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece.	Acts 18:23-21:16	
A.D. 54	Paul writes his second letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus. (Note: we call this 1 Corinthians, as we do not have a surviving copy of his first letter. See 1 Corinthians 5:9-10)		
A.D. 55	Paul's second visit to Corinth which does not go well (not recorded in Acts). He follows up this visit by writing a third letter to the Corinthians (we do not have a surviving copy of this).		2 Corinthians 2:1-4; 12:14-18; 13:1-3, 10.
A.D. 56	After hearing a good report from Titus, Paul writes his fourth letter to the Corinthians (What we call 2 Corinthians). He then returns to visit Corinth.		
A.D. 56-57	Paul writes the letter to the Romans from Corinth.		Romans 16:1
A.D. 57-59	Paul returns to Jerusalem and is arrested. He is taken for trial to the Roman Governor, Felix, in Caesarea Maritima, and remains in prison for two years.	Acts 21:17-24:27	
A.D. 59	Porcius Festus succeeds Felix. Paul is put on trial once more, before Festus and Herod Agrippa II.	Acts 25-26	
A.D. 59-60	Paul is taken to Rome	Acts 27:1-28:16	
A.D. 60-62	Paul remains in Rome under house arrest. It is here that he likely writes the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus.	Acts 28:17-31	

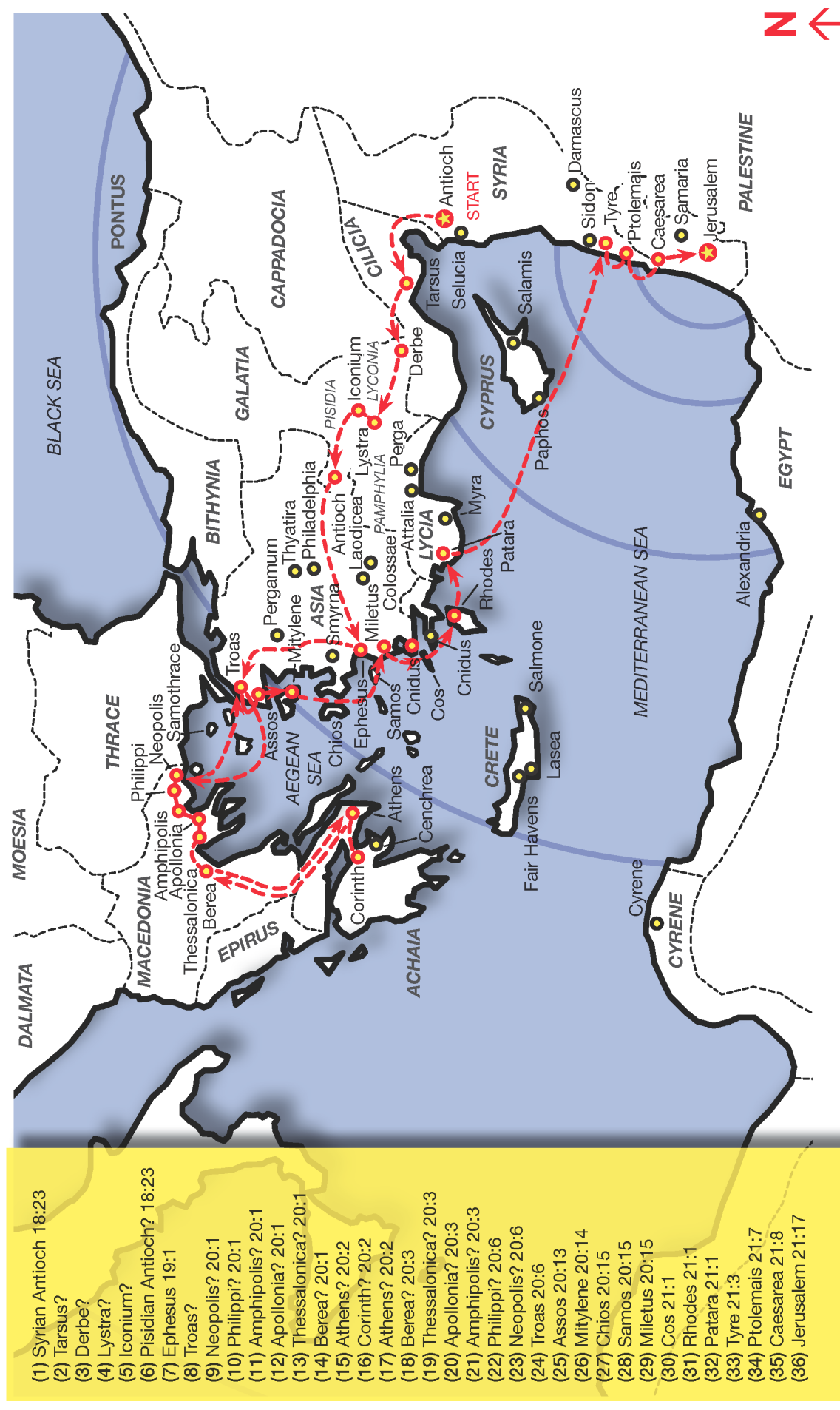
PAUL'S SECOND MISSION ACTS 15:39 - 18:22 AD 49-52

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PAUL'S THIRD MISSION ACTS 18:23 - 21:17 AD 53-57

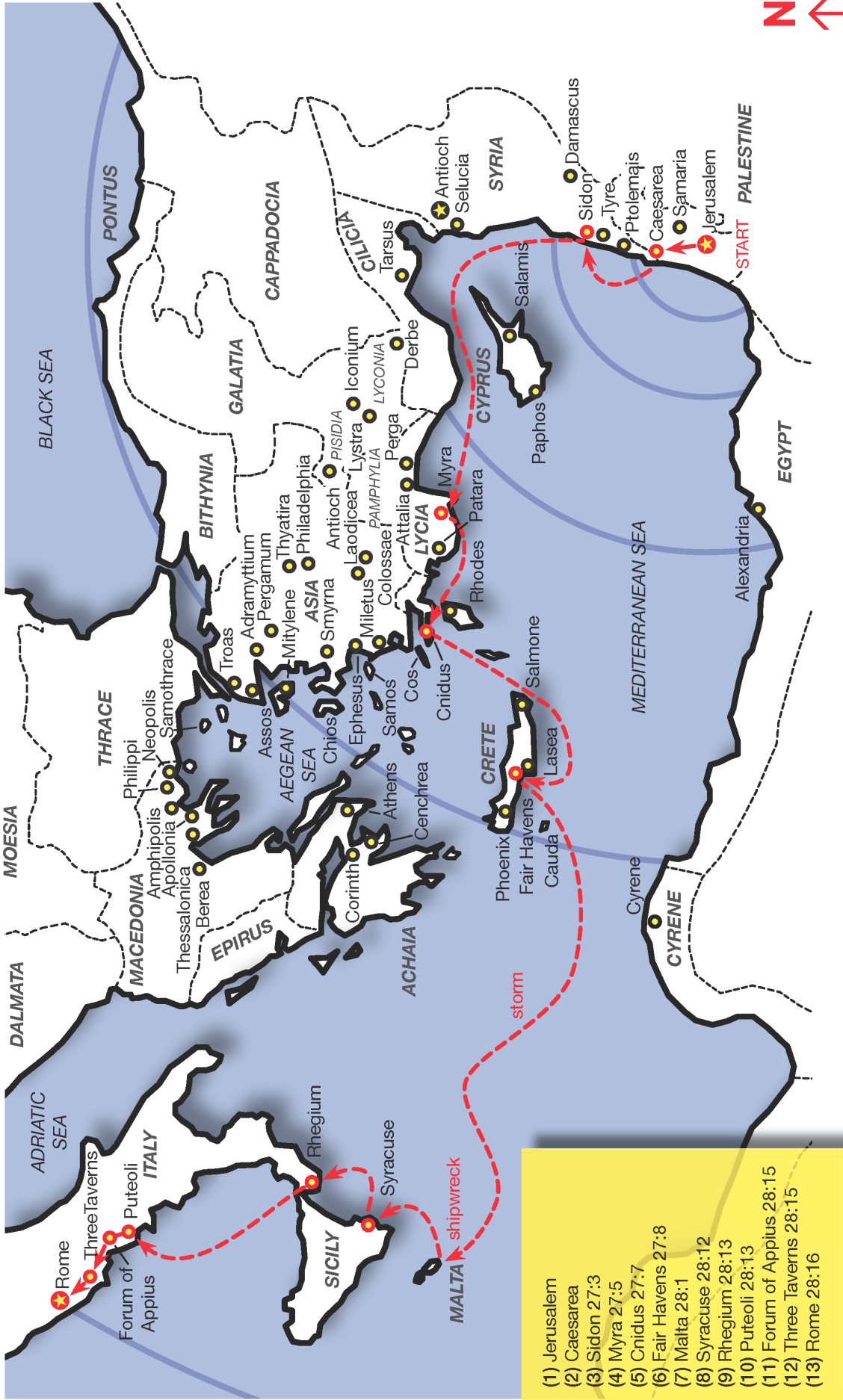
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- (1) Syrian Antioch 18:23
- (2) Tarsus?
- (3) Derbe?
- (4) Lystra?
- (5) Iconium?
- (6) Pisidian Antioch? 18:23
- (7) Ephesus 19:1
- (8) Troas?
- (9) Neopolis? 20:1
- (10) Philippi? 20:1
- (11) Amphipolis? 20:1
- (12) Apollonia? 20:1
- (13) Thessalonica? 20:1
- (14) Berea? 20:1
- (15) Athens? 20:2
- (16) Corinth? 20:2
- (17) Athens? 20:2
- (18) Berea? 20:3
- (19) Thessalonica? 20:3
- (20) Apollonia? 20:3
- (21) Amphipolis? 20:3
- (22) Philippi? 20:6
- (23) Neopolis? 20:6
- (24) Troas 20:6
- (25) Assos 20:13
- (26) Mitylene 20:14
- (27) Chios 20:15
- (28) Samos 20:15
- (29) Miletus 20:15
- (30) Cos 21:1
- (31) Rhodes 21:1
- (32) Patara 21:1
- (33) Tyre 21:3
- (34) Ptolemais 21:7
- (35) Caesarea 21:8
- (36) Jerusalem 21:17

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME

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STRUCTURE OF ACTS

Chapters	Notable events	Theological significance
1	The ascension of Jesus into heaven and re-commissioning of the disciples.	Acts 1:8 sets the scene for the rest of the book—the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
2	Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jews had come together from across the empire, and each hear the news of Jesus in their own language.	The fulfilment of Jesus' promise to be with his people through his spirit.
6-7	Stephen 's speech outlining how Jesus is the fulfilment of Jewish hope.	The speech marks an important theological separation between Jews and Christians. No longer are Christians considered just a sect of Judaism, but are separating further in their theology.
8	Conversion of Samaritans. The confirmation of their conversion by the Apostles.	This represents a practical separation from Judaism. Samaritans are considered 'half-way' between Jews and Gentiles. Samaritans being accepted into the 'one' church is a huge distinction from Judaism.
9	The conversion of Paul prepares us for the rest of Acts, where Paul becomes the main protagonist.	Paul is commissioned to be a missionary to the Gentiles.
10-11	The conversion of Cornelius and his household.	The first Gentile convert marks another significant practical separation from Judaism.
13-14	Paul's first missionary journey	
15	The Jerusalem Council	Official confirmation of Jews and Gentiles together as Christians. The council ratifies past actions and makes future developments possible.
16-19	Paul's second and third missionary journeys	
21-28	Paul's arrest, trial and journey to Rome	
28	Paul reaches Rome	Having reached the centre of the empire, the gospel is well placed to spread across the world.



PHILIPPI

Acts 16:1-40



SHARE

What are the benefits of being in a church with people from very different backgrounds and cultures? What challenges might arise?



EXPLORE

Recap: What is the story of Acts about? (see Acts 1:8; 15:22-35)

Read Acts 16:1-10

How do we see the story of Acts progressing here?

Read Acts 16:11-24

Whose conversion surprises you more: Lydia's or the slave girl? Why?

How would you expect Paul & Silas to feel at their imprisonment? (vv. 22-24)

What surprises you about their response?

Read Acts 16:24-40

Considering all these converts in Philippi of people of different rank and status, what challenges might they have faced as a church? What joys could they experience?



This passage is the first of several 'we' passages in Acts. In these sections it appears Luke himself was one of Paul's companions during his travels, and is providing his personal account of events. For much of Luke and Acts, he relies on eyewitnesses (see Luke 1:1-4). The four 'we' passages are: Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-8; 27:1-28:16.



HISTORY BITE

In 31BC, near Philippi, Octavian (who would later become Caesar Augustus in 27BC) defeated the armies of Mark Antony and Cleopatra after many years and battles with them. Octavian turned Philippi into a recognised Roman colony, sending many retired soldiers to live there. Octavian gave the city the *ius italicum*, a legal designation that granted Philippi the same status and autonomy as if it were in Italy itself. This provided additional property rights and exemptions from taxes, thus leading it to become an important and wealthy city, and home to people like Lydia (v. 14).

This is why Roman citizenship was highly valued in Philippi, as seen in Acts 16 when the magistrates realise they had beaten Roman citizens (vv. 37-38).



LIVE

How diverse are the people in your Community Group, or the people in your social circles at church? What makes it easy to gravitate toward people who are like us?

Do you have a personal story or observation where a diversity of relationships in church has been a real encouragement?

What are examples of how we could express our unity in Jesus with those who are less like us? What barriers could we break down?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Each week, we take a moment to consider what it is for us to live on mission and to keep the mission of Jesus' central in our own lives. We'll consider those we are praying for personally (via '2 for 2'), our efforts in local mission through our church, and our global mission partners.

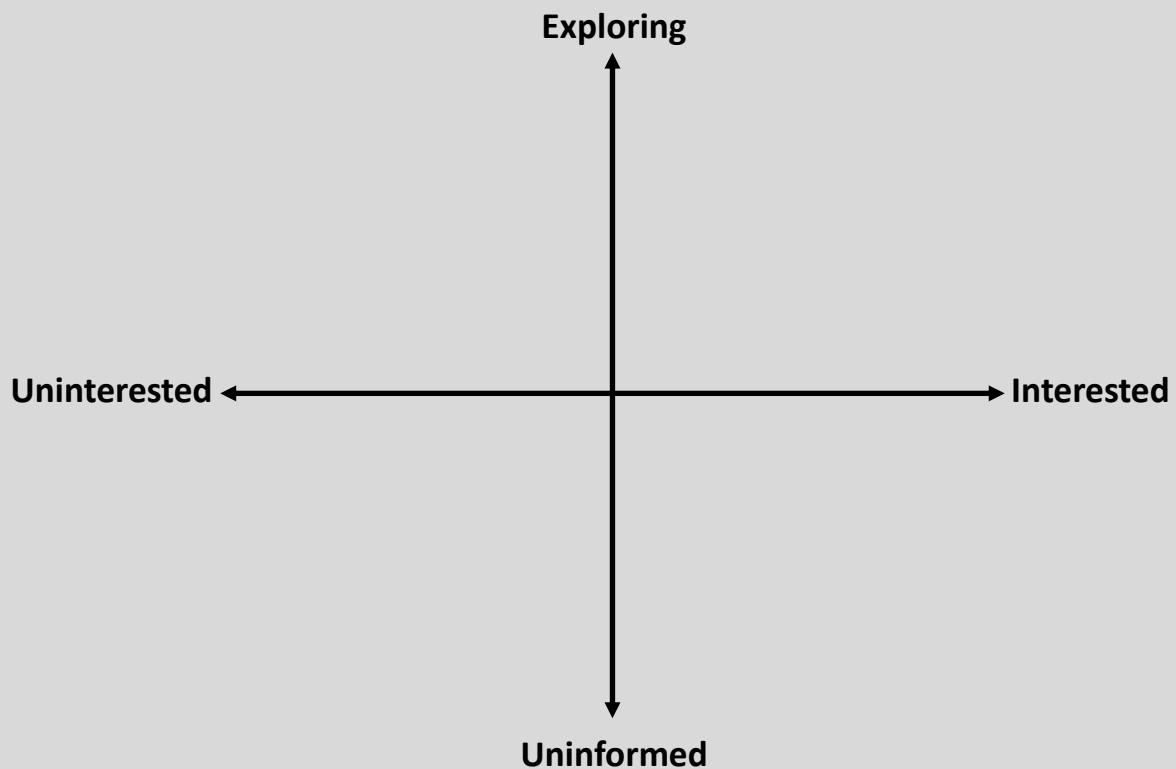
Who are you praying for?

1.

2.

Where are they at with Jesus?

Mark their current stance toward Jesus on the graph below.



What is the next step you can take with them?

(E.g. Introduce yourself? Ask about their beliefs? Invite them to coffee/read the Bible/event/church?)

1.

2.

When will you next have opportunity to take this step?

1.

2.

What do you need to pray for as you consider this?

1.

2.

Take some time to pray for each other.



THESSALONICA + ATHENS

Acts 17:1-34



SHARE

Why do you think Australians are generally hesitant to talk about faith and religion?



EXPLORE

Read Acts 17:1-15

What have the Jews understood correctly? What have they misunderstood? (vv. 5-9)

What attributes or events contribute to the spreading of the news about Jesus in this passage?

Read Acts 17:16-34

Why might Athens have an altar to an 'unknown god'? (v. 23) Are there modern ways that our culture is similar?

What surprises you about the content of Paul's speech? (vv. 22-31)

What aspects of Jesus are not mentioned in the speech?



The Areopagus was not a debating society, but a law court. They take (literally: "seize", v. 19) Paul, and he is put on trial for the claim that he is introducing new gods, worried it could undermine the political & social fabric of Athens.



HISTORY BITE

Athens was home to a number of schools of philosophy.

Epicureans, founded in 307BC, were very materialist. They dismissed a spiritual realm and sought to eliminate fear of the gods or of death. They sought to avoid painful experiences, and their greatest pleasure was found in stimulating their minds rather than their bodies.

Stoics, founded around 300BC, were highly logical and rational, enjoying a good argument. They placed high value on self control (especially over how you respond to emotions), and living a life of virtue. Contemporary expressions of stoicism exist today.



LIVE

What do you think is the minimum a person needs to know in order to be a Christian?

If you were to talk to a friend about Jesus for the first time, where would you most likely begin?

When did you last talk about your faith with someone who doesn't follow Jesus? When might you next have opportunity to do so?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

Who do you choose to sit with at church gatherings?

Do you often meet guests around you?

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for your group's church mission partner
- Pray for our Playtime ministry, reaching young families in our city



CORINTH

Acts 18:1-28



SHARE

What communities do you belong to that have the most impact on your life? (e.g. church, neighbourhood, family, workplace, hobby group, etc.)



EXPLORE

Read Acts 18:1-17

There are many things that must have sustained Paul and encouraged him to persevere. How many can you spot in this passage?

We know much about Corinth from Paul's two letters to them in the New Testament. What do we learn about the city and its residents in this passage?

Read Acts 18:18-28

You may like to look at the map on page 8 to get a sense of Paul's travels in verses 18-22.

We have many snippets of travel details through this part of Acts. Why do you think Luke includes them? What might be lacking if they weren't included?

How does Apollos display humility in his attitude? (vv. 24-28) What could we learn from him?



The book of Hebrews (as we know it) is anonymous. Suggestions of authorship include Paul, Luke, and Barnabas. Apollos is also a strong possibility, with his skills in speaking and understanding the Scriptures, as mentioned here in Acts 18:24-28 (Hebrews is often considered to be a sermon, rather than a letter).



HISTORY BITE

Paul is described as a ‘tentmaker’ (v.3; the term is also applied to ‘leatherworker’), working alongside Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. In this period, workers in the same trade would often live and work together, often forming trade guilds to sell their wares.

Trade guilds often adopted a local god, whom they would both offer food sacrifices and eat feasts in celebration of the god. This practice would naturally exclude Jewish people, leading to great joy when they found fellow Jews of their own trade to work alongside.



LIVE

How does this chapter show the role of both individuals and communities in spreading the news of Jesus?

What are the most significant ways that you are sustained and encouraged in your own faith?

What is one thing this group could do that would further sustain and encourage you?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

What is one aspect you find difficult to live a life on mission for Jesus?

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for our whole church, seeking to live a life on mission
- Pray for our Mobile Community Pantry ministry, in partnership with Anglicare



EPHESUS

Acts 19:1-41



SHARE

What is your favourite aspect of living in (or around) the city of Blacktown? (e.g. particular cultures, locations, memories, history, landmarks)



EXPLORE

Read Acts 19:1-22

Luke often shares stories of unusual episodes in the transitional life of the early church from its Jewish roots. Why do you think Luke includes the story of:

- The Ephesian disciples without the Holy Spirit? (See also Acts 8:14-17)
- The Jews driving out evil spirits in Jesus' name?

How does Paul's time in Ephesus have a significant impact on the spread of the news of Jesus? (vv. 8-10, 17-20)

Read Acts 19:23-41

How does the impact of Paul's teaching affect other residents in Ephesus? (vv. 24-27)
Should we expect a similar impact wherever Jesus is proclaimed?



While John the Baptist prepared the people to meet Jesus (19:4), his followers continued into the fourth century. Luke's inclusion of the stories of Apollos (18:24-28) and the Ephesian disciples (19:1-7) show that John's ministry spread at least as far as Alexandria (18:24) and Ephesus (19:1) respectively.



HISTORY BITE

The temple of Artemis served as both a bank and a temple, have far reaching economic significance. The temple itself was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens, and its history goes back to at least the 7th century BC (it's actual origin is unclear). It was partially destroyed and rebuilt several times through its history, and likely ceased being used in the 4th or 5th century AD.

Pausanias, writing in the second century, said:

But all cities worship Artemis of Ephesus, and individuals hold her in honor above all the gods. The reason, in my view, is the renown of the Amazons, who traditionally dedicated the image, also the extreme antiquity of this sanctuary. Three other points as well have contributed to her renown, the size of the temple, surpassing all buildings among men, the eminence of the city of the Ephesians and the renown of the goddess who dwells there. [4.31.8]



LIVE

How would you describe the impact of Christians on the city of Blacktown? Where is it strong? Where is it lacking?

What should our emphasis be when we pray for our city?

Do you have a regular habit to pray for this city, its people, and its institutions? How important is it for Christians to pray for our city regularly?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

How do you remember to pray for those who don't yet know Jesus?

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for your group's church mission partner
- Pray for our English classes, supporting migrants in our city



MACEDONIA

Acts 20:1-38



SHARE

Have you ever had a conversation with someone that you expected would be your last? What did you want to communicate with your parting words?



EXPLORE

Read Acts 20:1-16

What emotions might you have felt if you were at the meeting at Troas? (vv. 7-12)

Read Acts 20:17-38

What does Paul want the Ephesians to remember about his ministry to them?

What do you think Paul means when he says “I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you”? (v. 26)

What are the Ephesian Christians to do after Paul is gone? (vv. 28-31) To what extent could we apply this in our own context?

What does Paul expect will sustain the Ephesians after he is gone? (vv. 32-35)



Paul’s travelling companions (v. 4) appear to be Christian converts from places that Paul has already visited. They represent these cities, as Paul travels to take up a collection for the poor in Jerusalem. (See 1 Cor 16:3-4; 2 Cor 8:1-5).



HISTORY BITE

The area of ancient Macedonia overlaps with both modern day Greece and the Republic of Macedonia.

The use of the name 'Macedonia' was disputed between the two countries between 1991 and 2019, following the breakup of Yugoslavia.

It was eventually resolved through the United Nations, where the Republic of Macedonia was renamed 'North Macedonia'.



LIVE

Can you think of examples of people who have given up much for the sake of serving Jesus and his mission? What do you think sustains them in giving up so much?

What might it look like to imitate Paul's relationship with the Ephesians in our own context? Are there notable differences in our own context?

If you could choose your last words you shared with loved ones, what would you say? Would it surprise them?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

How much do you enjoy small talk? What is one thing you try to dive deeper in a conversation?

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for our whole church, seeking to live a life on mission
- Pray for our Kids Club, reaching families in our city



JERUSALEM

Acts 21:1 - 22:29



SHARE

What country in the world do you think it is most dangerous to be a Christian?

Check out Open Doors to find the answer, read a little about the dangers, and then pray for Christians who live there. opendoors.org.au/world-watch-list/



EXPLORE

In these final studies, we will cover large sections of Acts. You may wish to read the whole section in one go first, and discuss what stands out as the story unfolds. Don't forget to refer to the maps on pages 9-10.

Read Acts 21:1-16

Why do you think Paul continues to Jerusalem, despite warnings and protests of others?

Read Acts 21:17-36

Why do you think those in Jerusalem are angry with Paul, but not with the other Apostles?

Read Acts 21:37-22:29

What might Paul hope the crowd will understand by retelling his own conversion story?

Why is Paul's final statement the moment that offends the crowd? (v. 21)



It was not legal to bind or beat Roman citizens without trial. For the second time, Paul waits until this line is crossed before announcing his citizenship. This gives him leverage to work things in his favour. (See also Acts 16:37-39)



HISTORY BITE

The commander (21:37-40) assumes Paul was a rebel leader—far more than a simple Jewish man—and therefore would likely be well versed in the Greek language. The event of rebellion the commander speaks of dates to about 54AD. If the commander had indeed found that Paul was this same rebel leader, his capture of Paul would have been a great boost for his career.

The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, also recounts a similar story (although he gives a much inflated number of 30,000 terrorists). See also the story in Acts 5:36-37.



LIVE

What parallels do you see between Paul's journey to Jerusalem, and Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel?

How does Paul model for us a way to respond to strong opposition to faith in Jesus?

Where do you see/think/feel there is most significant opposition to Jesus in our context?
What does it look like for you to be a witness to Jesus in this context?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

Why is listening such an important skill for mission? What happens if we are not good listeners?

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for your group's church mission partner
- Pray for our Youth Group, reaching high schoolers in our city



THE JEWISH LEADERS

Acts 22:30-23:35



SHARE

Do you have a favourite courtroom drama?

(e.g. 12 Angry Men; To Kill a Mockingbird; A Few Good Men)



EXPLORE

Read Acts 22:30-23:22

What characters / actions are working against Paul?

What characters / actions are working in Paul's favour?

How would you feel if you were Paul?

Read Acts 23:23-35

What is the difference between the Jews and the Romans in their assessment of Paul?

Why do you think the Romans continue to offer Paul various forms of protection?



The Sanhedrin was the highest court of the Jews, with authority in civil, criminal and religious cases. It could not, however, enforce capital punishment, and the Romans reserved the right to interfere as they so desired.



HISTORY BITE

Sadducees and Pharisees were two distinct groups in 1st century Judaism. Sadducees controlled the temple and the priesthood, and their identity was tied closely to the rituals and rites performed at the temple. Pharisees were laymen well educated in the Scriptures, but they had little influence at the temple. Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection or a spiritual realm, while the Pharisees did (Luke 20:27, Acts 23:8).

Though Sadducees did not have a friendly relationship with the Pharisees, they saw the early Christians as a far bigger threat because of their proclamation of the historic resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:2), as well Jesus' own warning of the destruction of the temple (Luke 21:5-6). The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, and with it, the Sadducee movement came to an end.



LIVE

Paul hits a single key point in his words to the Sanhedrin: the resurrection of Jesus (v. 6). Is this what you would emphasise? Why or why not?

In the midst of all these events, Paul continues to show respect toward human authorities (vv. 4-5). What might be some modern parallels in our culture?

How does Paul's perseverance encourage you?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

How vocal do you feel you are as a Christian? (1—not at all; 10—very loud)

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for our whole church, seeking to live a life on mission
- Pray for Christians serving on mission in remote and dangerous locations



THE ROMAN LEADERS

Acts 24:1 - 26:32



SHARE

Who is the most powerful / influential individual that you have personally met?



EXPLORE

Read the passages below, pausing between each to share something that stands out to you in the narrative.

- Acts 24:1-27
- Acts 25:1-22
- Acts 25:23-26:32

Why do you think Luke gives us such a lengthy account of this part of the story?

Why do you think Festus and Agrippa are willing to give Paul such time to speak for himself?



Nazarene (24:5) was a term often used by Jewish Christians. It may have begun as an insult, mocking the obscurity of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth.

In John 1:46, hearing Jesus was from Nazareth, Nathanael says to his brother Philip, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"



HISTORY BITE

The term 'Christians' first appears in Acts 11:36, where we are told it originated as a name for the disciples in Antioch. For much of Acts, the movement is simply known as 'the Way' (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

Christianity was initially perceived as just another sect within Judaism. The Christian distinctive was that they saw Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah (anointed king), 'the way' to salvation. Jewish leaders sought to stamp out this movement by regularly accusing Paul of various crimes, and appealing to Roman leaders to prosecute him.



LIVE

Paul has been promised both to suffer and to be sustained by God (e.g. see Acts 9:15-16; 18:9-10). How do we see these two aspects together in the story of Acts?

God has also promised us that he will be with us, and that we should not be surprised when we suffer for his name (e.g. Matt 28:20; John 15:18-20, 16:33). What do you find most challenging about living with this tension?

How can Christian community help us navigate this tension?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

What are some ways you attempt to bring up faith in conversations with others?

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for your group's church mission partner
- Pray for the work of local mission in all Christian churches across Blacktown



ROME

Acts 27:1 - 28:31



SHARE

What's your favourite, most satisfying ending to a story?



EXPLORE

Don't forget to follow the map on page 10.

Read Acts 27:1-44

Why do you think Luke provides such a vivid account?

What do we learn about Paul's trust in God?

Read Acts 28:17-31

How satisfying do you find the conclusion to Acts?

What does Luke not include in his account?

How does this help us understand Luke's purpose for writing?

(See also Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-8)



Shipping was typically closed between November and March, as the seas became too rough (28:11). The Day of Atonement (27:9) occurs between late September and early October, when sailing is increasingly risky.



HISTORY BITE

Paul being under watch of a guard (28:16) is a very minor form of custody, akin to being under a relaxed house arrest. He is easily able to engage with his co-workers.

Luke understands Paul was there for two years (28:30), suggesting that things then change, but Luke does not tell us what happens to Paul. After all, his concern has not been telling Paul's story, but the story of the spread of the gospel all the way to Rome.

The telling thread throughout Acts is that the Roman leaders never find Paul guilty of any charges raised against him. We can only speculate, but it appears most likely, as Luke has repeatedly shown Paul's innocence, that his case was later dismissed.



LIVE

The story of Acts ends not so much with a grand finale, but with the beginnings of a new reality: the gospel of Jesus has reached Rome, the centre of the Empire. Luke foreshadowed that Acts would show the gospel spreading from *"Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

How do you think we, as readers, are intended to respond to what we have read?

What has encouraged you on our journey through the book of Acts?



PRAY

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise or thank God for?
- What kinds of people does it prompt you to pray for?
- How does it lead us to pray for the continual spread of the gospel?



A LIFE ON MISSION

Reflection

What would it take for you to feel confident inviting someone to Discover Jesus later this year?

Update

Take a moment around the group to share any updates in your conversations or interactions with your '2 for 2' prayer people.

Is there something your group can thank God for?

For prayer

- Choose 1 or 2 group members, and pray for their '2 for 2' prayer people
- Pray for our whole church, seeking to live a life on mission
-



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ONLINE ARTICLES

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/introduction-to-the-gospels-and-acts/>

A short introduction to the book of Acts, including purpose, historical reliability, and relationship to the gospels.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-bible-acts/>

A short, 12-week study outlining the main ideas and themes of Acts.

<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-acts/>

A short introduction to the book of Acts, with links to further resources.

ONLINE COMMENTARIES

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/ivp-nt/Acts>

A short, accessible commentary for insight into the passages.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/acts/>

Another short, accessible commentary for insight into the passages.

<https://journeythrough.org/courses/acts/>

A series of short devotional readings through Acts by David Cook (former principal of Sydney Missionary & Bible College).



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

COMMENTARIES

The Challenge of Acts.

N.T. Wright. London: SPCK, 2024.

This very accessible book offers a brief, clear and incisive introduction to the Acts of the Apostles from a world renowned scholar. Very easy to read. An excellent resource for anyone.

The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.

Ben Witherington III. Grand Rapids: Eerdemans, 1998.

This large, in-depth commentary provides an excellent exploration of not only the text of the book of Acts, but also the surrounding social, cultural, political and historical climate of the day that bear upon how we read this book.

VIDEOS

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts-1-12/>

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts-13-28/>

A pictorial outline of the book of Acts.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/luke-acts-series/>

Includes four videos outlining the story of Acts.

PODCASTS

<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/luke-acts-series/>

A 13-part series breaking down the book of Acts. Includes interviews with theologian N.T. Wright.

<https://undeceptions.com/podcast/second-act/>

An episode that interviews N.T. Wright, summarising his book, *The Challenge of Acts*.



NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

