

## The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020  
Jim Hoffman

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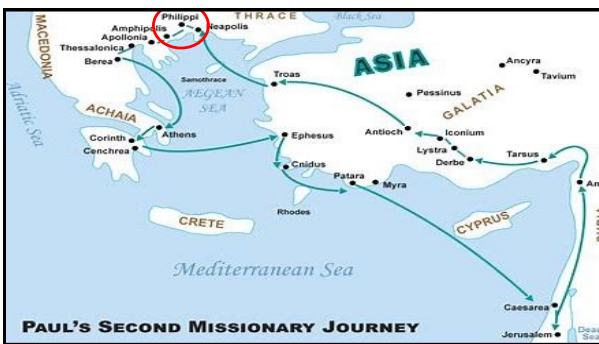
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48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	<a href="#">Acts 15</a>
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	<a href="#">Acts 15:36</a>
49 AD	Paul in Philippi	<a href="#">Acts 16</a>
49 AD	Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens	<a href="#">Acts 17</a>
51 AD	Paul in Corinth	<a href="#">Acts 18</a>
54 AD	Paul in Ephesus	<a href="#">Acts 19</a>
57 AD	Paul in Macedonia and Greece	<a href="#">Acts 20</a>
59 AD	Paul Returns to Jerusalem	<a href="#">Acts 21 - 23</a>
60 AD	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	<a href="#">Acts 24</a>
62 AD	Paul Before Festus	<a href="#">Acts 25</a>
62 AD	Paul Before Agrippa	<a href="#">Acts 26</a>
62 AD	Paul Sails for Rome	<a href="#">Acts 27</a>
62 AD	The Shipwreck	<a href="#">Acts 27:13</a>
62 AD	Paul Ashore at Malta	<a href="#">Acts 28</a>
62 AD	Paul Preaches at Rome	<a href="#">Acts 28:11</a>

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 16:16 One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl **who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future**. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. 17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." 18 This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "**I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.**" **And instantly it left her.** 19 **Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered**, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. 20 "**The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!**" **they shouted to the city officials.** 21 "They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice." 22 **A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods.** 23 **They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape.** 24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. NLT

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- "One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future."
- The BIG question surrounding this "slave girl" is "could she really see and tell the future?"
- The answer is no, and I will attempt to prove it to you with scripture and reason.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- There is no evidence in scripture that Satan nor his demons know the future.
- To the extent that the future of mankind in general is revealed in the bible he and his demons know it the same way we do. (perhaps even better because of the time they've had to study)
- So why does it seem that fortune tellers like this girl in Acts 16 can often be so accurate in assessing the futures of others?

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Ezekiel spoke of Satan as follows, **“You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.”** (Ezek 28:12)
- So Lucifer was gifted with wisdom and he and his demons have the advantage of observing human behaviors and where those behaviors lead a person.
- This is hardly different from a good counselor today who can assess a person’s likely future based upon their current behaviors.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Consider this – if Satan really knew the future he would never have engaged with God as he did in Job chapter 1.
- If he knew the future, he would have “known” that Job would hold true to his convictions and hold on to God.
- If he knew the future, he would have “known” too that for the last 4,000 years believers have been encouraged by the events and outcomes of Job’s struggle.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Many commentators say this about the slave girl in Acts 16 – she, like others in her position were ventriloquists of sorts.
- They were able to project their voices out of parts of their bodies other than their mouths.
- They were also often sort of “blown up” or gorged in their appearance like the carcasses of dead animals inflate in the sun.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Her “owners” were sad to see her career end, but what they were doing to her by keeping her trapped in her condition reveals what they really thought of her.
- Like today’s sex traffickers they cared not at all about this girl they enslaved but cared only about what they could gain from her craft.
- It is no secret that history tells a tale of humans enslaving other humans for the sole purpose of enriching themselves and having power over others.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Human slavery is one of the worst forms of sin because its always done for power and control over a person the Holy Spirt also wants to control.
- While two things can be true at the same time (physically controlled by people and spiritually by the Holy Spirit), it is still an evil practice.
- Today in America we hear lots about slavery that happened here 160 or so years ago, but almost nothing about the human traffickers of today.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- We are not told whatever happened to the fortune telling slave girl, but it would be interesting to know.
- What did she do with her newfound freedom from two kinds of slavery and how would she have been treated by those who knew her in the city of Philippi?
- If she came to our church would we treat her well, or would we keep her at arm’s length because of her past?

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- The city magistrates were charged with keeping the peace – much more so than applying justice, they seemed to do whatever the majority wanted.
- **“A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods.”** (sticks)
- There was no trial, no inquiry, they just did what was expedient in the interest in keeping peace in the city.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- So not only were Paul and Silas beaten without committing a crime, they were also jailed just for being accused of a crime.
- This will come back to “bite” the officials later, but you can get a taste of what a totalitarian government is like in this account of Paul and Silas.
- Justice might be mentioned, but not necessarily sought because the goal is whatever the mob wants.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- **“They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn’t escape. 24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.”**
- To be thrown into the inner prison was to be placed in the darkest, dankest, and most unsanitary place in the prison.
- Rats, lice, and assorted other critters and indignities.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- To paint the picture just a little more vividly, with their feet in stocks there would be no getting up to use the “facilities” as we might put it.
- You would eat there, sleep there, and do whatever business you might have right there in the stocks. ☹
- So now that we have a sense of what the conditions were like for Paul and Silas, let’s see how they responded.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 16:25 **Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!** 27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. 28 But Paul shouted to him, “Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!” 29 **The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.” 32 **And they shared the word of the Lord with him** and with all who lived in his household. 33 Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. 34 He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God. NLT

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- **“Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God”.**
- What a testimony – in the most uninviting conditions they were still worshipping their Lord.
- Without complaining about the softness of the pews, the room temperature, the style of music, the lighting, the quality of the free coffee, and without regard for the volume of the music, they somehow managed to worship. ☺

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**The Acts of the Apostles**

**Consider this – sometimes we become more spiritual and more inclined to worship when life is at its toughest.**

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**The Acts of the Apostles**

- One of the lessons for us is that when our hearts are right with God, we will worship him in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.
- Many of us are annoyed by the present COVID constraints, but we must not let circumstances dictate to us whether we will meet around his word or not.
- The same would apply to our own personal health situations as we age – so long as we are able, we should meet around his word and with his people.

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**The Acts of the Apostles**

- The jailer nearly condemned himself to an eternal hell – he was literally within seconds of being lost forever.
- In his mind he was doing the honorable thing – he was certain he failed his state and he would now voluntarily apply the penalty of the law.
- Had he fallen on his sword or plunged it into his body he would be finishing up his first 2,000 years in hell without any hope of escape or mitigation to his suffering.

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The Acts of the Apostles

Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' ESV

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Evidently the earthquake damage was so extensive that Paul could now see out from the inner prison because he calls out to stop the jailer from committing suicide.
- **“Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!”**
- You see just as the jailer was going to do what his state considered honorable, Paul was going to do that which would honor his Lord. (preach to his captor)

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The Acts of the Apostles

- And then we read, **“Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”.**
- So what was the jailer really asking? Had he heard what Paul and Silas were preaching?
- Inasmuch as Paul interrupted his suicide, he may have been thinking that Paul knew of loophole in Roman law that could be used to “save” the jailer from the law.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- The jailer knew the punishment for having prisoners escape on his watch, and since Paul interrupted his suicide, he may have had some temporal saving in mind.
- When Paul responds as he did the jailer may well have thought, “wait, what?!” 😊
- There is no evidence his mind was on eternal things as evidenced by his near suicide – if his mind was on the eternal he would not have been so eager to die.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- Nevertheless Paul answers the question he wanted to hear and not necessarily the one the jailer asked.
- **“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household”.**
- If the jailer’s mind and Paul’s mind were on two different tracks, then Paul was going to use the jailer’s own words to shift the exchange to eternal things.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- Whether it is the disciples asking, **“How can we know the way?”** in John 14:5, or the jailer in Acts 16, it is the question we want to be asked.
- How do we get to heaven is the question of the ages.
- Part of the “good news” is the good news that the path to heaven is found in Jesus’ own words, **“my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”.**

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- It has never been the intention of God to conceal or to in any way make salvation difficult.
- It seems like God has made it possible to have the most important event in all of history be one of the simplest events to communicate to an **open heart**.
- His “yoke” (how to be saved) is easy and his “burden” is light – meaning that while the burden is on us to respond to the gospel, it is a very light burden.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- We need to deal with this phrase as well, “**along with everyone in your household**”.
- Paul was not saying that if the head of a household is saved that his entire family is automatically included as well.
- He is saying that the gospel, if believed by the members of his family, is powerful enough to include all who believe.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 16:35 The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, “Let those men go!” 36 So the jailer told Paul, “The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace.” 37 But Paul replied, “They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!” 38 When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. 39 So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. 40 When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town. NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“But Paul replied, “They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!”**
- Here Paul is just being difficult – perhaps even intending to give the magistrates a taste of their own medicine.
- It’s sort of funny – you beat us and put us in jail and now you want us to help you save face? 😊

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Whatever his motivation, his words proved to be effective – **“So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city.”**
- Let’s give Paul the benefit of the doubt and count his motive as one of looking out for the next Christians the authorities would want to persecute.
- Surely the authorities would think twice before rushing to judgment the next time Christians were accused.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more.”**
- Do you see what I see? It appears as though a church has formed in Lydia’s home.
- Not a church as we think of a church today, but a church perhaps as the Lord has always intended – a small local group of believers who pray together, worship together, and care for each other.

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### The Acts of the Apostles

- Today's comfortable buildings and professional pastors have their advantages, but you still must wonder why we see only house churches in the bible.
- Would we be better served by having fewer amenities with more close interpersonal relationships? (does it have to be one or the other?)
- By having today's model have we strengthened or weakened the church of Jesus Christ?

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### Questions

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