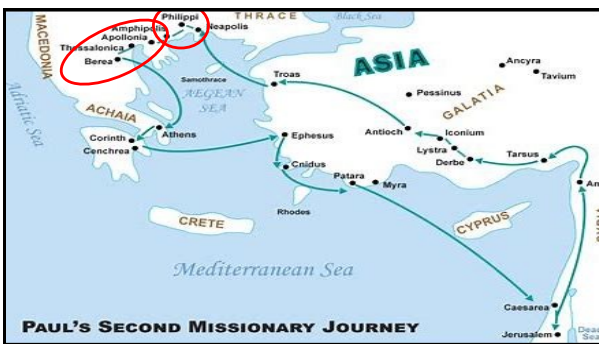


The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 17:1 Paul and Silas then traveled through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 **As was Paul's custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people.** 3 He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Messiah." 4 **Some of the Jews who listened were persuaded** and joined Paul and Silas, along with many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women. 5 **But some of the Jews were jealous, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot.** They attacked the home of Jason, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd. NLT 4

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **"As was Paul's custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people."**
- As stated, it was Paul's pattern when he came to a city or town with a synagogue he would attend on three successive sabbath days.
- It was customary in the 1st century synagogue to have readings from the Torah, then from the prophets, followed by a time for comments.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- There is where Paul's rabbinical training under Gamaliel, the best of the best, would prove to be extremely valuable.
- **Sidebar** – think of how God frequently uses our experiences and trainings in our past to prepare us for what he wants us to do later.
- When I started the School of the Bible, I knew what to do based on the previous 40 years of not always knowing what to do. © (I was in training)

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- And a far more notable believer, Moses, comes to mind.
- He was trained in all of the best schools of the Egyptians and then later trained in godliness on the back side of desert by God himself. (considered a nobody)
- All for what? To lead over 2 million grumbling Jews out of captivity, while interceding with God for them, and holding them together for 40 years in the wilderness.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **Back to Paul** – Paul thought his elite training in the Old Testament scriptures was so that he could dot I’s, and cross the T’s among his unlearned Jewish brethren.
- Instead, it was God himself putting him through his paces with Gamaliel, and then Jesus himself doing one-on-one sessions with him for 3 years.
- For what? To be able to connect the truth of the Old Testament to the fresh revelation of Jesus Christ.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- It seems that Paul had a definite plan and his plan is the same one we should employ when we can – **“he used the Scriptures to reason with the people”**.
- It is one thing to give our testimony in our own words, but even more powerful are the words of God.
- We are not told if Paul spoke of his Damascus road experience or not, but he probably did – after all, how many of us have actually seen the Lord?

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The Acts of the Apostles

- To place a priority on the scriptures over our own words assumes of course a good grasp of the Bible.
- What we do every Sunday morning in this class is to attempt to grow our understanding of what the Bible actually says.
- Our methods are repetition and weight – meaning that I repeat things as they are repeated in the biblical text and we do not “dodge” the complex (weighty) issues.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, **reasonable**, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.
- Paul is in a synagogue speaking with people who already believe the Old Testament so he was simply pointing to Jesus’ life and connecting it to what they already knew.
- So here is a question – does having an obscured view of truth make it easier or harder to come into the light?

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In other words is it a benefit or a detriment to have a “Christian” background?

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• **“He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead.”**

• Picture a Jew with a background in the O.T. taking a fresh look at Isaiah 53 while Paul points to Jesus.

• And maybe next Paul opens the scroll with the writings of Zachariah where we see the prophetic phrase, “They will look on me whom they have pierced”.

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• It becomes pretty easy to see why Paul’s approach to those who thought they knew the truth had to be different than simply telling the jailer about Jesus.

• So how was the jailer different from the Jew who faithfully kept the sabbath?

• The jailer didn’t think he had this righteousness thing mastered whereas the faithful Jew would have to rejigger his view of the scriptures he thought he knew.

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The Acts of the Apostles

• I think what we have to integrate into our understanding is that what Paul was up against was the shock to the Jew that Messiah was coming twice!

• No one in all of Israel had even a clue that Messiah would come once to die and a second time to reign.

• The words of God are quite clear looking backwards, but they would have been really mysterious on their face to both the writer and the reader of the Old Testament.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“This Jesus I’m telling you about is the Messiah”** (1st John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God.)
- For Messiah to have the name of a man would have been a shock to the Jewish mind.
- It was a totally foreign idea that Messiah would be a man AND God! Theologians call this matter the “hypostatic union”.

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- **Some of the Jews who listened were persuaded ... But some of the Jews were jealous, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot.**
- We’ve seen this before – as with nearly all of Paul's presentations of the gospel, some believe, and some go berserk!
- He must have missed the surveys identifying the truths that make people uncomfortable. 😊

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 17:6 Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers instead and took them before the city council. **“Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world,”** they shouted, “and now they are here disturbing our city, too. **7 And Jason has welcomed them into his home.** They are all guilty of treason against Caesar, for **they profess allegiance to another king, named Jesus.”** **8** The people of the city, as well as the city council, were thrown into turmoil by these reports. **9** So the officials forced Jason and the other believers to post bond, and then they released them. NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world”**

- It is a perverse way of thinking when the message of “Christ, the Savior has come” is considered to be trouble.
- Think back to what happened in Jerusalem and why it happened – Christianity threatened the power, prestige, and wealth of the Jews in professional positions.

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- The NKJV renders the phrase as, **“These who have turned the world upside down have come here too”**.

- The reality of course is that it was original sin that turned the world upside down – Jesus came to set the world back upright.
- Our enemy is like some politicians who frequently accuse their opponents of the very things they themselves do!

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- **“they profess allegiance to another king, named Jesus”**

- They did have this accusation right – for what is the difference between saying “Jesus is Lord” and “Jesus is King”?
- It ought to be considered a redundancy to claim Jesus as Lord and King – can I really claim to be following someone who I do not obey?

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• Acts 17:10 That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. **When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue.** 11 **And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica,** and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. **They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.** 12 As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men. 13 But when some Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, **they went there and stirred up trouble.** 14 **The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind.** 15 **Those escorting Paul went with him all the way to Athens;** then they returned to Berea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to hurry and join him. NLT

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- What can we say about the Jews in Berea? The Bible describes them as being "open minded". The sign of their open mindedness was that they "**listened**".
- And here again we have to wonder why these Jews are willing to listen and others were not – today they are no doubt praising God for their opened minds.
- Perhaps they even look back and say to themselves, "why me?".

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- The important thing about their listening was that while they were willing to listen, they were not naive – they were no doubt aware that not all teachings are true.
- "**They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth**"
- They actually did what every Jew in every synagogue should have done – they measured the words they heard against the known words of God.

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- Hopefully none of us are naïve enough to give any time to someone who claims to have received new “special revelation” from God.
- However, it should be our experience that we are constantly being exposed to new interpretations of the Bible as well as new applications of biblical texts.
- Our response to new interpretations and applications of the bible ought to be like the Berean response.

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- The Berean Jews had the Old Testament to compare this new teaching to - we have the whole bible as our means to verify anything new.
- Generally speaking, “if it’s new it’s not true, and if it’s true it’s not new”. 😊
- The above applies to the church as a body, but since we are always learning and growing, we should be finding “new” things to add to our personal databank regularly.

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- The results of Paul’s preaching was that “**many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men**”.
- And as you might expect opposition arose from Jews who heard what was going on and came to Berea to make trouble. (twelfth verse, same as the first)
- We have to admire Paul’s courage – in the face of nearly constant violent opposition he never wilts.

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- To say that Paul was “all in” for the gospel is like saying the pope is Catholic – and one of the reasons was that he saw his former self in the angry and zealous Jews.
- Having a thorough understanding of his own murderous past he presses on perhaps seeing himself in those who kept coming at him.
- Maybe it was easier for him than most to have compassion for those persecuting him.

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- But there is yet another reason for his perseverance – he also knew that his role was key to many, many souls being rescued from a Christless eternity.
- So while none of us are as prominent in the advance of the gospel as Paul was to the world, our own personal sticktoitiveness may be key to the eternity of a few.
- When we think we are facing opposition, we need but remember the suffering of Christ and the persistence of Paul for our motivation.

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- We’ve had it so easy and comfortable as American Christians that it should concern us how strong we would be in the face of opposition.
- There is coming fight for Christians worldwide – our enemy knows the key to enslaving the world is to destroy the church.
- He will try, he will not win the war, but how many battles he wins will be up to us – we don’t have to lose a single skirmish, but we will have to fight. (Eph 6)

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• **“The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. Those escorting Paul went with him all the way to Athens”.**

• In addition we see the instant family bond in the words above – something we’ve probably experienced when we meet other Christians for the first time.

• 1st Thes 4:9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. ESV

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• 1st John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

• This is not to the exclusion of loving those outside the faith, but what John wrote for us speaks of our preferred company for those times when we get to choose.

• Speaking for myself I find it far more relaxing when I am among Christians than those times when I must rub elbows with profane and the ungodly.

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1st Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals”.

Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!”

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