Paul’s Missionary Journeys

Following his conversion experience, Paul’s life can be divided into several general periods: (1) the relatively silent years, probably extending over ten to twelve years; (2) the work at Antioch; (3) the missionary journeys; and (4) the imprisonments.

Information concerning Paul’s “silent years” is obviously scant. What little is known comes from the facts recorded in Galatians 1:15-24; Second Corinthians 11:32-33; and most of the data in Second Corinthians 11:23-27. There is also some information revealed in Acts 9:19b paralleled together with Acts 22 and 26. The fact that Paul was so zealous in ministry leads many to believe that his silent years were not years of inactivity.

While Paul was in Tarsus (and other places in Syria and Cilicia), the gospel had already spread from Jerusalem to Syria in Antioch. (Acts 11:19-21) Barnabas had been sent to see what had happened there, and was instrumental in enlarging the number of converts. But when the work grew too large for him “he left for Tarsus to look for Saul [Paul].” (Acts 11:25) Together the two worked in Antioch for an entire year.

After his work in Antioch, we come to the beginning of Paul’s missionary journeys. Covering a period of about ten years, Paul’s work was chiefly in four provinces of the Roman Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. In each of these he concentrated on the key cities—the population centers. Once his work began, he then reached out into the surrounding countryside, usually by employing the native converts.
In places where the conditions were amiable, Paul’s methods of founding and establishing churches assumed a fairly regular pattern. We find a summary is in Acts 14:21-23: (1) preaching the gospel (evangelism); (2) strengthening and encouraging believers (edification); and (3) appointing elders in every church (organization and delegation of authority).

Paul’s First Missionary Journey (Acts chapters 13-14)

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:1-3

Discussion Questions

1. In Acts 13:1-3 we see Paul and Barnabas being sent out as they begin their missionary journey. Discuss how the sending process was accomplished, and the importance of each spiritual element found in these verses.

   DEFINITION

   [13:2] Ministered, leitourgeo (lie-toorg-eh-oh): Performing religious or charitable acts, fulfilling an office, discharging a function, officiating as a priest, serving God with prayer and fasting. (Compare “liturgy” and “liturgical.”) The word describes the Aaronic priesthood ministering Levitical services (Hebrews 10:11). In Romans 15:27, it is used of meeting financial needs of the Christians and performing a service to the Lord by doing so. Here the Christians at Antioch were fulfilling an office and discharging a normal function by ministering to the Lord in fasting and prayer.
ANTIOCH OF SYRIA

[AN tih ock, SIHR ih uh]—Antioch was the capital of the Roman province of Syria, and played an important role in the first-century expansion of the church. Antioch was situated on the east bank of the Orontes River, about 27 kilometers (16.5 miles) from the Mediterranean Sea, and 485 kilometers (300 miles) north of Jerusalem. The city was founded about 300 BC by Seleucus I Nicator, one of the three successors to Alexander the Great, and was named after his father Antiochus.

The early history of the church is closely connected with Antioch of Syria. One of the first seven “deacons,” Nicolas, was a “proselyte from Antioch.” (Acts 6:5) After the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), great persecution caused certain disciples to flee from Jerusalem to Antioch where they preached the Gospel to the Jews (Acts 8:1; 11:19). Others arrived later and had success preaching to the Gentiles. (Acts 11:20-21) When the church leaders at Jerusalem heard of the success in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to visit the church. (Acts 11:25-26)

Apparently Paul and Barnabas used Antioch as a base for their missionary journeys in Asia Minor. (Acts 13:1-3; 15:36-41; 18:22-23) Following the first missionary journey, Antioch became the scene of an important dispute. Certain men from Judea taught that Gentile converts must be circumcised and follow other Jewish laws in order to truly be called a Christian. (Acts 15:1-2) This theological disagreement culminated in a council at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were sent there to report how God had given them success in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. The council decided Gentile converts did not have to be circumcised.¹

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:4-12

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Roman Empire was divided into imperial provinces which were administrated by appointed representatives of the emperor called procurators (e.g. Pilate in Judea), and senatorial provinces, which were presided over by proconsuls appointed by the Roman senate. (Sergius Paulus was the proconsul of the island of Cyprus.)

Discussion Questions

2. In Acts 13:5 we see an important pattern developing in Paul’s ministry. What did Paul usually do first when he entered a city, and why was it so important?

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GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Cyprus is the largest island in the Mediterranean with the exception of Sardinia and Sicily. It covers an area of about 3,584 square miles. Its greatest length, including the northeast promontory, is about 140 miles and its greatest breadth is around 60 miles. The southwest portion of Cyprus is formed by a mountain complex, culminating in the peaks of Troodos (6,406 ft.), Madhari (5,305 ft.), Papofitsa (5,124 ft.), and Machaira (4,674 ft.). To the northeast of this lies the great plain of the Mesoreia, nearly 60 miles in length and 10 to 20 in breadth.²

² International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Copyright 1996 by Biblesoft.
3. Discuss what Acts 13:9 means when it says Paul was “filled with the Holy Spirit,” and discuss the significance of that insight in light of the verses which follow (10-12).

4. Discuss what Paul’s words in verses Acts 13:10-12 speak to us concerning how we should handle false prophets.

5. Discuss how the results of the Holy Spirit working through Paul lines up with First Corinthians 14:24-25.

6. In context, discuss what Acts 13:12 means when it says, “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”

7. Discuss whether the immediate impact of Paul’s words “you shall be blind” is something any Christian should be able to do at any time they desire.
Scripture Reading: Acts 13:13-15

There were sixteen cities named Antioch in ancient times within the region that is now modern-day Turkey. Antioch in Acts 13:14 was in ancient Pisidia, and is not the same as Antioch in Syria from which Paul was sent in Acts 13:1.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the Greek, “synagogue” means simply “a place of assembly.” Strictly speaking, the temple [synagogue] was the central place of worship in Judaism (more specifically sacrificial worship). The synagogue was also an educational institution, providing its students a place to study the law. In practice, however, the distinction between worship and instruction disappeared; the Jews who lived great distances from Jerusalem found it difficult, if not impossible, to worship there. Therefore, it was only natural that the local synagogue, as the place of religious association, fellowship, and worship, be adapted into the lifestyle of Jews far from Jerusalem.

Earliest indications in scripture reveal services in the synagogue on three days of the week: the Sabbath (Saturday), Monday, and Thursday. Later, the synagogues located in populous centers held three services each day at the times of the three daily temple sacrifices.

The early synagogues were quite simple. A portable chest or Torah shrine, which contained the sacred scrolls wrapped in a linen covering separated from the rest of the room by a curtain or kept in a side room. In the center of the room was a raised platform on which was a reading desk used by the one reading from the scrolls and the preacher who delivered the homily (message). The congregation was divided, with the men and women sitting on different sides of the assembly room. The only paid officer in the synagogue was the minister or attendant. Any who were qualified were welcome to address the assembly along with those who read from the Torah and gave the homily.³

³ Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, copyright 1975, Moody Press, pgs. 1642-1643.
**Discussion Questions**

8. Discuss how the ancient synagogue model is similar to Christian churches today, and what advantage they were to Paul as he preached Christ.

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**Scripture Reading:** Acts 13:16-41

**Parallel Passage:** Acts 2:14-40

**MINISTRY PERSPECTIVE**

Most sermons in Acts contain four elements: 1) a proclamation that the age of the Messiah has finally come; 2) citations from the Old Testament proving that Jesus is the Messiah; 3) a review of the life and ministry of Jesus (especially in regard to the resurrection); 4) a call to repentance.4

**Discussion Questions**

9. Considering Paul’s mainly Jewish audience, discuss the importance and effectiveness of the four sermon elements.

a) A proclamation that the age of the Messiah has finally come.

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b) Quotations from the Old Testament to prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

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c) A review of the life and ministry of Jesus, especially His resurrection.

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d) A call to repentance.

10. In your opinion, should the pattern of preaching be the same in the church today? Why or why not?

HISTORICAL NOTES

Pisidian Antioch (about 110 miles inland from the southern coast of Asia Minor) was a significant stop during Paul’s first missionary journey. Excavation of Pisidian Antioch of Paul’s day reveals how life in the city revolved around two paved squares, the Square of Tiberius and the Square of Augustus (constructed just before the birth of Christ).

The Square of Tiberius had 3,000 square feet of paving stones inlaid with many circles and rectangles on which the Romans in their idle hours could play all kinds of games. At the east end of the Square of Augustus there was a semicircle cut from native rock, and in front of it stood a two-story colonnade with Doric columns below and Ionic above. In front of the semi-circle stood a Roman temple built of white marble, apparently dedicated to the Asiatic god Men and also to Augustus. The squares were at least partly faced with shops and houses. The water system was superb—everywhere in the excavations they found terra-cotta pipes. About five miles north of the city are the remains of a Roman aqueduct used to bring water to Antioch.

One of the more interesting inscriptions found at Antioch in Pisidia was discovered by Sir William Ramsay. The inscription was dedicated to Lucius Sergius Paullus the Younger. Ramsey studied it in conjunction with an earlier inscription in which Sergia Paulla was mentioned. He discovered that Sergia Paulla and Lucius Sergius Paullus were the daughter and son of Proconsul Sergius Paulus of Cyprus. (Acts 13:7) Ramsay discovered further how the inscription concerning the daughter suggested that she may have been a Christian and trained her children in the Christian faith.

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:42-47

Paul referred to, and quoted the following scriptures (given in order):

Matthew 10:5-6
“...Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. [6] But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Isaiah 42:6
“I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles.”

Discussion Questions

11. Who were the devout proselytes?

12. Discuss what it was about Paul’s initial message that would have inspired nearly the entire city to come to hear it.

13. When Paul preached Christ and Him crucified, he brought a message of grace and hope to a lost generation. Discuss some possible reasons why the Jews would become filled with envy as they witnessed this hope manifest in the multitudes of Gentiles.
Scripture Reading: Acts 13:48-52

Discussion Questions

14. Discuss the meaning of the phrase “as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

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GODLY WISDOM

Concerning the phrase “appointed to eternal life,” Dr. Jack Hayford explains: The primary significance of the phrase “appointed to eternal life” is not theological but historical, as Luke traces the spread of the gospel from its Jewish origins to the Gentile world. This reference underscores God’s initiative in individual salvation. Throughout the Bible there are references to God’s hand of providence influencing people and altering the course of human history. Every Christian, in retrospect, can see how God carefully orchestrated particular events that changed his or her life forever.⁶

After being expelled from the region, Paul and those with him acted upon the instruction given by Jesus:

Matthew 10:14-15

And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. [15] Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

15. In biblical times “shaking the dust off” was a dramatic symbol of divine abandonment. According to Jesus’ words, when do we have the obligation to do this?

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**ICONIUM**

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 14:1-7

**HISTORICAL NOTES**

Paul and Barnabas were expelled from Antioch and traveled southeastward to Iconium at the western edge of the vast central plains of Asia Minor. It is almost certain the missionary pair took the Royal Road, about eighteen miles south of Neapolis. After another eighteen miles, at the north end of Lake Karalis, they left the Royal Road and traveled almost due east to Iconium (modern Konya). The total distance was about **eighty miles**.

**Modern Day Iconium**—the city of Konya, Turkey.

Konya has the most number of mosques in all of Turkey.

**Discussion Questions**

16. Discuss what we find in Acts 14:1 that seems to be the prevailing pattern of their missionary journey thus far.

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17. In each city they have visited so far, Paul and Barnabas have been met with fierce resistance. What was their initial reaction to the resistance of the “unbelieving Jews,” and at what point did they choose to leave?

18. Discuss parallel passages (relating to Acts 14:3-4) pertaining to why we see the Lord “granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”
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Scripture Reading: Acts 14:8-10

HISTORICAL NOTES

The hurried flight of Paul and Barnabas brought them in one day to Lystra, about eighteen miles southwest of Iconium. Lystra had been founded as a Roman colony by Augustus, probably in 6 BC, for the purpose of training and regulating the mountain tribes on the southern frontier of the province of Galatia. Biblical scholars note that the citizens of this small provincial town did not address the apostles in the Greek language, but in the “speech of the Lycaonia.” Not only was the city primarily Gentiles, but there didn’t even seem to be enough Jews to build a synagogue.7

Discussion Questions

19. Discuss the important faith principle we find as we observe the actions of Paul and the man who was healed in Acts 14:8-10.

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20. According to this passage, how does it appear that faith came to the man who was healed?

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Scripture Reading: Acts 14:11-18

HISTORICAL NOTES

Initially the missionaries were very well received. Luke (the author of the book of Acts) reported that the healing of the lame man by Paul led the native population to hail the pair as gods, identifying Barnabas as Zeus (a.k.a. Jupiter) and Paul as Hermes (a.k.a. Mercury). The implication seems to be that Barnabas was much the older of the two and had a dignified bearing. Paul was addressed as Hermes, the messenger of the gods, probably because he did most of the speaking. It has also been suggested that Paul’s being addressed as Hermes indicates he must have been a virile-looking, gracious, and attractive youth. Inscriptions show that Zeus and Hermes were especially coupled in the worship of the Lycaonians.8

Discussion Questions

21. When the people of the city desired to give sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas it says “they tore their clothes.” Discuss how that information speaks of their opposition to the situation.

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22. Discuss the key spiritual elements of the apostle’s response, and what they meant by saying (speaking of God) “who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.”

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Scripture Reading: Acts 14:19-20

8 Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, copyright 1975, Moody Press, pg. 352.
Consider the following passage in light of preaching the gospel, and its intended impact on those who hear.

Luke 8:11-15
“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” (NKJ)

Discussion Questions
23. In Acts 14:19-20, who was it that the enemy (the devil) used to steal the word of God out of the hearts of those who heard?
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Scripture Reading: Acts 14:21-28
24. The day after he was stoned, Paul rose up and departed for Derbe (approximately 40 miles south of Lystra). What do we find them doing after making disciples in Derbe that involved great wisdom and great courage?
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25. Discuss the important organizational and spiritual things the apostles did as they retraced their journey (also visiting Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia) in order to return to Antioch in Syria.
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Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. [23] They wrote this letter by them:

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,
To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:
Greetings.

Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment—it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.
Farewell.

Paul’s second missionary journey begins in Antioch. Paul (along with several other apostles and prophets) delivers a letter to the Christians in Antioch from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:22-35)

**Paul’s Second Missionary Journey** (Acts 15:36-18:22)

**The Jerusalem Decree (Acts 15:22-29):**

Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. [23] They wrote this letter by them:

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,
To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:
Greetings.

Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment—it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.
Farewell.
BIBLICAL CONTEXT

At the end of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch in Syria a long time. While staying there, men came from Judea preaching that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. (Acts 15:1) Paul and Barnabas had “no small dissension and dispute” with them. (Acts 15:2) Afterward they went to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to discuss the matter, and in this meeting “there was much dispute.”

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the value of passionate Christian debate along with some of the tools and boundaries we must employ in order for it to be productive.

Scripture Reading: Acts 15:36-41

Discussion Questions

2. Discuss Paul’s reasoning for not taking John Mark, and whether or not this was a valid reason for him to separate from Barnabas.

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:1-5
GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Derbe was a town in Asia Minor, in the southeast corner of Lycaonia, on the main road from Lystra to Laranda. On Paul’s first missionary journey, he came to Derbe (after having been stoned at Lystra) and made many disciples there. (Acts 14:6, 20) Paul went through Derbe on his second missionary journey from Cilicia to Lystra (Acts 16:1) and likely visited there on his third journey. Sir William Ramsay identified Derbe in 1890. The location identified is 66 miles by road southeast of modern-day Konya (ancient Iconium).

Discussion Questions

3. Discuss Paul’s actions in Acts 16:3-4 in light of the letter he just delivered (the Jerusalem Decree) to the Christians in Antioch.

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GODLY WISDOM

Pastor Jack Hayford states: “Paul, the chief spokesman of salvation by grace alone, had the half-Jewish Timothy circumcised so that he could take him into the Jewish synagogues. This was not compromise; it was simple Christian courtesy. It was a mature recognition that social, cultural, and even religious differences should never become more important issues than the simple message of salvation in Christ.”


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Scripture Reading: Acts 16:6-10
Discussion Questions

5. Discuss the various ways in which the Holy Spirit might forbid us to do something; or direct us not to go to a certain place.

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HISTORICAL NOTES

When Macedonia became a Roman province in 148 BC and throughout most of the first century AD, the boundaries of the province were well fixed. The Macedonia in which Paul ministered included not only most of the northern part of modern Greece, but also portions of modern-day Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and about half of Albania. Macedonia included the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica.

Discussion Questions


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Scripture Reading: Acts 16:11-15
HISTORICAL NOTES

Since Jewish law required the establishment of a synagogue wherever there was a population of at least 10 Jewish men in a community, the absence of a synagogue in Philippi indicates a very small Jewish population.

Discussion Questions

7. Discuss what scripture means when it says “the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.” (Acts 16:14)

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Second Missionary Journey with Silas

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:16-24

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The slave girl had a spirit of divination, or literally, “a spirit, a python,” characterizing her as one inspired by Apollo, the god worshipped at Pytho (Delphi).
Discussion Questions

8. Discuss why an evil spirit would openly reveal that Paul and the other disciples followed “the Most High God,” and what other passages might parallel this event.

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9. Discuss what the description of Paul’s reason for casting this demon out (i.e. “Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said…”) may reveal to us.

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Why Paul delayed in casting out the demon is uncertain. Perhaps he was aware of the danger the exorcism might cause for the mission team. This was Paul’s first clash with Roman officials. The new Christian sect was not a threat to the peace of Rome. The charges here were false, and later we see how Paul and Silas were completely exonerated by Roman justice.

Discussion Questions

10. Discuss why the masters of the girl who was delivered were so angry, and how it relates to the church and even the secular culture today.

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11. Discuss why the statement made by Paul and Silas’ accusers in verse 21 is false.

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12. Discuss why God didn’t miraculously deliver Paul and Silas before they were beaten with rods.

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Scripture Reading: Acts 16:25-34

GODLY WISDOM

Concerning this passage, Dr. Charles Green suggests the following: Study this example of the power of praise, even in difficult circumstances. Beaten and imprisoned, Paul and Silas respond by singing a hymn of praise—a song sung directly from the heart to God. The relationship between their song of praise and their supernatural deliverance through the earthquake cannot be overlooked. Praise directed toward God can shake open prison doors! A man was converted, as well as his household, and Paul and Silas were miraculously delivered from captivity. Today, as well, praise is an avenue through which the Lord moves to deliver us from chains of bondage. When our lives are in turmoil, learn from this text. Praise triumphs gloriously.⁹

Discussion Questions

13. Discuss several possibilities as to why, what appears to be, a sudden transformation took place in the heart of the jailor.

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Discussion Questions

13. Discuss several possibilities as to why, what appears to be, a sudden transformation took place in the heart of the jailor.

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14. Discuss what we see in this passage that reaffirms the truth that water baptism (though extremely important) is not what saves us.

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15. Discuss the meaning of Paul’s statement “…and you and your household will be saved.”

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**Scripture Reading:** Acts 16:35-40

**Discussion Questions**

16. Discuss whether or not it would have been more godly if Paul and Silas would have simply obeyed the magistrates rather than oppose the order given to the keeper of the prison.

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17. Discuss various times and situations when Christians should stand up and assert their citizenship.
18. Discuss why Paul and Silas didn’t leave the city right away, and how important their actions were before leaving.

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Scripture Reading: Acts 17:1-4

The Egmatian Way, main road across ancient Greece, runs through modern Thessalonica on the same roadbed as in ancient times.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Cassander named Thessalonica after his wife, half sister of Alexander the Great, when in 315 BC he grouped together villages of the area. The city’s harbor was excellent, and through the centuries has been the natural port for the trade of Macedonia. The city was basically Greek, though there was a Roman element in the first century, and even enough Jews to have a synagogue. Almost no visible ruins at Thessalonica date to the first century. Excavation is not feasible because the modern city covers the ancient one. The current population of 400,000 is approximately double that of New Testament times.10

10 Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, copyright 1975, Moody Press, pg. 1699.
Discussion Questions

19. Discuss whether or not there was more to Paul’s ministry than simply proclaiming “you must be born again, or you will die and go to hell.”

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Scripture Reading: Acts 17:5-9

Discussion Questions

20. Discuss what is behind the attack from the “Jews who were not persuaded,” and why they would even care that Jesus was being preached.

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21. Discuss what is wrong with the accusation made in Acts 17: 7.

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DEFINITION

**Security**: Probably the bond given to the authorities by Jason and his friends included an understanding that Paul would not return to Thessalonica. Any efforts to have the bond cancelled were unsuccessful; hence the reference to the hindrance by Satan (First Thessalonians 2:18).

**Scripture Reading**: Acts 17:10-15

**Historical Context**

BEREA [beh REE ah]—A city of Macedonia about 45 miles west of Thessalonica (modern-day Salonika). The apostle Paul preached at Berea with much success. The Bereans were “more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica,” because they “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11) Ancient Berea is the modern city of Salonika (northeastern Greece), one of the largest cities of Greece and the chief port and commercial center of Macedonia in Greece. In the first century AD, the apostle Paul preached to the Thessalonians in Thessalonica, then in the Roman province of Macedonia. The city was occupied in the 10th century by the Saracens and in the 12th century by the Normans. In the 13th century Thessalonica became part of the Byzantine Empire; many fine examples of Byzantine art survive in the city, particularly the mosaics in some of its historic churches, including the Basilica of Hagia Sophia and the Church of Saint George. Thessalonica was under Turkish occupation from 1430 to 1912, when it was surrendered to a Greek army. George I of Greece was assassinated there in 1913. The city was occupied by the Germans in World War II.11

11“Thessaloníki,” Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia. © 1993-1997 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
Discussion Questions

22. Were the “fair-minded” ones mostly Jews or Greeks?
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23. In Acts 17:11 we find two very important principles for Christian growth. Discuss the importance and affect of these principles when implemented in our lives.

   a) “They received the word with all readiness.”
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   b) “They searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”
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24. According to what we see in Acts 17:14, who does the anger of the Jews from Thessalonica seemed to be aimed at?
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Scripture Reading: Acts 17:16-21
DEFINITION

**Provocation, Provoke: paroxuno;** primarily, “to sharpen,” is used metaphorically, signifying “to rouse to anger, to provoke,” in the passive voice, in Acts 17:16, “was provoked” (KJV, “was stirred”). The Spirit of God within Paul being provoked is reminiscent of many Old Testament instances where the Jews provoked the Lord to anger. *Ka’as* (the Hebrew word meaning “provoke”) is common throughout the history of the Hebrew language, and is used in modern Hebrew in the sense of “to be angry, to rage.” It occurs some 55 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. The word is characteristic of the books of Jeremiah and Kings. A review of the uses of this verb shows that around eighty percent of them involve Yahweh’s “being provoked to anger” by Israel’s sin, especially in response to its worship of other gods. One such example is found in Second Kings 23:19: “And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the Lord to anger, Josiah took away....”

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**Athens** is the capital city of the ancient Greek state of Attica and the modern capital of Greece. The history of Athens goes back before 3000 BC, when a small village grew up on the slopes of the Acropolis. Athens’ history involved a number of battles with other city-states, such as Sparta, and with the Persians, who were led by Darius and Xerxes. In the sea battle with the Persians at Salamis (480 BC), the Athenians won decisively, but the retreating Persians burned Athens.

During the golden age of Grecian history it was the center of Greek art, architecture, literature, and politics. In modern day Athens a person finds on the Acropolis (the great central hill) the Parthenon (the temple dedicated to the virgin Athena, the goddess of wisdom and the arts), its Erechtheion (the unique double sanctuary dedicated to Athena and Neptune), and its small temple to Wingless Victory (symbolizing the Athenian hope that victory would never leave them). These are but a few reminders of the city’s history of worshipping false gods.

As one visits the museum in Athens filled with statues and the theater of Dionysus with the heads of the gods removed, one recalls Paul’s assessment of Athens as a city “given over to idols.” (Acts 17:16) As one walks through the Agora (marketplace) and visits the reconstructed porch of Attalus, one remembers that in porches like these the ancient Greek philosophers used to debate. Acts 17:18, for instance, describes Paul’s encounter with “certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.” In fact, the Stoics, the followers of Zeno (342-270 BC), took their name from these porches. In this area, between the Acropolis and the Agora, lies the hill known as the Areopagus (Mars’ Hill), where Paul may have made his defense before the council of Athens (Acts 17:22-31).

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Discussion Questions

25. In light of the definition and historical context, discuss what Paul’s reaction to the city and culture of Athens speaks about God’s hatred of idols and false religion, and how we should view such things in our cities today.

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26. Discuss what Paul’s strategy was to combat the idols and false religion, and how this relates to what Christians should be doing today.

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Scripture Reading: Acts 17:22-34
Discussion Questions

27. Discuss the reasons Paul uses the altar “To the Unknown God” as a way of reaching the Athenians and what this altar says about their culture.
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28. Discuss how the unity and commonality of the human race proves there is one God.
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29. Discuss why people “grope for Him” when He is so close.
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30. Discuss the point Paul is trying to make in Acts 17:29.
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31. Discuss what Paul meant in Acts 17:30 when he said, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked…”
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32. Discuss how Christ’s resurrection gives assurance that He will judge the world in righteousness.

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Scripture Reading: Acts 18:1-6

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**Corinth** (kor'-inth) (Korinthos, “ornament”): A celebrated city and capital of Corinthia. Corinth had three good harbors, and thus commanded the traffic of both the eastern and the western seas. The Corinthian cults of Aphrodite, of Melikertes (Melkart), and of Athene Phoenike are of Phoenician origin. Poseidon, too, and other sea deities were held in high esteem in the commercial city. When Paul visited Corinth, he found it the metropolis of the Peloponnesus (a peninsula in southern Greece). Jews flocked to this center of trade. (Acts 18:1-18; Rom 16:21; 1 Cor. 9:20) He found a strong Jewish nucleus to begin with; and it was in direct communication with Ephesus. The church in Corinth consisted principally of non-Jews. (1 Cor. 12:2) Within a few years after Paul's first visit to Corinth the Christians had increased so rapidly that they made quite a large congregation, but it was composed mainly of the lower classes: they were neither “learned, influential, nor of noble birth.” (1 Cor. 1:26) Little is known of the history of the church in Corinth after his departure.  

Discussion Questions

33. Discuss what Acts 18:3 tells us about the character of Paul.

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14 *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Electronic Database Copyright 1996 by Biblesoft.
**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Tent-making, mentioned only once (Acts 18:3), was Paul’s trade. His native province of Cilicia was noted for its goats’ hair cloth which was exported under the name of cilicium and was used largely for tent-making. We are told in the passage mentioned that Paul dwelt with Aquila and Priscilla and worked with them. In ancient Judaism it was improper for a rabbi to receive money for his teaching.

**Discussion Questions**

34. Discuss what Paul means in Acts 18:6 when he says, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean.”
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**Scripture Reading:** Acts 18:7-17

**Discussion Questions**

35. Discuss what we can learn about our own churches and cities from the vision the Lord gave to Paul.
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**DEFINITION**

**Judgment Seat:** (*bema*, “a raised place,” “platform,” “tribune,”; Matt. 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 12:21; 18:12,16; 25:6,17): In Greek law courts, one bema was provided for the accuser, another for the accused; but in the New Testament the word designates the official seat of a judge, usually of the Roman governor; also of the emperor (Acts 25:10); then of God (Rom 14:10) and of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).  

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Discussion Questions

36. Discuss what possible case the Jews would have made to substantiate Paul was “persuading men to worship God contrary to the law.”

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Gallio (gal’-i-o): The Roman deputy or proconsul of Achaia, before whom Paul was haled by his Jewish accusers on the apostle’s first visit to Corinth, during his second missionary journey. (Acts 18:12-17) The trial was not of long duration. Although Gallio extended his protection to the Jewish religion as one of the religions recognized by the state, he contemptuously rejected the claim of the Jews that their law was binding upon all. In the eyes of the proconsul, the only law universally applicable was that of the Roman code and social morality: under neither was the prisoner chargeable; therefore, without even waiting to hear Paul’s speech in his own defense, he summarily ordered his lictors (the attending magistrates) to clear the court. Gallio has often been instanced as typical of one who is careless or indifferent to religion, yet in the account given of him in Acts, he merely displayed an attitude characteristic of the manner in which Roman governors regarded the religious disputes of the time. Even the subsequent treatment meted out to Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, was to him a matter of indifference.16

Scripture Reading: Acts 18:18-23

Discussion Questions

37. Why do you suppose Paul went into the synagogue in Ephesus after telling the Jews in Corinth “from now on I will go to the Gentiles”?

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16 Ibid.
Scripture Reading: Acts 18:24-28

DEFINITION

**Fervent**, *zeo (dzeh-oh)*; living fervor, fiery hot, full of burning zeal. It is opposite of dignified, cold, and unemotional. In a Christian context it signifies a high spiritual temperature, inflamed by the Holy Spirit. Apollos was a complete man, articulate in Scripture, and full of spiritual fervency.

Discussion Questions

38. Discuss the description of Apollos and why his attributes are crucial in our own spiritual lives today.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul visited the churches of Galatia for a third time, and then settled in Ephesus for more than two years. Upon leaving Ephesus, Paul traveled again to Macedonia and Achaia (Greece) for a three-month stay. He returned to Asia by way of Macedonia. On this third journey Paul wrote First Corinthians from Ephesus, Second Corinthians from Macedonia, and the letter to the Romans from Corinth.

Scripture Reading: Acts 19:1-10

Discussion Questions

39. Examine each of the teachings about salvation and the Holy Spirit, and discuss what Acts 19:1-6 reveals concerning each teaching. (Also take into consideration the supporting text for each interpretation.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING I</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When a person gets saved (born again), they receive “all” of the Holy Spirit they can or will receive. The “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” which occurred at Pentecost, does not occur today, nor is it necessary. According to this teaching the spiritual gifts passed away after the last apostle died and the biblical canon completed.</td>
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Primary texts supporting the teaching that those who are born again have the Spirit of God and the “perfect” interpreted to mean the canonization of the Scriptures.

Romans 8:9-17: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-- not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (NKJ)

First John 4:2-4: “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (NKJ)

First Corinthians 13:9-12: “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” (NKJ)

(*Discuss each of the above passages and whether or not they give reasonable support for this particular teaching. Also discuss other passages you feel supports this teaching.)

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<tr>
<th>TEACHING II</th>
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Salvation (being born again according to Romans 10:9-10) causes us to become a child of God and precedes but is separate from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Being born again (becoming a “temple” of the Holy Spirit) enables us to receive the Holy Spirit baptism with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues.
**Primary texts** supporting the teaching that born again believers receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation and that it’s for all “afar off.”

**Acts 2:1-4:** “Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (NKJ)

**Acts 2:38-39:** “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”’ (NKJ)

**Acts 9:17-18:** “And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.” (NKJ)

**Acts 8:12-17:** “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (NKJ)

(*Discuss each of the above passages and whether or not they give reasonable support for this particular teaching. Also discuss other passages you feel supports this teaching.)*

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**Teaching III**

In order to become born again a person must complete three steps: Salvation, water baptism, and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues. Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit (with the evidence of speaking in tongues) a person is not saved.
**Primary texts** supporting the teaching that all three experiences (salvation, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues) must occur or a person is not truly saved.

**Mark 16:16:** “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (NKJ)

**Acts 2:38:** “Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (NKJ)

**Acts 10:44-48:** “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.” (NKJ)

**Acts 19:5-6:** “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.” (NKJ)

(*Discuss each of the above passages and whether or not they give reasonable support for this particular teaching. Also discuss other passages you feel supports this teaching.)*

**Discussion Questions**

40. Discuss the difference between John’s baptism of repentance from dead works, and baptism in Christ after His death, burial, and resurrection.

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**BIBLICAL INSIGHT**

John the Baptist’s ministry is spelled out in Luke 3:4: “...as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.’” John’s baptism helped prepare the hearts of people to receive the ministry of Jesus. Water baptism, which symbolizes believers being buried with Christ in His death, and then raised into newness of life, is an outward proclamation of the covenant entered into by those who believe, and based upon the redemptive work of Christ. John’s baptism, however, could be viewed as a “pre-cross” preparation in the heart of man in anticipation of the final and complete work of the cross of Christ.
Discussion Questions

41. Discuss what we see in Acts 19:8 (once again) concerning Paul’s pattern of ministry and diligence to obey the Lord.
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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The School of Tyrannus: Aside from Acts 19:9, no mention is made of this man. The phrase “the school [Gr. schole] of Tyrannus” is ambiguous. Did he lecture in the hall? Or was he the owner of it? Either is possible. The Western Greek text (Codex Bezae) of Acts adds several words at the end of verse nine: “…of one (or, a certain) Tyrannus, from the fifth to the tenth hour.” If this addition were accepted, we would know that Paul used this hall between the hours of 11:00 AM and 4:00 PM, a time of day when people were not working. Thus it served the same purpose as the house of Titus Justus in Corinth. This went on for two years with great success.

CONCLUSION

The last two verses of the book of Acts (28:30-31) say that Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him. It’s often noted how there is no closing statement to the books of Acts. It seems reasonable in the sense that Acts is not a letter, but rather a historical account of the Acts of the Apostles and the beginning of the New Testament church. Without the work and courageous obedience of apostles like Paul and Barnabas, the spread of Christianity may not have been as significant, and we would not know many of the principles elucidated in the letters generated during this period of time. It’s also interesting to consider how Luke traveled with them as a silent stenographer of these history-making events.

Concerning the death of Apostle Paul, Foxe’s Book of Martyrs states: Paul, the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labours in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in this first persecution under Nero. Abdias, declareth that unto his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death. They, coming to Paul instructing the people, desired him to pray for them, that they might believe; who told them that shortly after they should believe and be baptized at his sepulcher. This done, the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where he after his prayers made, gave his neck to the sword.17