

Seven Bible Studies 2017

Gospels

September 30: Acts 1-2 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 9-30-17

Acts 1-2

As we begin the book of Acts, let's look at a little background. Acts was written by Luke, the same author of the Gospel account. This is mostly based on the first verse. The author is writing this to Theophilis and references a "former account" by the author. In the first few verses of Luke, Theophilis is mentioned as the recipient and the book is referred to as an "orderly account" that covered the time of Jesus teaching until He was taken up. Luke was probably a gentile (in Col 4:10-14, Paul does not list him as one of those from the circumcision) which makes these two books the only ones written by non-Jews.

Luke gives a record of Jesus appearing to the Apostles during the forty days after His death. During these times, Jesus talked to them about the Kingdom and told them to stay together in Jerusalem until they were baptized (overwhelmed, immersed) with the Holy Spirit. When they want to know if this will be when the kingdom is restored to Israel (they are still thinking of the physical), He tells them that when they receive this power they will give witness of Him in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. This is the outline for the rest of the book of Acts as Luke documents the history of the spreading of the Gospel through the actions of the Apostles.

After Jesus is ascended, they go to Jerusalem to wait. Peter announces that they should replace Judas. He remembered two passages from Psalm 69:25 and 109:8. They set one main requirement; the new Apostle should be someone that was with them from the time Jesus was baptized until He ascended. This was so they could be an effective and truthful eyewitness Christ. We must not follow those today that claim to be apostles and are not. There is no way they can fulfill this main qualification. Two men are suggested, Joseph and Matthias. They asked God to choose between them and God chose Matthias. Joseph does not become discouraged at not being chosen. He is mentioned in Acts 15:22 as one of the men that is sent with Paul to disperse a letter from the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem. This is a tribute to his faith that he was a trusted brother and continued to be a pillar in the church.

On the Day of Pentecost (50 days after Passover which would make it a Sunday) the Apostles are together when the sound of a great wind fills the house and divided tongues of fire appear on them. At that moment they began to speak in different languages. The sound and commotion caught the attention of everyone in town. There were Jews from all over the world who were there for the feast. Some may have even been in town since the Passover. When they all gather, they hear the Apostles speaking. They are not speaking Hebrew or Greek, which almost all of them probably knew to some degree; they are hearing their own home languages. God, when man first was hearing the Gospel, made sure that everyone could understand it in a language that was comfortable. I think this is the reason that everyone should use a Bible that we can understand. The word should not be watered down or altered, but it should be in a comfortable language. There is no reason, in this day and age, that anyone in the world should have to learn an unfamiliar language and struggle to understand the Bible.

This also is another proof that the gift of speaking in tongues was not an angelic language or babblings, it was understandable, common languages.

While some try and figure out what is going on, others accuse them of being drunk. You can tell they are desperate because when someone is drunk, they usually struggle with their own language, not speak a complete foreign one. Peter is the one who takes the lead. This is important because the last time we saw Peter in a situation like this, he denied Jesus. This time he speaks with authority. He points out that they are not drunk. Instead, he quotes from Joel 2. This is a prophecy about what is happening right now before their very eyes. Power, by way of the Holy Spirit, is impacting the world through these men and eventually through others. Peter talks to them about Jesus and their role in His death. He reminds them that David prophesied about the coming Messiah and the events that have happened and uses those to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the one that David was talking about. He closes by telling them that Jesus, whom they had killed, is now both Lord (master) and Christ (the anointed of God).

Upon understanding and realizing the weight of what they have done, they search for an answer. They have just killed the Son of God. What possible hope could be available to them? What is God going to do to them? Is there any way that God will ever forgive them? Peter has the answer. Now that they believe, if they will just repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus their sins will be forgiven and God will live with them through the Holy Spirit. He also points to the future by saying that this is a promise to anyone who lives anywhere in any time. About 3,000 people are baptized that first day of the church. They did not just sit around. They learned and followed the Apostles' doctrine and they spent time together. They worshipped God and honored the sacrifice of Christ together. They responded to the miracles that the Apostles did in the name of Jesus. They shared with anyone that had need and sacrificed for each other. They did all of this simply and with joy. This caused even more people to be drawn to them and accept the Gospel as the church grew.

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:
Thanks Doug Twaddell

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thanks, Doug! It's an incredible gift to have this book for our edification. Love the unity of the early church and acts of the apostles.

October 7: Acts 3-4 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 10-7-17

Acts 3-4

After the Day of Pentecost, Peter and John go to the Temple for prayer. They still are keeping current traditions of the Jewish faith. They see a lame man sitting there asking for money. Peter tells him, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The man is immediately able to walk and leap. This is a man that was unable to walk since birth. This miracle is not just

in the healing of his legs, but also his nervous system, his balance ability and coordination between with a brain that has never directed those muscles before. Many of the Jews recognize him as the one that had, for so many years, sat and begged for money. The man will not leave Peter and John and this causes a crowd to gather.

Peter takes this opportunity to give another speech. He quickly points out that he and John had not healed the man, but it is the power of the name of Jesus. He reminds them that it is the same Jesus that they insisted should be killed and who God raised from the dead. He also admits that they did that in ignorance, but still calls on them to repent. Just because we don't know something is wrong does not excuse the action. We are still responsible for those sins and must deal with them before God when we are made aware. When we do, God is faithful to forgive them. He also points out that they have been allowed to be the first that are given the opportunity to respond to the sacrifice of Christ.

While Peter is speaking, the Jewish religious leaders take them into custody overnight. Despite that, there are many that respond to Peter's message bringing the number of believers to 5000 men plus women and young people.

The next day, the council gathers to question Peter and John. Their main concern is what power enabled them to heal the man. Peter again seizes the opportunity to teach. He first questions why they would be concerned about a good deed done to a helpless man. Then he tells them that it is the power of the name of Jesus, who they crucified but God raised from the dead. Peter in a couple of phrases condemns the council for not glorifying God for the mercy shown to the man and points out that, despite their apparent success in killing Jesus, God was able to counteract their purpose. He quotes from Psalm 118 about the chief cornerstone. This is the same quotation Jesus gave them after they questioned His authority to drive the moneychangers off the Temple grounds (Matt 21:42). Peter also makes the claim that salvation must come through Jesus because there is no other name powerful enough to save men.

The council recognize that Peter and John had been with Jesus when they realize that they are utilizing prophecies even though they are not educated and there is boldness and authority in their words. They also have the problem of a man that had never walked but is literally standing in front of them. They go into a closed meeting to discuss what to do.

They admit that there is no way to deny that a miracle has been done. Too many people saw it and recognize that they have seen the man at the Temple for years. The decision is made that they will threaten Peter and John to attempt to keep them from using the name of Jesus anymore. When they bring them back, Peter asks them if they should listen to the council or to God. Again, this would have reminded them of questions that Jesus posed to them. They refused to answer. To answer truthfully, you should listen to God first, would undermine their authority and admit that they had killed the promised Messiah. To claim the council is the higher authority would be blasphemy and the people would know their true hearts. After threatening them some more, they let them go. They are afraid to punish them any further because the people know that the miracle was real and are glorifying God for it.

Peter and John, upon their release, meet with the church and report what happened. They offer a prayer to God. Their prayer begins with praise and honor to God. They also admit to realizing that the death of Jesus was part of a greater plan. Remember, this is something they either couldn't understand or refused to accept while Jesus was with them. They then pray for boldness. They don't pray for God to punish the council or exact revenge for their threats. Again, this is something they were prone to ask for when Jesus was with them. Instead, they focus on how God can help them with their response to the threats. They ask for boldness to continue to speak the truth. They ask for God to heal more people and work other signs and wonders through the name of Jesus to prove to the world that they are speaking His truth. This

is how we should respond to threats and persecution. We should not retaliate or seek revenge because that is not our place. We should not ask God to do that on our behalf because that is not in line with the teachings of Christ. If we want God to seek revenge against those that disobey Him, we are seeking revenge against ourselves for we are all equally guilty. If we want mercy and forgiveness for ourselves, we cannot ask God to refuse that to others. God shows His approval of this prayer by giving them a physical sign (the place they were gathered shook) and filling them with the Spirit to grant their request for boldness in their speech. May we pray for such boldness and may God grant it to us.

Many of these early believers, remember, had originally arrived in Jerusalem quite a while ago. Some were no doubt from Jerusalem, but many were not. They have been there long enough that their resources that were originally to sustain them for a few weeks are running out. This is solved through the love of the brethren. They share with each other. Some realize that they have land or other possessions that they don't really need so they sell them and give the money to the apostles for distribution. This is when we are introduced to Joses. He was a Levite from Cyprus. I take the understanding that he possibly had no intention of returning to the island, so he arranged to sell his holdings there and gave the proceeds to the church. The apostles had nicknamed him Barnabas which means "Son of Encouragement (Consolation)." I sometimes wonder what our nicknames would be if the church called us according to our character.

Comment:

Paul Zinnel:

makes me wonder what my nickname would be and gives me the encouragement to improve and I have plenty of room for improvement.

Comment:

Paul Zinnel:

thanks doug

Comment:

Suzanne Ingle Harvey:

This is one (of many) of my favorite stories in the N.T. Thanks for the post & your comments.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

This story has always been a favorite, but especially so since the birth of our son Parker Wright with his Talipes equinus. There were no surgeons for that condition back then, but Jesus the Great Physician through his apostle Peter, did a surgery which not only perfectly reconstructed the man's feet, legs, and ankles, but taught his brain and body how to "Walk and leap!" The LORD and Peter were using this to "Make an opportunity" to preach the gospel!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug Twaddell! Especially during this busy and exciting time for your family.

Congratulations! ❤️ I sure love the book of Acts. This miracle and testimonials surrounding is

one of my favorites. It's a great lesson of praise placed to song. I often find myself breaking out in my happiest moments. This past summer we witnessed our 5 year old friend Elizabeth quote the chapter. A great inspiration!!!

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:
Thanks Doug!

October 14: Acts 5-6 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 10-14-2017

Acts 5-6

After Barnabas and others lead by example, Ananias and Sapphira sell some land. Ananias brings some of the money to the Apostles and keeps some. They want the notoriety of Barnabas without making the same sacrifice. Peter chastises Ananias by pointing out that the land was theirs and so was the money and they had full control over it. He says that they thought this through and conceived a plan to deceive. This was not a lie to men, but to God. Ananias immediately dies and is carried out. About three hours later, Sapphira arrives unaware of her husband's demise. Peter asks her if what they gave is what they sold the land for. She continues the lie of her husband. Peter connects lying to God with testing the Spirit of God and that she will die with her husband. She dies and is carried out. This caused the church to take notice and fear. It should cause us to take notice, too. We can be guilty of trying to appear more righteous than we are. Jesus called the Pharisees "white washed tombs" because of this same attitude. It reminds us that, even though our actions are important, God desires us to serve Him from the heart.

The Apostles continue to work miracles and regularly gather at the Temple. The church grows even more as great numbers are brought with the hope of being healed. This causes the High Priest to become concerned. Their earlier threats have not had the desired effect. They throw the Apostles in prison. That night, an angel opens the prison doors and tells them to go to the Temple and continue to teach. In the morning, the High Priest convenes the council and sends for the prisoners. The officers sent to get them can't find them. They report to the council that they found the prison doors shut, locked and guarded, but the Apostles are gone. Then someone arrives and tells them that they are at the Temple teaching. The captain of the guard convinces them to return to face the council without arresting them again.

The High Priest reminds them that they were told not to teach in the name of Jesus anymore. The council wants to know why they are still doing this and why they are trying to blame them for the death of Jesus. It has not been that long since these same Jewish leaders stood before Pilate and accepted the blame by saying, "His blood be on us and our children." (Mat 27:25)

The last time Peter and John stood before the council, they told them to judge whether they should listen to the council or to God. (Ac 4:19) Now he gives them the answer: "We ought to obey God rather than men." He tells them, again, that they murdered Jesus and God raised Him up to place Him in authority to offer forgiveness of sins.

This puts the council in a rage and plans are made to kill the Apostles. This prompts Gamaliel, the premier teacher of the council, to put the Apostles out and address the group. He reminds them of a couple of times that someone claimed to be the promised Messiah. When they died, their followers dispersed and the movement came to nothing. His advice is to leave the

Apostles and the church alone. His reasoning is simple, logical and in line with the history of the scriptures. If this movement is the invention of men, it will go away on its own. If this movement is from God, there is no way to stop it and they do not want to be found in opposition to God. The council agrees with Gamaliel. However, they warn them not to speak in the name of Jesus (like they have before), but they also beat them to emphasize their warning.

Instead of discouraging the Apostles, the experience invigorates them. They realize that if the same people that opposed Christ were opposing them then they must be correctly following Jesus. They continued to gather daily at the Temple and preach Jesus as the Christ.

By now there are a very large number of believers. Apparently, it is becoming more and more difficult for the Apostles to keep up with both their physical and spiritual needs. There was a group of widows that were unintentionally being passed over for help. The Apostles do not want their effort teaching the church to be hindered by the physical needs of the church. To solve this problem, they propose appointing some men to take care of the physical issues so they can focus on the spiritual. They want the body to pick them, but there are some specific qualifications that they insist the men have. They are to have a good reputation so the church trusts them. They are to be full of the Holy Spirit so there is spiritual consideration to the physical needs. They are to have wisdom so that their decisions are well thought out and sensible. Seven men are selected and they are appointed over the physical needs of the church. While they are not named such here, these men are filling the role of the later named deacons.

Stephen was one of those men and is now talked more specifically about. We find out that, even though he was tasked with caring for the physical needs of the church, he was still teaching and preaching. When a certain group of Jews is unable to successfully win arguments with him, they induce men to give false testimony claiming Stephen is guilty of blasphemy. The council arrests him and he is brought before them to defend himself.

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:

Thank you Doug. We just finished the book of Acts and are heading into Romans.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Thank you brother Doug!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! Love the book of Acts! It's so hard to stop and not read until the end. 😊

Comment:

Debbie Bolinger:

Thank you!!

October 21: Acts 7-8 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 10-21-17

Acts 7-8

Stephen is standing before the council and has been accused of blasphemy against the Temple. This charge is brought because of the teaching of Jesus as the Messiah and the transition from the Law of Moses to the Law of Christ. The council wants to know if the charges are true.

Stephen begins with God calling Abraham to leave his home and journey to a place that he has never been. Not only that, God did not give him a physical inheritance in that new place. God did tell him that he would have a son (even though he was old) who would produce descendants that would physically inherit the land. God even predicts that they will be in slavery for 400 years before God will bring them into the land. As a symbol of this covenant, God instituted circumcision.

The account continues with Joseph being sold into slavery because his brothers were jealous. While in Egypt, Joseph's great faith gave him favor in God's eyes who gave him favor before Pharaoh. When Canaan was struck with a famine, the brothers went to Egypt to find food where they encountered Joseph in power only below Pharaoh. Joseph showed them forgiveness and mercy and saved his family who became the nation of Israel.

Over time, the Israelites were enslaved by a Pharaoh that did not appreciate Joseph. During this slavery, Moses was born. After being hidden by his parents and found by a daughter of Pharaoh, Moses was raised and educated as an Egyptian, but knew of his Hebrew roots because of the influence of his mother. When Moses encountered the severe mistreatment of an Israelite by an Egyptian, he killed the oppressor. Because of this, he had to run away to Midian.

While in Midian, he became a shepherd, married and had two sons. It was during this time that God appeared to him in a bush that appeared to be burning but was not destroyed. God convinces Moses to take the lead in freeing the Israelites from slavery to a promised land given to them by God. It is pointed out to the council that Moses was rejected as a leader by his people, but he led them out anyway by the power of God. This is also used as a description of Jesus. Stephen then reminds them that literally days after they escape Egypt and while Moses is receiving the law from God on the mountain, the people make an idol to worship in place of the one true God.

Under Moses' direction, they built the tabernacle as a place to worship God and to represent His presence with the people. This was used through the days of David until Solomon built a more permanent Temple to replace it. Stephen refers to a passage from Isaiah 66:1 to point out that God cannot be contained in a physical house. This is something that Solomon admitted during the dedication of the Temple in Kings 8:27.

Stephen now compares the current council to their ancestors who resisted God's leadership and killed God's messengers. Just like them, they have rejected God and killed His messenger who was also the prophesied Messiah of Israel.

In 7:54, the council is "cut to the heart" (NKJV). This would appear similar to Acts 2:37. However, there are two different Greek words in play. Acts 7 is *diaprio* (to saw asunder or in two, to divide, to be sawn through mentally) while Acts 2 is *katanusso* (to prick, to pierce,

metaphorically to pain the mind sharply, especially the emotion of sorrow). These are two different reactions to the same message. In one case, the crowd on Pentecost, they were filled with sorrow at what they had done and driven to find a solution for their despondency. This is what Paul refers to as Godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Cor 7:9-10). The council did not feel sorrow, they only felt anger at the accusation. Instead of producing a drive for a solution, they were driven to hatred of the messenger. This is worldly sorrow (also from 2 Cor) which only leads to death.

Stephen is now given a glimpse into heaven and sees Jesus. This is all the council can take. They rush Stephen, take him outside the city and stone him to death. A young man named Saul is present and holds the outer garments of those participating. Stephen, with his last breaths, begs God for two things. First, he pleads for God to accept his spirit. Second, he asks God to not charge them with the sin of murder. This is a similar request that Jesus made concerning those that were crucifying Him.

Saul now begins an all-out persecution of the church. Because of this, many in the church leave Jerusalem and settle all over Judea and Samaria. This result of this persecution is the foundation of many churches and the initial spreading of the Gospel. God truly can make all things work together for good.

Philip, one of the appointed deacons in Acts 6, is preaching and performing miracles in Samaria. He encounters a man named Simon who had convinced the people that he had the power of God. This man becomes a baptized believer because of the things he sees and hears.

The apostles hear about what is going on and send Peter and John to bestow spiritual gifts to the believers. Simon notices that Philip could work miracles but the apostles could enable others to work the same miracles. He offers the Apostles money for this ability to pass on the gifts. Peter chastises him and tells him to repent and pray for forgiveness. Simon seems to get the message and asks them to pray for him, as well.

Philip is now told go to the area of Gaza. Once there, he sees a man in a chariot headed back to Ethiopia from Jerusalem. This is a distance of about 2600 miles (about the same as Los Angeles to Philadelphia). This would have been a long and expensive trip. Philip catches up with the chariot (with help from the spirit). The man is reading from Isaiah. Not everyone could afford their own personal copy of one of these scrolls. The man is confused as he reads (from what we call chapter 53:7-8). He cannot decide if the passage is about Isaiah or someone else. Philip begins right there (a messianic prophesy) and teaches the man about Jesus. Eventually they come to a body of water and the man wants to be baptized. On this long of a journey, he would have had plenty of water with him. If sprinkling or pouring was sufficient, there was no need to take notice of other water along the way or for the chariot to stop there. Philip has them stop and they both go down into the water to baptize the man. When the baptism is completed, Philip is miraculously taken away and the man continues on his way to Ethiopia. Philip ends up in Caesarea.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, brother Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Excellent summary, Doug! I love the testimony of Stephen. In Acts 6:5 he is introduced as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." Truly, he was full of the Holy Spirit (7:55), wisdom

(6:3,10) and grace (7:60). Every time I read this account I fight back the tears. Thanks be to God for the spreading of the gospel after this event. As well, the forgiveness Paul received. Truly the Lord works everything together for good. <3

October 28: Acts 9-10 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 10-28-2017

Acts 9-10

Saul is stepping up his persecution of the church. He receives official permission from the Jewish Council to go to other cities and round up believers. At this point they refer to them as those who were of "The Way." His plan is to bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. On his way to Damascus, he is stopped by a bright light that blinds him. Jesus takes Saul's persecution personal. The church really is the body of Christ. When the church is persecuted, Jesus feels it.

Saul asks Jesus what to do. Jesus could tell him that he needs to repent and be baptized. Jesus has the information and Saul's attention, but chooses to have a man tell him. To me, this shows that Jesus wants the Gospel spread by his followers. It is our job to spread the message.

Jesus now speaks to Ananias. He tells Ananias where to find Saul and instructs him to give Saul his sight back. Ananias is not too sure about this. He seems to find it necessary to remind Jesus who Saul is and what he has been doing. Jesus, of course, knows what has been going on (remember he took it personally) and tells Ananias about His plan for Saul. He says Saul is a chosen vessel and will witness about Christ before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. He also predicts that Saul will suffer many things for proclaiming the name of Christ.

Ananias finds Saul and returns his sight. Saul is baptized and becomes the very person he has been persecuting. Saul ends up spending several days with the church in Damascus. On a side note, archeologists have found the street named "Straight" in Damascus. While they can't know the exact house, you could go walk down that street.

Saul wastes no time changing gears. Instead of persecuting the Christians, he begins to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. Possibly because of his background and education, he does this very capably and stymies the Jews. While this transformation amazes and encourages some, it does not sit well with the Jewish leaders. This was their champion and he is now switched sides. They decide the best way to deal with this is to kill him. It seems that this is their answer to everything. If they don't like what a person is teaching (Jesus, Stephen, Saul) or what they represent (Lazarus) they strive to eliminate their voice.

Their plans become known to Saul and the church. The decision is made to get him out of the city. Because the gates are being watched, they lower him over the wall in a basket. Barnabas goes with him and they travel to Jerusalem because Saul wants to meet with the disciples there. They don't want anything to do with him because they are afraid of him. Remember, the last time they saw him he was assisting in the stoning of Stephen and preparing to persecute as many others as possible. I have often wondered what the meeting was like when Saul encountered Stephens family and friends. Often when Saul recounts the evil he had done, I imagine him seeing their faces and feeling their pain.

Barnabas is successful in persuading the Apostles and Christians in Jerusalem that Saul has changed. I have always had the curious thought, "What would have happened to Saul without Barnabas?" While I am sure that God would have turned it for good and still used Saul, could

the brethren at Jerusalem have missed an opportunity to forgive and love? Thanks to Barnabas, Saul meets with them and boldly proclaims the name of Jesus in Jerusalem. Again, the Jews decide that their beloved and trusted Saul must die. The brethren send him to Caesarea and then on to Tarsus, his hometown. A great time of peace and safety follows as well as great confidence and reverence for God. No doubt Saul's conversion had much to do with these things as well as the influence of Barnabas.

We now see that Peter is traveling and arrives at Lydda. He heals a man that had been bedridden for eight years. This helps lead many people in the area to believe. While he is there, a sister at Joppa, Tabitha (Dorcas), dies. She had spent much of her time helping others. The church sends for Peter when they hear how close he is. When Peter gets to Joppa, the widows show him the clothes that Tabitha had made for them. What a wonderful tribute and memorial. I was privileged to officiate at a sisters' funeral. When I arrived, her family had placed many of the quilts she made over the back of the pews. It turned out this was a small sample of the total. Most she had given to new mothers, newlyweds or people in need. Many of these people were not connected to the church. Just a question, what if, at our memorial service, an accounting was made of all the good deeds we had done for others? How long would the list be? Peter makes everyone leave and brings her back to life. Again, this causes many to believe. Peter stayed with Simon, a tanner. (Simon stays with Simon)

Meanwhile, in Caesarea, there is a man named Cornelius. He is an officer in the Roman army, specifically a centurion in the Italian Regiment. God calls him a devout man who feared God, prayed always and was generous to the poor. He sees a vision of an angel who tells him to send for Peter and tells him exactly where Peter is staying. Cornelius immediately sends two trusted servants and a devout soldier.

As they are approaching the city, Peter has a vision. He becomes very hungry and sees a sheet being lowered down that has all kinds of animals that a Jew was not allowed to eat under the Law of Moses. Jesus tells him to kill them and eat them. Peter refuses because they are unclean. Jesus tells him not to reject something that God has accepted. This happens three times. Peter has a lot to consider. Why would Jesus order him to eat foods that are not allowed? What is the significance of the three times? While he is trying to understand these things, the Spirit tells him about three men that will arrive asking for him. He is to go with them without questioning where or why. At this same time, Cornelius' men arrive. Peter invites them to spend the night and they will travel the next day. Some other brethren go with them to Caesarea.

When they arrive, Cornelius is waiting and has gathered all his relatives and close friends. When Peter walks in, Cornelius falls down at his feet and worships him. Peter rejects this worship by pointing out that he is only a man like Cornelius. Peter now understands the vision he had. God was telling him that what used to be unacceptable (unclean foods) are now acceptable because God has deemed them acceptable. Cornelius tells Peter about the vision he had to contact Peter so they could hear the commandments of God. Peter comes to a complete knowledge of the vision. Whoever fears God and is righteous, no matter what nationality, is acceptable to God. Peter then preaches Jesus to them.

While Peter is speaking, the Holy Spirit comes on them and they begin to speak in tongues. The Jewish Christians that came with Peter are astonished. God has shown, without a doubt, that Gentiles can become Christians and are acceptable to God. Peter commands that they be baptized and they ask him to stay a few days. Peter has now, spoken to, taught, stayed with and eaten with (quite likely foods they were not allowed to have previously) Gentiles. Not that long ago, Peter would have considered them beneath him. Now he sees them as brethren.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, brother Doug! Good thoughts!

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:
Thanks again Doug!

Comment:

Jack Dyer:
Thanks Doug for sharing the testimony about the Sister 's funeral. To be adorned with the quiet actions of service and love rather than what is commonly claimed as "beauty" is the truly the finest adornment.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Two of my favorite chapters in the Bible! Praise God that He has granted repentance unto life for all. Thank you, Doug, for your faithfulness to this study and devoting your life in preaching this good news.

November 4: Acts 11-12 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 11-4-17

Acts 11-12

News of the events with Cornelius get back to the Christians in Jerusalem. When Peter returns, they severely question him. It is interesting that they are most concerned about where he stayed and what he ate. Their Jewish roots are showing around their Christianity. Peter takes his time and explains everything from the beginning. He starts with his vision of the sheet, includes the vision Cornelius received and how the Gentiles began to speak in tongues. He concludes with the question, "Who was I that I could withstand God?" This is the same basic question that they are constantly asking the Jewish council to answer. Remember that Peter had taken several other Jewish Christians so they could verify all of this testimony. The church ends up glorifying God that Gentiles have been granted repentance to life.

We find out more places that the Christians had scattered, but it looks like they are only preaching to the Jews. At Antioch, Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene were teaching Jews who were not born in Israel and spoke Greek. They were very successful converting them. When Jerusalem hears about this, they send Barnabas to Antioch. After some time edifying the brethren there, he leaves for Tarsus to find Saul. Barnabas brings Saul back to Antioch where they stay for a year. It is during this time that the believers in Antioch begin to be called Christians.

Also, prophets arrive from Jerusalem. One of them, Agabas, prophesied that a severe famine was going to hit Jerusalem. The Christians at Antioch decided to collect funds to help the brethren through this time and sent Saul and Barnabas to deliver it.

It is about this time that Herod gets ahold of James and kills James (the brother of John) making him the first Apostle to die. Naturally this makes the Jews very happy and spurs

Herod to seize Peter with the intention of killing him after Passover. While Peter is in prison, the church gathers to pray for his release. One night, Peter is sleeping (bound in chains between two soldiers with two guards at the door to the prison) and an angel appears to him. The angel tells Peter to get up. When he does, the chains fall off. The angel then tells him to put on his sandals and clothes and leads him past all the guards. Peter thinks he is seeing a vision, which helps us understand how real his visions seemed.

When he sees that it is all real, he goes to John Mark's mother's house where the church is praying. Rhoda responds to Peter's knock. When she recognizes his voice, she forgets to open the door and goes back to let everyone know. They don't believe her, even though it is an answered prayer. When Peter continues knocking, they go to the gate and find him. He tells them to let everyone know what happened while he leaves the area.

In the morning, the soldiers are extremely concerned that Peter is not there. The escape will surely be met severely. After Herod questions the guards, he has them put to death and goes to Caesarea. He focuses his anger on the towns of Tyre and Sidon. To ease this anger, the leaders of these towns gather to listen to Herod give a speech. They begin to shout, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" When Herod accepts this praise, God causes him to be eaten by worms and die.

All this time, the church grows as the word of God is spread. Saul and Barnabas go back to Antioch and they take John Mark with them. John Mark will become an important figure in the relationship between Saul and Barnabas. In Colossians 4:10, Paul tells us that John Mark and Barnabas are cousins.

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Not at all the most important feature in the story, but it seems very likely to me the Hellenists in 11:20 are not Jews, but in contrast to the Jews mentioned in 11:19, are Greeks, telling us that Gentiles are being preached to as well, by these bold disciples who've come to Antioch.

Metzger has this: (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament) In the present passage, where the preponderant weight of the external evidence combines with the strong transcriptional probability in support of Ἑλληνιστάς, the word is to be understood in the broad sense of "Greek-speaking persons," meaning thereby the mixed population of Antioch in contrast to the Ἰουδαῖοι of ver. 19.

Replies:

Doug Twaddell:

I can see that.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, brother Doug!

Comment:

Josephus gave a parallel account of this event, which is a little more revealing. From the Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the New Testament:

Josephus provides a much fuller and parallel account of the death of Agrippa I (see "Josephus's Account of the Death of Agrippa I"). According to Josephus, Herod appeared in

front of the people early on a sunny morning wearing an unusual robe made entirely of silver. As the bright morning sun shone on the robe and reflected brightly off of it, Herod gleamed in dazzling splendor. The effect on the people was precisely as Herod intended. They acclaimed him as a god. This is certainly not unusual for the time. Emperors were often honored as gods after their deaths. Gaius Caligula, however, was at this time insisting that people worship him as a god during his reign. Herod sought no less an honor.

November 11: Acts 13-14 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 11-11-2017

Acts 13-14

We find that in the Church at Antioch there were several men that were participating in the teaching even though an Apostle was there. It was during this time that the Spirit wants them to send Saul and Barnabas on a specific work. After fasting and praying, they send them out. While God could have chosen to send them without congregational authority, He chooses to. God is setting the precedence of the authority of an eldership and congregation directing, overseeing and supporting the work of those preaching the Gospel.

In Salamis on the island of Cyprus, they preached in the synagogues. We also find out that John Mark, Barnabas' cousin from Jerusalem, is with them. Still on Cyprus, they come to the city of Paphos where they find a man named Bar-Jesus who attempted to predict things by reading the stars. He is a Jew that is affiliated with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Sergius is described as an intelligent man who wants to hear what Saul and Barnabas have to say. Bar-Jesus attempts to keep Sergius from listening (probably because he would lose any influence over him). Saul confronts the man and he is struck with blindness. This caused Sergius to believe.

After they leave the island, they arrive on the mainland at Perga in Pamphylia. It is at this time that John Mark goes home to Jerusalem. While we don't know the exact reason he did not continue, it does become a bone of contention between Saul and Barnabas. We also are left to speculate why Luke begins referring to Saul as Paul. This name change sticks and may be connected to Saul's amount of work among the Gentile nations.

They travel inland to Antioch in Pisidia. This, of course, is a different Antioch than where they started. During the reading in the synagogue, they are invited to comment. Paul addresses them. He gives them a brief history lesson starting with God bringing the people out of Egypt, their wanderings and the distribution of Canaan. He reminds them of the time of the judges and the first kings of Israel, focusing on David. He then reminds them of Jesus' connection to the lineage of David and John's role in preparing the way. He encourages them to realize that the very Jews that had Jesus killed were unwittingly fulfilling prophecies about Him.

Paul brings up the resurrection and the many proofs of it. He points out that David, after he had served God and the people, died and decomposed according to nature. Jesus died but did not stay in the grave to decompose, which David prophesied about. He also informs them that it is through the name of Jesus that they can receive forgiveness of from sin. The Gentiles that were there wanted to hear more the next Sabbath. Many of the Jews and proselytes follow Paul and Barnabas.

On the next Sabbath, nearly the whole city turns out to listen. Instead of praising God for the interest of the people, the Jews become jealous and begin to contradict and oppose Paul. We

should never let pride get in the way when teaching the Gospel. Some plant, some water, but God gives the increase and it is to His glory, not ours.

This emboldens Paul and Barnabas who confront the Jews and tell them that since they have rejected the truth, they will go to the Gentiles. This thrills the Gentiles and many are converted all through the region. The Jews stir up trouble and have them kicked out of the area. They leave to go to Iconium, but the believers they leave behind prosper.

In Iconium, they are again successful in their preaching, but the problem Jews stir up more trouble. Eventually, the city is divided and an attempt is made to stone them. They leave and go to Lystra and Derbe in the area of Lycaonia.

In Lystra a man who had never been able to walk was there. Paul healed him so he could walk. The people there, avid worshippers of the Greek/Roman pantheon, believe Barnabas to be Zeus and Paul to be Hermes and prepare to offer sacrifices to them. Paul is finally able to persuade them not to do it.

When the Jews from Antioch and Iconium show up they convince the crowd to stone Paul. This is quite a turnaround. The people stoning him believe him to be dead and the believers gather around, but Paul stands up. He had to be bruised, bleeding, and broken. Most of us would move on down the road. Not Paul; he goes back into the city. I wonder what those potentially celebrating Paul's death were thinking when he walked back through the gates. I wonder what those that had believed him to be Hermes were thinking.

The next day they go to Derby. After preaching there, they retrace their steps through the places they had been. In those cities they teach, encourage and appoint elders. They bypass the island of Cyprus and go back to Antioch where they were sent out from. There they gather the congregation together and report on all the things that happened; including the accounts of the Gentiles who were converted. This is further confirmation of the interest in and authority of the Elders and congregation at Antioch over Paul and Barnabas's work.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

Thank you brother Doug! With the non-anachronistic writing style of Luke, we see him only using names for people and things, such as they were called at the time of the events in the history. So, we do not see him using the word "Deacon" in (Acts 6) nor the word "Evangelist" in chapter 13. This should give us insight on the "Saul/Paul" thing also. As Saul came to be more widely known by this Greek variant of his name, because of his work among the Gentiles, then Luke began to use that designation for him, to reflect the common use at the later time.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, brother Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! You brought forth several excellent comments from our study. I have the hardest time stopping at the assigned reading on Saturdays. Praise God for the early church!

November 18: Acts 15-16 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 11-18-2017

Acts 15-16

While Paul and Barnabas are still at Antioch after their trip, some Christians from Jerusalem arrive and are teaching that a Gentile must be circumcised according to Jewish law before they can be saved. Paul and Barnabas dispute their teaching, but it is decided that they will go to the apparent source of the teaching. In Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas meet with the apostles, elders and the church.

After some discussion, Peter reminds them of his experience with Cornelius. He also points out that adding requirements is testing God and the Jews and Gentiles are both saved by the same process. Next, they hear Paul and Barnabas testify of their trip and work among the Gentiles. Next up is James. He quotes from Amos 9:11-12. He suggests that they send an official letter, so the Gentiles know the position of the Apostles. Everyone agrees that Paul and Barnabas will take the letter back with them. They also send two of their own number with them to offer testimony. They send Barsabas (who was one of the men put forward to replace Judas) and Silas (who will eventually travel with Paul). It is good for us to see that Barsabas did not have anger or resentment at not being chosen to be an Apostle. Instead, he became a trusted leader in the church at Jerusalem.

The letter they send is extremely important. First, they acknowledge the false teachers are from their number, but they make a distinction between those men who “went out from us” and Paul’s company that they decided to “send.” The distinction is between men that are operating under the authority of the leadership of the Jerusalem congregation and those that are operating with no overseeing authority. Second, they refute the teaching of circumcision before salvation. They do, however, tell them that they need to stay away from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled and from sexual immorality.

This letter brings joy to the congregation in Antioch. It would appear that it is apostolic confirmation of what they believed to be true when they refuted the false teaching. Barsabas and Silas stay for a time, but eventually are sent back to Jerusalem with greetings from the Antioch congregation. However, Silas decides to stay.

Paul and Barnabas decide to go back and visit the congregation they established on their trip. Barnabas is determined to take John Mark, his cousin, but Paul is not interested in taking someone that did not finish the trip last time. In the end, Paul chooses to take Silas with him and Barnabas takes Mark.

From this point, Luke focuses on Paul’s work with Silas. They begin by going north to visit Derbe and Lystra where Paul was stoned the last time he was there. While there, they meet Timothy who is the son of a Gentile father and a Jewish Christian mother. Timothy is known and has a good reputation among the brethren in the area. Paul decides to have him circumcised to lessen the issues with Jews who know his father is Greek. They are carrying with them the letter from Jerusalem.

Paul’s plan is to go north into Galatia, but the Spirit instructs him to go to Macedonia in northern Greece. When they get to Philippi, they find some women who meet on the Sabbath

for prayer. One of the women, Lydia, trades in purple dye and/or cloth. She and her household are baptized and they stay with the family.

They also encounter a slave girl that is possessed by a spirit that allows her owners to profit from her fortune-telling. When the girl starts following them around, Paul casts the spirit out. Naturally, this angers her owners because they can no longer profit from her. They proceed to drag Paul and Silas before the local judges who order them to be beaten and held in prison. At midnight, they are praying and singing to God while the other prisoners are listening. Suddenly, there is an earthquake that loosens their chains and opens the doors. The jailer is about to kill himself because he will be executed if the prisoners escape. Paul stops him and assures him that none of the prisoners are gone. Evidently, the jailer was also listening to their prayers and singing, because he wants to know what he needs to do to be saved. The man takes them home, washes their wounds and he and his family are baptized. He then feeds them.

The next day, the judges want them to be released and leave. Paul refuses to go, evoking his rights as a Roman citizen. They should not have beaten them without a proper trial. Now the judges are afraid, because they could be punished for this action. The judges go personally to Paul and Silas and ask them to leave quietly. Paul and Silas go to Lydia's house, encourage the brethren and then leave the city.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thanks, Doug! I appreciated you pointing out Barsabbas. I hadn't thought about it during the reading. Glad to remember he stayed faithful; excellent example to us.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:
I'm not sure they were the same Barsabbas? Acts 1 is Joseph Barsabbas and Acts 15 is Judas Barsabbas. Perhaps brothers both sons of Sabbas?

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:
You are right Marc. I did not pay close enough attention. It is probable that they are brothers (sons of Sabbas). Sorry for the confusion on my part.

November 25: Acts 17-18 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 11-25-2017

Acts 17-18

After leaving Philippi, they travel to Thessalonica. For three weeks, Paul goes to the Synagogue to teach them about Jesus and His connection to the Scriptures. Some of the Jews are persuaded and many of the Proselytes. The Jews who did not believe convinced some of the evil men from the marketplace to protest against Paul using the claim that he encouraged

following a king other than Caesar. They force Jason, who Paul and Silas are staying with, to pay money. After dark, the brethren send Paul and Silas away to Berea.

In Berea, they find the Jews more open minded and ready to search the scriptures to see if what Paul is teaching is true. As a result, many of both Jews and Greeks believe. However, when the Jews from Thessalonica hear about the success, they travel there and stir up a mob again. This time, Paul is sent away on a boat, but Silas and Timothy remain behind with instructions to follow as soon as they can.

Paul finds himself in Athens waiting for the others. He is stirred up over the immense amount of idolatry he finds in the city. He goes to the Synagogue, but also talks to whoever will listen in the marketplace. Greece was known for it's philosophers, and they take note of Paul. Some think he is crazy, but some wonder if he is talking about a foreign god. The idea of a resurrection intrigues them. They invite him to the Areopagus to discuss these things further.

When Paul sees they have a tribute to "the unknown god," he knows he has an opening. He informs them that he is going to tell them about the God they don't know about. While with the Jews, he would start with Abraham. With these Gentiles, he starts with creation and how man was made to seek out God. He also tells them that the Creator God cannot be represented with things man can make. He tells them that God wants them to repent and follow Him. He also brings up the idea of the resurrection from the dead. This divided the group with some making fun of him and others wanting to hear more.

Eventually, he leaves Athens and goes to Corinth. It is here that he meets Aquilla and Priscilla. They are Jews who had been kicked out of Rome. Since they are tentmakers, which happens to be a trade that Paul knows, he stays with them and works with them. Again, he tries to reason with the Jews at the Synagogue every week. When Silas and Timothy arrive, he becomes more bold in his teaching. The Jews reject him and the teaching. Paul is fed up with them and frustrated that the Jews won't listen. He symbolically shakes his clothes and tells them that he is going to focus on the Gentiles from now on. He goes to the house of a believer named Justus who just happens to live next to the Synagogue. Eventually, the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, is converted. Many other Corinthians follow. Jesus tells him in a vision that no one will bother them while they are in Corinth. They stay there for a year and a half.

When the Jews do finally try and cause him trouble, the proconsul, Gallio, won't hear the case because he thinks it is a waist of the courts time and Paul is set free. Instead, Sosthenes, the new ruler of the Synagogue, is beaten. Crispus is probably very glad he was receptive to the truth and this is quite a turn from what had happened in the previous cities.

When Paul finally leaves for Syria, we find that Priscilla and Aquila are with him. He cuts his hair as a sign that he wants to keep a certain vow. At Ephesus, the Jews ask him to stay longer, but he does not so he can make it to Jerusalem for the feast he has promised to keep. Eventually, Paul makes it back to Antioch.

We are introduced Apollos and some events surrounding him. He was born in Alexandria and is very competent in the scriptures. He is convicted of Jesus, but only knew about John's baptism. He is also traveling and preaching. He arrives at Ephesus where Aquila and Priscilla hear him. They take him aside and help him understand the full truth including the baptism of Jesus. This is often used as a testimony to two things. First, it is not always necessary to call someone out publicly if a private conversation will do the job. Second, Apollos does not get defensive, he listens and accepts the correction which he then teaches with great success.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Steven Wright:
Thank you Doug! Say, speaking of Jews, did you know that your surname is Sephardic Jewish in origin, and part of clan Fraser in Scotland AND this would make us distant cousins on your dad's side? (we, already are on your mom's side) from a book I am reading.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thanks, Doug! We sincerely appreciate your faithfulness to the study. I'm grateful for the example of the Bereans who received the message with great eagerness. Such a wonderful attitude to have as we study passages daily as well.

December 2: Acts 19-20 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for December 2, 2017

Acts 19-20

While Apollos is in Corinth, Paul arrives in Ephesus. He finds some believers there and asks them about their conversion. Specifically, he wants to know if they have received the Holy Spirit. They have no idea what Paul is talking about. His next question is about their baptism. They talk about the baptism of John (Jesus' cousin). Paul, instead of chastising them, teaches them the truth and they are baptized in the name of Jesus. After that, God, through Paul, gives them the ability to speak in tongues and prophesy.

Paul also goes to the Synagogue and teaches there for about three months. When he feels he has reached all that he can, he moves his teaching to the school of Tyrannus. This continues for about two years. The location allows for people from all over Asia to hear the word.

While he is in Ephesus, God allowed unusual things to happen. It seems that even a handkerchief that Paul had used could be taken to someone that was sick and they would be healed of diseases and evil spirits. Some traveling Jewish exorcists and seven sons of Sceva, a chief priest, start attempting to cast out spirits by invoking the name of Jesus and Paul. Interestingly enough, the evil spirit refuses to leave saying that he knows Jesus and Paul, but not these men. The evil spirit then caused the possessed man to attack the exorcists. This causes both Jews and Greeks in Ephesus to believe in Jesus. Even those that used to practice various magical arts came together and burned their books to show their conversion.

It is at this time that Paul decides through the Spirit that he will go to Rome after Jerusalem. He sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, but he stays for a time in Asia.

Even though it has taken a while, opposition to the church does come. Demetrius made money selling silver icons of the Roman goddess Diana. A great temple dedicated to her was located in Ephesus. He convinces other artisans that their livelihood is being threatened by the teaching of Paul. He also convinces them that the temple of Diana will lose its prominence and be neglected. They stir up the city, descend on the local open theater and take Gaius and Aristarchus, two Macedonians traveling with Paul, captive. Paul wants to go in and speak to

the crowd in their defense, but the disciples and some friends that are area officials won't let him. Inside the theater, it is so chaotic that eventually groups are arguing about why they are even there. A Jew named Alexander, who is also a coppersmith, is called on to address the crowd. Paul names him in 2 Timothy 4:14 as a man who did much harm. The people don't allow him to speak when they find out he is a Jew. Instead, they shout "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" for about two hours.

Finally, a city official is able to quiet them down. He tells them that there is no need to cause such a commotion. If crimes have been committed or if there is a dispute between individuals, they should take it through the proper channels in the court system. Otherwise, he is afraid the Roman officials will take action against an unlawful assembly. With this, he is able to convince the crowd to disperse.

When this is all over, Paul tells the disciples goodbye and heads for Macedonia then on to Greece. After three months in Greece, he plans to go to Syria. However, he finds out about the Jews plans against him, so he goes back through Macedonia instead. He sails from Philippi to Troas where he stays for a week. On the first day of the week, Paul speaks to the church. Since the Jewish calendar started each day at sundown (not sunup), there is a good chance this would have been what we call Saturday night. About midnight, a man named Eutychus is sitting in a window (they were meeting in a third story room). He falls asleep and drops to the ground below and dies. God, through Paul, brings him back to life. The meeting continues until daybreak when Paul leaves.

He eventually lands at Miletus. While there, he asks the elders from Ephesus to come see him. He would have liked to go visit the church there, but is concerned that it will take too long. Remember, Paul was at Ephesus for several years. He would have had many close friends in the area. Also, there was that uprising right before he left. Chances are, he would have had trouble only being there for a short time with no issues.

His visit with the Elders covers a lot of topics. He reminds them of the time that he was in Ephesus; everything from the truth he taught to the struggles they had. He acknowledges that the Spirit has indicated to many that an arrest and difficulties are waiting in Jerusalem. He is not concerned about himself, he is concerned about those he has been working with. He instructs them to watch out for the Christians that have been placed under their supervision. He warns them that "wolves" are on the way that will damage the Church. He also warns that some of those problems will come even from among the Eldership. He points out that he did not teach and warn them for his own profit, but for their good. He also reminds them of something Jesus said that we have no record of anywhere else, "It is more blessed to give than receive."

When he is done speaking, they pray together and say their goodbyes with a lot of hugs and tears. They realize that they will not see Paul again in this life. This exemplifies the great love they had for each other and the relationships that were formed while Paul was in Ephesus. I, too, have had teachers and leaders in the Church that were role models to me that are no longer with us. I miss them greatly and their wise counsel. I also have visited with some of them knowing that it would be our last. I think, to some extent, I can understand the Elders encounter with Paul. I can empathize with their sorrow as can many of you. However, through Jesus our sorrow can be turned to joy in the knowledge of the resurrection and salvation. (John 16:20)

Comment:

Charles Fry:
Good stuff! Rigorous days for Paul and company!

The time references suggest Paul arrived in Troas on Monday and stayed through Sunday in order to meet with the church on the 1st day of the week. Sunday meeting was important, especially since Paul was in a hurry. Mention of "next day" departure and leaving after the all night session suggest this was Sunday-Monday, rather than Saturday-Sunday, since the morning departure was "next day", the Roman reckoning rather than Jewish in this Greek city.

I think that with chapter 19 and then chapter 20 we have the writing of 1 Cor, 1 Tim, 2Cor, Rom from Ephesus, Macedonia and Corinth. Productive times for our sake. I think Paul especially wanted to meet with the Ephesians elders because as indicated in 1 Tim 3 Paul very much wanted to be there to appoint them, but provided for Timothy to take care of it in his absence.

You are so right about the powerful bonds Paul had with these folks. Very poignant description of the tender care in both directions.

Replies:

Doug Twaddell:

Thanks for the info Charles Fry. I can understand the consideration of Sunday-Monday. There is a natural bias, which I may have just exhibited, with our "first day of the week" meeting traditionally in the morning.

Charles Fry:

Doug Twaddell i do have the same bias/inclination. I'm not "naturally" comfortable with a Sunday evening assembly for the breaking of bread together myself.

Joanne Caffie:

So it sounds like one is saying that Paul preached for approximately 6 hours and Charles is saying that he preached approximately 12 hours. Hhhhhmmmm either way I might have fallen out the window too.

Charles Fry:

😊 However long the session was, in Paul's behalf I will point out it was not a lecture. Although the KJV used the word "preached" in v7 and "preaching" in v9, the Greek word for speaking in 7 and in 9 is "dialegomai" from which we get the word "dialogue." The Greek word means to discuss, to reason together, or to argue. Most English versions don't make that meaning clear in this passage.

Acts 20:7 (NRSV)

7 On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.

Doug Twaddell:

That is a distinction I should have made. Having a "dialogue" or discussion was by far the most prevalent form of teaching. Giving a speech was not common in the synagogues and that practice carried over into the early church.

Joanne Caffie:

This all makes sense about women's silence as well. Thx 4 the clarification!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug. Chapter 20 always makes me swell.

December 9: Acts 21-22 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 12-9-17

Acts 21-22

After leaving Miletus, they made their way to Tyre and stayed with some disciples for about seven days. The disciples warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Again, they pray with Paul's party before they leave. Eventually, they arrive in Caesarea where they go to Philip's house. We also find out that Philip is identified as an evangelist.

Agabus, a prophet, comes to them from Judea. He symbolically takes Paul's belt and ties up his own hands and feet to demonstrate what the Spirit says will happen to Paul when he gets to Jerusalem. This causes the believers to beg him not to go there. Paul tells them that he is ready even to die for the name of the Lord. After a few days, they head for Jerusalem.

At Jerusalem, they meet with the elders of the church and tell them about their interactions with the Gentiles. They glorified God at the news, but warned Paul that there were rumors going around that he was teaching Jews to stop following the laws of Moses including circumcision. They want Paul to submit to Jewish customary purification to demonstrate that it is not true.

After the purification, Paul goes to the Temple. When some Jews from Asia see him, they start telling people that he was teaching against Judaism and they assume that he had brought one of the Gentiles into the Temple that had traveled with him. This ignites the fury of the Jews. They drag him out of the Temple and start beating him intending to kill him. When the commander of the Roman soldiers realizes what is happening, he intervenes and protects Paul by arresting him. Upon questioning the crowd, it cannot be determined why they were attacking him. When they try to take him into the barracks to get him away from the mob, it is difficult to get away from them. Paul asks to talk to the commander who apparently thinks he might be an Egyptian that caused some problems. Paul tells him that he is from Tarsus and would like to address the crowd. When he is given permission, he speaks to the crowd in Hebrew

When Paul begins speaking in Hebrew, the crowd listens. He begins by detailing his credentials as a Jew, including his heritage and education. He also cites his persecution of the church and offers the High Priest as a witness of these things. This probably sounds pretty good to the Jewish crowd, but then he tells them of his conversion on the way to Damascus. He tells about being blinded and Ananias giving him back his sight. He also details a conversation he had with Jesus while in a trance at the Temple where concern was raised that the Jews would not accept him and he was told to take the message of Christ to the Gentiles.

At the mention of any supposed message from God going to the Gentiles, the crowd is reignited. At this point, the commander takes Paul into the barracks and orders that he be whipped until they find out what he has done. Paul informs the soldiers that he is a Roman citizen, which means they cannot touch him without a proper trial. When they tell the commander, he goes to Paul and tells him that he had purchased his citizenship with a lot of money. Paul lets him know that he was born a Roman citizen, which would carry more weight with the Roman government. With this information, the commander also becomes afraid because he had tied him up and order him to be whipped.

The next day, the commander takes steps to put Paul in front of the Jewish council to determine what the accusation against him is and how to move forward.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Charles Fry:
A minor detail in the story, affirming again Luke's historicity in the details, in the reference to the Egyptian messianic pretender:
(Arch SB) Josephus told of an Egyptian false prophet who some years earlier had led 4, 000 people (Josephus, through a misreading of a Greek capital letter, reported the number as 30, 000) out to the Mount of Olives. Roman soldiers killed hundreds, but the leader escaped. "Terrorists" (the Greek here is a loanword from Latin sicarii, meaning "dagger-men") were violent assassins.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Paul's courage shines in chapter 22. Truly the Lord used Paul, "He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15 & 16) And he suffered much for His name. What a hero of faith! Thank you, Doug, for another excellent lesson.

December 16: Acts 23-24 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 12-16-207

Acts 23-24

Paul is now in front of the Sanhedrin. When he starts by stating that his conscience is clear, Ananias, the high priest, orders him to be smacked in the mouth. Paul challenges his authority to do that and says that God will strike him down. Others standing near by point out that he has threatened the high priest. Paul immediately admits he did not know who the high priest was and quotes from Exodus 22:28 about not speaking evil of Jewish leaders. Even though he does not agree with Ananias and does not recognize his religious authority over him anymore, Paul still respects the office of the leader of the Jewish nation. Perhaps this is an example that many of us should take to heart.

Paul is knowledgeable enough about the makeup of the group to realize that there is a natural rift between the Pharisees and Sadducees. He announces that he is being judged because of his belief in the resurrection. This is probably an argument that Paul was involved in many times because of his position as a Pharisee. This causes quite an uproar as the discussion becomes about the resurrection instead of about Paul. It is easy to see how politically charged this council had become. The Pharisees now actually side with Paul while the Sadducees remain against him.

The Roman commander is afraid for Paul's life, so he removes him from the council and takes him back to the barracks. That night, Christ comforts him. Paul is told not to be afraid because he will live to testify in Rome.

More than 40 Jews take an oath that they will not eat or drink until they have killed Paul. They ask the council to send for Paul, under the pretense of further questioning, so they have an

opportunity to kill him. Paul's nephew hears about the ruse and informs Paul who sends him to the commander. The commander instructs the nephew not to tell anyone else and makes plans to send Paul away from Jerusalem.

With a small army of 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen, Paul is sent, in the middle of the night, to Caesarea to see Felix. He sends a letter to Felix detailing the events in Jerusalem with the Jewish council. He also points out that he has found nothing worthy of death and will instruct the council to send representatives to state their case before him.

I have often wondered about the men that took the oath. They obviously did not kill Paul. I wonder how long they went without food or drink before conceding they were not going to fulfill the oath.

When Felix reads the letter, he tells Paul that he will hear the case when Paul's accusers arrive. Until then, Paul is kept in Herod's palace.

Five days later, the council sends Tertullus, an orator, to present the case against Paul. His speech begins with an over the top praise of Felix. The accusations are that Paul was a ringleader of dissention among Jews and profaned the Temple. They claim they wanted to judge him according to Jewish law, but Lysias, the commander, violently took Paul from them and forced Felix to spend his time dealing with the issue.

When Paul is given a chance to respond, he denies the charges that he was inciting a crowd. He was just trying to worship God in Jerusalem. He does confess to being a part of "The Way" which the council saw as just another sect of Jews. He points out that, like the council, he believes in the Law and Prophets. He also admits that he has hope in a future resurrection of both the just and the unjust. He concedes that he feels he is being judged because of a claim he made about the resurrection before the council.

Felix has some knowledge about "The Way" and wants to hear from the commander, Lysias. He postpones judgement until that time. Felix tells the soldiers that while Paul is being held, they are to give him liberties and not keep his friends from visiting him. This would be an indication that he initially believes Paul has done nothing wrong.

A few days later, Felix called for Paul. Felix and Drusilla, his wife who is a Jew, want to hear more about his faith in Christ. While discussing righteousness, self-control and future judgement, Felix becomes afraid. He famously tells him to go away and they will talk again when it is more convenient. Felix continues to hold Paul and periodically call for him in the hopes that Paul will offer money in exchange for release. After two years of this, Felix leaves Paul in this situation when Porcius Festus takes over as governor.

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:
Thank you Doug!

Comment:

Charles Fry:
When Paul said the high priest would be struck by God, he spoke prophetic truth. Shortly after this he was removed from office by the Romans, and then when Jerusalem was in revolt his house was burned by Jewish zealots and he was hunted down as he hid in a water channel and assassinated, according to Josephus.

(Arch SB) "Ananias, the son of Nebedaeus, was the high priest from a.d. 47 to 59. He is not to be confused with the high priest Annas (a.d. 6–15). Ananias was noted for cruelty and violence. When the revolt against Rome broke out, he was assassinated by his own people."

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:
Thanks for the extra history.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thanks for your faithfulness to the study, Doug! Saturday has been one of my favorite study days this past year. I really appreciate your excellent summary each week.

December 23: Acts 25-26 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 12-23-2017

Acts 25-26

When Festus takes over as Governor, the Jews try again to kill Paul. They request that he be sent to Jerusalem with the goal of ambushing him on the way. Festus rules that Paul should be kept in Caesarea until he arrived. He invites the Jews to send accusers to meet him there and he will hear a trial against Paul.

At this trial, the Jews throw many accusations against Paul, but he is able to defend all of them. Festus asks Paul if he is willing to go to Jerusalem to be judged. Paul claims his right as a Roman citizen and requests to be tried before Caesar himself. Festus agrees to send him.

A few days later, King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice, come to see Festus. Festus runs Paul's case by Agrippa to seek his input and thoughts. Festus tells Agrippa that there were no charges worthy of Roman punishment. There are only complaints concerning the Jewish religion and about some man named Jesus who had died but Paul claimed was alive again. He also tells Agrippa about the request to go to Rome to be tried by Caesar. Although this is perfectly legal, it is strange because Festus can't find anything to charge him with. Agrippa decides he would like to hear Paul, too.

The next day, Agrippa and Bernice enter the judgement area with a great ceremony and all the important people from the city show up. Festus stands up and repeats the claims against Paul, that there was nothing he had found worthy of death and that Paul had requested to see Caesar. He also points out that this trial is in the hopes of determining relevant charges to send Paul to Caesar with.

Agrippa gives Paul permission to speak. Paul compliments Agrippa's knowledge of Jewish customs. He again recounts his credentials as a Pharisee and that he is being judged because of his stance on the resurrection. This time, he also includes an account of his journey to Damascus, the light, the voice of Jesus and his conversion. He tells Agrippa that all he did was obey the vision and the Jews don't like his message of repentance.

Upon hearing all of this, Agrippa proclaims that Paul must be insane. Paul responds by charging that he believes that Agrippa knows all of these things, because he is well versed in the events. Paul also challenges the possibility that Agrippa may actually believe all these things, too. Agrippa concedes that what Paul has said has almost persuaded him to become a Christian. Paul points out that he wishes that everyone gathered there would convert. Agrippa then privately consults with Festus and Bernice. He points out that, if Paul had not appealed to Caesar, they could set him free because he has done nothing worthy of imprisonment, let alone death.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Denise Waits:
I never understood why Paul appealed to Caesar if he would've been released without doing so.

Replies:

Marc Hermon:
It was the will of the Holy Spirit and the Lord Himself. Also the fulfillment of prophecy. Acts 19:21 , Acts 20:22-24, Acts 21:8-14

Acts 23:11 "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

Charles Fry:
I don't dispute the hand of God being in these things, but from a human perspective, it no doubt appeared to Paul that the new and unaware governor was about to consent to send him to Jerusalem, to win the favor of the Jews, not comprehending the likelihood of murder in the process. To prevent that impending egregious error, Paul called upon his rights as a Roman. Paul knew his adversaries very well, as a former insider of that opposition to Christ. It certainly didn't look to Paul like this new governor was going to release him.

Acts 25:9 (NIV)
9 Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

Paul Rutherford:
Or simply Paul's undying desire to preach the Gospel to as many as would hear him speak as many did throughout this process. I am confident that Paul planted much Gospel seed along the way. 🤔

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thank you so much, Doug! Saturdays will forever connect my gratitude and thoughts to you leading this study. Although this day is where I've been best versed I have learned so much the past year. It's really helped to have your thoughts and brethren's comments for different

perspectives I had not considered. Very edifying. In today's study Agrippa's statement to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" can also be interpreted, "With so few words and such short time, are you trying to convert me?" It could be mockery toward Paul that he is trying to make a Christian out of Agrippa. Of course Paul replies back yes - Not only you but everyone here.

December 30: Acts 27-28 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 12-30-2017

Acts 27-28

To transport Paul to Rome, it is decided to travel by boat. He is entrusted to a centurion named Julius. Paul is also allowed to take some brethren along. During the trip, Julius is kind to Paul and allows him to visit friends and receive care. Because of weather, they sail near Cyprus to Myra in Lycia.

At this point, they change ships. The weather still causing problems, they sail near Crete to the city of Fair Havens. While here, there is a debate about whether they should continue. Paul suggests they stay for the winter, but the captain and the owner of the boat convince Julius that they can continue as far as Phoenix and winter there.

Soon after they are underway, a Euroclydon (nor'easter) hits. The crew is forced into many attempts to survive the storm. When they can no longer sail into the wind, they try going with it. They wrap the ship with cables to hold it together under the pressure. They throw some of the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. The storm continues for many days and the crew begins to believe they will die.

When they had gone a few days without food, Paul reminds them that he tried to warn them. However, he tells them that God has told him that no one will die if they run the ship aground on a certain island. Nonetheless, when the sailors realize they are getting close to land, they are afraid to wreck so they drop anchors. When it does not look like the anchors will hold, the crew makes plans to abandon ship. Paul tells Julius that the crew must stay for God's promise to be fulfilled. The soldiers proceed to cut away the lifeboats.

Paul encourages the sailors to eat (they had not eaten for 14 days) and again promises that they will all live. Paul gives thanks for the food and they all eat. When everyone is full, they throw the remaining cargo overboard. They spot a beach that they are willing to run aground on and raise the anchors. Unfortunately, the ship stalls in a shallow place before they reach the land. This causes the ship to begin to break apart. The soldiers make a plan to kill the prisoners, so they do not escape, but Julius prevents them and gives the command that everyone is to get to the shore by any means possible. Just like God promised, everyone survived.

They find out the Island is called Malta. The people living there build a fire and are kind to them. As Paul is gathering some wood, a poisonous snake bites him. Paul just shakes it off into the fire. The people decide that Paul must have been a murderer, because even though he survived the shipwreck, justice will prevail. They continue to watch him for signs of the poison that will indicate his impending death, but nothing happens. Paul is just fine. They change their minds and decide that Paul must be a god.

An important man on the island, Publius, hosts them for 3 days. While they are there, the man's father becomes sick. Paul heals him. This leads to others coming to Paul to be healed.

After 3 months, they board a ship that honored the Roman gods Castor and Pollux. When they would make port stops, Paul was able to find brethren. Pretty soon, word spreads and brethren began meeting them at other ports.

When they finally arrive in Rome, Paul, while technically still a prisoner, is guarded by one soldier and allowed to live by himself. Within 3 days, Paul calls together the Jewish leaders in Rome. He appeals to them as Jews assuring them that he only appealed to Caesar because the Jews in Jerusalem did not give him any choice. He had been found guilty of nothing.

The Jewish leaders tell Paul that no one has come from Jerusalem or even sent word about Paul. However, they have heard of the church (they call it a sect) and want to know more about it. A time is set and a meeting takes place. Paul teaches them all day about Jesus using both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Just like everywhere else, some believe and some do not. When he quotes from Isaiah and informs them that the salvation of God will be taught to the Gentiles and they will believe, they leave.

Paul continues to live in a rented house for 2 years. While there, he taught many people that came to him about the kingdom of God and Jesus. The whole time, no one tried to prevent him from teaching in the name of the Lord.

Comment:

Beverly Schoonover Wattenbarger:

Thank you, Doug, for all your time and efforts for this study. I'm sure this has been a tough year for you. God bless you and your loved ones.

Comment:

Marc Hermon:

Thank you Doug for your Saturday efforts and closing out the 7 Bible Study for 2017. Many blessings to all of you who persevered all year and read through the entire Word of God. Also many blessings to all of you who spent more time in the Word of God than you did in 2016. "For 2 years, no one tried to prevent him from teaching in the name of the Lord." No one currently is preventing us from reading the Word for 2 years either! Let's take advantage of that blessing. Please join us again in starting on Monday as we read through the Bible in chronological order for another year in 2018.

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Thank you Doug for your many posts elucidating the beginning of the gospel and the early days of the church. Your efforts have been a blessing and provided good encouragement to stay the course!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Yvonna Hartman:

Thank you Doug for your work. Enjoyed it very much.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Reading the gospels and first 30 years of Christ's Church was truly the best! I literally have tears in my eyes, full of thankfulness for these words passed through the ages. So grateful to you, Doug, and all the brethren who helped me learn new details & perspectives I had not considered before. What a great few chapters to end on- clearly shows the spreading of the good news and success of the church was not mere work of man. Once again thank you so much, Doug! You persevered through difficult weeks throughout 2017. Despite, you continued to evangelize. We are grateful for your commitment to Christ and the Kingdom. You're a great blessing!