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| C:\Users\William\Documents\Graphics\Cross Black with Dark Red 2.jpg | The Acts of the Apostles |
|  |  |
| 2/16/2019 | Volume 2: Peter and the Jewish Church. |
|  | This second letter from Luke to Theophilus provides an account of the early Christians and the first century church. It focuses on the Apostles Peter and Paul and their rolls in the developing religion of Christianity. In Volume 2 of this study, the focus will be on Acts chapters 2:4 to 12:27 which describe the activities of Peter, James, John and others in the development of the Jewish church.. |

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The Acts of the Apostles

Volume 2: Peter and the Jewish Church.

# Introduction:

The book commonly known as the Acts of the Apostles is the second in a set of two letters written by the same author to a person identified as Theophilus.[[1]](#footnote-1) Taken together they provide a history of the Christian movement from the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ through his ascension into heaven, then onto the extension of his new religion from Jerusalem to Samaria and then to the farthest reaches of the known world. Although they are written by the same man, they are different types of writings. His first letter, the Gospel of Luke, is similar to the other letters known as the Gospels especially Mark and Matthew. It is best characterized as a Greco-Roman Biography. As a biography, Luke deals primarily with the life and deeds of Jesus Christ. The Acts of the Apostles on the other hand is unlike any other book in the New Testament. It has been most generally classified as a historical work. It differs from Luke in that it does not concentrate on a single individual, but introduces several people throughout its pages.

Acts begins with a connecting statement that reminds Theophilus about the nature of these letters. Doing this he sets the stage for the second volume to continue to trace the Christian movement since the death of Jesus.

In the Gospel of Luke, the author makes the following statement in his introduction:

 **Luke 1:1-4 (KJV)**
1  Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2  Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3  It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4  That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

He points out several things that are important to the study of the Acts of the Apostles. Among these are:

1. There have been other efforts to write about the things which their community believes
2. The writer has a “perfect understanding of all things from the very first”
3. This is written so that Theophilus might know for certain those things he has been taught

Clearly these are just as important to the study of the Acts of the Apostles as they are to the Gospel of Luke. The author has a “perfect understanding” of these things from the very beginning to the time he was writing the letters. We can ask for no better historian than this to provide us a glimpse of the spread of Christianity in the first century.

The author of both of these letters has been identified as Luke, the physician and a compatriot of Paul. Luke has been accepted as the author since at least the second century. However, some scholars dispute this.

Acts has been dated from 63 AD at the time of Paul’s imprisonment in Rome to as late as 95 AD. Most scholars today consider the most likely date to be somewhere between 80-90 AD.

Author of Acts

The author is not named in either volume.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBurkett2002196-6) According to Church tradition dating from the 2nd century, he was the "Luke" named as a companion of the [apostle Paul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostle_Paul) in three of the letters attributed to Paul himself; this view is still sometimes advanced, but "a critical consensus emphasizes the countless contradictions between the account in Acts and the authentic Pauline letters."[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles#cite_note-FOOTNOTETheissenMerz199832-7) (An example can be seen by comparing Acts' accounts of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-31, 22:6-21, and 26:9-23) with Paul's own statement that he remained unknown to Christians in Judea after that event (Galatians 1:17-24).)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles#cite_note-FOOTNOTEPerkins1998253-8) He admired Paul, but his theology was significantly different from Paul's on key points and he does not (in Acts) represent Paul's views accurately.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBoring2012590-9) He was educated, a man of means, probably urban, and someone who respected manual work, although not a worker himself; this is significant, because more high-brow writers of the time looked down on the artisans and small business-people who made up the early church of Paul and were presumably Luke's audience.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles#cite_note-FOOTNOTEGreen199735-10)

Wikipedia, Acts of the Apostles

The intended recipient of this letter, as well as the Gospel of Luke, is a person named Theophilus. He is identified in both the first chapter of Luke and Acts and is never mentioned again in the cannon. Since Luke calls him “most excellent Theophilus” in the Gospel it is assumed that he is a person in the upper class of society and maybe even a government official. Nothing else can be discerned about him.

In this second volume of the Study of Acts, we will begin in Antioch where the Holy Spirit separates out Paul and Barnabas for their first missionary trip and their journey that leads to the universal church of Christ.

## Method of study:

There are several ways to study this book. We are going to combine two of them into what I hope will be a unique study of the Acts of the Apostles, which we shall hereinafter call simply “Acts”. To understand this better, any history book will contain certain types of information. Among these are stories, speeches, tracking of the movements of the key characters, and supporting information including chronological data. Acts is not unlike this.

Because Acts in a general history book, it can best be studied by:

1. Studying the chronology found there. This is done by closely studying the spread of Christianity. Acts 1:8, introduces this method by quoting Jesus when he commanded his disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. A student of Acts can, therefore, study the spread of Christianity in three circles, namely;
	1. Jerusalem,
	2. Judea and Samaria, and finally
	3. Throughout the known world.
2. Studying the structure of Acts. Once again this can be divided into three sections.
	1. First is the transition from the Gospel (Acts 1:1-26),
	2. Second is the activities of Peter (Acts 2:1-12:25) and
	3. Finally the activities of Paul (Acts12:1-28:21)
3. Studying the themes found within Acts. Speakers will deliver different messages to different audiences. In Acts, the themes can be classified into three groups:
	1. Exhorting Christians, encouraging them to face the trials and tribulations that they will face.
	2. Converting new disciples, and
	3. Defending the doctrine. Usually to government officials in an effort to convince them that the basis of this new religion are factual.
4. Identifying the significant events such as; speeches, miracles, prayers, and persecutions recorded in Acts. The speeches in Acts occupy almost 25% of the book. There are around 19 speeches recorded in Acts. Of these 6 are attributed to Peter, 8 to Paul, 1 to Stephen, 1 to James, 1 to Ananias, and 1 to Priscilla and Aquila and 1 to Jesus. Luke records xx miracles, xx prayers and xx accounts of persecutions in his history of the early church.
5. Considering the skeptics. Studying accusations of error proposed by skeptics, and the answers to them.
6. And finally, studying Acts verse by verse, tracing the primary characters as they flow through this historic period as recorded by Luke.

We are going to combine each of these methods of study in this course. We will begin with an overview of each of these methods, then begin by identifying the structure and chronological period of that section, then look into the themes in those verses. From the themes we will move into an overview of the significant events and a brief investigation into accusations of skeptics before we enter the verse by verse study. This will be an exhaustive study that will likely take several weeks or even a few months to do correctly. However, it should be anything but boring as we get a glimpse into the development of the church of Christ in the first century.

# chronology of the acts of the apostles:

As stated earlier, the best estimate of the date of origin of Acts is between 80 and 90 AD. Chronologically, Acts covers the church from about 40 days after Passover in 30 AD to the imprisonment of Paul in Rome in 63 AD. In Acts 1:8, Jesus identified three periods of church development which we will use as broad chronological periods for this study. These are the development of the church in Jerusalem, the development of the church in Judea and Samaria, and the development of the world-wide church.

#### Development of the church in Jerusalem:

This is the earliest period of church history. The infant church was born on Pentecost in 30 AD, about ten days after Jesus ascended into Heaven or fifty days after His resurrection. This period is covered by Luke in Acts 1:1 through Acts 8:1. The principle characters are the apostles and the other 108 disciples including Mary the mother of Jesus. The key verse in this section is Acts 2:36 where the Jews cried out “What should we do?” once Peter and the other Apostles convinced them that they had had a part in the murder of Gods Son.

#### Development of the church in Judea and Samaria:

The second period of church development discussed by Luke in Acts begins with the church being exported from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria. This period of church development begins in Acts 8:1 and continues to Acts 12:24.

#### Development of the world wide church:

Once the church had been established in Judea and Samaria, Jesus wanted it taken to the farthest reaches of the world. Beginning in Acts 13:1, Luke expounds on the development of the world wide church. Paul was instrumental in achieving this goal.

In this volume, the chronological setting will exclusively be found within the “Development of the World Wide Church”.

### STRUCTURE OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES:

Acts can be structurally divided into three sections. The transition from the Gospel of Luke, the activities of Peter and the activities of Paul. While there are other men and women discussed in the last two sections besides Peter and Paul, they are arguably the primary characters in those sections.

#### Acts 1:1-26. Transition from the Gospel of Luke:

In this section, Luke transitions from the gospel to the history of the church. This section contains only one chapter and provides a connection between the earlier work that he had sent ant this one.

#### Acts 2:1-Acts 12:25. Peter and the jewish church

In the second section, Luke concentrates on the activities of Peter and the church as it begins as Jewish organization. Because Jesus gave Peter the keys to His kingdom[[2]](#footnote-2) he opened the doors twice, once to the Jews in Acts chapter 2 and finally to the Gentiles by baptizing Cornelius and his family in Acts chapter 10. Peter’s role continued into the final section for a short period, then he disappears from Luke’s history book.

#### Acts 13:1-Acts 28:31. paul and the universal church

The final section in Luke’s description of the development of the early church is its transition from an exclusively Jewish religion to a true universal religion. While Peter had a role it this with his conversion of the first Gentile Christians, Cornelius and his household, it is Paul who is the primary architect of the universal church.

### principle themes of the acts of the apostles:

Acts contains an overriding theme and three additional themes. The primary theme of the book of the Acts of the Apostles is that God is behind this new religion and that he is directing its development and spread. From this idea, three principle themes are evident. These are, Christians exhorting other Christians, Christians converting people to Christianity, and Christians defending the factual basis of Christianity. For clarity, these are titled Exhortation, Evangelism, and Apologies.

#### Exhortation:

Encouraging the early Christians was one of the principle reasons Luke wrote these two volumes. In the Gospel of Luke, he clearly told Theophlius that he was writing so” That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Luke wanted his intended audience, Theophlius, to be well grounded in the Christian doctrine so that he would be thoroughly convinced that what he had been taught was the truth.

Unlike some other Christians of this period, Luke did not think that Jesus would return in their lifetime.[[4]](#footnote-4) Luke makes it clear that Christians should not be concerned about the end of the world and the return of Jesus, but they should focus on introducing Christianity to the people of the world.[[5]](#footnote-5) His encouragement to the Christians to stop being concerned with the return of Jesus and to evangelize the world fits well with the exhortations throughout the book.

The speeches of exhortation presented by Luke begins with Jesus when he tells the disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Ghost falls on them and this will allow them to be a witness of him throughout the world.[[6]](#footnote-6) They continue with speeches by Peter, Paul and others.

Exhortation is just as important today is it was in the period that Luke wrote Acts. Today, Christians are faced with some of the same issues that they dealt with then. Christians are persecuted, both directly and indirectly by non-believers today. Members of other religious organizations kill believers of Jesus today, just as they did then. Satan works hard to cause doubts and questions that are designed to destroy our faith. Open hostility to Christians can be seen on college and university campuses here in America today. Because of this, it is easy for Christians to become depressed and speeches of encouragement and exhortation are essential to our religious health.

#### Evangelism:

Speeches of Christians to non-Christians are well represented in Acts. It should be noted that the speakers presented a message based on the needs and understanding of their listeners. Not every person needed to hear the same message, some had heard of Jesus and believed on him, others had not. Some understood the need for men to repent of their sins to be pleasing to God while others had no such understanding. A speaker seeking to convert a person who had not heard of Jesus would, of necessity, begin with Jesus as did Phillip when he rode with the Ethiopian official. Other speakers would only give the necessary instructions on how to become a Christian to people who already were convinced that Jesus was the son of God and that they needed to repent. This was the method used by Ananias when he met with Saul.

Evangelism is critical to the growth of the church today, just as it was in the first century. Very few people just happen to walk into the meeting of the church uninvited and un-encouraged. It is absolutely essential for Christians to work to convert their neighbors and families. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark both end with Jesus commanding his disciples to teach the world about him, making additional disciples.

#### Apologetics:

Speeches of Christians to non-Christians, usually government officials, that defend the facts of the Christian movement as recorded by Luke are speeches of apologetics. These speeches were intended to convince the listeners that Jesus lived, died, arose and ascended into heaven. While they also caused some, like Felix, to seriously consider becoming a Christian their principle purpose was to convince them that the Christian faith is based on historical facts and not mere rumors or superstition.

With Satan’s efforts, people today believe that life came from non-life, that the universe exploded into existence with no cause or design. Men claim that Jesus was a fictional character, or at most that He was only a very good man. They deny His virgin birth, His supernatural powers, His divine nature and especially His resurrection and ascension into Heaven. Defending these facts are just as important today as they were then, in fact Paul himself tells us that if Jesus did not rise from the dead we are the most miserable creatures that ever existed.[[7]](#footnote-7)

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Significant events will be presented in a table format identifying the type (i.e. speech, miracle, prayer, persecution, etc.), who was involved, what happened, the result and the particular verses involved.

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

This section will also be presented in a table format. It will list the verses involved, the skeptics’’ view, and the Christians View[[8]](#footnote-8).

# sTUDY GUIDE: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## Chapter 2:

### CHRONILOGICAL PERIOD:

#### The development of the church in jerusalem:

Acts Chapter 2 continues the period of the development of the church in Jerusalem. This is the birthplace of the church of Christ. This chapter begins on Pentecost in the year 30 AD, placing it on May 27 or 28, 30 AD on our calendar. Since May 28, 30 AD was on a Sunday, I prefer that date. Luke gives us no indication of the period of time covered by this chapter, only that is involved a number of days.

The principle dates involved are:

Chapter 2 opens the section on the establishment of the church in Jerusalem. The Apostles are all involved in Luke’s story here, however it is Peter that Luke concentrates on for most of the chapter.

### STRUCTURAL SETTING:

#### Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 2 opens the second section in the structure of Acts. This section deals with the Jewish church and the principal character is the Apostle Peter[[9]](#footnote-9). It traces the birth of the church in Jerusalem as being open only to the Jews to the beginning of the Gentile church and the Apostle Paul’s activities who becomes the principal character in the remaining parts of Luke’s narrative.

### THEMES:

#### Evangelism and exhortation

This chapter deals both with exhortation and evangelism. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is certainly a story of encouragement, there can be no doubt that the Apostles on whom the Holy Ghost descended and those who witnessed the results of that baptism by the Holy Ghost were strongly encouraged. How could they not be, Jesus had told them it was going to happen just before he went back to heaven and now it had happened. The power of the Holy Ghost must have been felt by those on whom he descended, there could not have been anyone of them who did not remember their Lord and who were not ready to conquer the world for Him!

Then the remarkable, and impossible, happened. They begin speaking in languages that they had not learned! They were boldly proclaiming Jesus, the crucified savior, to a crowd of Jews who spoke at least sixteen languages but everyone heard in their native tongue. And the church was born in May, 30 AD.

The people who heard the gospel in their own languages that day were:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Parthians | Medes | Elamites  | People from Mesopotamia |
| Residents of Judea | Residents of Cappadocia | Residents of Pontus | Residents of Asia |
| People from Phrygia | People from Pamphylia | People from Egypt | People from Libya around Cyrene |
| Romans | Jews | Crete’s | Arabians |

###  **SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**:

Peter uses the keys to the Kingdom that Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19) to open the kingdom to new converts. His impassioned speech was at once powerful and full of love. It was particularly effective in convincing the Jews in Jerusalem that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The facts surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection were still fresh in their minds. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Peter | Acts 2:14-39 | Jesus Christ who YOU crucified is the risen Lord. | About three thousand new Christians. |
| Prayers |  |  |  |  |
| Miracles | Jesus and Holy Spirit | Acts 2:1-4 | Baptism of the Holy Spirit | Apostles spoke in foreign languages and began to preach a risen savior. |
|  | Apostles | Acts 2:43 | Many wonders and signs | Christians were strengthened and the communal nature of the church was born. |
| Persecutions |  |  |  |  |
| Major Events | Peter | Acts 2:38-41 | Birth of the church of Christ | Salvation for all mankind is finally coming to the world. |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[10]](#footnote-10)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 2:21 | Will those that “call on the name of the Lord” be saved?Luke (Acts 2:21), Paul (Romans 10:13) and Joel (Joel 2:32) all claim that calling on the name of the Lord will save you. Jesus, on the other hand denies this (Matthew 7:21) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 14:12), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 8:18) and Micah (Micah 3:4) all agree with Jesus. | It is important to understand what is meant by “calling on the name of the Lord” means. Clearly it is not just calling out to Jesus by saying Lord, Lord. That is why Matthew said not all that do that will be saved. To be saved, a person had to do the will of God. Jesus clarified this in Matthew 25:31-46 where he said that salvation requires action. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah all are speaking about the Israelites who had rejected God. He was telling the prophets that He would not listen to them when they began to cry out to Him but would allow them to be punished for their sins. |
| Acts 2:22 | Luke claims that Jesus did many signs (Acts 2:22) and both John (John 20:30) and Mark (Mark 16:20) agree. But earlier Mark denied this (Mark 8:12) as do Matthew (Matthew 12:39, 16:4). And even Luke himself claims that he did not do many signs in his gospel (Luke 11:29)[[11]](#footnote-11) | In this scripture Luke says only that “*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:*” John does say in John 20:30 that Jesus did *“many other signs”* indicating that there were many miracles done by Jesus. Several of the passages listed indicating that Jesus did not do many miracles are actually reporting situations where Jesus resisted performing a miracle because the religious leaders were trying to tempt or trick him. The passage in Luke is actually a quote from Jesus where he is teaching about the wickedness of the society that existed then. In none of these do the writers indicate the number of miracles that Jesus did. |
| Acts 2:24, 43 | Who raised Jesus from the grave?Luke says God dis this remarkable feat (Acts 2:14, 32:4:19, 13:30). Paul agrees with Luke (Galatians 1:1, Colossians 2:12, 1 Thessalonians 1:10). However John claims that Jesus raised himself (John 2:19-21)[[12]](#footnote-12) | John’s gospel is loaded with passages that prove that Jesus is God. From the opening verses and throughout the book the fact that Jesus and God the Father share the Divine Godhead is evident. Being so “inextricably intertwined”[[13]](#footnote-13)that Jesus’ statement in no way indicates that God the Father was not involved in the resurrection.  |
| Acts 2:30 | Who was Jesus’ father?Luke claims he was Joseph (Acts 2:30, 13:23). So do Paul (Romans 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:8), whoever wrote Hebrews (Hebrews 2:16) and John (Revelation 22:16). However Matthew (Matthew 1:18, 25) and Luke (Luke 1:31-35) deny this.[[14]](#footnote-14) | Actually none of these verses say that Jesus was the son of Joseph. They all say that he was descended from David, except for Hebrews where the writer says that he is descended from Abraham. The lineages given in both Matthew and Luke trace his ancestry to David and Abraham. Both Matthew 1:16 and Luke 3:23 state that Joseph was only married to Mary and not that he was the father of Jesus.  |
| Acts 2:38 | In whose name is baptism to be performed?Luke says Jesus (Acts 2:38, 10:48, 19:5) while Matthew says “*the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matthew 28:19) | The intention of Peter here is not to give the baptismal formula as is clear from the occasion and audience he addresses. [As John Gill says](http://www.freegrace.net/gill/Acts/Acts_2.htm#38): “not to the exclusion of the Father, and of the Spirit, in whose name also this ordinance is to be administered, [Matthew 28:19](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/mt/28.html#v19), but the name of Jesus Christ is particularly mentioned, because of these Jews, who had before rejected and denied him as the Messiah; but now, upon their repentance and faith, they are to be baptized in his name, by his authority, according to his command; professing their faith in him, devoting themselves to him, and calling on his name.”[[15]](#footnote-15) |

### VERSE STUDY

##### Acts 2:5-13

5  And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.
6  Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7  And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8  And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9  Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10   Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11  Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12  And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13   Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

##### Discussion Acts 2:5-13

When word got around Jerusalem that a strong, loud wind occurred INSIDE a house, that flames of fire had appeared above the Apostles and they began to speak languages that they had not learned and had no previous ability to speak a crowd began to grow outside the house. In this crowd were people who spoke at least sixteen native languages.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Luke says that each heard the speakers in their native language. This could have been that the Apostles spoke and the Holy Ghost caused the individuals in the crowd to hear in their native language, or it could be that different Apostles were speaking in different languages at different locations around the house. I think that the second makes most sense considering the statement recorded by Luke in verse 13, that these were drunk. There would not be this misunderstanding of what was happening if the Holy Ghost caused the listeners to hear in their language, this only really makes sense when some hear people speaking something that the listener cannot understand. Regardless, something really strange was happening and it drew a crowd.

##### Acts 2:14-36

 14  But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15  For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. 16  But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17  And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18  And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19  And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20  The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21  And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. 22  Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23  Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24  Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. 25  For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: 26  Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: 27  Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 28  Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. 29  Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30  Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31  He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32  This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33  Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34  For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35  Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36  Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

##### Discussion Acts 2:14-36

Peter quickly counters the accusation that they Apostles are drunk. He reminds the listeners that it is only 9:00 AM (the third hour of the day). The importance of this is that every Jew understood that this was an hour for prayer, not drinking and eating. Therefore a devout Jew would never be drunk at this time of the day. He then goes on to preach the very first gospel sermon. This sermon can be outlined as follow:

1. Joel prophesied about what is now happening
	1. God will pour out His spirit
		1. Young men and women will prophesy
		2. Young men will see visions
		3. Old men will see dreams
		4. Servants and handmaids will prophesy
	2. God will cause signs in heaven and on earth
		1. The sun will be dark
		2. The moon will turn to blood
	3. Only those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved
2. Jesus Christ approved by God with
	1. Miracles
	2. Signs
	3. Both seen by the listeners
3. You have crucified and slain
	1. God raised Him up
	2. God loosened the pains of death
4. David spoke of this time
	1. God will not leave my soul in Hell
	2. David was not speaking of himself
		1. His tomb is with us today
		2. God swore an oath to David
			1. He would raise up a descendent that would save the world
	3. God promised to raise up one who would sit on his throne
5. It could not be David, his tomb is known at that time
6. God spoke of Jesus, a descendent of David
7. You crucified the one prophesied by David and approved by God
	1. He is at Gods right hand now
	2. What you see is being caused by Him
	3. You should all know that it is He that God made Christ

This sermon resonated through the Jews. They understood the prophesies, they knew the signs, they remembered the things that happened just 50 days earlier.

##### Acts 2:37-41

 37  Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? 38  Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39  For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40  And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41  Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

##### Discussion Acts 2:37-41

After Peters impassioned speech, the listening Jews understood what had happened at Passover, and their role in it. This caused them to exclaim “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” What follows is the first opportunity given by the Apostles for men to become Christians. Peter told them to “Repent and be baptized”, he did not have to tell them to hear about Jesus, they knew about him, they either saw him or knew others who did. He did not have to tell them to believe, they knew what had happened, they were either eyewitnesses, participants, or knew others who were. They were at a place in their lives where they only need to take the final steps to become Christians, therefore Peter only had to tell them to “repent and be baptized”. [[17]](#footnote-17)

Peter continues by telling them that the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost is to them and their children, to all that are afar off, and to all that God shall call. The Holy Ghost, speaking through Peter gives an indication here that God would extend salvation to all men, that is was not something reserved for the Jews.

The result of this speech is that 3,000 new Christians were born that day. This raises the number of disciples to about 3,120, including the Apostles.

##### Acts 2:42-47

 42  And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43  And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44  And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45  And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. 46  And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47  Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

##### Discussion Acts 2:42-47

Luke tells us how the first Christians acted after accepting Jesus. They continued in the Apostles doctrine, they maintained fellowship with one another, they ate together, they prayed together. They also witnessed miracles done by the Apostles which must have given them proof that their belief in Jesus was real and blessed by God.

Then Luke lays defines the social structure they were using. He says “they had all things in common”. They sold their possessions and goods and provided to all as they had need. This describes a communal social life in the earliest days of the church. This was easy since the church was limited to the city of Jerusalem at this time.

Then Luke states that they enjoyed each other’s company, eating together daily, visiting house to house and they also enjoyed a good reputation in the community. All this resulted in the church growing. Luke states that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”.

It would be wonderful it we could have this type of close relationship today! Even though there was over 3,120 disciples they managed to continue this relationship. So we cannot blame our lack of fellowship on size. They didn’t have phones or the internet, so we cannot blame our lack of fellowship on lack of communications. They didn’t have cars, so we cannot blame our lack of fellowship on travel time. They didn’t have large homes so we cannot blame our lack of fellowship on space requirements. The only thing we can really blame our lack of fellowship on is the desire to get together, and that is too bad.

I believe that if we had the love for each other that is demonstrated here in Jerusalem, the church would grow like it did then. But we don’t, so the church doesn’t grow and we wonder why we are losing members.

## Chapter 3:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in jerusalem:

Acts Chapter 3 continues the period of the development of the church in Jerusalem. This is the birthplace of the church of Christ. This chapter begins sometimes after Pentecost in the year 30 AD, making it sometimes after May 28, 30 AD. Luke gives us no indication of the period of time covered by this chapter, only that is involved a number of days.

The principle dates involved are:

Chapter 3 begins with Peter and John in Jerusalem. It contains the fourth speech of Peter and the first miracle performed by the Apostles that is specifically described in the New Testament.

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 3 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts. This section deals with the Jewish church and the principal character is the Apostle Peter. It traces the birth of the church in Jerusalem as being open only to the Jews to the beginning of the Gentile church and the Apostle Paul’s activities who becomes the principal character in the remaining parts of Luke’s narrative.

### THEMES:

#### EVANGELISM

The principal theme in this chapter is evangelism. Peter and John perform the first miracle specifically described by Luke as being done by a single person. The miracle of tongues in chapter was assigned to all the apostles and not a single person. Peter and John used the opportunity that this miracle provided to preach sermon of evangelism to the Jews gathered around.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Peter and John go to the temple for prayer at about 9:00 AM as was the custom of the Jews at that period in their history. They go into the temple by the most popular gate, the East Gate which the Jews called “Beautiful” and pass a lame beggar. This man had been lame from birth and was well known by the Jews because he often sat at that gate asking for money. His healing provoked a crowd, giving the apostles an opportunity to teach the gospel and it also caused the ruling class to act against the church.

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Peter | Acts 3:6 | Peter and John passed a lame beggar at the gate into the Temple that the Jews called “Beautiful”. They were asked for money, having none they offered instead to give what they had. | The beggar was healed. He immediately jumped up, stood on his own and walked with them into the temple. This cause quite a stir and drew a large crowd to Peter and John. |
|  | Peter | Acts 3:12-26 | Peter, using the healing of the lame beggar to his advantage taught the crowd that assembled to see him the gospel. | Peter and John were arrested. |
| Prayers |  |  |  |  |
| Miracles | Peter | Acts 3:1-11 | Healing a man who had been lame since birth and was well known to the Jews in Jerusalem. | Peter taught the crowd that assembled to see the beggar walking the gospel. |
| Persecutions |  |  |  |  |
| Major Events |  |  |  |  |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[18]](#footnote-18)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 3:18 | Did each and every prophet recorded in the Old Testament prophesy about the suffering of Jesus as Luke claims here? | It is obvious to any student of the Old Testament that ALL the prophets did not specifically prophesy about the suffering that Jesus would endure. What Peter is pointing out to the Jews that day is that the storyline of the Old Testament is about a savior that God would send who would suffer and die for us. This begins in Genesis 3:15 and continues throughout the Old Testament. Some prophets did specifically deal with His suffering (Isiah 52-53) and some Psalms deal with it as well (Psalms 22, 69, 110, and 118). |
| Acts 3:22-23 | Peter is referring to Deuteronomy 18:15, doesn’t that passage specifically refer to a prophet to follow Moses that would keep the people from running to mediums and fortune tellers like the people who had occupied their promised land did? Isn’t this fulfilled in Joshua and not Jesus? | While that verse in Deuteronomy was specifically looking forward to a person like Joshua who would keep the people from turning to mediums, the Jews in the time of Jesus also viewed it as foretelling a prophet who would rise up in the end times to lead the people back to God.  |

###  VERSE STUDY:

Acts 3:1-26 (KJV)
1  Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. 2  And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3  Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. 4  And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5  And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6  Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7  And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8  And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9  And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10  And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11  And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

##### Discussion Acts 3:1-11

Sometime after the day of Pentecost, Peter and John go to the temple to pray at the third hour of the day. This is the traditional hour of prayer for the Jews and Peter and John wanted to take the opportunity to go where a lot of Jews would be gathering. Note, from the earlier passages, especially Acts 2:42, the Christians did not wait for the hour of prayer to pray. Instead they continued in prayer. Paul would later command Christians to “continue always in prayer”[[19]](#footnote-19).

When going to the temple, they passed the gate called “Beautiful” where a lame man was brought by his family to beg for alms each day. When he saw Peter and John, he asked them for money. Peter said in essence, “We do not have money to give but we will freely give what we have.” Then Peter told the man, in the name of Jesus get up and walk. Peter grabbed his hand, lifted him up and his legs regained their strength and the lame man began to not only walk but to jump around praising God. Of course this caused a sensation which brought a lot of Jews together to see what was going on, which gave Peter an opportunity to preach to them about Jesus.

##### Acts 3:12-26

 12  And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13  The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. 14  But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15  And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16  And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17  And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers. 18  But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19  Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20  And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21  Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 22  For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23  And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24  Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25  Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26  Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

##### Discussion Acts 3:12-26

Once again, taking the opportunity to speak to Jews gathered together after a miracle Peter tells them that they killed God’s Son. This time he goes so far as to remind them that when Pilate wanted to let Jesus go because he saw no reason to condemn Him to death, they denied Jesus and demanded a convicted murderer be released in His place. Barabbas was a member of an earlier insurrection against Rome[[20]](#footnote-20) and as such may have been a hero to some Jews, especially those who were looking for a more militant messiah than Jesus.[[21]](#footnote-21) Peter is blunt in his speech, not mincing words. He says “You killed the Prince of Life” but God raised Him from the dead and we, he and John, are witnesses of that fact. Peter tells them is it this Jesus, through faith, that has healed the lame man that you all know. You know this is not a gimmick, you know he was lame. But now, because of his faith in Jesus he is healed.

Peter then softens his speech somewhat by saying, “You did it through ignorance as did your leaders, but the things that was prophesied that the Christ would suffer God has fulfilled.” Peter then tells them to “repent and be converted” so that their sins could be forgiven. He did not have to say “be baptized”, many of those listening to him probably had heard his speech on Pentecost. In addition, this group had not asked him “What shall we do?” Finally, Peter reminds them of what Moses said about a prophet that would come after him[[22]](#footnote-22). He goes on to tell them that all the prophets from Samuel[[23]](#footnote-23) on down have foretold these times and that they are living in those times.

## Chapter 4:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in jerusalem:

Acts Chapter 4 continues the period of the development of the church in Jerusalem. This is the birthplace of the church of Christ. This chapter begins sometimes after Pentecost in the year 30 AD, making it sometimes after May 28, 30 AD. Luke simply tells us that it is now late in the day that Peter and John went to the temple to pray. This means that they stayed at the temple and taught those who had gathered there for most of that day.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 4 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts. This section deals with the Jewish church and the principal character is the Apostle Peter. It traces the birth of the church in Jerusalem as being open only to the Jews to the beginning of the Gentile church and the Apostle Paul’s activities who becomes the principal character in the remaining parts of Luke’s narrative.

### THEMES:

#### Apologetics and exhortation

This is the first real speech of apologetics that Luke records. The rulers arrest Peter and John, then the next morning ask them why and by whose authority they are teaching resurrection from the dead. They then begin to defend the doctrine of resurrection. Toward the middle of the chapter, the theme changes to one of exhortation as Peter and John reunite with the disciples and tell them what had happened. The communal nature of the church is reinforced.

Chapter 4 begins a new tone. Until now Luke has told us that the Christians had “favor with all the people”,[[24]](#footnote-24)however now the rulers are becoming less than amused with this new movement. This is the first reported arrest of a Christian for preaching Jesus.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

The healing of the lame beggar reported in chapter 3, has resulted in two significant events. First is that 5,000 men who listened to Peters speech after the healing believed. Second, the Jewish rulers began to take notice of the Christian movement and started actively opposing it.

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| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Peter | Acts 4:9-12 | Peter, answering a question by the Jewish rulers made two statements that have been used throughout Christianity. He said that there salvation nowhere except Jesus, and you decide if it is right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than Him. | The rulers could not figure out how to punish Peter and John because even they could not deny that a miracle had been performed. So they threatened them and let them go. |
| Prayers | Disciples | Acts 4:24-30 | A prayer praising God for foretelling the sufferings of Jesus and the persecutions of the Christians. |  |
| Miracles | God | Acts 4 | Shaking the building where the disciples gathered. |  |
| Persecutions | Peter and John | Acts 4:1-3 | Arrested and held overnight. | Peter and John took the opportunity to preach the Gospel to the rulers. |
|  | Peter and John | Acts 4:21 | Threats from the rulers. | The threats emboldened, not only the Apostles but, all the disciples and Jesus was taught that much more. |
| Major Events  | Peter | Acts 4:9-12 | Statements to the rulers of Israel | Makes it clear that there is no salvation except in Jesus |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[25]](#footnote-25)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 4:12 | Peter really could not believe that Jesus was the only way for a person to be saved. There was no way for this message to spread to the rest of the globe, so it had to only apply only to those in Israel and Jerusalem who had been exposed to it. | This exclusiveness of Christianity teaches there is no second or third route to God. This thought is not limited to these apostles only. Jesus maintained that He was the only way to God[[26]](#footnote-26) and Paul later taught that Jesus was the only mediator between God and man[[27]](#footnote-27). The human desire for another way to be saved, cannot overcome the fact that Jesus is the only way. |
| Acts 4:16 | These stories of supernatural healing, unhuman powers and other such teachings in the Bible make it both unbelievable and unreliable. | The rulers never denied this miracle, although they probably really wanted to. Neither did they deny the miracles performed by Jesus or that His tomb was empty. They countered by claiming that Jesus did want He did, not by God’s power, but by the power of the devil and that His tomb was empty because the disciples stole His body.Jesus countered the accusation that He was using the power of Satan to perform miracles by saying that Satan would not labor against himself, he would not cast his own demons out of people or do wonders and then claim that it was God’s power that allowed him to do them. The second accusation, that the disciples stole Jesus’s body makes absolutely no sense. The grave was guarded, the disciples were disheartened, confused and in the midst of deep grief. To say that while in this state they conspired to remove the body then over 500 who claimed to have seen him after the resurrection maintained that story even to the point of death is counter to everything we know about human nature. |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 4:1-37 (KJV)
1  And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2  Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3  And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.
4  Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

##### Discussion acts 4:1-4

The tide of tolerance from the Jewish rulers begins to change. Peter and John, after spending most of the day at the Gate Beautiful teaching Jesus, are arrested by the Sadducees[[28]](#footnote-28). However by this time the church had grown to about 5,000 men. The women and children were not counted in this number.[[29]](#footnote-29) The Sadducees were in charge of the temple at this time. One of the identifying characteristic of their belief was that there was no resurrection.[[30]](#footnote-30) This is the reason that they arrested Peter and John that day, Peter and John was teaching that Jesus was resurrected, which was contrary to their teaching and therefore was considered sedition[[31]](#footnote-31) and heresy.

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##### Acts 4:5-22

5  And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, 6  And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7  And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? 8  Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9  If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10  Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11  This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12  Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. 13  Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14  And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15  But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16  Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*. 17  But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.
18  And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19  But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20  For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. 21  So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done. 22  For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

##### Discussion Acts 4:5-22:

After having to spend a night in custody, Peter and John was brought to the place where the High Priest and his family were to answer for what they had been teaching. When asked by whose authority and in whose name they had done the things that they were doing Peter, once again being blunt, tells them it is in the name of Jesus whom they had crucified that they had healed the lame man.

Then Pete makes a statement that is the foundation of Christianity, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” This is revolutionary, it makes it clear that there is no salvation under the Mosaic Law, that the old ways of Israel have been replaced by Jesus.

Because the Sadducees viewed Peter and John as unlearned and ignorant men, whey were amazed at their boldness and their ability to speak in the midst of the leaders of Israel. Then realizing that they were in a difficult position, they could not deny that a miracle had been done. The lame man was well known to all, and now he can walk. Because of this, they release Peter and John with a warning that they do not talk about Jesus again. To this Peter and John answer with the famous statement “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.  For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

##### Acts 4:23-37

 23  And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. 24  And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: 25  Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26  The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27  For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28  For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29  And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30  By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. 31  And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. 32  And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33  And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34  Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35  And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36  And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, 37  Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

##### Discussion Acts 4:23-37:

After being released by the High Priest, Peter and John return to where the disciples are and tell them all that expired since they left the day before. Then the entire group prayed, praising God and asking that He give them the strength to continue with boldness in the face of the threats from the High Priest. At the conclusion of the prayer, God caused the entire place to shake and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and all began to speak boldly the word of God.

Once again the communal nature of the early church is mentioned by Luke. In this instance, Luke says no one lacked anything. Those who owned land or houses sold them and gave the money to the Apostles feet for distribution. Luke specifically mentions Joses, surnamed Barnabas from Cyprus as having land and who sold it giving the receipts to the Apostles.

## Chapter 5:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in jerusalem:

Acts Chapter 5 continues the period of the development of the church in Jerusalem. This is the birthplace of the church of Christ. This chapter begins sometimes after Pentecost in the year 30 AD, making it sometimes after May 28, 30 AD. Luke continues with the Christians selling their possessions, giving the funds to the Apostles for distribution as needed. This communal society served the early church well. However, Satan quickly enters in and strokes the ego of some causing them to lie to the Apostles and to God.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 5 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts. This section deals with the Jewish church and the principal character is the Apostle Peter. It traces the birth of the church in Jerusalem as being open only to the Jews to the beginning of the Gentile church and the Apostle Paul’s activities who becomes the principal character in the remaining parts of Luke’s narrative.

### THEMES:

#### exhortation

Luke begins with miracles and ends with the Apostles being arrested by the High Priest and released by God. The first two miracles detail the result of lying to God. Ananias and his wife Sapphira lied about the amount of money they received from the sale of their property and God caused them to die for this. Exhortation can take a darker side as well as the more often seen encouragement. Here the Christians were exhorted not to lie to God.

The end of Chapter 5 details the first time the Apostles, as a group, were arrested and the second time the High Priest tried to stop the spread of Christianity. It also describes the first time physical violence was used against Christians

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

The church is growing by leaps and bounds, thousands have become Christians. Even priests have obeyed the gospel call. The early church entered into a stage of voluntary communal living. Everyone cared for all others, this allowed the apostles to make sure that everyone had what they needed to live. This, of course, provided a way for Satan to penetrate the community by taking advantage of human pride. Because of the growth, the rulers began a more active opposition effort against the church and its leaders. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Peter | Acts 5:3-10 | Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, conspired to lie to Peter in an effort to impress everyone with their offering. | Ananias and Sapphira were both killed by God for lying to the Holy Spirit. This also proved that the communal culture that the early church adopted was voluntary and not a lifestyle commanded by God. |
|  | Peter and the Apostles | Acts 5:29-32 | Answering the rulers question about being told not to speak about Jesus again, the apostles told them the “We must obey God rather than men.” | The rulers went from being jealous of the apostles, to being enraged at their answer. They were not used to people telling them to their face that they would not obey them. This rage resulted in the first mention of a desire to kill Christians. Instead they had them beaten. |
|  | Gamaliel | Acts 5:35-39 | Seeing the murderous rage building in the Sadducees’, Gamaliel who was a Pharisee, encouraged caution because they did not want to find themselves fighting against God. | The Sadducee rulers listened and calmed down enough to avoid killing any of the apostles, instead they choose to beat them and let them go again. |
| Prayers |  |  |  |  |
| Miracles | God | Acts 5:1-11 | Death of Ananias and Sapphira | Everyone who heard about this had a great fear. |
|  | God | Acts 5:19-20 | Release of the Apostles from prison | The apostles continued to teach which enraged the rulers. |
|  | Apostles | Acts 5:12-16 | Healings | This caused many to believe, even from surrounding towns. It contributed to the rulers taking aggressive action against the apostles. |
| Persecutions | Apostles | Acts 5:17, 25-27, 40 | Arrested, detained and beaten | The apostles continued to preach and teach. |
| Major Events | Ananias and Sapphira | Acts 5:1-11 | Lied to the Holy Spirit | Died in front of Peter |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[33]](#footnote-33)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 5:29 | Should we obey human or divine law?Luke has Peter saying we should obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29) while Peter himself says that we should obey human laws (1 Peter 2:13).[[34]](#footnote-34) | The circumstances are different and each require a different answer. In Acts 5:29, the apostles are being commanded to stop doing something that God instructed them to do. Therefore, Peter said that “*We ought to obey God rather than men*.” In 1 Peter 2:13, Peter is giving Christians instructions on living in the world. He tells us that we must obey the laws of the land, but reminds us in verse 16 that we are servants of God.Taken together, Christians are bound by God to obey men’s laws so long as they do not contradict Gods laws. |
| Acts 5:33-42 | If all the apostles were ushered out of the room where the rulers were assembled, how did they and Luke know what was being said by Gamaliel? | The simple answer is that the Holy Spirit directed Luke in writing this book and He supplied Luke with the specifics. Of course, another explanation that doesn’t involve the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit is that many priests had become Christians and it was likely that at least one or more of those remained in the room with the leaders after the disciples were taken out. |
| Acts 5:36-37 | The historian Josephus records the rebellion of Theudas as occurring during the time of Governor Fadus (44-46 AD) which is about ten or twelve years later than the speech of Gamaliel. So the Bible must be incorrect in its chronology of this time. | The name Theudas was popular during this period of history. Given the political turmoil of the time it is likely that Gamaliel and Josephus were referring to two different men. Since Josephus records rebellions around the death of Herod the Great (4 BC) it is likely that the Theudas that Gamaliel referred to was active at that time. |
|  |  |  |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 5:1-11 (KJV)
1  But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2  And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. 3  But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? 4  Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5  And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6  And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*. 7  And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8  And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9  Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10  Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband. 11  And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

##### Discussion Acts 5:1-11

While many disciples sold all that they had and brought the proceeds to the Apostles for distribution as needed, they were not under to command to. Ananias and his wife Sapphira, sold their possessions and brought part of it to the Apostles. This was acceptable, but what was not acceptable was for them to try to lie to Peter about the value that they received for the things they sold. They wanted to hold some for themselves, once again that was ok, but they told Peter that they were giving all that they had received and that was their sin. For the sin of lying to God, they sacrificed their lives.

The lesson in this for us today is that we are free to give what we want, but we are not free to lie about it to make ourselves look better to our friends.

##### Acts 5:12-16

 12  And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13  And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14  And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15  Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16   There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

##### Discussion Acts 5:12-16

This is an interesting passage, it tells us that there were a lot of miracles done by the Apostles. But it also says that while everyone liked the Christians, no one wanted to join them at this time. Then Luke says that “believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”.

It may have been that conversions slowed down after the incident with Ananias and Sapphira, then picked back up again when the healing miracles began.

##### Acts 5:17-42

 17  Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, 18  And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19  But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20  Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21  And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22  But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, 23  Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. 24  Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25  Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. 26  Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. 27  And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, 28  Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29  Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30  The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31  Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32  And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. 33  When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them. 34  Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; 35  And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36  For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37  After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38  And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39  But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. 40  And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41  And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42  And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

##### Discussion Acts 5:17-42:

The High Priest and rulers of Israel had just about put up with this new sect as long as they were going to. They were indigent that the Apostles were teaching a risen savior, and that many Jews were joining them, when they did not believe in resurrection. However, the fact of the miracles being done was tying their hands. But they had finally had enough and ordered the entire group of Apostles arrested.

However, the Lord was not done with the initial development of the Jerusalem church yet and sent an angle who opened the jail doors during the night and told the Apostles to return to the temple and continue to teach Jesus. The next morning, when the High Priest and rulers sent for the Apostles to question and warn them, they were nowhere to be found. The prison was locked, the guards were in place and reported no problems…but the prisoners were gone. While they were trying to understand how this could be, someone came in and said, “Hey, those guys you put in prison last night. You know the twelve men who claim to have seen Jesus after you had him killed…well they are in the temple teaching this very thing again.”

The rulers sent the Captain of the Temple Guard out to bring the Apostles back to them. When they arrived at the place where the Apostles were teaching they found that the crowd had changed. While at the last Passover, just a few months earlier, the crowd had demanded that Jesus be killed; this crowd was fully supportive of the Apostles. The temple guard found themselves at risk and had to carefully bring the Apostles back to the rulers. They could not bully them, threaten them or force them for fear of being stoned.

When the temple guard returned to the Council of the High Priest with the Apostles, the High Priest said, “Didn’t we warn you not to go about speaking and teaching about this Jesus anymore? Now, look…you have filled Jerusalem with this doctrine.” And again, Peter and the other Apostles boldly (probably with the strength of the Holy Ghost) said. “We will obey God and not you! This same Jesus who you murdered and hung on a tree, God raised up from the dead and exalted to be a Prince and a Savior. He is the one who will bring forgiveness and repentance to Israel. We are all witnesses of this fact, as is the Holy Ghost who God has given to all who believe!”

Well, this did not go over too well with the rulers of Israel. After all, they were supposed to be Gods representatives to the children of Israel, not a bunch of uneducated fishermen and a tax collector! The rulers became incensed and decided to just kill the Apostles and be done with this issue for good. However Gamaliel, PhD in Jewish Law, who seemed to be the most level headed person there cautioned them. After having the Apostles sent out of the room, Gamaliel said; “Don’t you guys remember anything! Before you act against these men you ought to consider the consequences. It was not long ago that Theudas, who claimed to be important got four hundred men to join his movement. After he was killed, his followers just dispersed. And since him, when Rome was taxing us, another rose up also claiming to be someone of importance. This Judas got a number of men to follow him. And the same thing happened, after he was killed his followers just went away. I think we ought to leave these guys alone, if they are not doing God’s will they will eventually run out of steam and disappear like those before them. And if they are doing God’s work, we will find ourselves opposing God if we act against them!” This convinced the rulers not to kill the apostles, instead they brought them back in, had them all beaten and warned them strongly to “stop teaching this heresy” then let them go.

Of course this had just the opposite effect. The Apostles were happy that they were considered worthy to suffer and did not cease to teach daily the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 6:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in jerusalem:

Acts Chapter 6 continues the period of the development of the church in Jerusalem The church in Jerusalem had grown to the point that the Apostles were not able to oversee all aspects of it by themselves. The widows of Greek speaking Jews were being overlooked in the distribution of goods and this was brought to their attention. Instead of taking time away from prayer and dealing with the spiritual needs of the church, they assign the task of dealing with the Grecian widows to seven men selected by the church for this purpose. This is commonly considered the selection of the first Deacons in the church of Christ.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 6 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts. This section deals with the Jewish church and the principal character is the Apostle Peter. It traces the birth of the church in Jerusalem as being open only to the Jews to the beginning of the Gentile church and the Apostle Paul’s activities who becomes the principal character in the remaining parts of Luke’s narrative.

### THEMES:

#### exhortation

Luke identifies a common problem in large groups, a part of the group has been overlooked in the daily ministries. This was brought to the attention of the Apostles who quickly took steps to correct it. Their actions pleased the church and prevented a worse problem from arising. It also allowed them to continue dealing with the spiritual needs of all the Christians in Jerusalem.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Peter uses the keys to the Kingdom that Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19) to open the kingdom to new converts. His impassioned speech was at once powerful and full of love. It was particularly effective in convincing the Jews in Jerusalem that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The facts surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection were still fresh in their minds. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Apostles | Acts 6:1-4 | Recognizing the growth of the church and the issues dealing with equal and fair distribution of food and other types of aid, the apostles directed the congregation to find seven men to deal with this activity. | The congregation selected seven men, full of the Holy Ghost, whom the Apostles laid their hands on and dedicated them to assisting the Grecian widows. |
| Prayers |  |  |  |  |
| Miracles | Stephen | Acts 6:8 | Great wonders and signs among the people | The Jewish freedmen disputed with Stephen but were not able to withstand his wisdom and the Holy Spirit who was directing his speaking. They convinced men to lie about Stephen which resulted in his arrest. |
| Persecutions | Stephen | Acts 6:11-12 | Stephen arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin. | Stephen’s face became like the face of an Angel. |
| Major Events | Church at Jerusalem | Acts 6:1-7 | Grecian widows not fairly taken care of | Appointment of the first Deacons |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[35]](#footnote-35)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 6:1-7 (KJV)
1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5  And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

##### Discussion Acts 6:1-7

The church in Jerusalem had grown to the point that some of the members were being overlooked in the daily distribution of goods. As in any group of people, those who are a little different from the majority are the ones that often get forgotten, this was the case with the Greek speaking widows. Perhaps it was because they didn’t have family there, perhaps it was because they didn’t express their need well. Regardless this started to become an issue and the Apostles wanted to make sure that goods were fairly and evenly dispersed based on need and not ethnicity. They also recognized the overriding need for them to continue in prayer and the ministry of the word, and not to have their time taken in distributing the goods. Their solution was to have the church to select seven men that the Apostles would authorize to make sure distribution was equally and fairly accomplished. This is commonly considered the appointment of the first Deacons in the church.

The word deacon simply implies a servant, and as such each and every Christian, both men and women, meets that criteria. However, these men were appointed by the Apostles to deal with a specific problem. The only criteria that the Apostles gave the church in selecting them were:[[36]](#footnote-36)

1. They had to be men
2. They had to be Christians; “seek out among yourselves”.
3. They had to be honest
4. They had to be wise
5. And they had to be filled with the Holy Ghost

All seven of the men selected by the church had Greek names. This was probably by design, since their duty was to care for the Grecian widows.

NOTE: Although these men had to be “filled with the Holy Ghost”, it wasn’t until after the Apostles laid their hands on them that Luke reports that they performed miracles. This clearly indicates that Christians, both in the first century and now, can be “filled with the Holy Ghost” and yet not have the gift of miracles. It was the laying on of the Apostles hands that this gift was given to a Christian, since the Apostles have died this gift has also died in the church.

Although there were seven men selected at the direction of the Apostles, we only hear of two; Stephen and Phillip again in the Holy Bible.

Luke then tells us that the disciples increased greatly in number and a large number of the priest also became Christians.

##### Acts 6:8-15

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council, 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: 14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

##### Discussion Acts 6:8-15

After the Apostles laid their hands on the seven men, Stephen began to do great wonders and miracles. Because of his teaching, he became a controversial figure with some groups. Luke specifically mentions the Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, people from Cilicia and Asia. Some scholars say that these were former slaves who had their own synagogue. Regardless they challenged Stephen and found that they could not withstand his wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.

Being sore losers, the Jews found men who would make exaggerated statements against Stephen. They claimed that they had heard Stephen speak blasphemy against both Moses and God which stirred up the general population. This gave the Jewish rulers all the ammunition that they needed to arrest him. Once arrested, they brought in men who lied about Stephens’ teaching. This is similar to the trial that they put Jesus through a year or so earlier. During the hearing, those who looked at Stephen saw his face as it were the face of an angle.

The specific charges that were brought against Stephen were:

1. Blasphemy against Moses
2. Blasphemy against God
3. Blasphemy against the Temple
4. Blasphemy against the Law

## Chapter 7:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in jerusalem:

Acts Chapter 7 continues the period of the development of the church in Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem continued to grow and develop.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 7 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts. This section deals with the Jewish church and the principal character is the Apostle Peter. It traces the birth of the church in Jerusalem as being open only to the Jews to the beginning of the Gentile church and the Apostle Paul’s activities who becomes the principal character in the remaining parts of Luke’s narrative. In this and the preceding chapter, Luke describes Stephen as the first Christian martyr.

### THEMES:

#### apologetics

Stephen has been arrested and Luke describes the charges pressed against him and his rebuttal. The change in attitude of the rulers toward Christianity that began in Chapter 4 has come to full fruition. Stephen becomes the first martyr of the Christian movement, being stoned to death by the Jews.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Peter uses the keys to the Kingdom that Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19) to open the kingdom to new converts. His impassioned speech was at once powerful and full of love. It was particularly effective in convincing the Jews in Jerusalem that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The facts surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection were still fresh in their minds. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Stephen | Acts 7:1-53 | Stephens defense of Christianity by pointing out the many times the Jews had murdered their own prophets. | The Jewish rulers fell on Stephen and stoned him to death. |
|  | Stephen | Acts 7:56 | Stephen stated that he saw Jesus standing by the right hand of God | This infuriated the rulers and sealed Stephens’s fate. |
| Prayers | Stephen | Acts 7:60 | Stephen asked God to forgive those stoning him. | Stephen died after this prayer. |
| Miracles | God | Acts 7:55 | God opened heaven to allow Stephen to see Him and Jesus | Stephen stated aloud what he saw. It could not but have given him even more courage than he already had. |
| Persecutions | Stephen | Acts 7 | Trial and execution of Stephen | Resulted in the first Christian martyr. |
| Major Events | Rulers of Israel | Acts 7:54-60 | Stoning of Stephen | First martyr |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[37]](#footnote-37)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 7:2-3 | Did God call Abraham before or after he moved to Charran?Luke (Acts 7:2-3) claims Abraham was still in Mesopotamia when God told him to move while Moses (Genesis 11:31-12:4) says he was already in Haran (Charran) when he was told to move.[[38]](#footnote-38) |  |
| Acts 7:2-4 | How old was Abraham when he left Haran?Moses states that he was 75 (Genesis 12:4) but Luke says that he left after his father died which would have made him 135. (Genesis 11:26-32, Acts 7:2-4)[[39]](#footnote-39) | The argument is as follows: 1. [Gen. 12:4](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/12.html#v4) says Abraham was seventy five years old when he left Haran.
2. This verse says Abraham left Haran when his father, Terah, died.
3. As his father died when Abraham was two hundred and five years, [Gen. 11:32](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/11.html#v32), and Abraham was born when Terah was seventy, [Gen. 11:26](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/11.html#v26), Abraham must have been hundred and thirty five years when he left Haran as per this verse. So that contradicts the seventy five years mentioned in [Gen. 12:4](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/12.html#v4)

But a conclusion only follows when it premises at true. And the premise that is false is that Abraham was born when Terah was seventy. Readers who actually read [Gen. 11:26](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/11.html#v26), will see that *three* sons were born to Terah. And they were not all born in the same year... The first was born when Terah was seventy. Given this verse we know that Abraham wasn't the firstborn. And given the date in this verse it must be that Abraham was born when Terah was hundred and thirty.Note: it's not uncommon in Genesis to mention the more important son before the firstborn, see another example in [Gen. 5:32](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/5.html#v32).[[40]](#footnote-40) |
| Acts 7:2-4 | How old was Abraham when Ishmael was born?Moses says that he was 86 (Genesis 16:16) While indicates that he was more than 135 (Genesis 11:26, Acts 7:2-4, Genesis 11:32, Genesis 16:4-15).[[41]](#footnote-41) |  |
| Acts 7:2-4 | How old was Terah when he died?Moses says that he was 205 (Genesis 11:32) while Luke indicates that he was only 145 (Genesis 11:26, 12:4, Acts 7:2-4) |  |
| Acts 7:6 | How long did the Israelites stay in Egypt?Moses is confused, in Genesis he says it was 400 years (Genesis 15:13) to which Luke agrees (Acts 7:6). But then Moses says it was 430 years in Exodus (Exodus 12:40)[[42]](#footnote-42) | This verse says that Abraham's seed would be a stranger in a land that wasn't theirs. Abraham didn't have seed until about sixteen years after. Abraham was 84 years old in this verse. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100, but wasn't acknowledged as his seed until Ishmael was cast out, when Abraham was 105.Paul in [Gal. 3:17](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gal/3.html#v17) mentions the number of years from the first promise made to Abraham which we find in [chapter 12:2](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/12.html#v2) until the law was given to Moses, which is 430 years. This verse is a repetition of that promise and adds the affliction of Abraham's seed which started 21 years after this verse, when Abraham had seed, and his seed was acknowledged as the true heir.Also, the author of the SAB shouldn't just join the word four hundred with captivity, but with being a stranger as well. In [Ex. 12:40](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/ex/12.html#v40) the same thing happens: it does not just count the years in Egypt, but the entire sojourn from this promise made to Abraham from being a stranger in a land that wasn't theirs until their exit from Egypt. The years spent in Egypt proper were 215 years.According to Ussher the first promise was made on Thursday, May 5, 1921 BC, this repetition is somewhere in 1912 BC.[[43]](#footnote-43) |
| Acts 7:14 | How many people were in Jacob’s family when they went into Egypt?Luke says that there were 75 (Acts 7:14), but Moses claims that there were only 70 (Genesis 46:27, Exodus 1:5).[[44]](#footnote-44) | This supposed contradiction is actually resolved when you look at the wording of the passages. Moses talks about the number of children born to Jacob while Stephen talks about the number of people called by Joseph to come to Egypt.When we add up the children and grandchildren of Jacob, we arrive at the conclusion that he had seventy one children and grandchildren. Exclude the two who died, and include Jacob himself and we arrive at seventy souls derived from Jacob and including Jacob that came to —although at different times, Joseph came first of course— and dwelt in Egypt, [Gen. 46:27](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/46.html#v27) and [Deut. 10:22](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/dt/10.html#v22)[[45]](#footnote-45)Stephen in this verse does not tell us how many children and grandchildren Jacob had, but how many people were called by Joseph to come to Egypt. So this time we not only look at Jacob's children, but also at the wives of his sons. Again the math: 1. Of Jacob's sixty nine children still alive, three were already in Egypt: Joseph and his two sons. So that's sixty six children which are in Canaan, [Gen. 46:26](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/46.html#v26).
2. Add the number of wives of Jacob's children, which are eleven wives. That would give us a total of 77 souls called. But it might be that, like Jacob's wives, some of them had died as well. So two could have died as well.
3. But there is another explanation that is more likely. It seems that the events mentioned in [Gen. 38](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/gen/38.html) played itself out over a number of years. So when Judah traveled to Egypt, Perez and Zerah might have been just young children. So the two sons of Perez, Hezron and Hamul, would have been born in Egypt, and therefore cannot be included in the number of persons that Joseph called.
4. All Jacob's wives had died by this time, so we don't have to include them.

And we arrive at a total of seventy five souls called by Joseph.[[46]](#footnote-46) |
| Acts 7:15-16 | Where was Jacob buried?Luke says he was buried in Shechem (Acts 7:15-16), about fifty miles north of Machpelah, while Moses claims he was buried in Machpelah (Genesis 50:13)[[47]](#footnote-47) | It is clear that if Stephen had made a mistake in front of this crowd, they would have immediately pointed that out. They understood, though, that Stephen was talking about the sons of Jacob, including Joseph,[[48]](#footnote-48) who died and were buried in Sychem. Jacob was buried in Machpelah to which his sons carried him.[[49]](#footnote-49) |
| Acts 7:16 | Who bought the sepulcher from the sons of Hamor?Joshua claims that it was Jacob who bought it (Joshua 24:32) while Stephen insist that Abraham bought it (Acts 7:16)[[50]](#footnote-50) | There are a few possible explanations for this apparent contradiction. The first is:This passage refers to two separate grave sites. Look at Genesis 23:16-17 and Genesis 33:18-19. Once again, had Stephen made a mistake the crowd would have immediately jumped on it.[[51]](#footnote-51) The second is:It was Jacob, and not Abraham, who purchased the sepulcher from the sons of Emmor, as is certain from the history given in [Genesis 33:19-20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ge%2033:19); yet it is attributed to Abraham here in the common version, and most of the Greek manuscripts. It is far more likely, however, that the manuscripts should err, in a case of this kind, than that the error should have been committed by Stephen or by Luke. I have, therefore, not hesitated to insert the name of *Jacob,* instead of Abraham, in the text. Dr. Bloomfield says, “The best critics are of the opinion that *Abraham* is spurious.” [[52]](#footnote-52)And another explanation:The explanation for Stephen’s statement is likely based on [Genesis 12:6-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ge+12%3A6-7), which says: “Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘I will give this land to your offspring.’ So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.” Jacob’s purchase of the land is a fulfillment of God’s promise to his ancestor, Abraham, and for this reason Jewish audiences would have accepted as accurate Stephen’s attribution to Abraham.Michael Wilkins et al., *Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible – Gospels to Acts*, ed. Jeremy Royal Howard, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2013), WORD*search* CROSS e-book, 680.[[53]](#footnote-53) |
| Acts 7:22 | Was Moses a good speaker?Luke says that he was “mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22). However Moses himself said that he was not a good speaker (Exodus 6:12, 30). Evidently God agreed because he made Aaron speak for Moses (Exodus 4:14-16).[[54]](#footnote-54) | Does this indicate that Stephen contradicts the OT witness about Moses’ abilities? Moses’ protestations about his speaking abilities are either a case of his being humble or an attempt to get out of doing what God was calling him to do. In a similar case, the apostle Paul said: “My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom” ([1 Cor 2:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+2%3A4)), but of course Paul was both persuasive and wise as a speaker. His intention was to highlight the work of the Spirit in bringing fruit from his preaching. God’s appointment of Aaron to assist Moses is not so much an endorsement of Moses’ claims about his speaking ability as it is a means of setting aside his excuses.The fact is Moses was quite eloquent in his confrontations with Pharaoh ([Exodus 5-11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+5-11)), and thus Stephen’s remark is clearly justified. Moses’ self-perception, humility, or attempt to shirk God’s call have to be seen for what they are, especially when we consider his actual performance and his elite training and reputation growing up privileged in Pharaoh’s household.[[55]](#footnote-55) |
| Acts 7:30-35 | Who appeared to Moses in the bush that didn’t burn up?Mark says it was God (Mark 12:26) Moses seems to be confused about who it was, first he says it was an angel (Exodus 3:2) then he claims it was God (Exodus 3:4). Luke says it was an angel (Acts 7:35)[[56]](#footnote-56) | The word angel means, properly, a *messenger*, ([Matthew 1:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+1%3A20),) and is applied to the invisible spirits in heaven, to men, to the winds, or pestilence, or to whatever is appointed as a messenger to make known the will of God. The mere *name*, therefore, can determine nothing about the nature of the messenger. That *name* might be applied to any messenger, even an inanimate object. The nature and character of this messenger are to be determined by other considerations. The word may denote that the *bush on fire* was the messenger. But a comparison with the other places where this occurs will show that it was a celestial messenger, and perhaps that it was the Messiah who was yet to come, appearing to take the people of Israel under his own charge and direction. Comp. [John 1:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+1%3A11), where the Jews are called "his own." In [Exodus 3:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+3%3A2), it is said that the angel of the Lord appeared IN a flame of fire; in [Exodus 3:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+3%3A4), it is said that Jehovah spake to him out of the midst of the bush; language which implies that God was there, and which is strongly expressive of the doctrine that the angel was Jehovah. In [Exodus 23:20,21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+23%3A20-21), God says, "I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware *of him*, and obey *his* voice," [Exodus 23:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+23%3A23), [32:34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+32%3A34), [33:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+33%3A2). In all these places this angel is mentioned as an extraordinary messenger to conduct them to the land of Canaan. He was to guide them, defend them, and drive out the nations before them. All these circumstances seem to point to the conclusion that this was no other than the future Deliverer of the world, who came then to take his people under his own guidance, as emblematic of the future redemption of mankind.[[57]](#footnote-57) |
| Acts 7:48 | Does God live in temples?In 1 Kings 8:13 and 2 Chronicles 7:12,16 God says he lives in temples, but Luke contradicts God and says he does not live in temples (Acts 7:48) | The prophet quoted by Stepen is [Is. 66:1](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/is/66.html#v1). And Solomon didn't dwell under such an impression either. In [verse 27](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/1kg/8.html#v27) he expressly says so: But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? So [the meaning of these words](http://www.studylight.org/com/geb/view.cgi?book=acts&chapter=7&verse=48) is not that God would be confined to it, or included in it, or circumscribed by it. The meaning is that compared to the tabernacle, this would be a settled place, a fixed location. It is called a place to abide in for many aeons, many centuries as [the Hebrew word that is translated with “forever”](http://cf.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H05769&Version=kjv) actually signifies. And indeed, this temple has stood for many centuries and this location has been the location of a temple for many more centuraries, until the times of the Old Testament had passed.[[58]](#footnote-58) |
| Acts 7:54-Acts 8:1 | Christians commonly say that Saul of Tarsus was in charge of the stoning of Stephen. Paul the Apostle does not claim that in his writings. | This is a common mistake that Christians make. Saul was not directing the stoning, he was only supporting it by guarding the clothing of those throwing the stones. Paul does not claim to have directed the execution, only that he was there and approving of the actions being taken. |
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### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 7:1-50 (KJV)
1  Then said the high priest, Are these things so? 2  And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,
3  And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4  Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. 5  And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child. 6  And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. 7  And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. 8  And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs. 9  And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10  And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11  Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12  But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13  And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14  Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15  So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16  And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father* of Sychem. 17  But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18  Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. 19  The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. 20  In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: 21  And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. 22  And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23  And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24  And seeing one *of them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25  For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. 26  And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? 27  But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28  Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? 29  Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. 30  And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. 31  When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32  *Saying*, I *am* the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33  Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34  I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. 35  This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. 36  He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37  This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. 38  This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39  To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40  Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.
41  And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42  Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of* forty years in the wilderness? 43  Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. 44  Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. 45  Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;
46  Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47  But Solomon built him an house. 48  Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,
49  Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what *is* the place of my rest? 50  Hath not my hand made all these things?

##### Discussion Acts 1:1-50

After having been arrested, Stephen is brought before the High Priest and given the opportunity to answer for the crimes he is accused of. He begin his rebuttal by reminding them of their history from Abraham to Moses. Stephen specifically reminds them of the failures of their forefathers, beginning with selling Joseph into slavery, continuing through the golden calf and ending with the murder of Jesus.

##### Acts 7:51-53

 51  Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. 52  Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53  Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

##### Discussion Acts 7:51-53

Luke reports that Stephen directly accused the rulers of persecution of prophets. Stephen calls them “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears”, meaning that they are so set in their ways that they refuse to recognize when God acts directly in their presence. Stephen says; “You tell me which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute, which ones did they not kill before Jesus?” Then Stephen boldly tells them that they all are betrayers and murderers, “you received the law from angles and did not keep it”.

##### Acts 7:54-60

54  When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. 55  But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56  And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57  Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58  And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59  And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60  And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

##### Discussion Acts 7:54-60

The rulers and High Priest respond to Stephen, not by recognizing the value of his comments but by feeling insulted so much so that they began gnashing their teeth. Stephen looked up into heaven, being filled with the Holy Ghost he saw[[59]](#footnote-59) Jesus standing by Gods right hand. This is the only time Jesus is reported standing beside God. All other times He is sitting at Gods right hand. There are a two views concerning this, they are:

* Jesus is waiting to welcome Stephen into heaven when his work on earth is complete and,
* Jesus is ready to go back to earth to avenge Stephen, knowing what pain he is about to suffer.

When Stephen announced that he saw the vision of Jesus standing by God, the rulers could not take it any longer. They immediately rushed him out of the city and stoned him. At the stoning we are introduced to Saul of Tarsus who was participating in the murder of Stephen by holding the clothes of those throwing stones.

Just before Stephen died, he prayed “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*”, then after kneeling down he prayed “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*”. The prayer is still to Jesus, but the Jehovah’s Witnesses bible “The New World Translation” translates the Greek word “kyrios” as Jehovah. This is an abuse of the language, it should be translated Lord, like it is in most other versions.[[60]](#footnote-60)

Instead of accusing the rulers of murder, instead of begging for mercy, Stephen asked that this charge not be held against them.[[61]](#footnote-61)

## Chapter 8:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in judea and samaria:

Acts Chapter 8 begins the second chronological period in the development of the church of Christ. Due to the increasing persecution of Christians in Jerusalem, the church is planted and develops in Samaria and Judea.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 8 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts. This section deals with the Jewish church and the principal character is the Apostle Peter. Chapter 8 ushers in the second stage in the development of the Jewish church, the migration out of Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria. While the Apostle Peter remains a principal character Luke introduces Phillip, one of the Deacons chosen to assist with the ministry to the Greek speaking widows described in Chapter 6. Phillip is a leader in Luke’s story of church planting in Judea and Samaria.

### THEMES:

#### evangelism and exhortation:

Due to the increasing persecution by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, the Christians were dispersing into the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria. They were preaching Jesus wherever they went thus beginning the second chronological period in the development of the church of Christ. Even with the persecution in Jerusalem the church continued to grow. Instead of stamping out this movement with their arrest, stoning’s, beatings, and other forms of harassment the rulers insured its growth.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Peter uses the keys to the Kingdom that Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19) to open the kingdom to new converts. His impassioned speech was at once powerful and full of love. It was particularly effective in convincing the Jews in Jerusalem that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The facts surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection were still fresh in their minds. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Peter | Acts 8:20-22 | In answer to Simon’s request to be given the power to transfer the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter warned him that he was in danger of being lost. | Simon repented and asked that Peter pray for him. |
| Prayers | Peter and John | Acts 8:15 | Prayed that the Samaritans receive the Holy Ghost. | The Holy Ghost fell on the Samaritans after the laying on of hands by Peter and John. |
| Miracles | Phillip | Acts 8:7 | Casting out unclean spirits, healing the paralyzed and lame. | People listened to his preaching and great joy was in the city. |
| Persecutions | Disciples | Acts 8:3 | Persecutions led by Saul of Tarsus | Disciples scattered and went about preaching the Gospel. |
| Major Events: |  | Acts 8:13 | Conversion of Simon the Sorcerer | An example of a disciple who was in danger of becoming lost. |
|  |  | Acts 8:26-39 | Conversion of the Ethiopian Official. | A disciple was made that went to Ethiopia. |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[62]](#footnote-62)

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 8:1-4 | If persecutions were so great in Jerusalem and all the disciples were scattered, why were the leaders (Apostles) not forced out as well? | It is likely that the rulers were concentrating on the Hellenistic Jews, of which Stephen was a representative, during this persecution.  |
| Acts 8:16 | Whose name is a person baptized with?Matthew says use “*The Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matthew 28:19), while Peter says use only Jesus (Acts 2:38, 8:16,10:48, 19:5)[[63]](#footnote-63) | See the comments for Acts 2:38. |
| Acts 8:25 | Is the Gospel for everyone?Matthew (Matthew 10:5-6, 15:24) says it is not then contradicts himself (Matthew 28:19). Luke says it is not for everyone (Acts 16:6), then like Matthew he contradicts himself (Acts 8:25, 15:3, 22:21, 28:28). Mark and Paul are at least consistent saying it is for all (Mark 16:15, Galatians 2:3).[[64]](#footnote-64) | See the comments for Acts 1:8 |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 8:1-13
1  And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2  And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.
3  As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison. 4  Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. 5  Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6  And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7  For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8  And there was great joy in that city. 9  But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10  To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11  And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12  But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13  Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

##### Discussion Acts 8:1-13

Saul, who only held the coats of those who stoned Stephen is now an active persecutor of the church. He is, as far as we know, the primary antagonist of the church of Christ at this time. His primary method of harassing Christians was arrest and imprisonment. However, he, himself tells us that he participated in the murder of Christians[[65]](#footnote-65) although Luke fails to mention this at this time.

During this persecution, Stephen is buried and church mourns.

The persecution of the church caused the dispersion of the Christians, but it did not have the intended effect of stomping out this new movement. It had just the opposite effect, the church which had been confined to Jerusalem is not being planted in Judea and Samaria. Instead of dying out, it was growing. This, I believe, was the concern Gamaliel had when he cautioned the High Priest not to move against the Apostles.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Phillip leaves Jerusalem and preaches in Samaria and the people there gladly receive the word. We can recall that the Samaritans received Jesus after he visited with the woman at the well.[[67]](#footnote-67) So these people were ready to accept the gospel, and many were baptized.

Luke introduces us to a sorcerer, Simon, who had in the past impressed the people with his magic. Simon, recognizing real supernatural acts done by Phillip became a believer as well. Luke says that Simon believed and was baptized. Why does Luke specifically mention Simon? He did not mention converts in Jerusalem by name other than those selected to aid the Greek speaking widows, nor does he mention any other converts here in Samaria by name. Even when he tells us that many priests believed, he does not mention names. So why Simon? Perhaps the answer is provided in the next section of this chapter when Peter and John travel to Samaria.

Luke says that “12  But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13  Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” This passage tells us several important things:

1. The Samarians believed and were baptized, both men and women
2. Simon “believed also”, which indicates that the same way the others believed Simon believed
	1. Because of this, if the other Samarians were made Christians because they believed and were baptized, Simon was a Christian because he believed and was baptized
3. Simon continued with Phillip seeing the miracles that were being done.
	1. This could only have strengthened his faith, as it did others
	2. Because he was a sorcerer, he could identify any fake miracles, after all that is what he had been using all his life
	3. But he “wondered” at the miracles and signs that Phillip was doing indicating that he could not determine how they were done. This lends credence to the fact that the miracles being done by Phillip were truly supernatural and not some trick or other illusion that is often claimed by skeptics today

##### Acts 8:14-25

 14  Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15  Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16  (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17  Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18  And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19  Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20  But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21  Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22  Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23  For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. 24  Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25  And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

##### Discussion Acts 8:14-25

The Apostles, who are still in Jerusalem, get word that Phillip had taken the gospel to Samaria and that people had accepted it. Hearing this, the Apostles “sent” Peter and John to Samaria. This one phrase indicates that neither Peter nor John were considered to have any more authority than any of the other ten Apostles. Had Peter or John had any more authority, or had them been considered to be more important than the other Apostles the Holy Ghost would have had Luke use some other word. But the word “sent” implies that the group of Apostles together gave Peter and John the direction to travel to Samaria.

The purpose of their trip is also clear. They went to pass on the Holy Ghost. Luke says here “Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:  (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” Simon, who was still with Phillip saw this and offered money to Peter and John so that “…whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost”. NOTE: Simon did not want to purchase the gift of the Holy Ghost, indicating that he received this with the rest of the Christians in Samaria. He wanted what ONLY the Apostles had, the ability to pass on the Holy Ghost. Peter told him that he had no part in this and that he would perish with his money unless he repented.

The lessons in this section of Acts chapter 8 are:

1. While baptism causes one to receive the “gift of the Holy Ghost”[[68]](#footnote-68) He does not “fall”[[69]](#footnote-69) on anyone without the laying on of the Apostles hands.
	1. This is clear, Phillip couldn’t pass on this level of the Holy Ghost, otherwise it would not have been necessary for Peter and John to travel to Samaria
	2. Simon coveted it because it would provide him something of value
		1. That something of value had to be the ability to pass on the ability to perform miracles.
2. Simon, believed and was baptized. He received the laying on of hands by the Apostles[[70]](#footnote-70). But Peter told him to repent or perish with his money.
	1. This proves that a Christian can be in danger of falling away and Simon understood this clearly. Why else would Simon had asked Peter to pray that none of that would happen to him?
		1. If believing makes a person a Christian, as most of the Once Saved Always Saved teachers believe, then Simon was a Christian.
			1. If he was a Christian, Peter says he was in danger of perishing with his money which invalidates the Once Saved Always Saved ideology.
			2. If he wasn’t a Christian, then believing doesn’t make one a Christian which invalidates the “believe only” ideology.
		2. Luke said that says that Simon did everything the rest of the Samarians did to be saved, teachers today say that Simon still wasn’t a Christian.
			1. I chose to believe Luke
				1. Simon was a Christian just like the other Samarians

I believe that Peter or John laid their hands on him, just as they did the rest of the Samarian Christians

* + - * 1. Simon coveted something he had no part in and that put him in danger of “perishing”
				2. Prayer and repentance could reverse that and put him back in good graces with God

The reason that Luke specifically mentions Simon in Samaria but none of the other Christians in that city is to teach us a specific lesson. That lesson is that one can be in danger of “perishing” even after becoming a Christian. Other writers emphasize this as well.[[71]](#footnote-71) Peter tells us how to return to God once we find ourselves in this situation, repent and pray for forgiveness.

After the account of Simon, those who had brought the Gospel to Samaria traveled back to Jerusalem preaching in all the villages they passed through. This would include Peter, John and Phillip.

##### Acts 8:26-40

 26  And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27  And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28   Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29  Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30  And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31  And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32   The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33  In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34  And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35  Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36  And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37  And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38  And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39  And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. 40  But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

##### Discussion Acts 8:26-40

After the account of Simon in Samaria, Luke says that an angle of the Lord came to Phillip and instructed him to leave Jerusalem and go to Gaza[[72]](#footnote-72). Without a single question, at least none that Luke recorded, Phillip left Jerusalem and traveled south into Gaza. It was desert then, just as it is today. Somewhere near Gaza, Phillip saw a chariot with a man from Ethiopia in it. This man, a eunuch in service of Candice[[73]](#footnote-73) Queen of Ethiopia as her treasurer. He must have been a devout Jew, probably a proselyte, and wealthy because he had traveled from Ethiopia[[74]](#footnote-74) to Jerusalem to worship, he was seated in his chariot indicating that he had a driver, and he had a copy of the book of Isiah which were handwritten and rare.

The Spirit told Phillip to join the chariot, which he did and realized that the Treasurer was reading from Isiah 53. Their discussion began with a question by Phillip, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The Treasurer replied, “How can I unless someone helps me.” Then he asked Phillip to sit with him in the chariot and asked “.” If the prophet was talking about himself or someone else when he wrote “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.”

 Phillip began where the Treasurer was and taught him about Jesus. Note: Phillip did not try to go over the history of the Jews like Stephen did, he did not have to convince the Treasurer that there was a God and that Jehovah was the only God. He already believed that. After teaching the Treasurer, they passed a body of water and the Treasurer asked “See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” While we do not know what Phillip said to the Treasurer, we can surmise the following:

1. He said nothing about saying a “Sinners Prayer”
2. He told the Treasurer what salvation meant and how to be saved.
3. He told the Treasurer that he had to be baptized.

After hearing this question, Phillip replied “you may be baptized if you believe with all your heart” to which the Treasurer replied “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” On that statement, Phillip asked the chariot to stop and they both went into the water and Treasurer was baptized. After the baptism they parted companies and never saw each other again on this earth as far as the Biblical record indicates. However we know that the Treasurer went on his way rejoicing, and we can suspect that he taught about Jesus to other proselyte Jews[[75]](#footnote-75) in Ethiopia just like all other converts in the first Century. It seemed impossible for them not to share the gospel, unlike today when there is little rejoicing and the new convert rarely shares his salvation with others.

After leaving the Treasurer, Phillip traveled to Azotus[[76]](#footnote-76), which is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea preaching in all the towns and villages up to Caesarea[[77]](#footnote-77), which is also on the coast.

## Chapter 9:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in judea and samaria:

Acts Chapter 9 continues the second chronological period in the development of the church of Christ. Due to the continuing persecution of Christians in Jerusalem, the church is planted and develops in Samaria and Judea. However, Luke indicates that some Christians had fled to Damascus which was in Syria as well.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

While chapter 9 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts dealing with the Jewish church he tells us about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus which prepares us for the last section in Acts, the world-wide church. It concludes with two miracles performed by Peter in Judea, one in Lydda and the other in Joppa.

### THEMES:

#### evangelism and exhortation:

Due to the increasing persecution by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, the Christians were dispersing into the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria. Some were even fleeing into Syria to Damascus.[[78]](#footnote-78) They were preaching Jesus wherever they went thus continuing the second chronological period in the development of the church of Christ. Even with the persecution in Jerusalem the church continued to grow. Instead of stamping out this movement with their arrest, stoning’s, beatings, and other forms of harassment the rulers insured its growth.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Peter uses the keys to the Kingdom that Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19) to open the kingdom to new converts. His impassioned speech was at once powerful and full of love. It was particularly effective in convincing the Jews in Jerusalem that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The facts surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection were still fresh in their minds. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Jesus | Acts 9:4-6 | Jesus appeared to Saul and asked why he was working against Him.  | Saul, being blinded by the appearance of Jesus was led into the city and waited as Jesus had instructed. |
|  | Jesus | Acts 9:10-16 | Jesus appeared to Ananias and instructed him to meet with Saul, lay his hands on him to restore his sight and tell him what he had to do. | Ananias was reluctant because of Saul’s reputation, but he obeyed Jesus and found Saul. |
|  | Ananias | Acts 9:17 | Ananias, after locating Saul, told him that Jesus had sent him so that his sight could be restored and that he could be filled with the Holy Ghost. | Saul’s sight was immediately restored, he got up and was baptized. |
| Prayers |  |  |  |  |
| Miracles | Jesus | Acts 9:4-19 | Appeared to Saul in person and to Ananias in a vision.. | Saul was converted to Christianity |
|  | Ananias | Acts 9:17 | Restored sight to Saul. | Saul was baptized and immediately began preaching and teaching Jesus. |
|  | Peter | Acts 9:32-35 | Healing of Aeneas from palsy. | All those who lived in Lydda and Saron became Christians. |
|  | Peter | Acts 9:36-43 | Raising Tabitha from the dead. | Many who lived in Joppa became believers in Jesus. |
| Persecutions | Saul of Tarsus | Acts 9:23-25 | The Jews attempted to kill Saul. | Saul found out about the plot to kill him and escaped by being let down the city wall in a basket at night. |
|  | Saul of Tarsus | Acts 9:29 | The Grecian Jews in Jerusalem plotted to kill Saul. | The disciples sent Saul to Caesarea and then to Tarsus to escape the plot to murder him. |
| Major Events | Saul of Tarsus | Acts 9:18 | Baptism of Saul of Tarsus | A major shift in Christianity had begun. God is preparing for a universal church. |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[79]](#footnote-79)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 9:7 | Did the men with Saul hear a voice or not?Luke is confused, first he says that they heard a voice (Acts 9:7), then he has Paul saying they didn’t hear a voice (Acts 22:9)[[80]](#footnote-80) | This is an example of a common way of speaking that is still prevalent with us today. In Acts 9:7, Luke says that they heard a voice. Paul, explaining the appearance says they did not hear a voice.It is evident that they heard a voice, but could not make out what was being said. We often to this today when we tell a person we did not hear them when we meant that we heard their voice but could not understand the message they were trying to convey to us.Another explanation is that they heard Saul speaking, but did not hear Jesus speaking to Saul[[81]](#footnote-81) |
| Acts 9:7 | Did the men with Saul fall to the ground?Once again Luke is confused. Here he says they remained standing (Acts 9:7), but later he quotes Saul as saying that they were all knocked down (Acts 26:14) | Acts 26:14 refers to the *immediate* effect of the appearance of the light. They were *immediately* smitten to the ground together. This was before the voice spake to Saul, [Acts 26:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+26%3A14). In *this* place [Acts 9:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A7) the historian is speaking of what occurred *after* the first alarm. There is no improbability that they rose from the ground immediately, and surveyed the scene with silent amazement and alarm.[[82]](#footnote-82) |
| Acts 9:8 | Luke reports that Saul went from Damascus to Jerusalem, but Paul in Galatians 1:15-18 says that he did not go directly to Jerusalem but went to Arabia. This is a discrepancy that proves the Bible to be in error. | There are several valid explanations for this apparent discrepancy. These are:1. Luke is not writing a detailed history of the life of Paul the Apostle, but a history of the early church. Therefore the statement “after many days were fulfilled” could account for the three years Saul spent in Arabia.
2. Saul could have preached for a while in Damascus, then spent three years in Arabia, returned to Damascus where, after escaping the death threats in a basket, he left for Jerusalem.
3. Saul could have preached long enough in Damascus to irritate the Jews causing them to plot to kill him. After learning of this plot, he may have escaped by the basket then gone into Arabia for three years since the Jews in Damascus probably sent word to Jerusalem about what had happened there. After spending three years in Arabia, Saul returned to Damascus then left for Jerusalem.
 |
| Acts 9:25-26 | Luke says that Saul escaped Damascus in a basket because the Jews were plotting to kill him, in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33 Paul says that it was a threat of arrest from King Aretas that caused him to leave Damascus. This is a discrepancy that proves the Bible to be in error. | There is really no conflict here, just as in the case of Jesus the Jews probably petitioned the King to arrest Saul, where after another mock trial they intended to have him killed for blasphemy. Once again, Luke’s account here is more concerned about the history of the church than an accurate account of the life of Saul. |
| Acts 9:26-28 | Did Saul visit all the disciples when he went to Jerusalem after his conversion?Luke says that he did (Acts 9:26-25), but Saul himself disagrees (Galatians 1:18-10) claiming that he only saw Peter and James.[[83]](#footnote-83) | Luke simply says that Barnabas took Saul to “the apostles” but he does not say to “all” of them. Paul in Galatians says he saw Peter and James only. This probably means that the rest of the apostles were not present in Jerusalem or not available when Barnabas and Saul met with Peter and James. |
| Acts 9:43 | Luke did not understand Jewish religious life because no Jew would spend time with a tanner who worked with dead carcasses.Peter was hypocritical in his views, here he was willing to stay with a man who had an “unclean” profession, but was not willing to eat the “unclean” animals Jesus showed him in a vision told by Luke in Acts 10. | Peter was not a Pharisee as far as we know. Therefore he was not likely to be really dedicated to all the Jewish purity laws. In addition, being a fisherman himself he was accustomed to being around dead animals.This is arguing apple and oranges. Staying with a person who dealt with dead animals was no different than staying with other fishermen. Eating some unclean animal was a serious breach of Jewish law which Peter was unwilling to do until God explained that everything was made by Him. |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 9:1-9
1  And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2  And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. 7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

##### Discussion Acts 9:1-9

Luke changes thoughts completely with Chapter 9. In this section of Chapter 9 Luke tells us that Saul was so interested in persecuting Christians that he requested, and received, authority to travel all the way to Damascus to persecute them there. This was a major trip in those days. There were two routes that he could have taken to get to Damascus, the exact route he used is lost to history.[[84]](#footnote-84) The distance has been given as ranging from 120 to 190 miles which would have taken around five, or more, days by foot.

Some historians think that Saul must have ridden a horse, since this would have allowed him to get there faster. However, this does not fit well with Luke’s account. Luke says that “he fell to the earth” while this does not mean that he was not on horseback, certainly Luke would have said “he fell from his horse” had he been on horseback[[85]](#footnote-85). In addition, Luke tells us “the men with him stood speechless” which seems to indicate that they were on foot. If Saul was on horseback and the soldiers were on foot, the advantage of speed would disappear since they could travel only as fast as the slowest person could walk.

Luke doesn’t tell us how far Saul had traveled before Jesus appeared from him, only that “as he journeyed he came near Damascus”. Some accounts put the location at a bridge about 0.5 miles outside Damascus. But think about this; Saul’s traveling companions were not in his social circle, they were soldiers assigned to him by the High Priest. Because of this, they would have kept to themselves and not walked nor talked much with Saul. So for this journey he was mostly alone with his thoughts and certainly thought about the Christians he had already persecuted and those he was going to persecute.

A comment made by Jesus, “*it is hard for you to kick against the pricks*” is of particular interest. It may indicate that Saul was already having an inner struggle with the persecution. Having seen the reaction of the Christians that he had already persecuted, he must have realized that they were completely convinced of the nature of Jesus. While they fled Jerusalem to escape the persecution, when they were arrested and beaten most did not deny Jesus. This in itself indicated a strong conviction in the believers. Saul could not have overlooked this fact. The phrase “*it is hard for you to kick against the pricks*” could also mean that the harder Saul and the Jewish leaders tried to stamp out the infant church, the faster it grew. It was kind of like that game that was popular when our kids were preschool age, “Mole in the Hole”. When they hit one mole several more popped out of holes all over the playing board, making it almost impossible to get rid of them all. We know for a fact that the persecution resulted in the spread of the church, so Jesus could have meant that and Saul could have not had any second thoughts at all. Certainly Luke’s opening statement in this chapter “1  *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2  And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem”*[[86]](#footnote-86) indicated that Saul had no misgivings when he left Jerusalem for Damascus.

Some scholars feel that Saul must have seen Jesus before his murder or that he may have even been at the cross itself. The reasoning is that Saul was a dedicated Jew and would not have missed Passover in Jerusalem as it was one of the three feast where all Jewish men were required to attend in person[[87]](#footnote-87). If he were in Jerusalem, it would have been highly unlikely for him not to have known what was happening. However, there is not a single comment that even alludes to this in the New Testament. It is entirely possible, given the stature of Saul, that he could have been in Jerusalem and known of the trial and execution of Jesus but never saw him. Saul could have considered this just an execution of an iterant preacher by the Sadducees and nothing for him to attend. His attention during that time could have been entirely placed on the feast, not considering the impacts that Jesus would have until the Pentecost fifty days later.

Some have pointed out what appears to be a discrepancy between Luke’s account here and the retelling of this by Paul later in the book. In Acts 22:9 Paul says that those with him “…*heard not the voice that spake to me*.” There is, of course, no discrepancy. We all have said at one time or another that we have not heard a speaker, even though we hear a sound and can make out some words, meaning that we cannot hear well enough to understand what is being said. That is what happened here, they heard the sound of someone talking but did not understand what was being said.

This is only the beginning of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul was inundated with the light of the glory of Jesus, he saw the resurrected Savior and heard His voice! This happened around noon, so the light must have been very bright.

Saul knew immediately that something spiritual was happening and asked “*Who are you, Lord*”. To which Jesus replied, “*I am Jesus who you persecute*.” Saul did not argue with Him, he did not deny Him, he did not try to dismiss this as a hoax or a dream. Then Jesus tells him that it is hard for him to kick against the pricks. To which Saul has only one more question, “*What will you have me to do?*” This is similar to the question that the Jews asked Peter on Pentecost, to which Peter replied, “*Repent and be baptized*”. However Jesus tells Saul to go into the city and you will be told what you MUST do.[[88]](#footnote-88) The soldiers had to lead Saul into the city where he stayed on Straight Street at the home of Judas. For three days Saul would not eat nor drank. Instead he fasted and prayed. There must have been considerable bitter turmoil in his mind during these three days. While he thought that he was doing Gods’ will in persecuting the disciples of Christ, he knew now that he had actually been working against God. To a devout Jew, this must have been devastating.

##### Acts 9:10-22

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord. 11  And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12  And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13  Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14  And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17  And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

##### Discussion Acts 9:10-22

After appearing to Saul and telling him what he had to do, Jesus appeared to a disciple named Ananias. Notice though, Jesus appeared to Ananias in a vision but He appeared to Saul in person. Jesus told Ananias to go to find Saul because he was praying, and has seen a man named Ananias who will come into the house and restore his vision. This is critical in that an apostle had to have seen Jesus in person.

Ananias wasn’t enthusiastic about the prospect of actually going to find Saul, after all most disciples tried hard to avoid meeting him. But Jesus assured Ananias that he had plans for Saul and that he would suffer great things for Him. The idea that Saul would suffer may have been viewed by Ananias as divine payback for all the suffering he had caused the disciples. When Ananias entered into the house he found Saul, laid his hands on him and said “*Brother Saul, Jesus sent me so that your sight might be restored and that you will be filled with the Holy Ghost.*” Ananias called Saul “Brother”, not because he was already saved but because he was a Jew.

After Saul’s sight was restored, he was baptized. It was only after he was baptized that he began to eat. Saul understood that he was at odds with the will of God before he was baptized, after his baptism he broke his fast, stopped praying and ate. It was after he was baptized that Saul felt he was once again in the correct relationship with God[[89]](#footnote-89). After his baptism, Saul remained in Damascus for “certain days” where he preached in the synagogues that Jesus was, in fact, the Son of God. This must have been an amazing transformation! The person sent by Jerusalem to destroy the Christian movement was, himself, proclaiming that religion. He was proving the very thing he had sought to destroy.

##### Acts 9:23-31

 23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket. 26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

##### Discussion Acts 9:23-31

Luke simply states “*after that many days were fulfilled*” the Jews decided to eliminate what had become a problem for them. Paul, in the letter to the Galatians, says that he left Damascus and went into Arabia then came back to Damascus not going into Jerusalem for three years after his conversion.[[90]](#footnote-90) This incident that Luke describes could have happened after Saul had gone to Arabia and returned to Damascus, immediately preceding his going to Jerusalem, or it could have been the thing that prompted him to go into Arabia.

##### Acts 9:32-35

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

##### Discussion Acts 9:32-35

Peter was traveling from village to village and visited the Christians in Lydda. Lydda was located in northwestern Judea, south and east of Joppa. Peter performed a miracle by healing a man who had been sick with palsy[[91]](#footnote-91) for eight years. As in most cases of the miracles, this one became widely known and caused many to convert to Christianity.

##### Acts 9:36-46

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. 38  And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. 39  Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40  But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41  And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42  And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. 43  And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

##### Discussion Acts 9:36-45

While Peter was in Lydda, a Christian woman who lived in Joppa died. The disciples there knew that Peter was in Lydda and sent for him. Since Lydda was “*nigh to Joppa*”[[92]](#footnote-92) it would have taken Peter some time to get there. We cannot know why the disciples sent for Peter, since they had a sense of urgency, “Don’t delay in coming with us”, it is unlikely that they just wanted him to come to mourn with them. What we can discern is that it is unlikely that the disciples in Joppa had the ability to perform miracles since Dorcas became sick and died. However, the Apostles had not yet raised anyone from the dead. They did not raise Stephen from the dead after he was murdered, so it is questionable to think that the disciples in Joppa thought that Peter would bring Dorcas back to life once he arrived. It may have been that they just wanted Peter to be there when they were grieving over this disciple.

Regardless of their reasoning, the disciples urged Peter to hurry to Joppa. It would have taken at least 6-7 hours for Peter to arrive, so Dorcas’ body would have entered into the early stages of rigor mortis resulting in stiffing of parts of the body[[93]](#footnote-93). She would have clearly been dead, not in a comma or some other type of deep sleep. It is important that Luke states that she “opened her eyes” when Peter told her to rise up because the eyelids are some of the first muscles to enter rigor mortis after death[[94]](#footnote-94) and would have been fixed in closed position by the time Peter went in to the room with her. This is clearly a miracle, and not some accident of timing!

It is interesting that Peter commanded everyone to leave the room before praying. I do not believe that Peter had any doubt in the power of God to raise her up. We do not know what he asked God to do in his prayer. We only know that he kneeled down beside the body, prayed, then turned toward the body and commanded her to arise. At this point, she opened her eyes, saw Peter and sat up. What a remarkable thing to witness! We can, through the words of the Holy Ghost as presented to us by Luke, fully understand the power and majesty of God and His power over death. What reassurance we have! God raised Jesus, He raised Tabitha, He will raise the dead when Jesus returns!

Something like this could not be kept secret. It became widely known and the result was that “many believed in the Lord”. While many believed, not all there did even after Tabitha was raised. This causes us to remember Jesus’s words in the story He told us about the rich man and Lazarus. In that story, Abraham told the rich man that his brothers would not believe even if someone were to be sent back from the grave. How true this is! Today we know that Jesus was raised, the historical evidence is overwhelming, Luke tells us about Tabitha and yet people refuse to believe.

## Chapter 10:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in judea and samaria:

Acts Chapter 10 continues the second chronological period in the development of the church of Christ. However, Luke introduces the first gentile to be converted to the church of Christ since its inception in Jerusalem in about 30 AD. God begins to prepare the Jewish Christians to accept gentile converts, which due to a long history of exclusivism is a difficult proposition for them to accept.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

While chapter 10 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts dealing with the Jewish church he tells us about the conversion of the gentile Cornelius of Caesarea which begins to prepare us for the last section in Acts, the world-wide church. It describes miracles performed by God and by Cornelius and his household.

### THEMES:

#### evangelism:

God continues with His plans for a universal church. He makes it clear to Peter that all people are subject to the salvation presented by Jesus in a vision concerning unclean animals. At first Peter failed to understand the meaning of the vision, but quickly saw the full meaning when he met Cornelius. Peter used the keys of the kingdom that Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19) for the second and last time to open the kingdom to the Gentiles. This presents a whole new field of evangelism to the Christians. Now the message of the Gospel was available to everyone on earth, and not restricted to the Jews.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Peter uses the keys to the Kingdom that Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19) to open the kingdom to new converts for the second and last time. This was the beginning of the universal church, as God had planned from the beginning. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Angel of God | Acts 10:3-6 | Instructed Cornelius to send men to Joppa for Peter | Cornelius obeyed the instructions and sent three men to Joppa for Peter. |
|  | Holy Spirit | Acts 10:19-20 | Instructed Peter to go with the three men and doubt nothing because they had been sent by God. | Peter accompanied them to the house of Cornelius. |
|  | Peter | Acts 10:28-29 | Told Cornelius and those gathered in his home that it was unlawful for a Jew to be there but that God had showed him that nothing was unclean. | Peter stayed and asked why he was sent for. |
|  | Cornelius | Acts 10:30-33 | Explained that he had seen a vision and was told to send for Peter and he would tell him what God commands him to do. | Peter began preaching Jesus to the Gentiles. |
|  | Peter | Acts 10:34-43 | Peter’s sermon to Cornelius and his visitors. | Conversion of the first gentiles. |
| Prayers | Cornelius | Acts 10:30 | No information. | Cornelius saw a vision and sent for Peter. |
| Miracles | God | Acts 10:9-16 | Vision given to Peter concerning the unclean animals. | Peter was understood that God created all things equally.. |
|  | Cornelius and his household | Acts 10:44-46 | The gentiles began to speak in tongues. | This convinced Peter that God wanted the gentiles to be a part of the church and caused Peter to baptize them. |
| Persecutions |  |  |  |  |
| Major Events | Conversion of Cornelius and his entire house | Acts 10:44-48 | First gentile Christians. | The church became a universal church with the inclusion of Gentile believers |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[95]](#footnote-95)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 10:9-13 | What can we eat?The Bible is completely confused about this. In the vision that Peter had, God told him to kill and eat anything (Acts 10:9-13). Paul said we can eat any meat unless it offends someone (Romans 14:21), but then tells Timothy that abstaining from meats is a doctrine of devils (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Luke says to eat anything that is offered to us (Luke 10:8) and Paul tells the people in Corinth to eat whatever is being sold (1 Corinthians 10:25). Moses tells us that we should be vegetarians (Genesis 1:29), then he says we can eat anything (Genesis 9:3). Later he says we can eat some meat (Deuteronomy 14:7-8, Leviticus 11:2-4). | There is no contradiction when you study the chronology of these passages. After the creation and before the flood, humans were told by God to eat only plants and fruits (Genesis 1:19). After the flood, God allows man to eat any animal, but it must be drained of its blood (Genesis 9:3). Later, when speaking to the Jews God restricts their diet to certain meats (Leviticus 11:2-4 and Deuteronomy 14:7-8). NOTE: this restriction was only for the Israelites, Gentiles were still under the command given to Noah after the flood. In Luke 10:9, Jesus is speaking to his disciples, which are Jews, who are being sent out to other Jews. So they would eat whatever was in front of them, even if they didn’t like it since it would have met the restrictions placed on the Israelites under the Law of Moses. After the church was established, the old laws of Moses including the ones about eating meats were abolished. Therefore Paul could say eat anything that didn’t offend others. |
| Acts 10:22 | Is there any such thing as a just man?Solomon, the wise man, said there is no such thing as a just man (Ecclesiastes 7:20). But Luke says that Cornelius was just (Acts 10:22). He also said Joseph from Arimathaea was just (Luke 23:50-51) as well as Simon (Luke 2:25). Peter claims that Lot was a just man (2 Peter 2:7). Paul says that there are just people (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11). The writer of Hebrews agrees (Hebrews 10:38)[[96]](#footnote-96) | Solomon was correct, there is no such thing as a “*just man*” who does good and does not sin. Jesus was the only man to which this could be said and he was not living when Solomon wrote these words. However, we can be just in the eyes of God because of the sacrifice of Jesus. His blood provides us a way to stand before God and allows Him not to see our sins. So the references given of ‘just” men are of those whose belief and obedience to God causes them to stand in the blood of Jesus where our sins are not seen.Cornelius was said to be a just man because of his actions towards the Jews. He prayed to God, he gave alms and he was just in the sight of men.No one who lives without Jesus is just, good or sinless. |
| Acts 10:34 | Is God a respecter of persons?Luke says here that he is not (Acts 10:34). Paul and Peter both agree with him (Romans 2:11, Galatians 2:6, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, 1 Peter 1:17). However, Moses disagrees claiming that God did respect specific persons (Genesis 4:3-5, Exodus 2:25, Leviticus 26:9)[[97]](#footnote-97) | If we actually consider the context it is clear that the meaning of “God is no respecter of persons” is not “God does not respect a person” as the author of the SAB has it. The meaning is that God does not look at the outward appearance: are we rich or poor, have we been circumcised or not, are we Jewish or not. God looks at the heart of man, how we are on the inside, as only a God can. As Peter says in [next verse](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/acts/10.html#v35) (verse 35): *But in every nation he that feareth him is accepted with him.[[98]](#footnote-98)* |
| Acts 10:36 | Was Jesus a peaceful man?Luke says that he is (Acts 10:36, Luke 2:14) and Matthew and John agree (Matthew 26:51-52, John 14:27, John 16:33). But all three contradicts themselves (Matthew 10:34, Luke 12:51, Luke 22:36, Revelation 19:11).[[99]](#footnote-99) | Yes, Jesus is peaceful. He did not fight when he was bound and captured, [John 18:36](http://www.berenddeboer.net/sab/jn/18.html#v36). He has come to bring peace to sinners whose consciences are wounded by their sins.[[100]](#footnote-100) |
| Acts 10:48 | There is a discrepancy between the instructions for baptism provided by Luke, here, and Matthew in Matthew 28:19 | Having Corneilus baptized in the “name of Jesus Christ” is having him baptized in the authority of Jesus. The instructions of Matthew include Jesus. Here Luke focuses on the mediator, Jesus, while Matthew gives provides the full involvement of the Trinity in baptism. |
|  |  |  |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 10:1-8
1   There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,
2  *A* devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3  He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4  And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5  And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6  He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7  And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8  And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

##### Discussion Acts 10:1-8

Luke introduces Cornelius, a devout man who feared God while being a gentile. This tells us that he was not a proselyte but was still a person who believed in the God of Israel. Some have argued that Cornelius was a proselyte because of the following facts[[101]](#footnote-101):

* He was praying to the God of the Israelites at the ninth hour of the day, the traditional hour of prayer,
* He was fasting while praying, a tradition of the Israelites.
* God answered his prayers

However, the arguments that Cornelius was not a proselyte are just as convincing. These are:

* The Bible mentions several gentiles who had not become proselytes but who were favorably inclined towards the Jews
	+ Naaman; 2 Kings 5:15-18
	+ Rahab; Joshua 6:25
	+ An unnamed Centurion; Luke 7:1-5
* Conversion of proselytes had been already documented by Luke,
	+ Acts 6:5 refers to a Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch
		- There is not a single recorded incident opposing the conversion of Nicolas by the Jews
* The Jewish Christians did not oppose the conversion of gentiles, as long as they became proselytes first
	+ Acts 15:24[[102]](#footnote-102)
	+ Peter himself needed miraculous proof that God intended to include gentiles in the church, this would not have been a problem with Peter had they first been proselytes
		- He was with the Apostles in Jerusalem when Nicolas was selected and had no problem with that
	+ Peter and the Jewish Christians with him were completely surprised that the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and the members of his household
		- This would not have been their reaction had they been proselytes
* If Cornelius were a proselyte, Peter would have not had such an aversion to having contact with him.
	+ Jewish proselytes were accepted into Jewish culture and life, although with some restrictions
		- In Acts 13, Paul addressed both Jews and Gentile Proselytes in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia[[103]](#footnote-103)
* The Christians in Jerusalem understood that Cornelius was not a proselyte. They strongly objected to Peter’s visit with him as recorded by Luke in Acts 11:2-3
	+ They basically said “You went in and ate with an uncircumcised man, how dare you?”
* Both Peter and James recognized the conversion of Cornelius as a conversion of a gentile[[104]](#footnote-104)

All these point to the fact that while Cornelius worshiped the God of the Israelites, he was not a proselyte at the time of his conversion. Therefore he was, indeed, the first gentile to be converted to Christianity.

Cornelius did not hesitate when he understood that the angel was speaking for God. He immediately selected his most trustworthy men and sent them to Joppa to ask Peter to come to his home. He would have understood the significance of this, since he knew that Jews and Gentiles were not to intermingle according to Jewish law. But he obeyed God without question.

##### Acts 10-9-15

9   On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10  And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11  And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12  Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13  And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14  But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15  And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

##### Discussion Acts 10:9-15

Peter went to the top of the house to pray around noon. He was hungry which was likely the reason that God choose the vision he did to convince Peter of His intentions to open the church to Gentiles. It is interesting that Peter’s initial reaction was to refuse to do what God told him to do. Compare Peter’s response to this with the following[[105]](#footnote-105):

* Abraham when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac[[106]](#footnote-106)
* Hosea when God asked him to marry a prostitute[[107]](#footnote-107)
* And Isaiah when God told him to go naked for three years[[108]](#footnote-108)

Each of these three men immediately obeyed God, even though His commands were personally repulsive to each of them.

 Peter, on the other hand initially objected and refused to eat. His reaction was more like the following people who initially objected to Gods instructions:

* Jonah, who did not want to go to Nineveh to preach repentance [[109]](#footnote-109)
* Mary, who could not understand how she would conceive since she was still a virgin[[110]](#footnote-110)
* Zechariah, argued with the angle when told his wife would have a son[[111]](#footnote-111)

His response was “Not so, Lord”, Peter had always observed the Jewish restrictions on clean and unclean foods, so this was so foreign to him that he could not comprehend why it would be commanded. Perhaps he thought it was a test of his character, maybe he thought that it was just a regular dream. Regardless of his thoughts, his initial reaction was to reject the instructions and maintain his strict Jewish culture.

##### Acts 10:16-33

16   This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17  Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18  And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19  While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20  Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21  Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come? 22  And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23  Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24  And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25  And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. 26  But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.
27  And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28  And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29  Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? 30  And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31  And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32  Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33  Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

##### Discussion Acts 10:16-33

After God sent the same vision to Peter three times, each time Peter refused to eat the incident was concluded. Peter woke up from his trance[[112]](#footnote-112) and wondered about the vision clearly remembering the words “*What God has cleansed, that call not thou common*.” At this very minute the messengers from Cornelius arrived at the gate to the tanners’ home. Because of the timing, Peter could not have missed the implication and the meaning of the vision. To reinforce the message, the Holy Spirit told him that three men were looking for him and that he should go with them without any doubts because they had been sent by God. An interesting comment by Luke is in verse 23. Here Luke says Peter invited the messengers into the home of Simon the Tanner and lodged them overnight. This is interesting in that at least one would likely have been a gentile. The soldier would most likely have been a gentile, the other two could have been Jews who were in the employ of Cornelius, however there is nothing in the Bible that implies that. The point is that Peter is already beginning to rid himself of the prejudices that he has held against gentiles from birth because of the vision he had just seen and the impeccable timing of God in arranging the events so that their meaning was unmistakable.

The next day Peter, the messengers and “*certain” brothers*[[113]](#footnote-113) from the church in Joppa went to Caesarea to meet with Cornelius. The distance from Joppa to Caesarea was about 30 miles[[114]](#footnote-114), the typical distance that a person could walk in a day was considered to be about 20 miles, so this trip probably took about 1.5 days. When they arrived they found not only Cornelius, but his entire family and close friends, waiting to hear what Peter had to say. When Peter entered the house, Cornelius knelt and began to worship Peter. Cornelius may have thought that since the angel had told him to send for Peter, he was due worship as well as God. Peter immediately corrected this by picking him up and pointing out that he was only a man.

Peter began his visit by pointing out that it has been unlawful for a Jew to entertain or be entertained by a gentile, but God had shown him that no man was to be considered unclean and asking why he had been sent for. By this time, Peter certainly understood the message that was given to him by God in the form of the vision on the rooftop in Joppa. It is clear from Luke’s’ record that Peter had no idea why he was being summoned by Cornelius. It is obvious that the messengers had told him nothing about the task that was before him. This tends to reinforce the idea that all three of the messengers were gentiles. Even after walking with them for over a day, they had not talked enough together for Peter to know why he was being summoned.

Cornelius told Peter about the vision he had of an angel who told him that God had heard his prayers and that his offerings were being remembered. Then he told Peter that he was instructed to send for Peter and that he was staying in the home of Simon the Tanner in Joppa by the sea shore. Cornelius said that he “*immediately*” sent for Peter and that they were all gathered together to hear *“all things that are commanded of God*”.

##### Acts 10:34-43

34  Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
35  But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36  The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37  That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38  How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39  And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40  Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 41  Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.
42  And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. 43  To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

##### Discussion Acts 10:34-43

Peter began his response by stating that “*God is no respecter of persons*”.[[115]](#footnote-115) In verse 35 Peter states “ *But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*” Some have taught that Peter is teaching salvation by works in this verse. This cannot be farther from the truth. Peter is stating here what the writer of Hebrews makes clear in Hebrews chapter 11. That true faith is always accompanied with obedience and the requisite actions. Peter then begins to tell Cornelius the gospel of Jesus beginning with the baptism of John. Peter was only able to point out that Jesus was killed by the Jews and hung on a tree, was resurrected on the third day and appeared to witnesses chosen by God. That they ate and drank with him after his resurrection and that they were commanded to preach that Jesus was ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. When he stated that the prophets all witnessed that through His name men who believed would receive remissions from their sins a miracle happened.

##### Acts 10:44-48

44  While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45  And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46  For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47  Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48  And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

##### Discussion Acts 10:44-48

During Peter’s speech, the Holy Ghost fell on all those who heard. This was a remarkable miracle! The Holy Ghost falling on gentiles in the presence of Jewish witnesses. No one could argue because there were seven Israeli witnesses to this miracle. Peter and the six Christian men from Joppa. What they saw completely surprised them and caught them off guard. None of them could even have guessed that this would happen to gentiles. However, here it was! They were speaking in tongues just like the Apostles did on the day of Pentecost and Peter recognized the significance of it. He ask, probably the Christian men from Joppa, “*Can any man forbid water that these should be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost as we did?*” Then Peter commanded them to be baptized.[[116]](#footnote-116) This act opened the church to every human in the world, regardless of their prior religious state. No one would be required to become a Jew any longer in order to be saved. This truly started the universal church of Christ.

## Chapter 11:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in judea and samaria:

Acts Chapter 10 continues the second chronological period in the development of the church of Christ. Peter has to defend his actions in Caesarea with Cornelius and his family and friends to the Christians in Judea. God introduces the concept of congregations assisting others when the need arose.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

While chapter 10 continues with the second section in the structure of Acts dealing with the Jewish church, Luke repeats the facts surrounding the conversion of gentiles. The church in Judea receives assistance from the disciples in Antioch giving us the example of congregational cooperation.

### THEMES:

#### EXHORTATION AND evangelism:

Peter encourages the church in Jerusalem when he defends his interaction with Cornelius. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch to encourage the disciples here. This not only resulted in the confirmation of their faith, but in adding many converts.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Peter defends his actions with the gentiles and Barnabas finds Saul of Tarsus and begins his work with him. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches | Peter | Acts 11:1-18 | A summary of the events detailed in Acts 10 with Cornelius. | The church in Jerusalem accepts gentile converts. |
| Prayers |  |  |  |  |
| Miracles |  |  |  |  |
| Persecutions | Disciples | Acts 11:19 | Persecutions surrounding the murder of Stephen | Disciples dispersed and preached the gospel. |
| Major Events |  | Acts 11:26 | A new name was given to the disciples | Christians. This became the name of disciples of Jesus Christ. |
|  |  | Acts 11:27-30 | Disciples in Antioch gave according to his ability for the disciples in Judea | The concept of inter congregational assistance and cooperation is introduced. |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[117]](#footnote-117)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 11:13-14 | What does a person have to do to be saved?The Bible is so confused on this it is hard to figure it out. Luke says here that we have to listen to Peter (Acts 11:13-14). Matthew says we have to say the right things (Matthew 12:37) while Jeremiah, John and Paul say we have to do the right things (Jeremiah 17:10, John 4:29, 2 Corinthians 5:10). Then Paul says we have to believe the right things (Romans 3:28, 5:1, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8). But James says we have to both do and believe the right things (James 2:17). We are told to work our way to heaven (Psalms 62:12, Matthew 16:27, Revelation 20:12-13, 2 Corinthians 11:15, 1 Peter 1:17, James 2:14, 17, 20, 24, 26, Revelation 2:23, 22:12, Philippians 2:12). We are told to do God’s will (1 John 2:17), be a doer of the law (Romans 2:6, 13), call on the name of the Lord (Acts 2”21, Romans 10:13), call on God (Psalm 55:16), trust in the Lord (Psalm 37:40), get to know God (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9) and wait for God (Proverbs 20:22, Isaiah 25:9). Isaiah tells us to look at him (Isaiah 45:22) while the Hebrews writer says that we need to be scourged and tortured (Hebrews 12:6, 11:35) then Luke says we have to repent (Luke 13:3,5).We are also told some things not to do. We can’t be wicked (Exekiel 18:27), offend children (Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:14, Luke 17:2). We can’t be filthy or naughty (James 1:21) and we can’t lust (James 1:15).[[118]](#footnote-118) | Actually it is easy to figure out. A person must:Hear the Gospel-Romans 10:14Believe that Jesus is the Son of God-Acts 8:37Confess their belief-Romans 10:9Repent of their sins-Acts 17:30Be Baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.-Acts 2:38The Bible teaches that salvation is freely given to mankind by the grace of God, through a faith that is shown by our obedience. |
|  |  |  |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 11:1-18
1  And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2  And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3  Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. 4  But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying, 5  I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: 6  Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7  And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8  But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9  But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. 10  And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11  And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. 12  And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:
13  And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14  Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15  And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16  Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17  Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?
18  When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

##### Discussion Acts 11:1-18

Word got around that the gentiles had been evangelized and some in the church in Jerusalem took issue with this. Peter defends his actions by recounting the events surrounding the conversion of Cornelius. This passage dispels any thoughts that Cornelius may have been a proselyte in that the disciples in Jerusalem clearly asked him why he went in and ate with “*men uncircumcised*”[[119]](#footnote-119). Peter’s final argument, after explaining the incidents that happened to both him and Cornelius, was “*what was I, that I could withstand God?*”[[120]](#footnote-120) This statement quitted all objections, for a short time anyway.

##### Acts 11:19-26

19  Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. 20  And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21  And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. 22  Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 23  Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. 24  For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. 25  Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: 26  And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

##### Discussion Acts 11:19-26

Following the murder of Stephen, disciples left Jerusalem and traveled throughout the region preaching the word to Jews. Luke states that the church in Jerusalem heard about the conversions resulting from the dispersion of disciples after the murder of Stephen and sent Barnabas to encourage them. Luke tells us that Barnabas was a “*good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith*”[[121]](#footnote-121), the result was not only were the disciples encouraged, but that many more were converted. After encouraging the new converts, Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Tarsus to find Saul. They worked together for a year, teaching many people. It is at this point that Luke tells us that God gave us a new name. From this point on, we all should be called “Christians”, what a glorious name!

##### Acts 11:27-30

27  And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28  And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29  Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30  Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

##### Discussion Acts 11:27-30

Prophets from Jerusalem went to Antioch and foretold about a drought in Judea. The Christians in Antioch collected funds from each “*according to his ability*”[[122]](#footnote-122) to send to relieve the suffering of their brothers and sisters in Judea. This sets the example of inter-congregational cooperation and support. Notice that the funds were not dispersed directly to the disciples in Judea, but given to the elders. This lends credence to the inter-congregational cooperation teachings in this passage.

## Chapter 12:

### CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD:

#### development of the church in judea and samaria:

Acts Chapter 12 concludes the section of the Development of the church in Judea and Samaria.

The principle dates involved are:

### STURCTURAL SETTING:

#### The Activities of Peter and the Jewish church:

Chapter 12 concludes Luke’s narrative of the church in Jerusalem and his concentration on the activities of Peter.

### THEMES:

#### Exhortation:

As the church comes under more intense persecution, Luke tells us about the second martyr. James, the brother of John was killed using a sword at the command of Herod the King. Seeing how this pleased the Jews, he continues his persecution but God uses this to encourage the disciples by freeing Peter from prison.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS:

Active persecution begins again resulting in miracles by God that exhort the disciples. These significant events are described as:

|  |
| --- |
| SIGNIFICANT EVENTS |
| Activity | **Who** | **Scripture** | **Summary** | **Result** |
| Speeches |  |  |  |  |
| Prayers | The church in Jerusalem | Acts 12:5 | The church as a whole prayed for Peter | Peter is freed from prison by an angel of God. |
| Miracles | God | Acts 12:7-10 | An angel of God entered the prison and freed Peter. | The government is completely baffled and the Christians are encouraged. |
| Persecutions | James, the brother of John | Acts 12:1-2 | James was murdered using a sword. | This act pleased the Jews and encouraged additional persecutions. |
| Major Events |  |  |  |  |

### CONSIDERING THE SKEPTICS:

Skeptics have accused the Bible of errors for centuries. None of them have proven accurate. The following is a list of the more significant skeptical claims about this chapter and the Christian View:[[123]](#footnote-123)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Verses Involved | Skeptics View | Christians View |
| Acts 12:20-23 | Luke indicates that Herod died immediately after the speech while Josephus says that he died five days later. Therefore the Bible does not agree with other witnesses. | Luke does not say that Herod died immediately, only that the Lord smote him immediately after the speech.[[124]](#footnote-124) Since he was eaten by worms and died, there had to have been sometime between when the worms began to eat him and he died. The Holy Spirit just did not see the importance of saying that it took five days for Herod to die. The important thing is that he accepted praise that rightfully belonged to God and he suffered greatly for it. |
|  |  |  |

### VERSE STUDY:

Acts 12:1-19
1  Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.
2  And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3  And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) 4  And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. 5  Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. 6  And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. 7  And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands. 8  And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9  And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10  When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. 11  And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews. 12  And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. 13  And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.
14  And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. 15  And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. 16  But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished. 17  But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. 18  Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. 19  And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and *there* abode.

##### Discussion Acts 12:1-19

Herod begins a concentrated effort to persecute Christians. After having James, the brother of John, killed and seeing how the Jews appreciated that action he had Peter arrested. It is very likely that Herod intended to murder Peter as well, but wanted to wait until after Passover to bring him before the people. Herod may have heard of the events that Luke records in Acts 5:17-21 where the apostles escaped prison after being put there by the high priests. This could explain why he assigned so many soldiers to guard him. The “four quaternions” of soldiers would have been composed of a total of 16 men. Since they were usually assigned a three hour watch, Peter would have had four men guarding him at all times. This would have been two in the prison with him and two at the gate the entire night with a change every three hours to minimize the chance that they would fall asleep at their post. It is clear that Herod did not want a repeat of the earlier escape.

God, of course had other plans and sent an angel to free Peter. Peter himself thought that he was dreaming, after all how could a person be freed when you were bound with two chains, with a guard on either side of you and two more at the gate? Luke says that they passed the first and second ward on their way out. Herod not only put Peter in prison, but he put him in the deepest part of the prison in an effort to keep him from escaping. When they got to the gate, it opened by itself. The angel stayed with Peter until they had passed one street then left him. Peter realized that he was indeed free and made his way to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark.

When he arrived at Mary’s house, the disciples were there praying. Knocking on the gate, a young girl named Rhonda answered the knock and seeing Peter ran with excitement back to the disciples forgetting to let Peter in. As she excitedly told the disciples that Peter was at the gate, no one believed her. They told her she was crazy, after all no one could expect to be freed from that prison with 16 guards assigned to keep you there. Since Rhonda insisted that Peter was at the gate, they told her that she had seen his angel. Meanwhile Peter was still at the gate and began to knock again. When someone else went to the gate they found out it was indeed Peter. He came in and told them what had happened then went to another place.

Herod was not pleased with the escape and after questioning the guards had them all executed.

##### Acts 12:20-25

20  And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country*. 21  And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22  And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is* the voice of a god, and not of a man. 23  And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. 24  But the word of God grew and multiplied.
25  And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

##### Discussion Acts 12:20-25

Tyre and Sidon were cities who were competitors to Jerusalem, there had been tensions between these groups for centuries. This explains why Herod was displeased with them. However, they wanted to meet with Herod because Jerusalem was important to their survival. Josephus tells us that Herod made this speech from his royal throne, dressed in royal robes made of silver that glistened in the sun. Josephus goes on to say that the crowd hailed Herod as being “superior to mortal nature” and that he did not rebuke them for this flattery. Joseph says that Herod died five days after the speech from a stomach condition. All this agrees completely with the account in Luke.

After Herod’s death, Luke says that the church grew, then introduces Barnabas, Saul and John Mark. This is the transition into the third and final section of Acts, the Activities of Paul and the Universal Chruch.

# Summary of Acts 1-12:

Luke’s history of the church in Jerusalem and the activities of the Apostle Peter begins with the ascension of Jesus on May 17 or 18, 30 AD and concludes with the death of King Herod in March of 44 AD. In less than fourteen years, the church had gone from a small sect of Judaism composed of at the most about 500 people and maybe much less to a major religion that counted its members in the thousands. It had also moved from a tolerated group to one that both the government and the religious leaders of the day were actively trying to extinguish.

Luke introduces us to several significant Christians, among these are Peter, John, James, Stephen, Phillip, Barnabas and finally Saul of Tarsus in these twelve chapters. He tells us about miracles that include healing a well-known lame man and raising a dead woman among others. He tells us how the early church believed and practiced prayer, how they cared for one another in the same congregation and how congregations cooperated for the good of the Church. He also tells us how the early Christians dealt with persecutions.

In the second half of his history, Luke will tell us about the Apostle Paul (Saul of Tarsus) and the church of the gentiles.

1. Luke 1:3; Acts !:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Matthew 16:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Luke 1:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “The New Testament, A historical introduction to the early Christian writings” by Bart D. Eharman, page 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Acts 1:6-11 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Acts 1:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Most, although not all, of the information in this section will be taken from the “*Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For more on the life of the Apostle Peter, refer to the Biography of the Apostle Peter, Appendix 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible* [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. From “*Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See chart above for a list of these languages. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Appendix 12 for an in depth study of Acts 2:38. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ephesians 6:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Mark 15:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Interestingly some earlier manuscripts give his name as Jesus Barabbas. This could have been true since Jesus was a common name then. In addition, Barabbas means “son of the father”. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Deuteronomy 18:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 2 Samuel 7:12-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Acts 2:47 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. John 14:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. 1 Timothy 2:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. See Appendix 7 for list of persecutions given by Luke in Acts. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Secular estimates of the total population of Jerusalem at this time range from 80,000 to 600,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Matthew 22:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Because the Sadducees were the rulers in Jerusalem, any teaching contrary to their doctrine was teaching against the government and therefore sedition. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Acts 4:19-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Paul further clarified the qualifications of Deacons in his letter to Timothy, 1 Timothy 3:10 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. From “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. From “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See Joshua 24:32 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Taken from “*The Skeptics Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. J. W. McGarvey, *A Commentary on Acts of Apostles, with a Revised Version of the Text*, Seventh Edition ed. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Taken from “*Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Taken from “*Holman Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Taken from “*Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*” [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Stephen, Paul (Acts 9:3-6) and John (Revelation 1:10, 12-16)) are the only men who have seen Jesus after his ascension into heaven. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The Septic’s Annotated Bible [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Stephen did what Jesus did at his death, see Luke 23:46 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Acts 26:9-11 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Acts 5:34-39 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. John 4:4-42 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Acts 2:38 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Luke does say that the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius in Acts 10. That situation was unique and was necessary to accomplish a very specific task, the introduction of gentiles into the church. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Note: Peter says that Peter and John laid their hands on “them”, those who were in Samaria who had believed and were baptized. This would have also included Simon because he “believed also” and “was baptized”, Acts 8:13. There is nothing in scripture that indicates that Simon did not receive laying on of hands and the ability to perform miracles as did all the rest of the believers in Samaria. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Hebrews 6:1-8; 1 Corinthians 9:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. At this time Gaza was a city in the southeast part of Judea on the Mediterranean Coast. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. "Candace" was a title for the monarch of Ethiopia, somewhat the way "Pharaoh" was used in Egypt and "Caesar" in Rome.
Bruce B. Barton et al., *Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999), WORD*search* CROSS e-book, Under: "ACTS 8". [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The law prohibited a eunuch from entering "the assembly of the Lord" ([Deuteronomy 23:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+23%3A1)), but [Isaiah 56:3-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+56%3A3-5) speaks of eunuchs being accepted by God. In Greek writings, however, "eunuch" may have been simply a governmental title as opposed to the usual meaning—a man who has been emasculated. Bruce B. Barton et al., *Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1999), WORD*search* CROSS e-book, Under: "ACTS 8". [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Peter had not opened the church to Gentiles yet, so the Treasurer must have been restricted by the Holy Spirit to teaching only Jews and proselyte Jews in Ethiopia. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. This city was known as Ashdod and is located on the Mediterranean Coast south of Joppa in Judea. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Azotus, was on the very southeast corner of Jueda on the coast, Joppa was about halfway up the coast to the northeast corner of Judea, and Caesarea was in Samaria, north of Joppa. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. The distance from Jerusalem to Damascus was about 175 miles. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Taken from “*Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*” [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Appendix 14 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. The host radio talk show on Sirius Satellite Radio titled “The Bible Answer Man” says quite often that the Holy Spirit was not linguistically challenged. By this, he means that God the Holy Ghost knew how to express Himself well and that He said just what he meant. Taking this into account, since Luke says that Saul “fell to the ground” it probably indicates that he was on foot and not on horseback. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Acts 9:1-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Deuteronomy 16:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Appendix 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See Appendix 15 for more information on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Galatians 1:16-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Palsy was a paralytic disease that involved a part of the body or the whole body. The “withered hand” referred to in Matthew 12:10-13 was a type of palsy that involved only the hand. One particularly difficult form of palsy was known as “cramp”. It caused the persons limbs to fixate and remain immovable. The person seemed to be suffering tortured. This type of palsy was often fatal within a few days. www.christnotes.org/dictionary [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Adam Clark in his commentary states the distance as “four leagues” which is about 12 miles. Barnes puts the distance at 6 miles. The Bible Background Commentary states the distance as 10 miles. Regardless considering the travel to Lydda and then back to Joppa, the delay would have been at least 8 to 10 hours before Peter could get to Joppa. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. www.deathreference.com [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*”. NOTE: This document discusses numerous verses that imply that there are or were just men. I have used these few in an effort to demonstrate their contention and reduce space. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Taken from “*Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. “*Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Taken from “*Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*” [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. “*Skeptic’s Annotated Bible Answered*” [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Taken from the website www.gospelgazette.com [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. While this incident refers to people who were already Christians, it is easy to see that the Jewish Christians would have hat little or no issue with their conversion had they first been proselytes. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Acts 13:14-16;42-43 [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Acts 15:7,14 and Acts 11:2-3 [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Holman Apologetics Commentary of the Bible, Acts 10:1-16 [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Genesis 22:1-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Hosea 1:2-3 [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Isaiah 20:2-3 [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Jonah 1:1-3 [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Luke 1:34 [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Luke 1:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Some think Peter was asleep, however the Bible says he fell into a trance. The actual word used is ekstasis, which carries the meaning of amaze, amazement, or trance. It does not indicate a state of sleep. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. While Luke doesn’t tell us here haw many of the men from the congregation in Joppa accompanied Peter, we find out in Acts 11:12 that there were six. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. [www.wernerbiblecommentary.org](http://www.wernerbiblecommentary.org) Acts 10:1-48 [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. This idea was taught to the Jews, but had been applied only within Israel. Proverbs 24:23 and Proverbs 28:21. That God is not a respecter of persons is also well documented; Deuteronomy 10:17, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Job 31:13-15, Job 34:19. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Many of the denominations today use this as a “proof text” that baptism is NOT necessary for salvation. They claim that Cornelius and his household were saved before baptism because the Holy Spirit fell on them. Seen Appendix 16 for a detailed discussion of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Taken from “*The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*”. NOTE: the list that they use contains 189 topics. I have used only a few here. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Acts 11:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Acts 11:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Acts 11:24 [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Acts 11:29 [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Most of these are taken from the “*Holman’s Apologetics Commentary on the Bible”* [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Acts 12:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-124)