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THE STORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

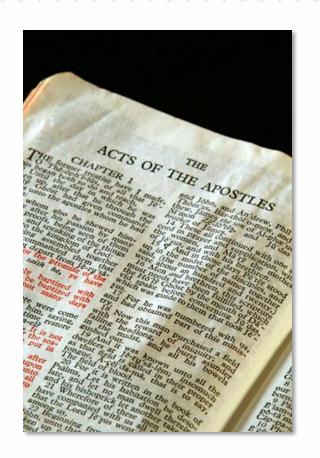
BOOK of ACTS



Overview

- By studying the way God acted in history, we become attuned to the ways God is active among us today.
- We must be sensitive to the way the Spirit moves in our midst and in the world to join in the mission.

The book of Acts shows that God is active in our world!





Overview

- When Adam and Eve rebelled in the garden of Eden, God began a rescue mission.
- God wanted to restore his world and creatures so they would fulfill his original intentions for them:

to enjoy him and praise him forever!

Overview

- God has chosen humans to work alongside him in this mission.
- At the end of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus commissions his disciples to be a part of this plan:
 - "You are witnesses of these things." —Luke 24:48

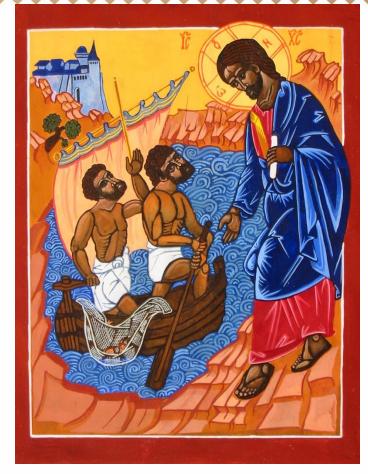


Jesus calling Peter and Andrew to follow him



Overview

- At the beginning of Acts, Jesus commissions his followers to reach the whole world as witnesses of him.
 - "... and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." —Acts 1:8



Jesus calling Peter and Andrew to follow him



The story of the church becomes the story of the fulfillment of God's mission to make all things new.



MISSION TO THE GENTILES

Chapters 11–28

Peter's Vision

- The Lord gave Peter a vision of ritually "unclean" animals coming down in a sheet.
- The point of the illustration:
 - "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." —Acts 10:15



Peter's Vision

• For many Jews at that time, the impurity of those animals was equivalent to the impurity of the Gentiles.



Peter and Cornelius

• Right after the vision, the Spirit led Peter to Cornelius—a Roman centurion—who was "devout and God-fearing" (Acts 10:2).



Peter and Cornelius

- After Cornelius's household in Caesarea heard Peter's presentation of the gospel, the Holy Spirit came upon them.
- God was putting his seal of approval and welcoming on the Gentiles.



Peter and Cornelius

- Peter understood what God was doing.
 - He said, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water." —Acts 10:47
- Later, Peter explained to Jewish believers in Jerusalem:
 - "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life." —Acts 11:18



Ministry in Antioch

• "For a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church [in Antioch] and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." — Acts 11:26



Herod's Persecution of Christians

- Herod Agrippa, I had James, brother of John, executed.
- Herod had Peter thrown in prison, but God sent an angel to rescue him.



Herod's Persecution of Christians

Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death."

—Acts 12:18–19



Herod's Persecution of Christians

- When Herod declared himself a god, he was struck dead by God.
 - "Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died." —Acts 12:23



Paul's Mission

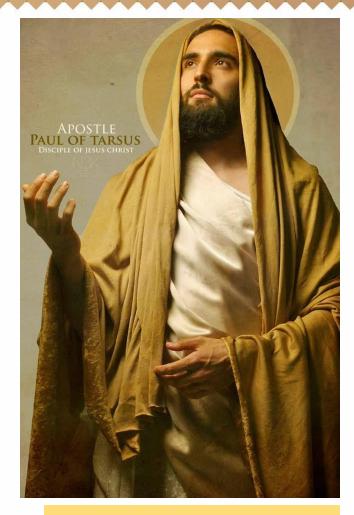
• At this point in the book of Acts, the story transitions to Paul's (Saul's) mission to spread the good news to the Gentiles.



Paul's Mission

• "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."

—Acts 13:2–3



Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles

Scripture

• Acts 13:1–14:28

Date

• AD 47–49

Travelers

• Paul, Barnabas, John Mark

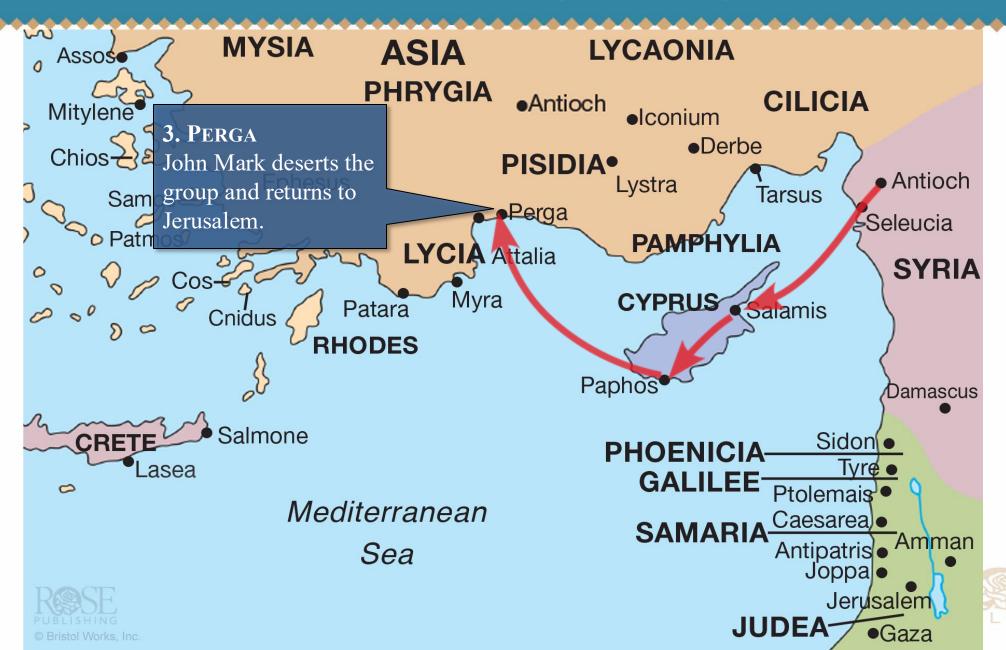
Main Route

• Cyprus and Turkey (1,400 miles; 2,253 km)







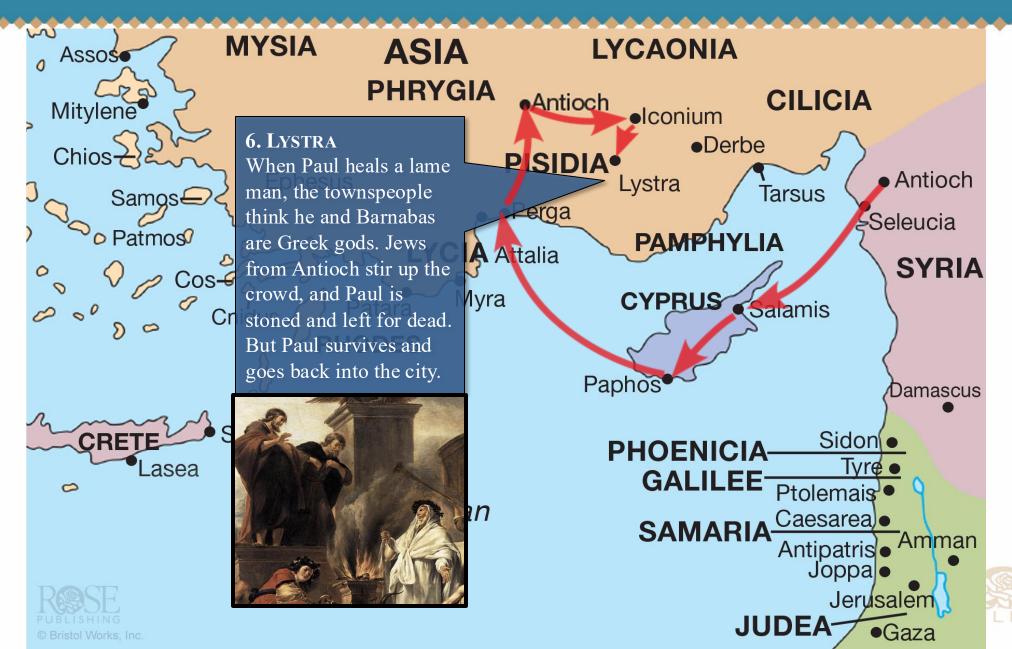




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•Gaza





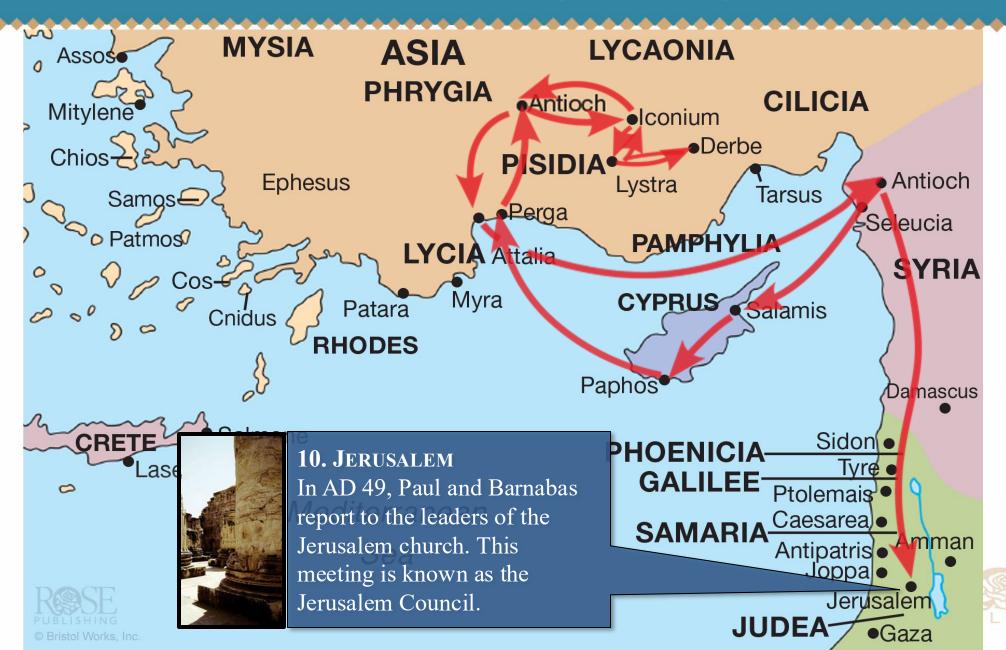




9. ANTIOCH

Paul remains here for





Scripture Reference

• Acts 15:36–18:22

Date

• AD 49–51

Travelers

• Paul, Silas, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila, Luke

Main Route

• Syria, Turkey, Greece, Jerusalem (2,800 miles; 4,506 km)

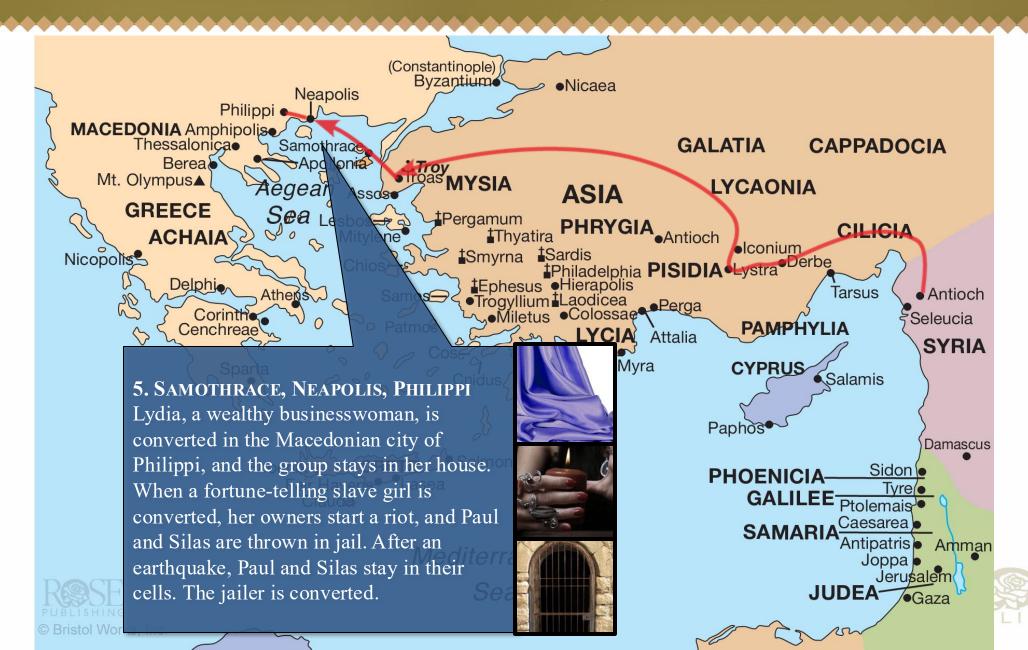


























Scripture Reference

• Acts 18:23–21:16

Dates

• AD 52–57

Travelers

• Paul, Timothy, Luke, others

Main Route

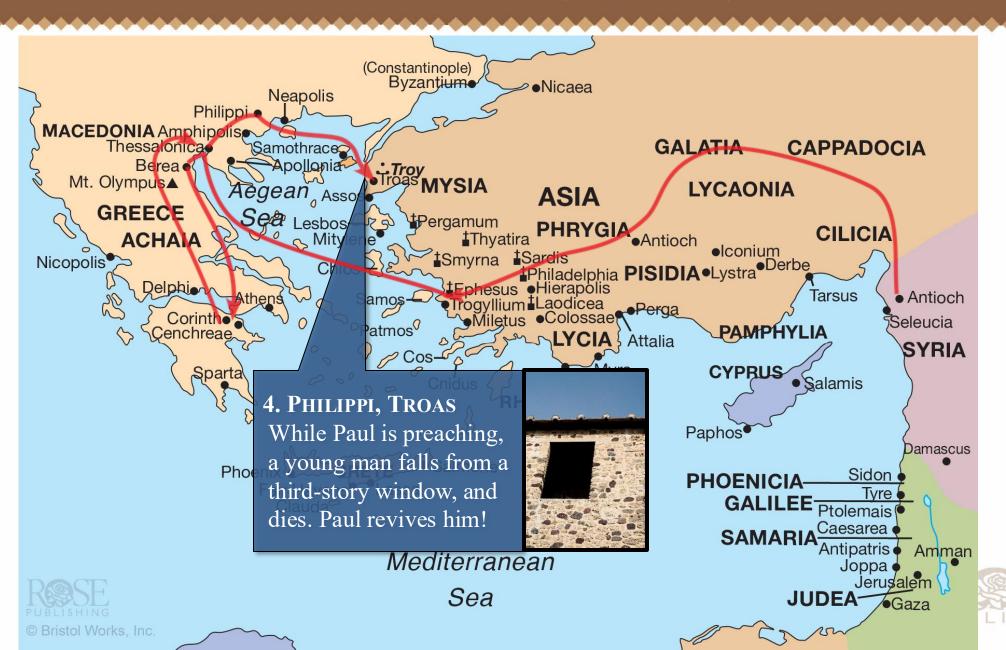
• Turkey, Greece, Lebanon, Israel (2,700 miles; 4,345 km)



















Scripture Reference

• Acts 21:17–28:31

Date

• AD 57–62

Travelers

• Paul, Roman guards, Luke, others

Main Route

• Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Crete, Malta, Sicily, Italy (2,250 miles; 3,621km)







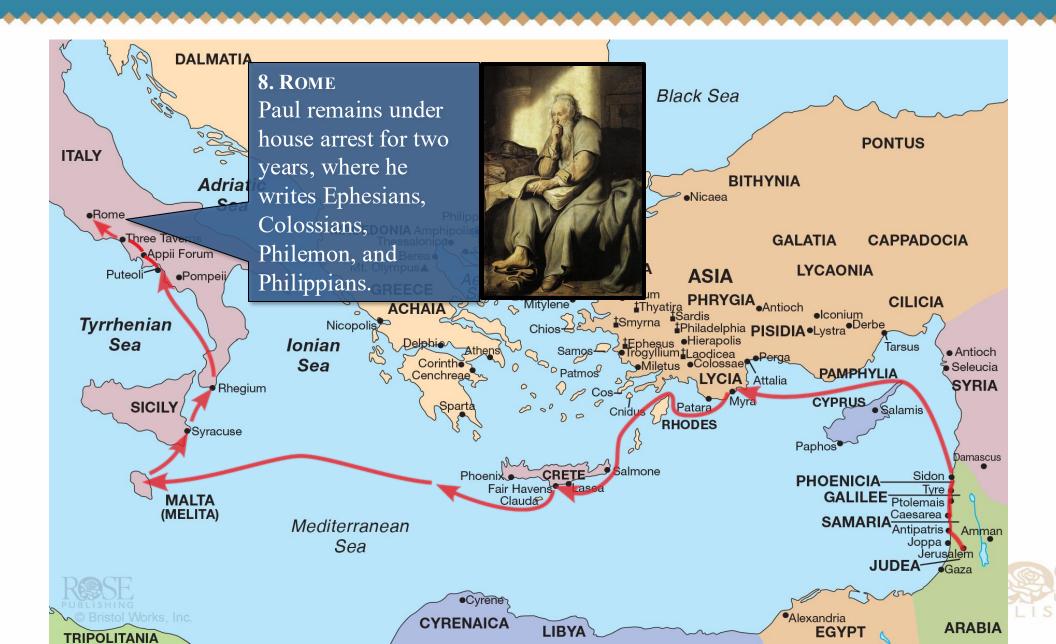












The Book of Acts concludes . . .

"For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!"

—Acts 28:30–31



Our History and Heritage

- The book of Acts is not simply ancient history.
- It is our story, the story that informs who we are.
- We are God's people, called to be witnesses of what God did and continues to do in Jesus.

"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

—Acts 1:8