

Acts 28.17-31

“To the Ends of the Earth”

1. Bridge to Church History

IF NO Bk of Acts: John 21 to Romans 1 > 1ST word ‘PAUL’ Who? What?

Church in ROME? How did the FAITH Leap Across Mediterranean Sea??

2 Letters from **PETER**?? – Guy who DENIED Jesus THREE TIMES!!

2. Background for Epistles

Meet Paul Author, 13 NT Letters: Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi...

Key to Understand Issues: Acts Narratives of Paul’s Missionary Journeys

3. Not Biography

Key People Peter & Paul: NOT Learn: Physical Appearance, Parents, Politics, Hobbies, Death

>> **Focus – Sermons & Service for Jesus**

Many Individuals > Common Theme > Followers of Jesus: ACTOR

4. Not Blueprint

Tendency to ROMANTICIZE the Early Church > REAL CHURCH!

Acts = Also reveals Rivalries, Hypocrisies, Immorality, and Heresies

BIRTH of Church > But is NOT EXACT BLUEPRINT for Church

Draw Lots for Leaders?? Flames for Headdress?? Live in Communes??

5. Blessing Every Book Scripture, MUCH for PEOPLE of God

The book of Acts...is a kind of vast treasure. John Calvin

It is the most lyrical of books...Live in that book, I exhort you: it is a tonic, the greatest tonic I know of in the realm of the Spirit. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

STRUCTURE: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in *Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*”

Acts 1.8

Ch 1 – 7 Jerusalem / 8 – 12 Judea & Samaria / 13 – 28 Ends of the Earth
Apostle to Gentiles: Eager to Visit the CAPITAL of ALL GENTILES

Paul was NOT FOUNDER of Church of Rome > NEITHER was PETER!!

Day of Pentecost came...there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven...*visitors from Rome* Acts 2.1,5,10

Anonymous Visitors Returned with Message of NEW LIFE in JESUS

25 Years Later > PAUL wrote Letter to ROMAN CHURCH

I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. *I long to see you ...* Romans 1.10-11

Paul: *"I must visit Rome also."*

Acts 19.21

Rome dominated his horizon.

John Stott

Welcome Party > Some Believers WALKED 40 mi Greet & Escort Paul

v. 14,15 And so we came to Rome. And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

1. The Bound

a. Handed Over 3 yrs After Letter > 1st Visit, Ambassador in Chains

v 17 I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerus into the hands of the Romans

Parallel btwn LUKE & ACTS > 'Journey Motif' to Jerusalem / Rome

JERUSALEM – City of DAVID // ROME – City of CAESAR

Jesus & Paul / determination, arrest, trials, courts, death, resurrection (sea)

b. Hope

v 20 Paul "it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain"

Paradox of Kingdom > DESPAIR Grows – DELIGHT is Greater in HIM

May the God of hope fill you with all joy & peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit Romans 15.13

HOPE: Restrains his Natural Reaction to BITTERNESS, take REVENGE

1) Right with Moses v. 17 " he called together the local leaders of the Jews... "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers..."

2) Right with Caesar vs. 17,18 "I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case"

3) Right w Himself No Counter Suit > No Revenge agnst JEWS

v. 19 ... though I had no charge to bring against my nation

c. Without Hindrance > Man in Fetters, Message was FREE

v. 16 when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

CHAINED by WRIST to ROMAN SOLDIER > On 4 or 6 Hour SHIFTS!

WHO was PRISONER? > HEARD lots of Sermons, like it or NOT!

HAND was CHAINED > MOUTH was LOOSED for the GOOD NEWS

v23 morning till eve. he expounded to them, testifying to kingdom of God, trying to convince them about Jesus both from Law of Moses & Prophets.

v. 30 He lived there 2 whole years at his own expense...welcomed all

v. 30 ALL: Jew & Gentile, ANYONE WELCOME to COME and HEAR

NO Freedom to MOVE > Very ACTIVE, FRUITFUL, MISSIONARY!

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

Philippians 1.12-14

Despite all the OBVIOUS HINDRANCES – Shipwreck, Beaten, Prison

Feel our Limits: Time, Knowledge, Insight, \$, Strength, Can Do More!

WORD of GOD cannot be BOUND

2. The Blind

v. 17 After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews ...

Gospel FIRST to JEWS > Even in the Capital of GENTILE World

Paul BETRAYED by Individual Jews > Still BURDENED for Nation

a. Mistook Signs Only Heard Bad News about ‘SECT’ of Nazarene

v. 21,22 they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

NOT Flattering Word = “SECT” is Word used for HERESY

NO NEWS from HQ, ie. JERUSALEM was SILENT on Paul

‘KILL Paul’ Group Forgot to COPY EMAILS to Synagogues at Rome

Ignored Many OPPORTUNITIES to LEARN More > CRUCIAL ISSUE

Letter written DURING PAUL'S ROMAN IMPRISONMENT...

All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing... Coloss 1.6

Gospel is Available > too BUSY? -- PROUD? – SELF-RIGHTEOUS?

Hawaiians fly to 9th Island for Fun – Can't Cross Town to find Faith in X

b. Misunderstood Scripture v. 23 From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and Prophets

Not Light Chit-Chat w Punch & Cookies, All Day Battle for Mind

Emphasis of Teaching > HISTORICAL Jesus is the BIBLICAL Christ

the Old Testament is all about the promised King of the kingdom of God. So that is where Paul starts.
R.C. Sproul

JESUS is KEY to UNLOCK True Meaning of HEBREW SCRIPTURES

vs. 23,24 word for PERSUADE, CONVINCE used 2 X's > REASONED

Reaction to DAY of Teaching > Hearers split in 2 Groups

Jesus to Jewish Leaders: You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. *These are the Scriptures that testify about me*, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.
John 5.39-40

NOT the BIBLE that SAVES > JESUS declared in BIBLE Saves

Luther: Bible // CRADLE held Baby JESUS > Life in BABY, not BOX

c. Missed Salvation v. 24 ...would not believe Lit.'Refused to Believe'

vs. 25-27 disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul said had "Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers thru Isaiah: “Go and say, “You’ll hear but never understand & you’ll see but never perceive.”"

They INHERITED their FATHER'S SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Isaiah Text Quoted 6 X's in NT > Strongest Possible Warning

FULFILLED in REJECTION of CHRIST and HIS GOSPEL

v.28 " Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

FAMILIAR Pattern in ACTS > Begin Synagogue > Booted onto Streets!

WESTERN Text: v. 29 The Jews left arguing hotly amongst themselves.

Door to Jews Closing, Door OPEN in Gentile World > "they will listen!"

ROME NOT the END > Impt STOP > GOD'S GLOBAL ADVANCE

1974 Billy G – Stott – Winter – B Bright – 2000 M ldrs Lausanne

1989 – Manila – 2010 Cape Town – Next wk Seoul 2024

Present Cape Town – 4000 delegates 198 Nations

Seoul – 5000 present / 5000 virtual – 200+ Nations

Focus – Tribes, Languages Not Yet Heard Gospel > Hear & Believe

1974 > 16,000 groups // 2024 > 7,000

3. The Bold

a. Work of Jesus v. 30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him

2 years > Something CHANGED > Released? or Executed??

WHAT Happened to PAUL 2 years LATER?? > Not Told, Speculate?

2 Quest Unanswered: 1. Paul face Caesar? // 2. What happened to Paul?

These words from the first chapter and from the last chapter are the bookends of the Acts of the Apostles, marking the transition from Jerusalem to Rome and from the apostolic church to the global church. It is the tale of two cities. Jaroslav Pelikan

LAST VERSES are BEST UNDERSTOOD by Reviewing FIRST VERSE

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus **began** to do and to teach...
Acts 1.1

BEGAN = Still GOING, Life & Work of Jesus CONTINUES!

Acts of Exalted Jesus in Power of HSpirit thru His Apostolic Church

b. Word of Jesus v. 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

PREACHING > Doctrinal Content / TEACHING > Evangelistic Purpose

Luke places MARKERS thru BOOK > GROWTH of WORD of GOD

7 Servants - 6.7 So the word of God spread. # disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly & large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Apostle JAMES is Martyred > 12.24 King HEROD Eaten by WORMS
But the word of God continued to increase and spread.

P & B 1st M Journey: 13.48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

Power Encounter Ephesus – Believers burned Idols 19.20 In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

Word of God is LIVING, GROWING, SPREADING, LIFE-GIVING
 PARADOX > How does KINGDOM EXPAND from PRISON CELL?
 MAIN ACTOR in Acts is JESUS > WORD of GOD Made FLESH

1) Witness Expanded > MORE PEOPLE in HARD to ENTER Places

VISITORS > Witness to Governors, Kings, even CAESAR

27.24 'Do not be afraid, Paul. *You must stand trial before Caesar...*'

The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. *And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.*

2 Timothy 4.17

SYMBOL of CAESAR was the LION

2) Witness Enriched > almost 5 Years of INACTIVITY

Paul carried on TENT-MAKING > while CHAINED at WRIST?

Wrote > Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon in Roman PRISON

Prison LETTERS > Joy, Hope, Truth, Trust in God for Whole Church

c Won by Jesus v24 some convinced by what he said, others disbelieved

...to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read...But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away

2 Corinthians 3.14-16

English Puritan John Bunyan > 12 years in PRISON for GOSPEL 1600's

Supported Wife & 4 Children > Made & Sold BOOT LACES, 100's

Wrote ELEVEN Books > Incl classic 'PILGRIM'S PROGRESS'

Conducted Worship Services in Prison & even OUTSIDE in SECRET

Wrote MANY LETTERS to COUNSEL People who SOUGHT ADVICE

Kingdom of GOD > BIGGER than US and our PERSONAL NEEDS

GOD'S Eternal Kingdom Purpose: Ultimately Our Good, His Glory

FINAL WORD of Acts in ORIGINAL Text > UNHINDERED

Last word: “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” 28.31

Chained Rome soldier, stopped M trips, lost head Caesar’s executioner

Luke ran out of parchment, God’s story continues, thru U & and me

Focus on Jesus & kingdom “My kingdom is not of this world” Jn 18.36

Kingdom of God not on Air Force One > Red or Blue Suit

CHALLENGE us to CARRY and HAND ON – Baton of Gospel in 21st C

What was begun with so much heroism ought to be continued with ardent zeal, since we are assured that the same Lord is mighty still to carry on His heavenly designs.

Charles Spurgeon

Congregational Prayer – Psalm 139

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,”

even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you...

Give Thanks to Lord for His Power, Presence, and Protection!

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!