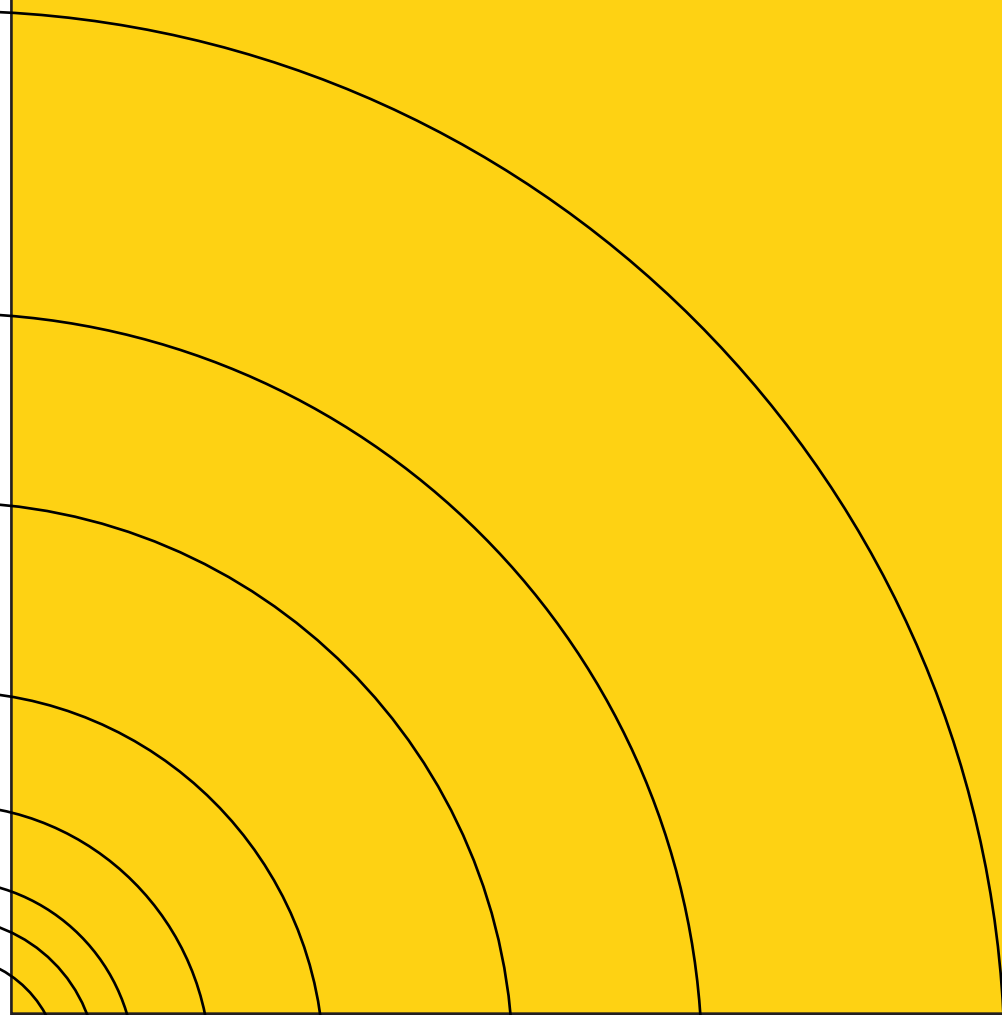


Learning Truth

Acts

A concise guide to
the King James Bible

Greg Cetton



Learning Truth

Acts

What is the Bible?

Biblical definition: An actual book based on the text preserved by God that stands as absolute authority.

Non-biblical definition: The Bible is the word of God in the original writings, which no longer exist; extant (existing) manuscripts (hand-written copies) are the word of God insofar as they reflect the wording of the non-extant originals.

1. The Bible is an actual book

“Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.” (Isaiah 34:16)

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The Bible is an actual book (whether physical or digital), not a set of lost manuscripts that never constituted a book.

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (Heb 10:7). The author of Hebrews states that the promise of Jesus the Messiah can be found in an actual book (not merely some lost originals). He proves his point by quoting from a copy of Psalm 40:7, which was originally written some 1,000 years earlier. So the scripture available in the 1st century AD (when Hebrews was written) is the authoritative word of God, as was the scripture available in David’s day (when Psalm 40 was written), even though one is a copy of the other. The Old Testament scripture available in the 1st century AD was faithfully copied by Hebrew scribes and eventually used as the basis of the King James Bible.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ

Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). Timothy apparently received biblical education from his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois (2 Tim 1:5) who would not have access to the original manuscripts, yet nevertheless had access to “the holy scriptures.”

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Paul assures Timothy that everything that makes the Bible the word of God – attributes of inspiration, power, truth, and authority – are present in the scriptures that he possesses. The “problem” of not having access to the original manuscripts is an issue invented by those who wish to weaken the authority of the Bible and is not an issue in the eyes of anybody in the New Testament.

It is not about the original manuscripts; it is about the Book that “turned the world upside down”!

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2. The Bible is based on the text preserved by God

The Old Testament

“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt 5:18)

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The Levites were commanded by Moses to preserve the scripture (Deut 31:24-26) and to read the law to the people of Israel every seven years (Deut 31:9-12). They were to see that any future Israelite king had an authentic copy (Deut 17:18). The Levite priest Hilkiah found a book of the law of the Lord which had been lost or hidden during the reign of evil King Manasseh. Hilkiah presented it to the scribe Shaphan who read it to King Josiah (2 Kings 22:8-10).

Acts of the Apostles

Introduction

Theme Verse

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Overview

The *Acts of the Apostles* shows how Christ’s followers, through the power of the Holy Ghost, fulfill His promise to spread the gospel from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and the greater Gentile world (Acts 1:8).

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Luke’s account focuses on the primarily Jewish ministry of Peter (Acts 1-12) and the primarily Gentile ministry of Paul (Acts 13-28). Both Peter and Paul will have a significant sermon recorded (Acts 2, 13), heal a lame individual (Acts 3, 14), heal persons from afar (Acts 5, 19), cast out unclean spirits (Acts 5, 16), receive a miraculous release from prison (Acts 12, 16), confront a sorcerer (Acts 8, 13), refuse to be worshiped (Acts 10, 14), receive heavenly visions (Acts 10, 16), lay on hands to impart the Holy Ghost (Acts 8, 19), raise the dead (Acts 9, 20), and be imprisoned for their faith (Acts 12, 21-28). Luke draws parallels between the two men to show that the same Holy Spirit empowers both apostles to do His work.

Transitions

Gospels: Old Testament to New Testament

Acts: Israel to the Church

Revelation: the Church to Israel

Outline

Luke gives a summary statement when the gospel is preached:

Acts 2:47 – initially at the temple

Acts 6:7 – throughout Jerusalem

Acts 9:31 – throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria

Introduction

- Acts 12:24 – into the Gentile world as far as Antioch in Syria
- Acts 16:5 – into Asia Minor
- Acts 19:20 – into Europe
- Acts 28:30-31 – throughout the eastern half of the Roman Empire

Author

Acts is the second of Luke's two-volume series written to Theophilus. His first volume, the Gospel of Luke, bears the author's name. Luke first meets Paul at Troas during the apostle's second missionary journey and travels with him to Philippi (Acts 16:11-12), where he parts with Paul until rejoining him there toward the end of the third missionary journey (Acts 20:6). Luke then travels with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:17), where the apostle is arrested. Luke is not continuously with Paul during the apostle's two-year confinement in Caesarea (Acts 24:27) but remains in the vicinity and subsequently travels with him to Rome (Acts 27:1). He is then present with Paul at the apostle's first imprisonment in Rome when Paul includes greetings from "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col 4:14, also Philem 24). Luke remains a faithful friend to Paul during the apostle's final imprisonment in Rome when Paul tells Timothy that "only Luke is with me" (2 Tim 4:11).

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Reader

Luke writes Acts to Theophilus (Acts 1:1), whom he addresses in his first volume as "most excellent" (Luke 1:3). This title is used to show respect (like calling a judge "your honor"). Roman governors Felix (Acts 23:26, 24:3) and Festus (Acts 26:25) are also called "most excellent" or "most noble." Josephus writes *Against Apion* to "most excellent Epaphroditus," his patron (financial supporter).¹⁰² So Theophilus might be a government official, Luke's patron, or another important individual.

Purpose

Primary purpose: Luke writes a narrative that shows how Christianity grows from a small group of believers in Jerusalem to a worldwide faith that extends to the capital of the Roman Empire. His primary purpose is to show how God accomplishes His desire to bring the gospel from Jerusa-

¹⁰² Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, preface.2

Acts Chapter 16

[1] Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

- Paul previously planted churches in Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:6) and now returns to strengthen the believers (Acts 15:36). The apostle parted company with Barnabas and the young John Mark (Acts 15:37-39) and now travels with Silas and will recruit the young Timothy.
- Timothy becomes a lifelong disciple and co-worker of Paul (1 Tim 1:2, Rom 16:21). He has a spiritual gift imparted by the Apostle Paul (1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6) and will labor as a minister (1 Tim 4:6), a preacher (2 Cor 1:19, 2 Tim 4:2), and an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5). Although his father is a Gentile (Acts 16:3), Timothy learned the scriptures as a child (2 Tim 3:15) from his Jewish mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois (both now believers, 2 Tim 1:5). He may have been present at Paul's prior stoning at Lystra (Acts 14:19-20, 2 Tim 3:10-11).
- Timothy will now follow Paul through Asia Minor and into Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 17:14-15, 18:5). Later he will assist Paul during the apostle's extended stay at Ephesus (Acts 19:22) and then travel with him again into Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:4) and possibly on to Jerusalem. He will act as Paul's trusted messenger on two missions to Macedonian churches (1 Thes 3:2, Acts 18:5, 19:22) and one assignment to Corinth (1 Cor 4:17, 16:10). Paul will show deep affection for him in his two letters to Timothy (e.g., "my dearly beloved son," 2 Tim 1:2), in his commendation to the Philippian brethren (Phil 2:19-23), and by his inclusion of Timothy's name in church letter salutations (2 Cor 1:1, Phil 1:1, Col 1:1, 1 Thes 1:1, 2 Thes 1:1, Philem 1:1).
- Timothy will be with Paul at his first imprisonment in Rome (Phil 1:1, Col 1:1, Philem 1:1) and, at some point, also imprisoned and released himself (Heb 13:23). After Paul's release from prison (after

Acts 28), Timothy will again travel with him until the apostle asks him to minister at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3, 4:6). When Paul suffers his final imprisonment in Rome, he will call Timothy to his side when almost everyone else has forsaken him (2 Tim 4:9-11).

[2] Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

Timothy has shown himself to be of good character, even though he is young (1 Tim 4:12, 2 Tim 2:22).

[3] Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

- “Greeks” can refer to the peoples of the Aegean peninsula, to “civilized” nations that have adopted Greek language and culture (Acts 16:1, Rom 1:14), or to Gentiles in contrast to Jews (Acts 20:21, Rom 1:16).
- Paul previously refused to give in to pressure from the circumcision party (Acts 15:1) to circumcise Titus (Gal 2:3-5) since he is a Gentile and doing so would give credence to their false doctrine that keeping the law of Moses is necessary for salvation (Acts 15:5).
- Timothy is considered a Jew because of his Jewish mother (Ezra 10:3). She would not have circumcised Timothy because “it is the duty of the father to have his child circumcised.”²³² Because the community knows that his Gentile father would never have circumcised him, Paul has Timothy circumcised to maintain a good testimony before those Jews with whom they expect to come in contact during their ministry (1 Cor 9:19-23). Paul does not hesitate because here the act of circumcision is simply a matter of showing respect for custom and has nothing to do with personal salvation (Gal 5:6, 6:15).

[4] And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at

²³² Emil Hirsch et al. “Circumcision.” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906

Jerusalem.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy convey the instructions from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, which state that it is wrong to teach Gentiles that “ye must be circumcised, and keep the law” (Acts 15:23-29).

[5] And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

- The issue of circumcising Gentiles no longer stands in the way of the Holy Spirit's work in Galatia, and the disciples are free to bring the gospel directly to Gentiles.
- Luke gives the fifth of seven summary statements in the book of Acts now that the gospel has spread into Asia Minor.

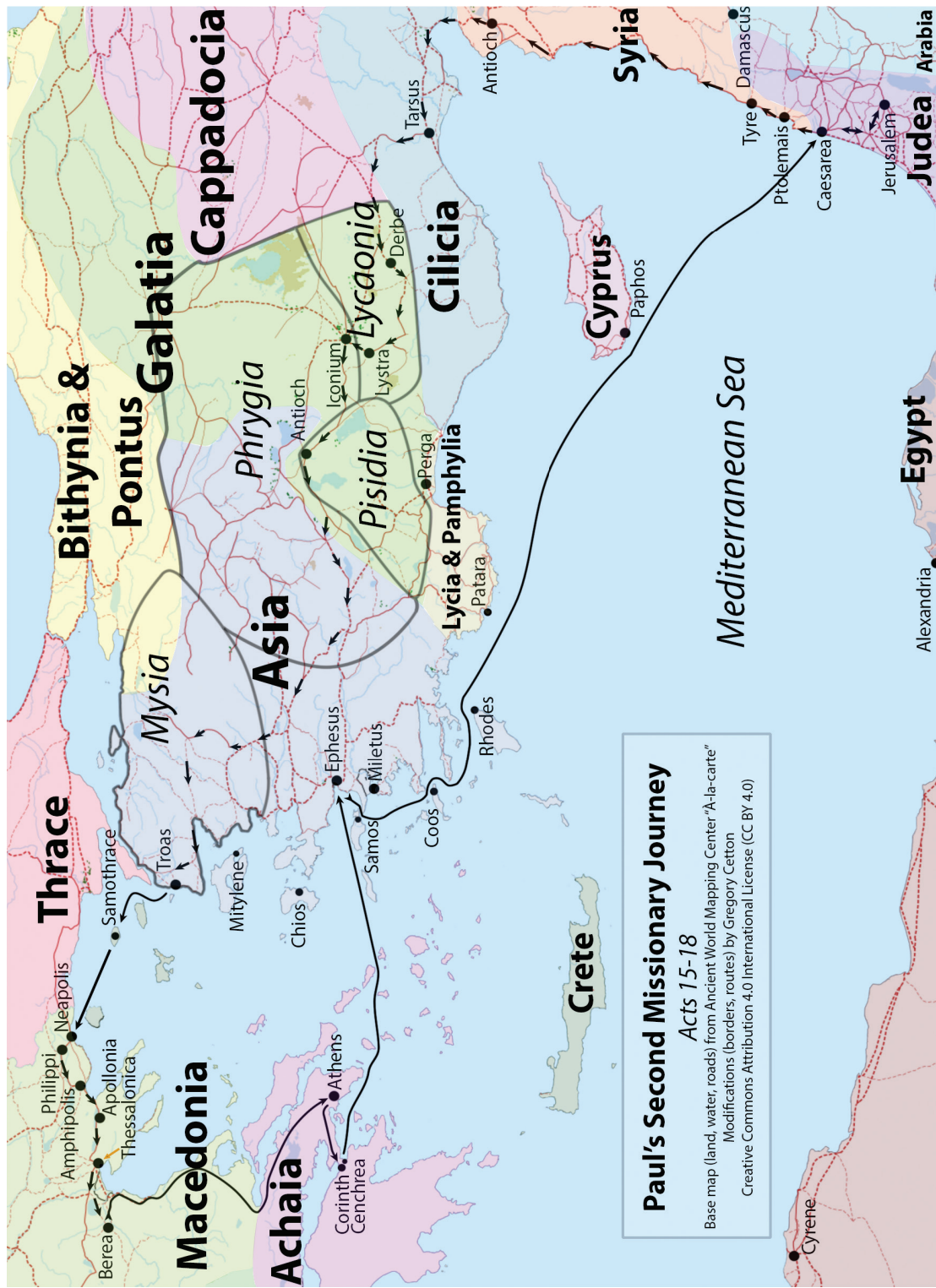
[6] Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

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- Paul had previously established churches in the province of Galatia at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:14), Iconium (Acts 14:1), Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 14:6). Phrygia overlaps western Galatia and eastern Asia; some of its inhabitants heard the gospel preached in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:10).
- Paul and his companions do not simply go where they feel best but proceed as the Holy Ghost leads them (John 16:13, Acts 16:9). Although forbidden to evangelize the province of Asia now, Paul on his return (Acts 18:19) will have a ministry there so mightily blessed of God that Luke will write that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). They will now be led farther west and into Europe (Acts 16:11-12) to fulfill Christ's commission to be witnesses “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

[7] After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

- Paul travels through (but does not evangelize) the province of Asia to reach the territory of Mysia. He intended to travel to Bithynia, but



Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Acts 15-18

Base map (land, water, roads) from Ancient World Mapping Center "A-la-carte"
Modifications (borders, routes) by Gregory Cetton
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God the Spirit has other plans.

- The gospel will later reach the people of Bithynia, and Simon Peter will write to believers there (1 Peter 1:1).

[8] And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

Paul will later return to Troas, where he will preach the gospel (2 Cor 2:12) and, on a future visit, will resurrect Eutychus (Acts 20:9-10).

[9] And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

- God communicates indirectly through circumstances (e.g., Paul will bring the gospel to Malta when he is shipwrecked there, Acts 28:1) and through advice from other believers (e.g., Paul came to Antioch because Barnabas brought him there, Acts 11:25-26). He also communicates directly through His written word (Isa 34:16). God also gives His word through believers (via preaching and prophecy, Acts 15:32), or sometimes through an unbeliever (2 Chron 35:20-22) or even an animal (Num 22:28, 2 Peter 2:16). He may give a message directly from the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2) or the angel of the Lord (Acts 8:26). In the Old Testament, God spoke audibly to men such as Noah (Gen 6:13), Abraham (Gen 22:1, 11), and Moses (Exod 33:11). God also speaks directly through visions and dreams (Num 12:6, Dan 1:17).
- God may give a vision in a forthright manner, such as when the heavens were opened at Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:16-17) or when the women saw a vision of angels at the empty tomb (Luke 24:23). God may also give a vision with the recipient in a trance (Acts 22:17-21), during which the individual appears awake though transfixed to observers (Num 24:4) who are unable to see (Acts 9:7) or hear (John 12:28-29) God's directed message. Moses (Exod 33:18-23), Isaiah (Isa 6), and Ezekiel (Ezek 1) all had visions of God's glory. Other memorable visions include Daniel's visions of the last days (Dan 7-12), the transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9), tongues like fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-3), Stephan's vision of Jesus at God's right hand (Acts 7:55-56), Paul's vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6,

26:19) and his vision of paradise (2 Cor 12:1-4), Simon Peter's vision of the sheet let down from heaven (Acts 11:5-10), and John's Revelation.

- During sleep, God may give a direct revelation through a dream or a "vision of the night" (Job 33:15). Biblical examples include Abimelech's warning (Gen 20:6-7), Jacob's ladder (Gen 28:12), Joseph's dreams of his future rule (Gen 37:5-10), the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker (Gen 40:5-19), Eliphaz's night vision of a spirit (Job 4:13-21), Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue (Dan 2:1, 31-35), the wise men's warning (Matt 2:12), the premonition of Pilate's wife (Matt 27:19), and Paul's night vision of this man of Macedonia.

[10] And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

Luke writes, "we," indicating that he is now joining Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The course of western civilization is forever changed as they bring the gospel to Europe (Acts 17:6).

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[11] Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

They sail on the Aegean Sea from Troas in Asia Minor to Neapolis in Europe via the island of Samothrace.

[12] And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

- Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River with his army in 49 BC after conquering the Gauls. Long-standing enmity between him and the Senate culminated when he entered Rome and declared himself dictator. Five years of civil war followed, leaving a victorious Julius Caesar, popular with the Roman people but despised by the Senate, whose power he had usurped. On 15 March (the Ides of March), 44 BC, he was assassinated by a faction led by Senators Cassius and

Brutus.²³³ These two Senators fled Rome and raised an army to fight against forces led by Mark Anthony and Caesar's nephew and heir, Octavian, who was later given the title "Caesar Augustus" and ordered a taxation which brought Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary to Bethlehem in Judea (Luke 2:1-5). Mark Anthony and Octavian defeated Cassius and Brutus at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, ending the civil war.²³⁴

- Julius Caesar had initiated a policy of establishing colonies outside of the Italian peninsula to accelerate the spread of Roman law and culture.²³⁵ A colony is "a Roman settlement in conquered territory. . . The colonists could exercise full political rights in Rome and elect their own magistrates, who had limited judicial and financial power."²³⁶ Therefore the colony of Philippi is considered the most prestigious ("chief") city of the province despite Thessalonica's designation as the capital. Here at Philippi the magistrates are expected to carefully uphold justice in the case of Roman citizens such as Paul and Silas.
- Veterans of the Battle of Philippi were among those who established this Roman colony. The Philippians are very proud of their civil status (Phil 2:21), whereas Paul will choose not to avail himself of his rights as a Roman citizen if he feels doing so will undermine the message of the gospel (Acts 16:22,37). Paul will later remind the Philippians to live their lives not merely as citizens of earth but as citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20).

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[13] And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

The Jewish population of Philippi is apparently too small to support a synagogue like those in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1) and Berea (Acts 17:10), so sabbath prayer is customarily made ("wont to be made") at the river-side.

²³³ "Julius Caesar." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, accessed 4 Nov 2019

²³⁴ "Battle of Philippi." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, accessed 4 Nov 2019

²³⁵ "Civitas." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, accessed 4 Nov 2019

²³⁶ "Colony, Ancient Roman Settlement." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, accessed 7 Sept 2019

[14] And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

- Lydia is noted to be a devout worshipper of God (Psalm 86:9) when she first hears the gospel message. She believes from the heart (Acts 8:37) and becomes the first Christian (Gal 3:28) in Europe. She is wealthy due to her sales of purple textile, which is an expensive luxury (Prov 31:22, Luke 16:19).
- Lydia is ironically from Thyatira in Asia, where Paul was forbidden to preach (Acts 16:6). A church will eventually be established in Thyatira and will receive one of the letters to the seven churches (Rev 2:18-29).

[15] And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

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The members of Lydia's household have certainly believed before being baptized, as had the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8:36-38) and as will the local jailer and his family (Acts 16:33-34). She convinces them of her moral integrity and compels them to partake of her hospitality (Rom 12:13, 1 Peter 4:9).

[16] And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

These men direct their servant girl to make prophecies of the future using an evil spirit, but scripture forbids such practice (Lev 20:6, 27). The Lord had punished King Saul with death in part for his use of such witchcraft (1 Sam 28:7-8, 1 Chron 10:13-14). The girl's masters use spiritism for economic gains (Micah 3:11), as did Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9,18-19) and Elymas (Acts 13:8) and as will Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:24). Balaam greedily took a financial reward (Jude 11) to curse Israel (Neh 13:2) with his divination (Num 22:7) and suffers eternal punishment (Jude 13) for his unrighteous (2 Peter 2:15) doctrine (Rev 2:14).

Language

“Divination” and “soothsaying” refer to foretelling future events by supernatural means.

[17] The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

Evil spirits know (James 2:19) and may proclaim the truth (Luke 4:34), but the corrupt speech of the wicked does not glorify God (Prov 7:5, Phil 1:15).

[18] And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

278] Paul, like Jesus (Mark 1:23-25), does not accept the testimony of an evil spirit lest people should think his work done in the power of the Holy Ghost (Acts 16:6) is done in the power of the devil (Matt 12:24). He casts out the unclean spirit (Mark 16:17, Eph 6:12) as did Jesus (Luke 4:35-36), the other apostles (Matt 10:1, Acts 5:16), and Philip (Acts 8:6-7). Paul and Silas will suffer for their good deed (2 Tim 2:9, 1 Peter 3:17).

[19] And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,

Her masters are not the first to be offended by miraculous healing (Mark 3:4-6, Luke 13:14), which in this case removes the source of their unjust gains (Job 27:8, Prov 28:8, Ezek 22:13). The merchants of Ephesus will likewise take offense when their incomes are threatened (Acts 19:27).

[20] And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

- “These Jews attacked our religion!” However, the religious accusation is merely cover for their real frustration, that “the hope of their gains was gone” (Acts 16:19). Demetrius the silversmith will also use a religious pretext to protest his loss of income (Acts 19:24-27).

Acts Chapter 16

Furthermore, Paul did not start this conflict; he was peacefully on his way to prayer when disturbed by the evil spirit (Acts 16:16-17).

- Previously when the Lord Jesus was criticized for performing miraculous healing, He retorted, "And ought not this woman . . . whom Satan hath bound . . . be loosed from this bond?" (Luke 13:16).
- The city is not troubled by Paul, but by those (1 Kings 18:17-18) who have exploited a woman possessed by an evil spirit who is now delivered (Luke 8:2, Acts 10:38). The plaintiffs do not reject Paul; they reject God's grace (1 Sam 8:7, Titus 2:11).

[21] And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

- Here at Philippi Paul is accused of promoting Jewish practices that are unlawful for Romans. Ironically, at Jerusalem he will be accused



Paul and Silas bring the gospel to Philippi, where Lydia becomes the first convert to Christianity in Europe (Acts 16:12-15).