



DISCOVERY

Luke, Acts, James, Galatians, Romans

Preparations for Jesus' Ministry

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Discovery is a Bible study course for the high school and adult levels. Bible references are taken from the King James Version. The companion to these Sunday school lessons is Daybreak, a daily devotional and personal Bible study continuum. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Discovery is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.

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SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Luke 1:1 through 4:13

KEY VERSES FOR MEMORIZATION

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

(Luke 2:10-11)

BACKGROUND

The Book of Luke was written to Theophilus, a Gentile who is believed to have been interested in the teachings of the Christian faith; his name means “one who loves God.” Luke, the author of this Gospel, was a skilled writer and historian as well as an educated physician. He was also a Greek—the only Gentile among the writers of the Gospels—so he could identify with the perspectives of Gentile readers. His writings helped Christians in the Gentile churches to better understand Jesus, His life, and His mission on earth.

As a friend and traveling companion of Paul the Apostle, Luke had access to the Apostles and close friends of Jesus, and no doubt their firsthand reports and recollections were the basis for much of his writings. Luke gives more detail than any other Gospel writer concerning the birth and early life of Christ.

The universal scope of Christ's message is brought out in the Gospel of Luke in a variety of ways. For example, Luke's genealogy of Jesus in chapter 3 goes back to Adam (the father of all mankind), rather than only to Abraham (the father of the Jewish nation), as Matthew's did. Heli, mentioned at the beginning of the genealogical list, was likely Joseph's father-in-law, so this ancestral record traces the family line of Mary, and may have been received personally from her.

The Book of Luke highlights Jesus' compassion toward those considered unimportant in Jewish society, such as women, children, those in poverty, and social outcasts. In these first chapters, Luke detailed how Christ's birth took place in lowly circumstances—in an area housing animals. It was to humble shepherds that the angels proclaimed their joyous message, and those shepherds had the privilege of meeting in person the tiny Babe who came as the Savior of the whole world.

Another notable feature of Luke's Gospel is the emphasis on the humanity of Jesus. In chapters 1 and 2, Luke gave a detailed account of Jesus' birth by an earthly woman, and provided the only glimpse in

Scripture of Jesus' boyhood. In chapter 4, Luke recounted how Jesus experienced hunger after fasting for forty days, and then was subjected to temptation from Satan. In addition, he gave details about how Jesus overcame temptation, providing an example for His followers throughout the ages since.

Luke alluded frequently to the Holy Spirit. For example, he explained Jesus' conception by relating the angel's assertion to Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee” (Luke 1:35). At Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove while the Father spoke from Heaven, beautifully depicting the Holy Trinity.

The text of this lesson includes words that have been woven into some of the greatest songs of all Christendom: Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55, often called the *Magnificat* (the first word of the Latin translation of this passage); the *Benedictus* or *Song of Zacharias* in Luke 1:68-79, and *Gloria in Excelsis*, which begins with the words the angels sang when Jesus' birth was announced to shepherds in Luke 2:14.

QUESTIONS

1. After four hundred years without a message from God's prophets, the Jewish people were expecting their Messiah to come, heralded by the forerunner prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6. In Luke 1:11-17 the angel Gabriel announced the advent of that forerunner, John the Baptist. What miraculous circumstance surrounded John's birth as noted in Luke 1:7,18?

2. In Luke 1:30-33, Mary was told by the Angel Gabriel that she would conceive and bear the Son of the Highest—an event that would bring difficult and life-altering circumstances into her life. What might some of those circumstances have been? Why do you think Mary surrendered to God's plan for her life with so little hesitation?

3. In Luke 2:1, Caesar Augustus ordered his subjects to return to their home cities to be taxed. That decree meant Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem, even though the birth of her Child was imminent. Old Testament prophets had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (see Micah 5:2), and God’s perfect plan was fulfilled when Jesus was born. What conclusion can we draw from the fact that this prophecy (and many others) was fulfilled in minute detail?

4. The message of the angel to the shepherds was one of great joy, for a Savior had been born to Israel. Many of the Jews expected that when their Messiah came, He would deliver them from Roman tyranny—their focus was on their temporal needs. However, the angels proclaimed a deliverance that was much greater than freedom from political oppression. What was the deliverance Jesus came to bring? (Luke 2:10-11)

5. When Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus into the Temple to be presented to the Lord, an elderly man named Simeon was greatly blessed to hold the Baby in his arms (see Luke 2:25-32). This just and devout man had waited patiently for many years to see the “consolation” of Israel. What do we, as the people of God, wait for today?

6. John the Baptist’s father, Zacharias, had been told by the angel Gabriel that John would prepare the way for the Messiah (Luke 1:17). When John began preaching throughout the region near the Jordan River, he declared that he was only a voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Lord by making His paths straight. In what way did John prepare the Messiah’s path? Luke 3:7-18.

7. The Holy Trinity (also referred to as the Divine Trinity, Godhead, or Triune God) consists of three Persons in one who are equally and eternally the one true God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These are separate and distinct persons, possessing recognizable personalities and qualities, perfectly united in one. How does Luke’s account of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River reveal the distinction of Persons in the Godhead? Luke 3:21-22

8. In Luke 4 we read that as part of Jesus’ spiritual preparation for ministry, He was “led by the Spirit” to a wilderness region where He fasted and prayed for a forty-day period. During that time, Jesus was “tempted of the devil,” yet He refused to yield. Based on Luke 4:3-13, how can we withstand temptation using Jesus as our example?

CONCLUSION

Luke’s description of John’s prophetic role, his baptism of Jesus, and Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, help us understand that these events were all part of the divine preparation for Jesus’ ministry and His role as Savior of the world.

NOTES



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Luke 4:14 through 11:54

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19)

BACKGROUND

This portion of the Gospel of Luke covers Jesus' ministry in Galilee and the beginning of His ministry in Perea, the territory east of the Jordan River. Jesus used Capernaum as His home base, but He travelled into many of the cities and villages in the region, teaching, preaching, and healing as He went. During this period Jesus called the twelve disciples who would be instrumental in helping to establish His church, and commissioned seventy followers to proclaim the Kingdom of God throughout Israel. In addition to His public ministry, Jesus spent time alone with His disciples, revealing to them His mission as the Savior of the world, His coming death, and the cost of true discipleship.

At times, Jesus' teaching took place in Jewish synagogues. During the years of Israel's exile when there was no Temple, synagogues were established as places of worship and as schools for young boys; a synagogue could be built in any town where ten or more Jewish families lived. It was customary for Jewish people to gather there on the Sabbath to hear the Scriptures expounded, and that practice continued even after the Temple was rebuilt. A visiting rabbi sometimes was invited to read from the Scriptures and teach, and Jesus availed Himself of that opportunity on a number of occasions.

As Jesus' fame spread throughout the area, He began to preach and teach in locations other than the synagogues. Luke states that He ministered in homes, by the seashore, as He traveled between various places, on the plains, at city gates, and in desert areas. Luke also mentions occasions when Jesus withdrew from the crowds for time alone in prayer, and spent time privately with His closest followers.

In these chapters, Luke's description of Jesus' ministry emphasizes the complete well-being or wholeness that Christ came to bring. He healed sick bodies but also delivered from sin. He had compassion for the hungry people in the wilderness, as well as for the

spiritual hunger of penitent sinners. He set free the demon-possessed, and raised the dead. By word and deed, Jesus showed love and compassion, regardless of nationality, gender, age, wealth, or station in life.

QUESTIONS

1. In our focus verses, Luke 4:18-19, Jesus explained the purpose of His ministry on earth. What did Jesus say He was sent to accomplish? Why were these things needful for the human family?

2. After describing the purpose of His ministry by reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah (Luke 4:16-21), what did Jesus mean when He said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears”? What was the response of the people to His statement?

3. We read in Luke 5:16 that Jesus withdrew into the wilderness to pray. A little later, before selecting His disciples, Jesus went to a mountainous region, and this time prayed all night (Luke 6:12). What was the value in removing Himself from others in order to spend time alone with God? Why do you think He did this?

4. In chapter 5 we read that Jesus taught the people from Simon Peter's boat which had been rowed a distance away from the shore. Afterward, He instructed Simon to launch out into deeper water and lower his

nets. Simon Peter had fished all night and caught nothing, yet he did as he was told. What qualities did Simon exhibit by his response, and what were the results? What would be a formula for victory using this account? Luke 5:1-11

5. Luke records frequent occasions when the Pharisees or teachers of the Law exhibited condemning attitudes toward Jesus. Chapter 6 provides two examples of them finding fault: when Jesus allowed His disciples to pick corn to eat on the Sabbath (verses 1-5), and when He healed a man's hand on the Sabbath (verses 6-11). Jesus saw the hypocrisy of the Pharisees' hearts, and responded that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (verse 5). What did He mean by that statement?

6. In chapter 8, verses 4-18, Jesus gave the parable of the four soils to illustrate spiritual receptivity. While emphasis is often placed on the variety of soil in this parable, we should also consider the seed itself. What does the seed represent? What are some conclusions we can draw about sowing the seed that are applicable to our day?

7. Luke 8:22-25 tells of a fierce storm which occurred on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples, who were traveling across that body of water at the time, were afraid. Fear is a normal human reaction when we face alarming circumstances. Yet after calming the storm, Jesus challenged the disciples by asking them, "Where is your faith?" What can we do to retain our faith when faced with fear-inducing circumstances?

8. On two occasions recounted in chapter 9, Jesus warned His disciples about His impending death (Luke 9:21-27,44-45). He also stated that following Him would not always be easy. It would necessitate a life of self-denial and there would be a cross to carry. How can Jesus' admonition in Luke 9:23 be fulfilled in today's world?

9. In chapter 10, a lawyer attempted to involve Jesus in a typical Jewish dispute over fine points of the Law by asking what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded by validating the concept of loving God and loving our neighbors (verse 27). When the lawyer pressed further, asking, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan. We can all relate to this story as we all encounter people to whom we should reach out in compassion. What are some ways we can minister to the needs of others?

10. When Jesus was a guest in Martha's home, her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet in worship and communion with Him. Martha was attempting to minister to Jesus through acts of hospitality, and she complained that Mary did not help her (Luke 10:38-42). However, Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the better part. What does this account teach us about priorities?

CONCLUSION

Jesus taught His followers that love was the rule by which men are to live, and He lived what He taught when He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and delivered those in bondage. He commissioned His followers to follow His example by proclaiming the Kingdom of God in word and deed.



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Luke 12:1 through 19:27

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

BACKGROUND

Today’s lesson describes Jesus’ last journey to Jerusalem before His crucifixion. After leaving Galilee, Jesus passed through Samaria where He healed ten lepers. He spent some time east of the Jordan River and then went on to Jericho where He healed the blind man. Our text concludes with the conversion of Zacchaeus and Jesus’ visit to his home.

In this portion of text, Luke’s focus is on Jesus’ compassion and the teaching of His principles. Many of Jesus’ most well-known parables are in this segment; in fact, Jesus taught almost half of His parables while traveling through the countryside on His way to Jerusalem. Included are the accounts of the rich but foolish farmer, the chief rooms, a great feast, the lost sheep, a lost coin, a prodigal son, an unjust judge, and an unjust steward.

Jesus also spoke of His imminent death and gave numerous warnings regarding being alert for His return to earth—an event that will take many by surprise. He emphasized the necessity of striving to enter into the Kingdom of God and the high cost of discipleship, but also promised that those who sacrifice in this life will be greatly rewarded both here and in eternity.

Luke records several instances in these chapters when Jesus was criticized by the religious leaders of the day who were more concerned with their traditions than with the law of love. They condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath and eating with sinners, but Jesus knew their hearts and in each case responded with teachings that revealed their hypocrisy.

During this final journey, Luke highlighted the compassion of Jesus, noting how He gave special attention to the lowest in society: the women, the helpless, the poor, and the outcasts. He took time for little children and indicated by His teachings that He would go out of His way to find the lost. However, even though Luke portrayed Jesus as the Son of man—One who empathizes with humans—he also made it clear that Jesus was the divine Son of God.

QUESTIONS

1. In Luke 12:13-21, Jesus gave the parable of the rich but foolish farmer who decided to tear down his barns

and build greater ones to store his crops. What precipitated this discourse by Jesus, and what point was He making in this parable?

2. After giving the parable of the rich farmer, Jesus went on to tell His followers that “life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment,” and to explain that there was no need to worry about the provision of their needs (verses 23-34). How can we reconcile this injunction with other Scriptural admonitions to labor industriously to provide for our own necessities and those of our families?

3. In Luke 13:24, Jesus told the people to “strive to enter in at the strait gate,” the “gate” representing access into the Kingdom of God. What does it mean to “strive” to enter in, and why is this necessary?

4. In the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16-24), what did the invitation represent? What were some of the excuses given for not accepting the invitation?

5. Verses 1-2 of chapter 15 set the scene for the three parables given in this chapter, all of which relate to seeking lost things. The Pharisees and scribes were upset about Jesus' actions and communicated their displeasure by "murmuring." What had Jesus done to cause their displeasure, and how did Jesus' response in the parables relate to their attitude?

6. When speaking of His future Kingdom on earth, Jesus said the coming of the Son of man will occur quickly and gave several warnings about being ready for that day. One of them was, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). What do you think Jesus meant by that warning?

7. After relating the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow, Jesus said, "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:7-8). To "bear long" and to "avenge them speedily" could appear to be contradictory concepts. What was Jesus teaching by this parable?

8. Jesus loved the little children. We read in Luke 18:15-17 that after the disciples tried to stop those in the crowd from bringing infants to Him, Jesus welcomed them to come to Him. He then told those present that one must "receive the kingdom of God as a little child." How do children typically receive teaching about God?

9. The account of Zacchaeus' conversion is given in Luke 19:1-10. What evidence did Zacchaeus give of the transformation that had taken place in his life?

10. In the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:12-27), a nobleman "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." In his absence, he gave his servants a certain number of pounds and instructed them, "Occupy till I come." What did the word "occupy" infer, and what is the application of this parable to our day?

CONCLUSION

As Jesus neared the end of His time on earth, He taught His followers many vital principles. We would do well to pay close attention to His words and apply them to our own lives.

NOTES



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Luke 19:28 through 24:53

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”
(Luke 22:42)

BACKGROUND

This final portion of the Gospel of Luke covers Jesus’ last days on earth. Our text begins with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His second cleansing of the Temple. Luke goes on to describe several instances in which the religious leaders challenged Jesus’ authority (chapter 20), and then records Jesus’ closing teachings regarding future events (chapter 21). Chapter 22 gives a description of Christ’s last supper with His disciples, His agony in the Garden, His betrayal by Judas Iscariot, and Peter’s denial. In chapter 23, Luke tells of Jesus’ trial before Herod, His sentencing by Pilate, and His crucifixion and burial. Chapter 24 concludes the Gospel, recounting Jesus’ resurrection, His post-resurrection appearances to His followers, and finally, His ascension into Heaven.

Luke’s main purpose in writing his Gospel—to present Jesus as the Savior for all people everywhere—is clearly revealed in this text. By chronicling the details of the price paid for man’s salvation, Luke highlighted the importance and relevance of the Good News for all mankind. Jesus’ life on earth gave the perfect pattern for a life lived in obedience and accordance with the will of God. Through His death, He paid the price for salvation for all people everywhere. Through His resurrection, He provided overcoming power over sin, death, and Hell. And at His ascension into Heaven, He gave His followers not only a great commission but also a glorious commitment—the promise of the fulfillment of all things that had been written by Moses and the prophets, and the endowment of power from on high.

QUESTIONS

1. In Luke 19:29-38, we read that as Jesus approached Jerusalem, crowds began to acclaim Him as King and to give Him glory and praise. The account of His triumphal entry into the city is one of the few incidents in the life of Jesus which appears in all four Gospels. Clearly, this was a significant event, not only to the people of Jesus’ day, but also to Christians throughout history who celebrate Palm Sunday to commemorate

that occasion. Why do you think the Triumphal Entry was so significant?

2. Bible historians note that the view of Jerusalem from the point near the Mount of Olives where Jesus rode into the city would have been one of beauty and splendor, with glimpses of the magnificent Temple, the gardens and elaborate dwellings of wealthy Jews, and the great wall encircling the city. According to Luke 19:41-44, what did Jesus do as He looked out over Jerusalem, and why?

3. In Luke 20:9-19, Jesus gave the parable of the vineyard, in which the husbandmen who had the responsibility of caring for the vineyard failed to provide the owner with a return on his investment. The husbandmen had rejected the owner’s authority and viewed the vineyard as their own. Why were the chief priests and scribes so furious when they heard this parable?

4. In chapter 21, Jesus told His followers of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, of His return, and of several distinct signs that would precede these events. In verse 36, He instructed His disciples to watch for these signs and to pray continually; otherwise, they could be caught off guard and suffer destruction. We are in the closing days before the return of Christ to this earth, so the warning to “watch . . . and pray” has special significance for our generation. What does the word “watch” mean in this context, and what are some ways we can watch for our Lord’s return?

5. On the night before Jesus' crucifixion, He expressed His desire to celebrate a final Passover meal with His disciples, who were His closest earthly companions. In addition to sharing a precious time of communion with them, Jesus knew the religious significance that evening would have for His followers in the coming centuries. What ordinance did Jesus institute that night at this final meal with His disciples, and how?
Luke 22:17-20

6. In a grove of olive trees near the Mount of Olives, Jesus spent His final hours before His arrest in prayer to the Father. His petition culminated in these words, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). What did the "cup" Jesus referred to represent?

7. Peter denied Jesus (Luke 22:56-62), and yet later became a leader in the Early Church. Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Luke 22:47) and later suffered a tragic end. Why do you think these two men, both of whom had been among the closest associates of Christ, had such different endings?

8. God permitted false accusations and injustice to prevail in the trial of Jesus Christ. The most infamous legal proceeding in history, described in our text, occurred so that God's plan for the salvation of mankind could be fulfilled. The Innocent One was declared guilty not just in one court, but in three. Before whom did those three trials take place?
Luke 22:66-71; 23:1-25

9. Luke's account of the life of Jesus Christ on earth does not end with the grief and darkness of Calvary. In chapter 24, we find the thrilling account of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and His post-resurrection appearances. The Resurrection is the cornerstone of the Gospel and the central fact of Christian history. What are some of the ways the Resurrection is fundamental to our Christian faith?

CONCLUSION

Jesus paid a high price for our redemption, and was victorious over sin, death, and Hell. As Christians, we have every reason to glorify the King of kings and the Lord of Lords for He is worthy!

NOTES



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Acts 1:1 through 7:60

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“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)

BACKGROUND

The Acts of the Apostles is the Biblical account of the establishment of the Early Church, and the primary source of information about the expansion of Christ’s message in the first century. Traditionally ascribed to Luke, it continues the narrative of the Gospel of Jesus Christ recorded in the Book of Luke and the other Gospels. Chapters 1-7 describe the ascension of Christ into Heaven, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter’s sermon following the outpouring, and the subsequent actions of the Apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit that established the church in Jerusalem.

At His ascension, described in chapter 1, Jesus commanded His disciples to return to Jerusalem and wait for the promised Holy Spirit. They were to begin their ministry as Christ’s witnesses only after they had received this power from on high, for the Holy Spirit would equip them to spread the Gospel, beginning at Jerusalem and then expanding out to all points of the earth.

Chapter 2 records the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost upon the disciples who had tarried together in the Upper Room with hearts in perfect unity. Shortly after being filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter boldly faced the crowds, who were amazed at what was happening, and preached a Spirit-anointed sermon. About three thousand people were converted and baptized in water the same day.

A miracle of healing at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple is the key event of chapter 3. A lame man asked Peter and John for money, but through Jesus’ Name, they gave him a much greater gift—the ability to walk, though he had been lame from birth. Following this miraculous healing, Peter preached another sermon, recounting how Moses and Samuel had prophesied the coming of the Messiah who would fulfill the covenant of blessing to Israel, and asserting that Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise. More souls received salvation after that sermon, and the congregation grew to about five thousand.

While numbers were increasing, the fledgling church faced great adversity. Chapter 4 records that in reaction to the healing of the lame man, Peter and John were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. This governing body of elders, rulers, scribes, and priests demanded to know “by what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” Peter fearlessly responded that it was “by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified.” He and John were released after being commanded to never preach again in the Name of Jesus, but in spite of that warning, the Apostles continued to proclaim Christ in synagogues without fear. The believers gathered in homes for fellowship, prayer, and communion. They were unified spiritually and demonstrated Christian love, with many selling their possessions and sharing with those in need in the church.

In addition to facing adversity from without, the body of believers faced challenges from within. Chapter 5 records what happened when Ananias and Sapphira lied to Peter about their offering, and in doing so, lied to God. Judgment was swift and sure; both husband and wife died when they were confronted, and were buried within a few hours. As a result, great respect and reverence for God came upon the new church.

The influence of the Gospel spread, and multitudes began coming from cities around Jerusalem, bringing their sick to the Apostles to be healed. Once more the Apostles were imprisoned but were miraculously delivered by an angel. Again they were commanded to cease from preaching in the Name of Jesus, and once more they refused, saying, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

In chapter 6, a dispute arose concerning the daily ministration to needy members of their group. Stephen was one of seven chosen to remedy this situation. His messages, which were “full of faith and power,” stirred up more opposition, and Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin and accused of blasphemy.

Stephen’s powerful sermon as he faced his accusers is recorded in chapter 7. It was not a defensive message, but rather a bold proclamation of truth going back to God’s covenant with Abraham, and recounting God’s blessing through the eras of Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. He asserted that the people had continued to reject God and ultimately had even put to death the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Stephen’s accusation enraged the people, and he was condemned to death by stoning, becoming the first Christian martyr of the Early Church.

QUESTIONS

1. Just before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus' final words to His followers are recorded in Acts 1:4-8. What were they instructed to do, and what was promised to them before fulfilling the Great Commission?

2. The disciples obeyed Jesus' instructions to tarry in Jerusalem, and Acts 2:1 tells us that when the Day of Pentecost came, they were "all with one accord in one place." What does this statement tell us about the disciples' spiritual condition when the Holy Ghost descended?

3. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descended upon those who had tarried in prayer. According to Acts 2:4, what was the external evidence that the Spirit had descended?

4. Following the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, Peter stood and preached with courage and boldness to the crowd that had gathered. According to Acts 2:37, what was the response to his message? What does this reveal about the effect the Holy Spirit has on the unsaved?

5. The lame beggar by the Beautiful Gate of the Temple asked Peter and John for alms. The disciples had no money to give, but the lame man received far more than the monetary donation he had hoped for. What did he receive, and how? Acts 3:6-8

6. In Acts 5:1-2, Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession but conspired together to hold back part of the proceeds, while giving the impression that they were offering the full amount for God's use. The Greek word translated *kept back* in verse 2 means "to set apart or appropriate for one's own use," indicating that the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was deliberate

deception to portray full submission and participation. Divine judgment was immediate, and caused a healthy fear of God among the people. Why do you think God punished this couple so quickly and with such finality? What can we learn from this?

7. Multiple references in chapters 1-7 indicate that the early disciples were people of prayer even after the amazing prayer meeting where they received the infilling of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 3:1; 4:24-31; 6:4-6). What conclusion can we draw from this?

8. Acts 6:1-7 describes the appointment of seven individuals to attend to the physical needs of the growing group of believers. According to verse 3, what qualifications were necessary in those who would fill the position? Why are these qualities important for the service of the Lord?

9. Stephen was charged with speaking blasphemous words against God and the Temple, and attempting to change Jewish customs. Chapter 7 records his defense before the Sanhedrin. Why do you think Stephen could so fearlessly address the council, even though he must have known his life was in danger for doing so?

CONCLUSION

Prior to Jesus' ascension to Heaven, He promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would empower them to be witnesses for Him, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." After receiving the promised power, the disciples began to witness and evangelize, and as a result, the Early Church was established in Jerusalem and grew rapidly.



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Acts 8:1 through 12:25

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

(Acts 8:3-4)

BACKGROUND

Jesus’ final words to His followers declared that after the Holy Ghost came upon them, they would be His witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth (see Acts 1:8). In today’s text, that promise began to be fulfilled beyond Jerusalem. Chapters 8-12 of Acts relate that as the persecution in Jerusalem grew, believers dispersed throughout Judaea and Samaria, and everywhere they went they preached the Word.

Chapter 8 describes the ministry of Philip, a Greek-speaking Jew and one of those who had been chosen to serve with Stephen (see Acts 6:5). He went to Samaria and preached Christ there. The people gladly received his message. Later, the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to observe this new ministry to the Samaritans, people who were part Jew and part Gentile. They found a solid body of believers, and the Samaritans subsequently received the Holy Ghost.

Though his ministry in Samaria had been fruitful, Philip was directed by God to leave that location and go to a lonely desert road in Gaza. There he saw a chamberlain to the Queen of Ethiopia riding along in his chariot. The Ethiopian was thirsting for understanding of the Scriptures, and when Philip joined him in his chariot and told him of Jesus, the man believed and subsequently was baptized in water.

The story of Saul’s conversion takes up most of chapter 9. Saul was well-known for his extreme hatred and persecution of the followers of Jesus, and his dramatic conversion on the road between Jerusalem and Damascus stirred the Jewish community. The radical change in this former persecutor demonstrated the transforming power of the Gospel, which Saul immediately began to witness to and would later preach. However, there was a waiting and growing time for Saul before he began his ministry. He spent about three years in the desert of Arabia (see Galatians 1:17-18), and then resided for a time in Tarsus, his home city.

At the end of chapter 9, the focus of the narrative in Acts shifts back to Peter. Two incidents in his

ministry are described: the healing of Aeneas the paralytic, and the raising back to life of the deceased Dorcas (Tabitha).

Chapter 10 records how the divinely arranged meeting between Peter and Cornelius began to open the door for Gentiles to be a part of the community of believers. The Law was ingrained in the Jewish people. Strong feelings prevailed about things considered unclean, which included people who were Gentiles. That concept needed to be changed in order to reach the Gentiles for Christ. Peter’s vision on the rooftop in Joppa helped him understand that Christ’s death had abolished the barrier between Jews and Gentiles. Then, with perfect timing, Peter received the God-directed summons to Cornelius’ house. Cornelius was a Roman centurion who was a devout man, though not a member of the Jewish community. Peter journeyed to Caesarea where Cornelius lived, and while he was delivering his message of salvation through Jesus, Cornelius and the others in his household embraced it, and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them.

Chapter 11 describes the opposition to Peter’s actions by the church leaders in Jerusalem. They were offended that Peter had visited Gentiles and had eaten with them, but Peter recounted his vision and the events that followed. Clearly, the Gospel was for all and after their initial astonishment, the Jerusalem saints began to rejoice in the salvation of these new converts.

The conclusion of chapter 11 describes the formation of the church in Antioch. Some of the Jews who had been scattered by persecution had settled in this city of Syria, located about three hundred miles from Jerusalem. As a vital commercial hub, Antioch became a major center for Christian missionary outreach. Barnabas was sent by the Jerusalem church to oversee the church there. The rapid growth of the congregation spurred him to travel to Tarsus to bring back Saul, who had been saved about ten years earlier, to help with the work. It was at Antioch that the name “Christians” was first applied to the followers of Christ.

The persecution in Jerusalem continued, as evidenced by the events described in chapter 12. Herod Agrippa beheaded James, making him the first Apostle to be martyred. (For information on the various Herods, see the chart at the end of the book.) Because this action pleased the Jews, Herod arrested Peter as well. However, the night before the Apostle’s trial, the chains that shackled him between two guards fell off and an angel led him out of prison. Peter made his way to the home of John Mark’s mother, where the saints had gathered to pray for him.

QUESTIONS

1. After Simon saw the Holy Ghost being poured out through the laying on of hands by Peter and John, he attempted to pay money to obtain the same power. According to Acts 8:20-23, how did Peter respond?

2. According to Acts 8:5-8, Philip's ministry to the people of Samaria had been blessed by God. Many afflicted individuals had been healed, and there was great joy in the city. Yet, God instructed this successful evangelist to go to a lonely road in the middle of a desert to witness to one man (verse 26). What spiritual lessons can we learn from this incident?

3. From the perspective of the early disciples, Saul of Tarsus was an unlikely candidate for the Gospel. Based on Acts 9:1-2, 13-14, how would you describe Saul prior to the events that occurred as he traveled to Damascus? What happened that changed him?

4. In chapter 10, verses 1-8 describe a vision of the devout centurion, Cornelius, in which he was instructed by God to send to Joppa for Peter—a man he had never met. He obeyed, sending two of his household servants and a devout soldier to the location God designated. Shortly before their arrival, Peter was praying on the rooftop, and God sent him a vision as well. What did Peter see in his vision, and what was the lesson he was to learn? Acts 10:11-16

5. The Apostles and believers in Jerusalem heard that Peter had visited Cornelius' house. Acts 11:2-3 describes their reaction—they “contended” with him and condemned his actions, saying in effect, “You are supposed to be a faithful Jew, so why did you associate with and even eat with Gentiles?” How did Peter respond to their criticism? Why was the eventual understanding they reached so critical to the spreading of the Gospel? Acts 11:4,18

6. Barnabas first appears in Scripture in Acts 4:36, where we learn that his name (perhaps a nickname) meant “Son of consolation.” His first recorded action was when he sold land that belonged to him and “brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:37). He is also mentioned in Acts 9:26-31 and Acts 11:22-26, 30. After reviewing these texts, how would you describe this Christian worker?

7. According to Acts 12:1-2, the Apostle James was beheaded by King Herod, making him the first of the twelve Apostles to be martyred. Subsequent verses in the same chapter relate how the Apostle Peter was spared—in fact, he experienced a dramatic deliverance from prison through the intervention of an angel! (See Acts 12:5-10.) Why do you think God delivered in one instance but not the other?

8. Peter's imprisonment inspired the believers to pray “without ceasing” on his behalf. However, when Peter miraculously appeared at their door, the saints found it hard to believe (see Acts 12:13-16). Why do you think they were so disbelieving of Rhoda's report? What conclusion can we reach from this event about how God answers prayer?

CONCLUSION

The New Testament church had a call to evangelize the world for Christ. Starting in Judea, then into Samaria, and then to regions beyond, the saints began to move into new areas, sowing the seed as they went. Our commission is the same today, as we carry on the work of the early disciples until Jesus comes.



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Acts 13:1 through 21:17

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.” (Acts 16:5)

BACKGROUND

Jesus had said His followers would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). Persecution had caused the believers to be scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, and even into neighboring territories (Acts 11:19). By A.D. 44, the Roman Empire provided conditions conducive to expanded preaching of the Gospel around the eastern end of the Mediterranean world and westward to Rome, the capital. Paul was to lead this movement. Throughout his three missionary journeys, described in chapters 13 through 21 of Acts, the Holy Spirit guided by selecting the Apostle's fellow workers, signifying Paul's destinations, and directing decisions regarding the new churches.

Chapters 13 and 14 describe Paul's first and shortest missionary journey, circa A.D. 46-47, which began in Antioch, Syria. With the clear direction of the Holy Ghost, Paul and his co-worker, Barnabas, traveled initially to the island of Cyprus, and from there into the regions of Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Galatia. Their method of evangelism was to preach first in the town synagogues, but when many of the Jews rejected Christ, the missionaries recognized the Holy Spirit's leading to witness to the Gentiles. It was on this first journey that Saul began to be referred to as Paul, his Grecian name, possibly in order to identify more closely with the Gentiles he was attempting to reach.

Chapter 15 describes the first session of the Early Church leaders held in Jerusalem (often called the Jerusalem Council), which probably occurred about A.D. 50. In the mixed Jew-Gentile church of Antioch, dissent and confusion had arisen regarding compliance with Jewish Law. In Jerusalem, converted Pharisees insisted that Gentile converts observe the Law. However, when Peter, Paul, and Barnabas related their experiences, including the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on Gentile believers, the council concluded that Gentile converts should not be compelled to adhere to Jewish rites. This significant decision removed a potential barrier to the expansion of the Gospel into the Gentile world. Paul and Barnabas, along with others, took a letter summarizing this conclusion to Antioch.

Paul's second missionary journey, described in Acts 15:36 to 18:22, began approximately three years after the conclusion of his first trip. Paul was accompanied by Silas on this second trip, and this time they set out by land rather than sea. Their purpose was to revisit the churches in Galatia, encouraging them in the Lord. Paul also added Timothy, a convert from Lystra, to the team.

Chapter 16 records that in Troas, the Holy Spirit changed Paul's plan of continuing on to Asia. The vision of a man saying, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us,” was an indicator of the Spirit's leading. In Philippi, a Roman colony and the largest city in Macedonia, the missionaries were arrested, beaten, and put into stocks in an inner prison. However, as they sang praises to God at midnight, an earthquake shook the prison, the doors opened, and the shackles came off all the prisoners. This led to the salvation of the jailor and his whole household.

Chapter 17 states that Paul and Silas went next to Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, and from there to Berea and Athens.

In chapter 18, Paul continued on to Corinth, which was a city of great immorality. There the Apostle met Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers who became Paul's helpers in the Gospel. Paul stayed in Corinth for over eighteen months, during which time he wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Then he returned to Ephesus, finally traveling back to his starting point in Antioch.

The record of Paul's third missionary journey is found in Acts 18:23 to 21:17. After a time in Antioch, Paul traveled back to the regions of Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the saints. In Ephesus, Paul met with some believers who had not heard of the Holy Ghost, knowing only the water baptism of John. After Paul's instruction, they were water baptized according to Jesus' baptism and shortly thereafter, received the infilling of the Holy Ghost.

Chapter 19 relates that Paul remained in the area of Ephesus for two years, edifying the saints, preaching, and performing miracles in the name of the Lord.

Chapter 20 continues the record of Paul's travels. During this period, he wrote his second epistle to the saints at Corinth, and his epistle to the Romans. As his trip drew to a close, the Apostle traveled on to Miletus where the elders from Ephesus bid him a tearful goodbye, knowing they would not see Paul again on earth. Though warned by disciples in Tyre and Agabus in Caesarea that trouble awaited him in Jerusalem, Paul was led by the Spirit to continue on to that city, thus concluding his third missionary journey.

QUESTIONS

1. Acts 13 marks a milestone in Christian history, as Saul (later called Paul) and Barnabas were commissioned by the Holy Spirit to set forth on the first missionary venture into Gentile territory. What were the two men doing when they were chosen? Why do you think this is significant? Acts 13:1-3

2. The Early Church did not start or grow by its own efforts or enthusiasm. The early believers were empowered and directed by God's Holy Spirit. What role did the Holy Spirit have in the appointment of Barnabas and Saul? Acts 13:1-4

3. Paul and Barnabas traveled for about two years on this first missionary outreach to the Gentiles, and covered many miles. After evangelizing in Galatia, the two could have finished their trip by returning through Paul's hometown of Tarsus. It would have been simpler and safer to do so. Instead, however, they retraced their steps and revisited the churches where they had been, going back into the very areas where they had been violently opposed and persecuted. According to Acts 14:21-23, what was their purpose in doing this?

4. The meeting of the Council of Jerusalem, described in chapter 15, is one of the great turning points in the Book of Acts. What issue was brought before the Council, and why was the decision they made so significant?

5. Chapter 16 records that while the missionaries were in Philippi, opposition arose when a demon-possessed slave girl was delivered. Paul and Silas were taken before the magistrates, and then beaten and placed in stocks in the inner prison. At midnight, however, the two men prayed and sang praises to God. While we may never be beaten and imprisoned for our faith, we will experience trials of some nature. What are the benefits of keeping a spirit of praise, even in hard circumstances?

6. In view of the shameful treatment Paul and Silas had endured in Philippi, preaching the same message at their next stop in Thessalonica took God-given courage! Still, they went ahead and taught boldly in the synagogue of that city, making it clear that the Jewish ceremonial way of being reconciled to God was obsolete and that Jesus was the promised Messiah. While some believed, others of the Jews stirred up a mob. What accusation was leveled against the missionary team? Acts 17:6

7. In chapter 17, we read that Paul visited Athens, the intellectual and cultural center of the ancient world, where he began his sermon on Mars Hill by referencing an altar with the inscription "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Based on Acts 17:16-21, how would you describe the men of Athens? In what ways do you think they were similar to people in the "Christian" society of our day?

8. In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, recorded in Acts 20:18-35, Paul warned of grievous wolves and false prophets who would attempt to destroy the church. The admonition Paul gave is good today. What two key words in verse 31 give us a vital clue regarding how to avoid being led astray by any "grievous wolf"?

CONCLUSION

Paul's missionary journeys took the Gospel to regions along the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. New churches were started, and new believers began to mature and grow in their Christian lives. Paul was able to conclude his third missionary journey with joy, and with a testimony proclaiming the grace of God. In spite of intense opposition, he had been faithful to the souls of both Jews and Gentiles. Now his heart's desire was to spread the Gospel in Rome.



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Acts 21:18 through 28:31

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

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

BACKGROUND

This final portion of the Book of Acts centers on Paul’s long-desired visit to Rome. At the conclusion of his third missionary journey, Paul went to Jerusalem to deliver relief money gathered by the Gentile churches. Once his mission there was complete, he intended to visit Rome, capital of the Roman Empire and the natural base for his next missionary endeavor because of its strategic location and political importance. This would take his missionary effort further west.

The Holy Spirit was the source of Paul’s desire to evangelize, and the Holy Spirit divinely orchestrated the means by which the Apostle reached Rome. Within days of his report to the church elders at Jerusalem regarding what God was doing among the Gentiles, opposition arose. Paul was falsely accused and arrested at the Temple, setting the stage for a series of trials before various religious and government officials. These trials gave Paul the opportunity to give his testimony and proclaim the Gospel of salvation for both Jew and Gentile in a variety of locations, including Rome.

First, Paul was given an opportunity to speak to the mob of angry Jews in Jerusalem who were determined to kill him. The next day, he was brought before the Sanhedrin, where he gave his second defense. After a plot to kill him was foiled, the Apostle was taken to Caesarea, where he witnessed initially before Felix (the procurator of Judea), then before Festus (the governor who succeeded Felix), and finally before Agrippa (King of Judea). In each case, Paul skillfully wove together a tapestry of his own experiences, doctrinal elements, and in some cases, even a call to decision.

After his hearing before Agrippa, the king and those with him concluded that Paul was not guilty and could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar. However, Paul’s steps had been ordained by God, and He had promised Paul that he would testify in Rome (see Acts 23:11). Paul being sent to Rome for trial was simply the next step in God’s plan.

Luke concluded his account of the Acts of the Apostles by detailing Paul’s journey to and arrival in

Rome. Chapter 27 through 28:15 relate Paul’s experiences aboard ship on the voyage to Rome as a prisoner, including a stay on the island of Malta after a storm caused their ship to be wrecked. After a description of the last leg of their journey to Rome, the final verses of chapter 28 tell of Paul living under house arrest in Rome, where he remained for two years preaching, teaching, encouraging, and visiting with those who came to him while he awaited trial.

The Book of Acts ends with Paul’s first Roman imprisonment; Luke states that Paul lived two years under house arrest. According to tradition, Paul was set free for a time after this. Historians indicate that charges had to be brought within two years, so he possibly was released when that time ran out. His letter to the church at Philippi, which was written during this first imprisonment, records Paul’s expectation of being released shortly (see Philippians 2:24). Later, Paul was imprisoned again, most likely in Rome, and under much more strict conditions. It was then that he wrote his final epistle, 2 Timothy. The New Testament does not say when or how Paul died, but historians believe he was martyred sometime after the Great Fire of Rome in A.D. 64 and before the last year of Nero’s reign in A.D. 68.

QUESTIONS

1. At the conclusion of his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Jerusalem, where he met with the leaders of the church. Soon after, opposition arose when a group of Judaizers accused him of encouraging the Jews to “forsake Moses”—to put aside the traditions of the Law. In response, what did the elders of the church ask Paul to do, and why? Acts 21:23-24

2. In spite of Paul’s action in taking the vow, a riot was started by some “Jews which were of Asia”—the area where Paul had been so violently opposed. Paul was arrested, but the chief captain allowed him to speak to the people, and Paul used this opportunity to share his testimony. Based on the Apostle’s words in Acts 22:13-21, give a brief description of this former persecutor after his conversion.

3. Acts 23 describes Paul’s appearance before the Sanhedrin. His defense resulted in a furious dispute between the Pharisees and Sadducees—a conflict so uproarious that the chief captain ordered Paul to be removed from the scene, “fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them” (verse 10). With his future in jeopardy and his life hanging in the balance, Paul no doubt needed some extra support. How did the Lord comfort and encourage the Apostle? Acts 23:11

4. After his appearance before the Sanhedrin, the Apostle was transferred in the darkness of night to Caesarea where he was to appear before Felix, the procurator (or governor) of Judea. Chapter 24 records the accusations made against Paul before Felix, and the Apostle’s response. What are some words you would use to describe how he made his defense, given in verses 10-15?

5. Felix had been governor of Judea for six years, so he undoubtedly already knew about the Christian faith. Building upon that, Paul presented to him the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and when Paul finished his defense, Felix had a “more perfect knowledge of that way” (Acts 24:22). Subsequently, Felix met with Paul again, and listened to the Apostle concerning faith in Christ. When Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” how did Felix respond? What parallel can you see between his response and the way many respond to the Gospel invitation in our day? Acts 24:24-25

6. Paul was imprisoned for two years in Caesarea. When Festus replaced Felix, Paul’s accusers again brought charges against the Apostle and pressed for a trial to be held in Jerusalem. At that point, Paul requested a hearing before Caesar, which was the right of every Roman citizen. In Acts 25:14-21, Festus explained Paul’s case to the visiting King Agrippa. What great doctrinal truth did Festus point to in his summary of the accusations against Paul? (Acts 25:18-19). Why did the Jewish religious leaders so vehemently resist this truth?

7. Paul’s defense before Agrippa is recorded in chapter 26. For the third time in the Book of Acts, the Apostle recounted how his life was turned around through his experience on the road to Damascus. Based on verses 19-20, what was the outcome of that experience?

8. In chapter 27, Paul was taken by ship toward Rome. As winter approached, the weather became more and more dangerous for traveling by sea. The ship made a good start from Crete, but in time, they encountered great difficulty in a storm. When the weather became so tempestuous that a shipwreck was certain, Paul stepped forward and offered words of encouragement and comfort to the terrified sailors. What was his message, and on what basis was he able to offer it so assuredly? Acts 27:20-26

9. Paul carried on his ministry even while imprisoned in Rome. According to Acts 28:23, “There came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.” The final verse of the Book of Acts relates that Paul continued “preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” As we come to the close of this book, what are some of the key lessons that we can learn from the life of Paul?

CONCLUSION

The Spirit of God inspired Paul’s longing to carry the Gospel to Rome and provided the means for the Apostle to get there, orchestrating a sequence of events that put him in contact with government officials who wanted him to tell them about Jesus, and enabling him to preach Jesus Christ in many locations. Though opposition was fierce, Paul was reassured by the knowledge that God would bring him safely to his goal. His example of commitment, and his willingness to suffer and die for the Gospel if need be, were widely imitated in early Christianity, and helped the Early Church grow despite periods of intense persecution.

DISCOVERY

James' Letter



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

James 1:1 through 5:20

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” (James 2:18)

BACKGROUND

By A.D. 49, many of the early believers had left Jerusalem to live in areas outside of Palestine due to the persecution that arose after Stephen's death. Since these individuals who were “scattered abroad” no longer had day-to-day contact with the leaders of the church, James wrote this epistle to encourage them to endure in spite of trials, to continue growing in Christ, and to evidence their faith by actions that were appropriate for believers.

More than any other book in the New Testament, James focuses on the necessity for followers of Christ to act in accordance with their faith. The author was convinced that what Christians believe must affect what they do. His repeated emphasis on practical aspects of the life of faith is similar in many ways to Proverbs and other portions of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

While there is no clearly defined structure in James' epistle, a number of themes are woven throughout the five chapters. These include faith that is revealed by actions, remaining steadfast in trials, wise speech, the wisdom of God, the worthlessness of riches, and perseverance in prayer. His instruction, though written nearly two thousand years ago, can still serve as a how-to book on genuine Christian living.

QUESTIONS

1. James began his epistle by challenging the recipients of his letter to patiently endure when faced with difficult circumstances. The word “temptation” in James 1:2 refers to both outward adversities and trials. The phrase “trying of your faith” in verse 3 implies a test designed to prove the quality of something. In verse 4, what reason did James give for patient endurance of temptations and trials?

2. Early Christian churches followed the pattern of synagogue worship in which religious instruction was delivered orally, so throughout his epistle James frequently challenged believers to put into practice what they heard from God's Word. One such instruction is found in James 1:22, where he admonished, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” How would you describe a person who is a doer of the word?

3. In James 2:14-26, James described the interaction of “faith” and “works” in the Christian life. How does his assertion that “faith without works is dead” (verse 20) fit with the Apostle Paul's teaching that salvation is obtained through faith alone, and not by works?

4. In chapter 3, James moved from generalities about good deeds to specifics about godly speech. In verse 5, he compared the damage the tongue can do to a fire, saying, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” What are some ways uncontrolled speech and fire are alike?

5. In verses 13-18 of chapter 3, James took up the topic of genuine wisdom, pointing out that just as one can identify a tree by its fruit, one can identify godly wisdom—the “wisdom from above”—by observing its characteristics. What eight qualities of godly wisdom does he list in verse 17?

6. In chapter 4, James described behaviors that are evidence of a carnal nature, such as strife, wrong desires, worldliness, and disunity. In verses 7-10, he presented the remedy in a series of imperative commands. What two actions does he mention in James 4:7, and why are both so vital for a victorious Christian life?

7. Planning for the future is a familiar theme in today’s society. High school students are encouraged to practice for SAT tests, apply for scholarships, and make early inquiries to colleges they might like to attend. Young professionals are advised to draft business plans and set goals for advancement in their field of choice. Middle-aged individuals are counseled to evaluate their resources and talk to a financial advisor in order to ensure they will have a comfortable retirement. In chapter 4, James addressed the making of plans. He gave an example of a merchant who had thought of everything including time (today or tomorrow), location (such and such a city), duration (spend a year there), purpose (buy and sell), and goal

(achieve a profit). However, one important aspect had been left out. What was that aspect? How would you summarize James’ admonition about looking ahead to the future? James 4:13-15

8. In James 5:13-15, the author instructed those who were afflicted (facing any troubling circumstances in life) to pray, and the cheerful to sing psalms of praise to God. What did he instruct the sick to do?

CONCLUSION

Though written nearly two thousand years ago, the epistle of James gives practical advice for believers of every era regarding living out what one believes.

NOTES



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Galatians 1:1 through 6:18

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

BACKGROUND

The exact geographic location of the Galatian churches remains uncertain. In Paul the Apostle's time, the Romans gave this name to an area in north central Asia Minor that came into their possession around 25 B.C., which they made into a province. In broader traditional usage, Galatia referred to a small southeastern portion of that province encompassing such cities as Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia. Most likely the letter was addressed to the churches in these locations which Paul had founded on his first missionary journey, as recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts.

Bible scholars estimate that Paul wrote this letter around A.D. 53-55. Like many of the New Testament letters authored by Paul, this epistle was written as a corrective message to churches going through challenging times after being founded under his authority, teaching, and tender care. It addressed the first major doctrinal controversy that plagued the Early Church in its formative years—a contention regarding whether Gentile believers had to adhere to requirements of the Mosaic Law, specifically the rite of circumcision. Apparently a group of teachers from Jerusalem had come and undermined Paul's teaching. Their faulty teaching that the Gospel required adherence to the old Law brought great bondage rather than the freedom offered by the Gospel of justification through faith in Christ. Of the epistle's six chapters, the first four and a half primarily concern this issue, and the remaining chapter and a half focus on how the Gospel should be lived out in daily life.

While the main theme of the letter is a defense of the doctrine of justification by faith and warnings against reverting to the requirements of Jewish legalism, Paul first established his authority as an Apostle. Other highlights include a charge to stand firm in Christian liberty, a comparison of the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit, and a warning that what is spiritually planted, either to the flesh or the Spirit, will grow into a crop with eternal consequences.

QUESTIONS

1. After his opening salutation, Paul asserted that the Galatian believers had removed themselves from what they had been taught to "another gospel." The Greek word translated "removed" in Galatians 1:6 implies changing sides or turning away. The verb tense used shows that this was taking place as Paul wrote, so this was an attempt at halting these believers' movement away from the true Gospel. In verses 6-9, how did he make clear the seriousness of what they were doing?

2. Paul stated in Galatians 2:19 that he had died to the Law, meaning that he no longer tried to justify himself by keeping the Law, and thus was free from its dominion. The following verse, Galatians 2:20, introduces one of the Apostle's most significant theological concepts. How would you explain what it means to be "crucified with Christ" and yet continue to live?

3. In the first two chapters of this epistle, Paul defended the authority of his message. In chapter 3, he addressed the spiritual error that was overtaking the Galatians: the false belief that obedience to the Mosaic Law was necessary for justification. Based on Galatians 3:19-25, how would you summarize the purpose for which the Law was given? What role did Paul point to in verse 24 to illustrate this purpose?

4. In chapter 4, Paul continued his explanation of spiritual liberty by describing the difference between slaves and sons. He reminded the Galatians that they had been promoted from servitude to sonship, and expressed his deep concern about their choice to return to enslavement. Near the end of chapter 4, Paul used the Old Testament account of Abraham’s two sons as an allegory or teaching tool. What basic contrast was Paul pointing out by his series of comparisons in verses 21-31?

5. Toward the end of his letter, Paul took the concept of justification by faith and applied it to everyday life. He stated that the real test of a relationship with Christ was not the old covenant sign of circumcision, nor did uncircumcision have any merit. What had true value in God’s sight was faith that was worked out in the life by love (see Galatians 5:6). List some ways that faith in Christ can be evidenced (or worked out) through love for others.

6. In verses 19-21 of chapter 5, Paul presented a list of behaviors that he identified as “works of the flesh.” Which activities on this list pertain to relationships between individuals?

7. In contrast to the works of the flesh, verses 22-23 of chapter 5 list the fruit of the Spirit—the evidence that is apparent in the lives of those who are controlled by the Spirit. The first three (love, joy, and peace) are inner characteristics reflecting a person’s relationship with God. The next three (longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness) are qualities related to a believer’s dealings with others. The final three (faith, meekness, and temperance) are inner attitudes. What are some specific ways these godly attributes can be exemplified in our lives?

8. Paul’s dual list of works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:19-24 is bracketed before and after by the clear commands, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (verse 16) and “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (verse 25). How would you describe what it means to walk in the Spirit?

9. The Apostle closed this epistle by writing the final verses himself, rather than dictating them to a scribe (Galatians 6:11). He noted that those who were insisting upon circumcision were doing so in order to avoid the stigma associated with the Cross of Christ, and “that they may glory in your flesh” (or take pride in their own supposed religious superiority). In contrast, what did the Apostle say that he was determined to glory in, and why do you think he stated this so forcefully at the close of his epistle? Galatians 6:14-15

CONCLUSION

Paul challenged Galatian believers to stand firmly within the “good news” of spiritual freedom purchased by Jesus Christ on Calvary, and not to revert to the old requirements of the Law. He insisted that justification was not obtained by any human effort, but by a simple response of faith to God’s unspeakable gift of grace in Christ. That justification is still available today.



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Romans 1:1 through 7:25

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17)

BACKGROUND

Paul's Epistle to the Romans is generally accepted to provide one of the most concise summaries of the Gospel message in all of Scripture. At the conclusion of his third missionary journey, while wintering in Corinth around A.D. 57, the Apostle began making plans to travel to Rome. In anticipation of that trip, he wrote this epistle with the intent of introducing himself to Gentile and Jewish believers in that city and presenting his core message: that salvation is not obtained through the Law nor by the most zealous of religious practices. Rather, it is a gift of grace, received by faith in God's promise to forgive sins for the sake of Christ's death on the Cross.

While Paul's other New Testament letters deal primarily with the Church and the challenges facing early believers, his epistle to the Romans focuses more on God and His great plan of redemption. The word *God* occurs over 150 times in the book, or an average of once every forty-six words—a more frequent usage than in any other New Testament book. Other words Paul used often in Romans are *law*, *Christ*, *sin*, *Lord*, and *faith*; all of these subjects were predominant themes in the epistle.

Paul began by asserting that Christ was the God-ordained fulfillment of the rituals of the Jewish faith and the pronouncements of prophets through the ages. After introducing himself to the saints at Rome, he gave a brief summary of his message in verses 16-17 of the first chapter. In successive chapters, the Apostle went on to point to the unrighteousness and guilt of all mankind, emphasizing that both Jew and Gentile were without excuse for their rejection of God because He has revealed Himself to all. He explained that while the Law brought knowledge and understanding of sin, no one could be justified by works—righteousness comes only through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Using a comparison of Adam and Christ, he established that just as sin was imputed to mankind through one man (Adam), justification is offered to mankind through one man (Jesus Christ).

Paul also addressed several other foundational doctrines of the Gospel in this first portion of the epistle, including the nature of sin and its penalty, the fact that all have sinned, the question of whether believers sin, and the necessity of sanctification. In chapter 7, the Apostle described himself when he was a religious sinner, explaining the conflict that raged within while he was in that condition, and the inability of the law to suppress indwelling sin.

When outlining this epistle, many Bible scholars include chapter 8 in this first section. In that chapter the Apostle goes on to describe the victory that is possible for those “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

QUESTIONS

1. The word translated *gospel* means “good news” or “a good message.” In Romans 1:1-5 and 16-17, Paul spoke of the “gospel” for which he had been set apart. What can we learn about the Gospel from these verses?

2. Paul put in place the first foundational element of his message to the Romans by describing God's wrath toward the ungodly, and asserting that all humanity is unrighteous and thus is condemned before God. Why did the Apostle say that people are without excuse for their ungodliness? (Romans 1:18-22)

3. In Romans 2:4, Paul referenced those who despised the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering. That same description could apply in many cultures today. Even in places where godly values and Biblical principles were once respected by most people, that is becoming less and less the case. What are some ways that, like Paul, we can show fidelity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our unashamed commitment to it in an increasingly hostile environment?

4. In Romans 2:11, Paul stated, “There is no respect of persons with God.” What did he mean by this statement, and why did the Jewish teachers of the Law assume God would be partial to them?

5. Romans 3:23 states that all mankind has sinned. The following two verses contain three words which are key in Paul’s explanation of the provision God has made to remedy this sinful condition: “justified,” “redemption,” and “propitiation.” The word “justified” has the sense of being judicially pardoned. “Redemption” implies liberation from captivity through a ransom price paid. “Propitiation” expresses the concept of appeasement or conciliation. Using these definitions, briefly note how each word figures in God’s plan of redemption.

6. Paul knew that adherents to the Law would point to righteous Abraham as a rebuttal of the teaching of justification through faith, so in chapter 4, Paul presented an analysis of how Abraham was made righteous. The Apostle pointed out that it was not by works (verses 1-8), nor by fulfilling the requirements of the Law (verses 9-12). Based on verses 13-16, what was the basis of Abraham’s righteousness? Why is this significant for us?

7. First-century Christians lived in an atmosphere where persecution and suffering were prevalent, and in order to endure, they needed to have a deep understanding of the benefits that were theirs through justification. What were some of the effects and blessings of justification by faith that Paul listed in Romans 5:1-11?

8. The word *commendeth* in Romans 5:8 is significant. In this usage it includes the sense of “recommending” or setting forth in such a way as to appeal to the heart. Name several specific ways that God’s love has commended itself to you.

9. In Romans 6, Paul addressed several foundational doctrines of the Gospel including the nature of sin and its penalty. Based on verses 1-11, how would you summarize Paul’s description of what it means to be free from sin?

10. In Romans 7, the Apostle Paul described himself prior to his Damascus Road experience, and described the conflict that raged within while he was a religious sinner. Though he had genuinely wanted to do right, the power to do so was lacking because it was overcome by a stronger prevailing force: the nature of sin. In verses 14-25, Paul wrote of the awful failure of his former efforts to break free from sin’s dominion. While the Law had stirred up his conscience, it could not empower the obedience which it enjoined. Still, he recognized the value of the Law. What words did he use to describe the Law in verses 12 and 14? In spite of those words, what did the Law fail to do?

CONCLUSION

In this first section of Paul’s epistle to believers at Rome, the Apostle asserted that all individuals are born in sin, and explained that the Law was not designed to make man righteous but to reveal man’s unrighteousness. He went on to explain that salvation and a righteous standing before God is not obtained through works, but through faith in Jesus Christ.



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Romans 8:1 through 11:36

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1)

BACKGROUND

After describing in chapter 7 the futility of trying to live righteously while still in bondage to sin, in chapter 8 Paul went on to describe victory over the former controlling force. He taught that while forgiveness for committed sin is obtained at justification, the ultimate provision for man's sinfulness is the experience of entire sanctification, which deals with the sin nature. When the Apostle asserted in Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation . . .,” he was looking at the totality of sin: both committed sins and the carnal nature of sin with which all humanity is born. The phrase “no condemnation” refers to more than mere judicial acquittal; it also indicates deliverance from the condition described in Romans 7:7-25 (the sinful disposition and inclination of the flesh). Once freed from the dominion of sin, the sanctified believer is enabled by the Spirit to live in the righteousness provided by God.

The Apostle seemingly was concerned his readers might conclude that God's plan of justification apart from the Law meant that God had rejected the Jews. Perhaps for that reason, in chapter 9, he began a three-chapter segment explaining Israel's role in God's plan, and how God's righteousness is revealed and illustrated by Israel's history.

Chapter 9 deals with election and divine sovereignty, and emphasizes that the promises of God are obtained by faith, not bloodline. Paul illustrated God's sovereignty by using the patriarch Abraham as an example, pointing out that God ordained that the Messianic line would come through Isaac, the son of promise, rather than through Abraham's eldest son, Ishmael, who was the son of the bondwoman, Hagar. The Apostle made it clear that the true children of God were the children of promise (those who believed in the God of Abraham), rather than the children of the flesh (those who are merely Abraham's biological descendants).

The theme of chapter 10 is rejection and human responsibility. In this portion of text, Paul used Israel's rejection of Christ as an example, explaining

that while Israel had the opportunity to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they had refused it. He asserted that salvation is offered to all, both Jew and Gentile, and each person is individually responsible for the choice he or she makes. Though Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, his love and concern for his Jewish kinsmen is evident throughout this passage.

In chapter 11, the final segment of Paul's three-chapter explanation of Israel's role in God's plan, the Apostle concluded that after the Jew's rejection of God, the Gospel message was extended to the Gentiles. Paul explained that God's purpose in turning away from Israel was a desire to provoke Israel to jealousy as the Gentiles embraced what the Jews had refused. Then the Apostle looked ahead to the day of restoration when Israel would once again be the people of God, this time through faith in the shed Blood of Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. In Romans 8, the Apostle focused on deliverance from sin and the sinful disposition and inclination of the flesh, sometimes referred to as the “sin nature” or the “carnal nature.” What does this deliverance from the sin nature—the experience of entire sanctification—accomplish in our lives?

2. In Romans 8:28, Paul asserted that God works all things together for good for those who love Him. How can we reconcile that statement with the fact that pain and adversity clearly occur in the lives of believers?

3. *Foreknowledge* and *predestination* are concepts Paul alluded to in Romans 8:29-30. God chose all humanity to be made righteous through His grace, but His *foreknowledge* identifies individuals who He knew

would respond to His call with repentance and faith. The word *predestinate* in verse 30 means “to predetermine.” According to verse 29, what is God’s predetermined purpose for all individuals?

4. In chapter 9, Paul continued his instruction on the sovereignty of God. In verse 19, he imagined someone asking, “If it is all a matter of God’s choice, then how can God find fault with me?” He responded in the next verse by showing how disrespectful such a question is. His point was, who are we to question God? What illustration did Paul use in verse 21 to support his point?

5. Many of the Jews wanted to be righteous, but they tried to achieve that state in the wrong way. According to Romans 9:32, what was the great error of the Jews regarding how they sought to be righteous? What are some ways people try to be righteous in our day?

6. What was the “stumblingstone” to which the Apostle referred in Romans 9:32-33?

7. In Romans 10:3, Paul referenced the failure of the Jews to grasp the true meaning of information available to them in the Scriptures they studied so zealously. Paul’s declaration that they endeavored to “establish their own righteousness” indicated the Jews’ self-righteous pride in their own efforts. They were seeking to live up to the commandments of the Law only to prove their own worthiness. Paul went on in

the next verse to assert that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” What do you think he meant by that statement?

8. In Romans 11:33-36, Paul concluded his synopsis of Israel’s role in God’s plan with a spontaneous outpouring of praise to God. Who could have conceived of the whole scenario with Israel and the Gentiles as God had done? Paul realized that God’s ways are past finding out, and that His wisdom and knowledge were beyond him. In reference to Paul’s thought expressed in verse 36, in what way are all things “of” God, “through God,” and “to” God when it comes to our salvation?

CONCLUSION

God’s remedy for man’s sinfulness is available to both Jew and Gentile, and is accessed only through faith in the shed Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son.

NOTES



SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Romans 12:1 through 16:27

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

BACKGROUND

Having concluded his discourses concerning the Gospel (chapters 1-8) and God's dealings with the nation of Israel (chapters 9-11), at this point in his epistle Paul transitioned to practical application. As he instructed his readers regarding the basics of Christian behavior, his primary emphasis was how the transformed life was to be exemplified both in secular society and within the body of believers.

In chapter 12, the Apostle began this section by pointing to the necessity for entire consecration, admonishing the Roman believers to give themselves to Christ as living sacrifices. They were to resist conformity to the world and embrace the transformation that comes through Jesus Christ. He went on in this chapter to describe how Christian love should be demonstrated among believers (verses 3-13), and then toward one's enemies (verses 14-21).

In chapter 13, Paul dealt with the Christians' responsibilities as citizens and outlined principles related to submitting to authority. Since it is God who grants the power held by governmental rulers, he encouraged the Roman Christians to submit to "the powers that be." Specifically, this submission was to manifest itself through the paying of taxes and demonstrating respect for those in authority.

Chapters 14 and 15 focus on the relationship between weak and strong believers. The words "weak" and "strong" found in this passage represent two tendencies of the spiritual mind: one that is exceedingly hyper-sensitive, and the other that is more liberal. While liberty in the Gospel was one of Paul's themes, the limits of liberty and the importance of not causing a weak brother to violate his conscience is the emphasis of the last half of chapter 14, where Paul cautioned against putting a stumbling block in another brother's way. Seemingly harmless behaviors could damage others whose consciences were particularly sensitive, so

Paul stated that spiritually mature individuals should be willing to forego personal liberties in consideration of the potential impact on their weaker brethren. The liberty that Paul enjoined was not a disregard for distinctions between right and wrong, but referred solely to matters such as ceremonial observances and differences of opinion.

Near the end of chapter 15, Paul began to draw his epistle to a close. The remainder of the letter contains an outline of his plans, along with a series of personal greetings and final words of encouragement. The Apostle related his intention to stop in Rome on his way to Spain, after first taking a contribution from the brethren in Macedonia and Achaia to the poor saints in Jerusalem. Realizing that such a trip would entail danger, he asked to be remembered in prayer. The quantity and variety of individuals named in his salutations illustrate the unifying bond of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's companions at Corinth added their greetings, and then the Apostle concluded his epistle with a brief but characteristic benediction invoking the peace of God toward all the saints in Rome.

QUESTIONS

1. Paul's words in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you . . ." indicate a fervent appeal. In essence, he was saying, "I strongly appeal to you; I implore you." He went on to urge the believers to present (or consecrate) themselves completely to God. What three words did the Apostle use to describe the sacrifice he was encouraging them to make? What was the significance of each word?

2. Paul went on in Romans 12:2 to state that believers were not to be "conformed" to the world, but rather "transformed." The Greek word translated *conformed* literally means "to be molded or stamped according to a pattern." Withstanding pressure to conform will take effort. What are some ways we can actively resist being "molded" or "stamped" with the characteristics and philosophies of the world?

3. In verses 9-21 of chapter 12, Paul gave a series of brief injunctions that emphasized how an inward transformation was to be evidenced in love for the brethren. Review the list of instructions in these verses. Which directive stands out to you as being particularly applicable to the circumstances of your life, and how might you put the principle into action?

4. In Romans 13:8, Paul stated that followers of Christ have an obligation of love to others, “for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” He repeated the same thought in verse 10. Why do you think the Apostle regarded love as a “fulfillment” of the Law?

5. In chapter 14, Paul addressed interactions between strong and weak (or spiritually immature) believers. He admonished strong Christians to be cautious and protective in their dealings with the weak, not to pass judgment on a weaker believer’s perspective, and to refrain from contending with him about insignificant details. In verses 2-3, what example did Paul use to make his point clear?

6. Romans 15:13 is a brief prayer that Paul prayed for the Roman believers, expressing his desire that they might “abound in hope.” Studies show that a common

factor among those who are depressed and discouraged is that they lack hope. What does Paul identify as the source of hope and how do we obtain it?

7. As Paul explained his future travel plans, he requested the prayers of the saints in Rome. What is implied by the fact that he requested they “strive” in their prayers to God for him? Romans 15:30-32

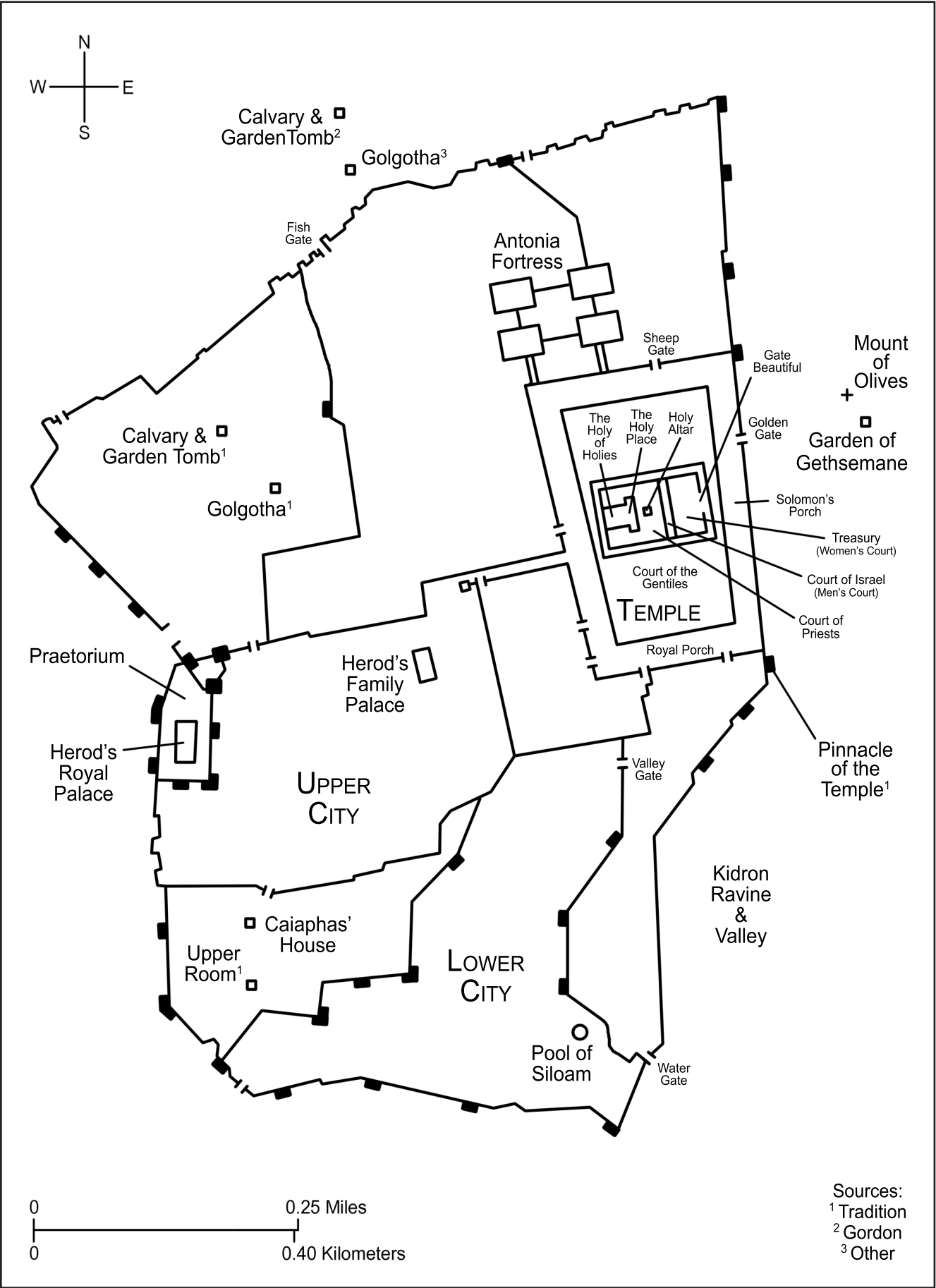
8. Paul closed his epistle in chapter 16 by sending greetings to a lengthy list of individuals (verses 1-16). His personal comments went to both men and women, Romans and Greeks, prisoners and prominent citizens, slaves and free. Some of these people are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture; others are referred to only here. In verses 21-23, a number of fellow workers with Paul joined him in extending greetings to the saints in Rome. What does this wide-ranging exchange of greetings reveal about the nature of the fellowship of believers?

CONCLUSION

Paul’s epistle presented the Gospel to Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome, but through the ages his words have encouraged Christians of all backgrounds to faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ.

NOTES

New Testament Jerusalem



A Traditional View of Passion Week

PALM SUNDAY



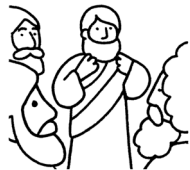
- Jesus makes His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd waves branches, shouts “Hosanna,” and puts garments and branches in the road.

(Matthew 21:1-11)

MONDAY

- Jesus cleanses the Temple, overturning the money changers’ tables and declaring, “My house shall be called the house of prayer.”

(Matthew 21:13)



TUESDAY

- Jesus teaches the disciples and Jewish leaders with parables.

(Matthew 21:23)

WEDNESDAY

- Judas plots to betray Jesus to the priests for 30 pieces of silver.

(Matthew 26:14-16)



THURSDAY

- Jesus celebrates the Passover Feast and institutes the Lord’s Supper and Foot Washing ordinances.

(Matthew 26:26-28 • John 13:1-17)



- Jesus prays in Gethsemane.
- Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss.
- Jesus is arrested and taken to Caiaphas.

(Matthew 26:36-46)

(Matthew 26:47)

(Matthew 26:57)

FRIDAY

- Early in the morning, Jesus endures a Jewish trial.
- Before daybreak, Peter denies Jesus three times.
- Jesus stands before Pontius Pilate, is sent to Herod, and is sent back to Pilate.

(Matthew 26:59-68)

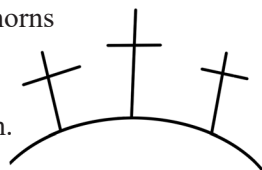
(Matthew 26:58, 69-75)

(Matthew 27:1-2 • Luke 23:6-11)

- Soldiers crown Jesus with thorns and mock Him.

- Jesus is crucified at 9:00 a.m.

(Mark 15:25)



- There is darkness from noon to 3:00 p.m.
- The veil in the Temple is torn from top to bottom.
- Jesus’ body is buried in a borrowed tomb.

(Matthew 27:45)

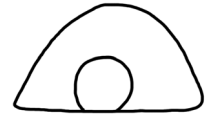
(Matthew 27:51)

(Matthew 27:57-60)

SATURDAY

- Jesus’ body remains in the tomb.

(Matthew 27:62-66)



EASTER SUNDAY¹

- Soldiers guarding the tomb become as dead men because of an earthquake and an angel who rolls away the tombstone.

(Matthew 28:2-4)

- The women in a group (Mary Magdalene in advance of the others) approach the sepulcher.
- Mary Magdalene, seeing the stone removed and hastily concluding that the body has been removed, runs for Peter and John, thus separating herself from the rest of the women.

(John 20:2)

- The other women arrive at the sepulcher and see two angels. They depart to tell the disciples.

(Matthew 28:5, 8 • Mark 16:5 • Luke 24:4, 9)

- While the women are gone, Peter and John run to the sepulcher, find it empty, and leave.

(Luke 24:12 • John 20:2-10)

- Mary Magdalene, having followed Peter and John to the sepulcher, stands outside weeping. After they depart, she sees two angels and then Jesus. According to His command, she departs to carry His message to the disciples.

(Mark 16:9-10 • John 20:11-18)

- The women on their way—before their arrival at the abode of the disciples, but after the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene—see Jesus.

(Matthew 28:9)

- All the women, including Mary Magdalene, unite in relating their story to the incredulous disciples.

(Matthew 28:9 • Luke 24:10)

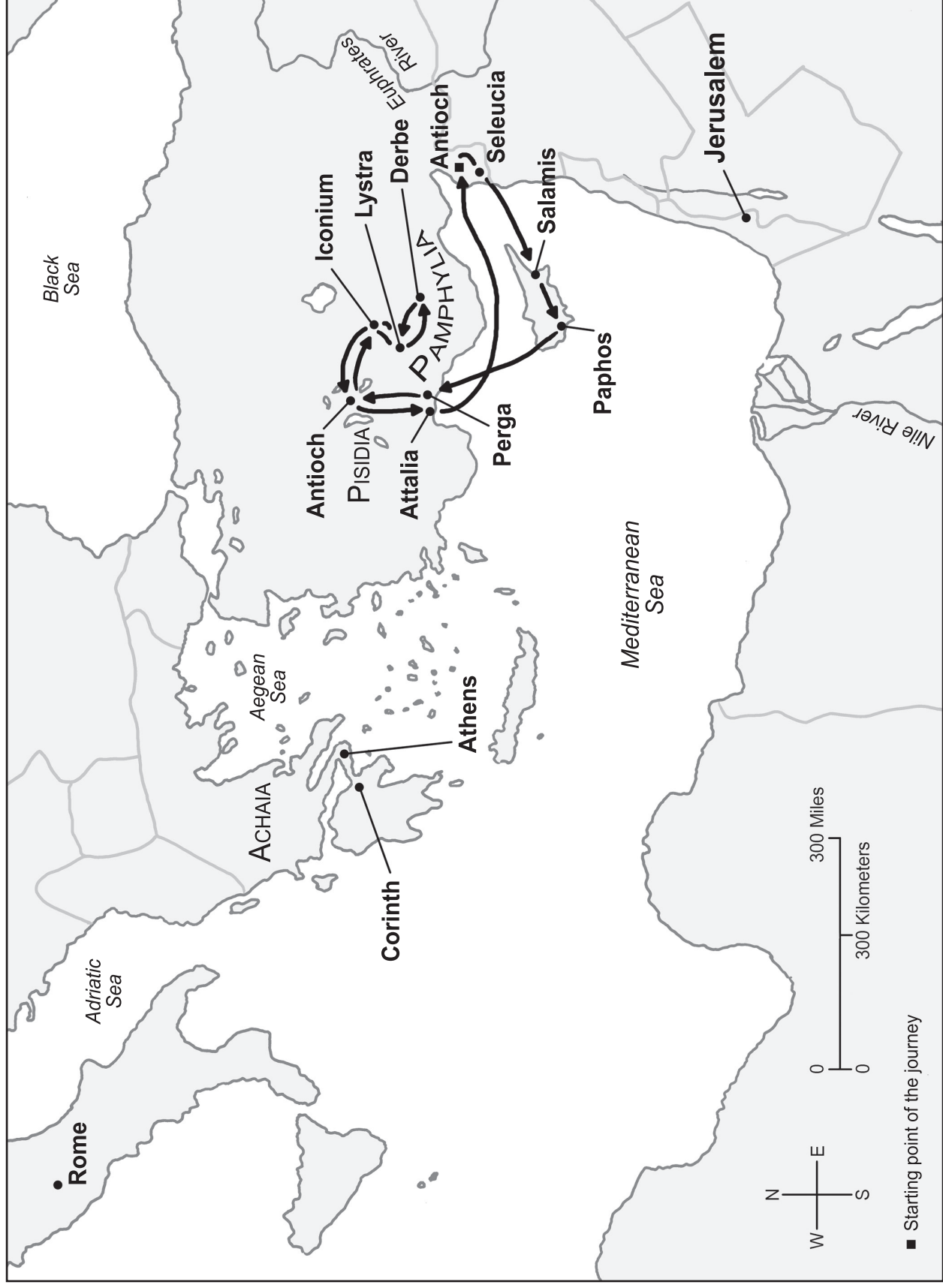
- Jesus appears to the disciples: to Peter, to Cleopas and another follower on the road to Emmaus, and then to a group of disciples in Jerusalem.

(Luke 24:13-36)

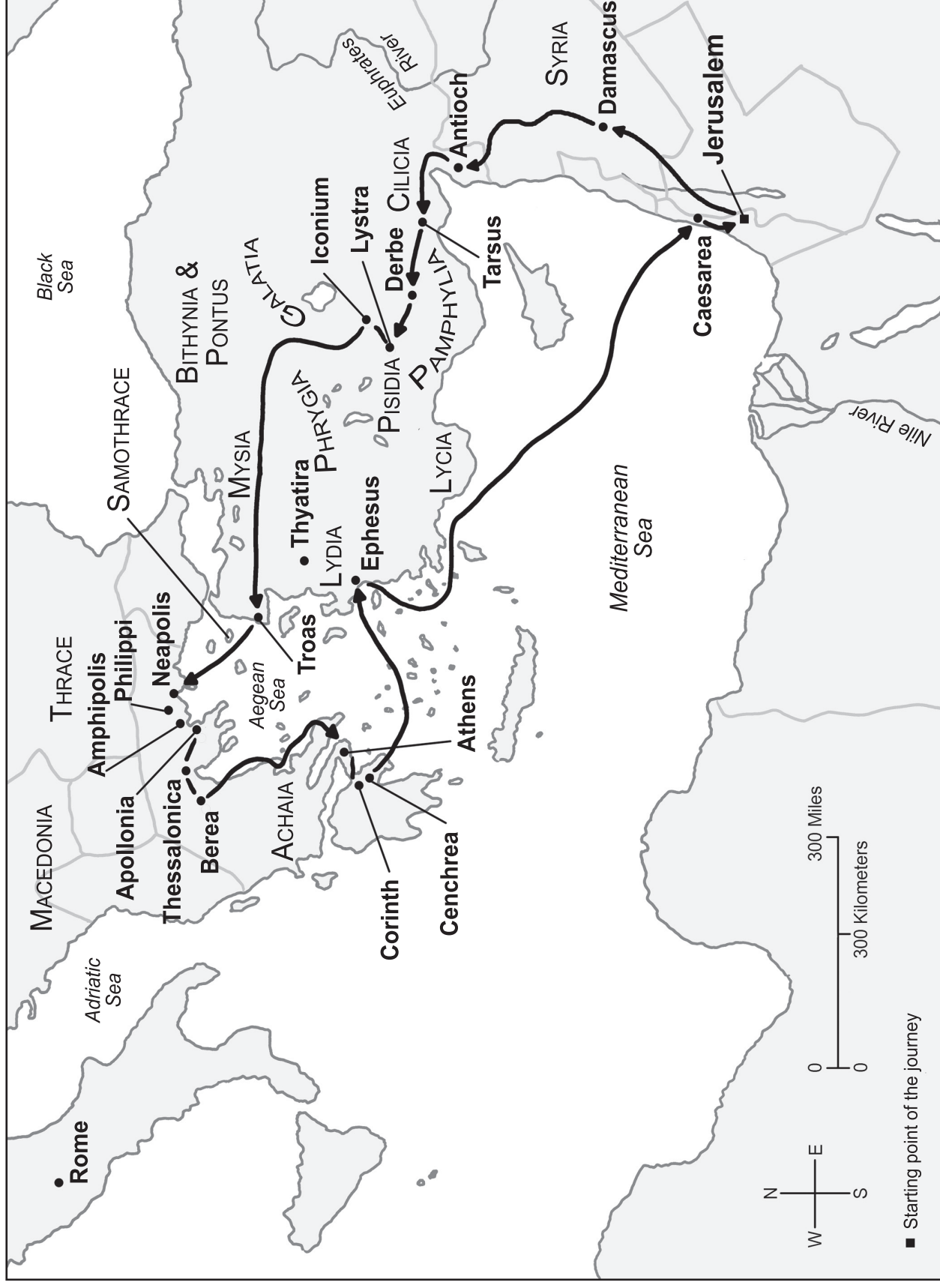


1. D.D.. Whedon, *Commentary on The Gospels: Luke-John*, p. 408

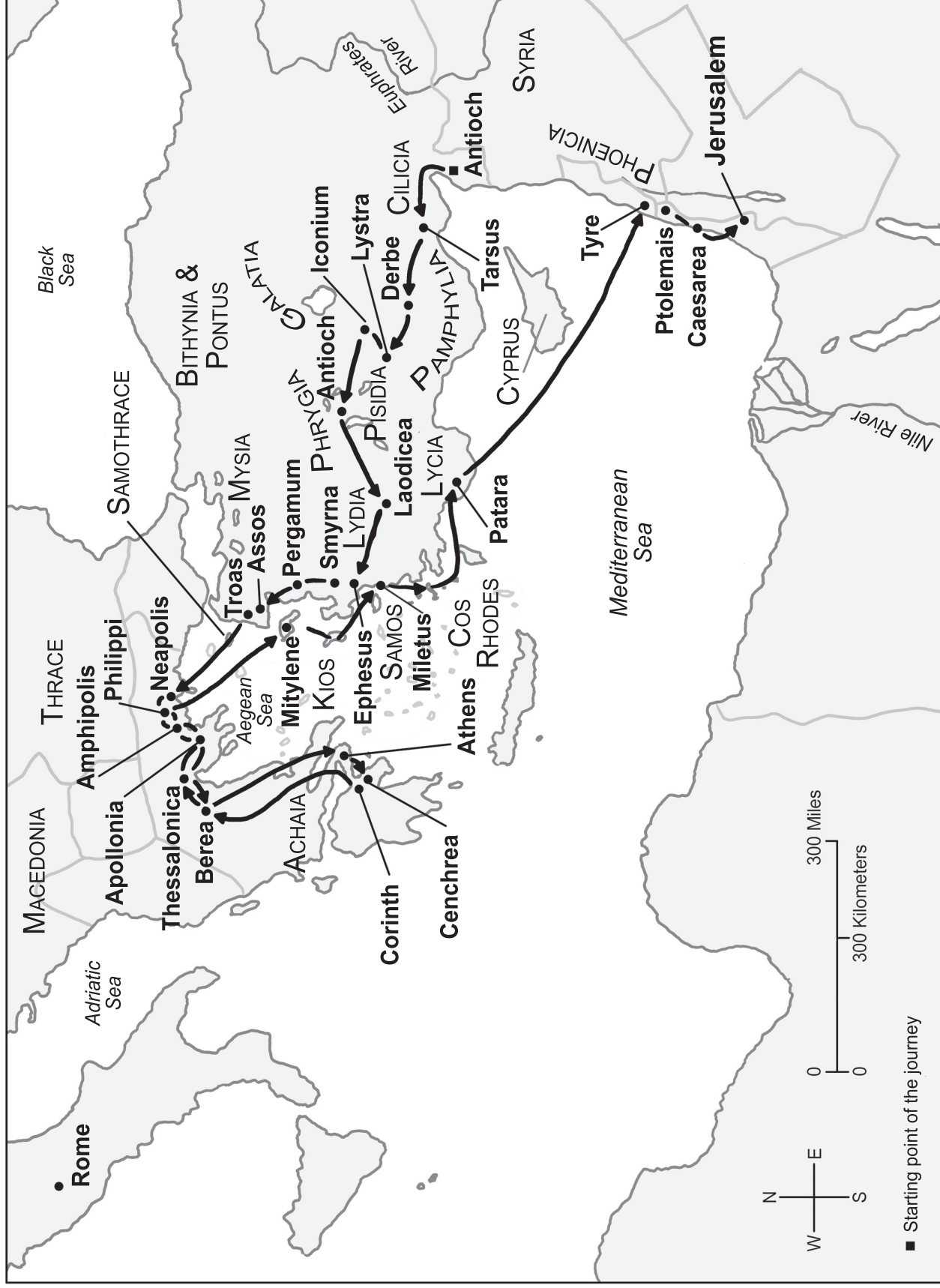
Paul's First Missionary Journey



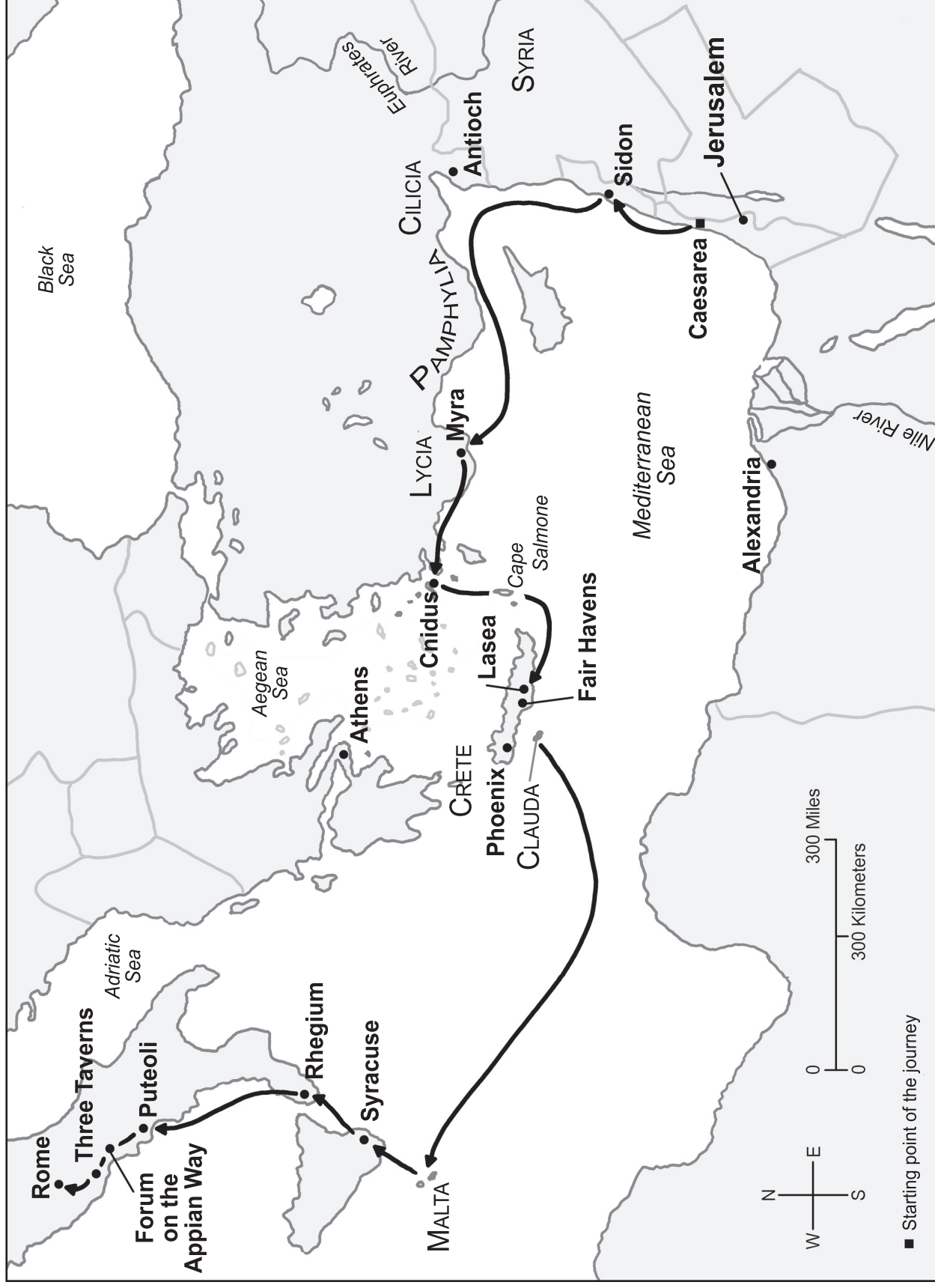
Paul's Second Missionary Journey



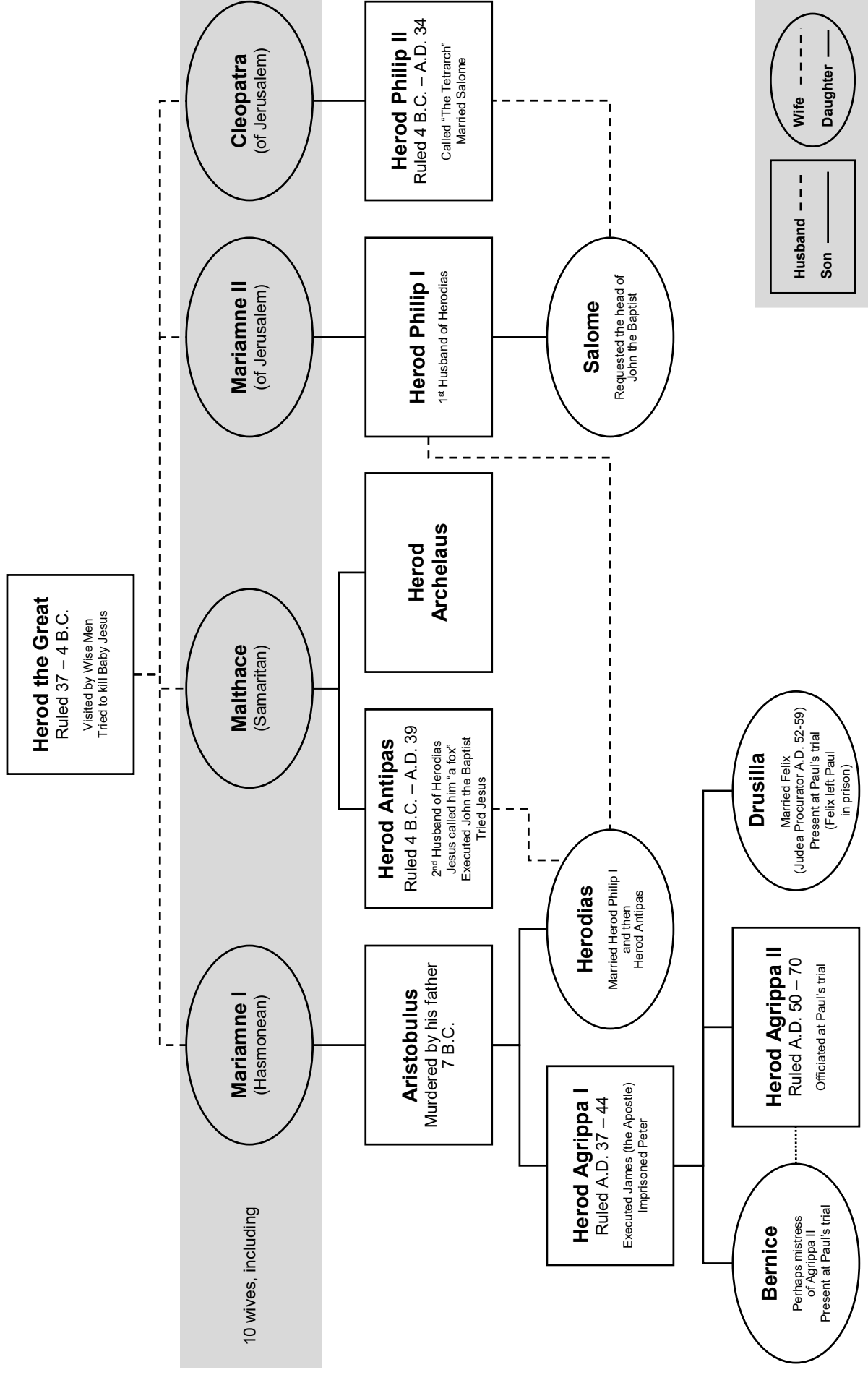
Paul's Third Missionary Journey



Paul's Journey to Rome



The Family of Herod the Great



Contrasting Calvinism and Arminianism

Within the broad scope of Christian theology, Arminianism and Calvinism share both history and many Biblical doctrines. However, they offer radically different interpretations of Scriptures related to salvation through Jesus Christ. In addition, there are a variety of approaches under the general headings of Calvinism and Arminianism; proponents on both sides are not in universal agreement regarding how they apply these doctrines.

Calvinism, which is built upon the religious teachings of John Calvin (1509-1564), emphasizes the sovereignty of God and the salvation of the elect (those He has predetermined will be saved) by God's grace alone.

Arminianism is based upon the original beliefs of the theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), but can also include teachings of John Wesley and others. The Apostolic Faith subscribes most closely to the Wesleyan view of Arminianism.

In his written works, Arminius quotes from Christian theologians dating back to the first century who taught that grace is extended to all, but that man, by his own free will, may turn toward or away from the faith. He also demonstrated that there were Christian leaders in every age since the time of Christ who taught that man can and should live holy in this life.

Following is a chart that briefly states the five main points of difference between Calvinistic teaching and Arminian teaching.

CALVINISM	ARMINIANISM
Total Depravity: Man is born with a depraved nature and lacks a free will. God draws to repentance only those He has predetermined for salvation.	Free Will: Man is born with a depraved nature but has a free will. God draws all to repentance, but man can choose to repent and be regenerated, or resist and perish.
Unconditional Election: God has chosen only certain individuals for salvation. The elect are those God has predetermined will be saved.	Conditional Election: God has chosen all humanity for salvation. The elect are those who respond to His offer of salvation with repentance and faith.
Limited Atonement: When Christ gave His life upon the Cross, atonement was made available but only for the elect.	Unlimited Atonement: When Christ gave His life upon the Cross, atonement was made available for everyone. However, atonement avails only for those who choose to accept Christ's provision.
Irresistible Grace: Grace is extended only to the elect. God's call cannot be resisted and always results in conversion.	Resistible Grace: Grace is extended to all. Man is free to accept or reject God's call. Conversion results when man believes and receives God's offered grace.
Perseverance of the Saints: Saved individuals retain their salvation to the end because they are preserved by God. No saved person will ever be lost; once an individual is saved, he is always saved.	Assurance and Security: Saved individuals can retain their salvation to the end through continued obedience and faithfulness to God. However, saved individuals can forfeit their salvation by turning away from God.