

A LOOK AT THE BOOK ACTS HOW GOD FORMED HIS CHURCH

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Author and Date

The parallel introduction demonstrates that the writer of Acts and of Luke were the same person.

It has already been argued in the introduction to Luke that Luke, the physician and traveling companion of Paul, was the author of Luke.

The "we" passages, compared to the historical comments in the epistles, would confirm this view (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16).

Lucan authorship is also attested to by the external evidence of tradition.

The historical references at the conclusion of the book place it in the early sixties.
Dates suggested are around A.D. 61-63.

Historical Background

The Book of Acts picks up the story where Luke concludes.

Messiah has come.

When He came, Israel's leaders did not want to hear the good news of His arrival.

They were more interested in protecting their interests than in participating in God's program.

Only the outcasts of society were interested in following Him.

Therefore, God began a new program with them.

Acts explains HOW God formed His new program with the remnant of faithful Old Testament saints and those who had been excluded from God's program previously.

After the death and resurrection of Christ time passes.

The church continues to grow.

However, Christ has not yet come.

The apostles are beginning to die.

Luke wants to leave an accurate record of the early development of the church.
Acts bridges the gap between the life of Christ and the early church.

Purpose and Theme

The early church was suffering because of their faith in Christ.

If they were to stand firm in the midst of the continual barrage of opposition, they had to understand their roots.

Luke writes to tell the suffering church where we have come from.

Gospel – *WHY* the new people of God was necessary.

History – *HOW* God went about forming it.

Luke's purpose is to describe the way in which God formed the early church.

He presents the change from life under Judaism in a national context, to life in the church as the body of Christ.

The book serves as an apologetic for the church because it demonstrates that God was at work in its formation.

God's confirmation of His hand at work in its formation is clearly demonstrated.

The evidence of God's participation in the formation of the church, as well as the evidence of His protection of those who form part of it, serve to encourage those who are suffering for their faith in Christ.

This is God's work and He will care for them.

The content of the book traces the historical development of the church.

Attention is directed to the different groups that came to form part of that church and to the way in which God brought each group into it.

The problems faced are handled wisely as the Spirit of God directed them.

These decisions set the pattern for the future life of the church as well.

Organization

The book is organized according to the major theological and geographical movements revealed in Acts 1:8.

First the book looks ahead to the coming of the Holy Spirit (1:1-26).

Then attention is given to the testimony of the early church in Jerusalem (2:5-8:3).

Next the church moves into all Judea and Samaria (8:4-12:25).

Finally, its expansion is traced into the corners of the earth (13:1-28:31).

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT 1:1-26

The story of the church's formation begins with the coming of the Holy Spirit. However, the book of Acts begins with the preparation for His coming (1:1-26).

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS OF CHRIST 1:1-11

Review of Luke's conclusion 1:1-3

The account begins where Luke ends.

Luke relates this book to the other in his introduction to Theophilus (1:1-3). He first describes the things Jesus *began* to do and teach. By implication, Luke describes the things He *continues* to do.

Promise of the Spirit's coming 1:4-8

After relating this account back to the conclusion of Luke (1:1-3), Luke focuses on one final meeting in which Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit

The disciples are told to go back to Jerusalem and wait for a few days until the Spirit comes.

He will come on them and as a result they will be filled with power to be witnesses of the Lord throughout the known world.

This event becomes **the basis on which the rest of the book develops.**

Description of the Lord's ascension 1:9-11

After Jesus leaves this final promise, the Lord ascends into heaven.

Angelic messengers promise that He will return in the same way as He ascended into heaven.

DEDICATION TO PRAYER 1:12-14

The disciples returned to Jerusalem as the Lord instructed them and dedicated themselves to prayer.

SELECTION OF A SUBSTITUTE 1:15-26

As they were praying concerning God's plan for their future ministry, Peter is led to propose the naming of a substitute for Judas.

The context of the event, the lack of biblical censure, and the significance of the substitute seem to suggest that this act was motivated by God's direction.

The appointment of Matthias was caused by the loss of one of *the twelve*.

They were frequently referred to by that name.

It's inconceivable that they have a continual reminder of the defection of Judas.

The presence of twelve would demonstrate that God's program was not upset by Judas' failure.

TESTIMONY IN JERUSALEM 2-8:3

The testimony of the church to Jesus began in Jerusalem.

FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH 2-4:31

Its birth 2:1-47

The Spirit came on the day of Pentecost just as Jesus had promised.

The feasts of Israel looked back to great events of the past but they also looked ahead prophetically to other great events in the future.

Pentecost was inseparably united with the Passover.

It always came fifty days later.

It emphasized the result of what was foreseen in the feast of First Fruits.

It envisioned a new beginning.

The coming of the Spirit brought a new beginning also.

He makes possible a new life.

Peter indicates that the meaning of Pentecost was fulfilled with the coming of the Spirit fifty days after the fulfillment of the Passover.

Coming of the Spirit 2:1-4

When the Spirit came, He demonstrated His presence by physical signs which attracted public attention and by foreign languages.

Question of observers 2:5-13

The external evidence of the Spirit's presence was observed by devout Jews who had come to Jerusalem for the feast.

These people are described as "rightly religious."

They want to know what the signs mean.

Explanation by Peter 2:14-36

In answer to their question, Peter explains the meaning of the signs.

Inadequacy of wine 2:14-15

For the benefit of some who were making fun by saying they were drunk, he answered that wine couldn't explain what they are seeing.

Evidence from coming of the Spirit 2:16-23

Using Joel as a basis, Peter argues that the Old Testament had promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit following the coming of God to dwell among His people in the last days.

What they are seeing is the evidence of the coming of the Spirit.
Therefore, **God must have come to dwell among His people.**

The coming of the Spirit demonstrates that Jesus is the Messiah.

Messiah came and demonstrated Himself to be Yahweh in the midst of Israel, just as God had promised.

Just as Joel predicted that those who call on the name of Yahweh will be saved, so those who trust in Jesus will be saved.

Evidence from the resurrection 2:24-35

A second evidence Jesus was the Messiah: the resurrection.

David predicted that Messiah would be raised from the dead.
Jesus fulfilled that prophecy and thereby demonstrated who He is.

Conclusion 2:36

The logical conclusion of the proofs found in the coming of the Spirit and the resurrection is that God is authenticating Jesus.

Jesus is Lord, that is, Yahweh Himself, and Christ, the Messiah.

Response of hearers 2:37

When these who had been watching for the fulfillment of the promises saw the evidence and heard about Jesus, they realized they were in trouble.

If Jesus was Messiah and Israel killed Him, what could they do now?

Exhortation by Peter 2:38-40

Peter's response was two-fold:

They should change their mind concerning Jesus and they should identify with Jesus by baptism.

By doing so they will identify with Jesus and be cut off from the generation of Israel that is about to be judged for rejecting Him.

Obedience of believers 2:41

Many of those present recognized the truth of Peter's message.

About 3000 identified with Jesus by baptism.

Conduct of believers 2:42-47

Those who accepted Him became part of the church.

Luke summarizes the characteristics of the church in those days:

Their activity 2:42

Their amazement 2:43

Their commitment 2:44-45

Their witness 2:46-47

Its growth 3-4:31

Another glimpse of the development of the church is presented by the account concerning Peter's second sermon.

The sign 3:1-7

The first message was confirmed by tongues; the second one was confirmed by the healing of the crippled beggar.

While the first message was directed to a select group of devout Jews. The second one was delivered in the temple to a more general group.

The response 3:8-11

They are amazed by what they see.

The explanation 3:12-26

Peter again explains the significance of the sign.

Power not from them 3:12

Power from God to authenticate Jesus 3:13-26

Peter's message on this occasion is the message to unbelieving Israel throughout the present age.

The miracle was designed to authenticate the Person of Christ.

Divine authentication and their rejection 3:13-18

Jesus, whom they rejected and crucified was their Messiah.

Divine authentication and their repentance 3:19-26

Since they did it in ignorance they can still correct the wrong they have committed.

They must change their mind about Jesus and turn to God.

Their return to God is prerequisite for the kingdom to begin. Therefore, they are urged to respond to God.

Peter's exhortation 3:19-21

Prophets' confirmation 3:22-26

When they do this, God's plan for Israel will begin again.

This is still the next step for the nation.

However, they will never do it until God moves them (compare Rom. 11:25-27).

The results 4:1-31

Peter's message met with a mixed response.

Response from the leaders 4:1-22

Arrest 4:1-3

Hearing 4:4-22

The leaders rejected the message and put them in prison.

Many people received the message and believed in Christ (4:4).

The next day the council met to hear the matter (4:5-22).

The leaders question them concerning the source of their authority (4:5-7). *"By whose authority?"*

Peter attempts to clarify the issue by redefining the question:

Something significant has happened.

A man has been healed.

They had better find out what it means.

The answer to the more important question is that the sign demonstrates that the one they rejected and killed was raised by God.

He is the only means of salvation and they had better trust Him (4:8-12).

The leaders are unable to decide how to handle the problem (4:13-18).

Their discussion shows their unwillingness to hear the truth.

They cannot argue with the sign.

They also acknowledge the positive response of the people.

All they can do is threaten them and release them.

The apostles hear the threat and respect the authority of the leaders but recognize a higher responsibility to God (4:19-20).

The leaders can only threaten and release them (4:21-22).

Response from the church 4:23-31

The result in the church is revealed (4:23-35) when the apostles return to the church to report what happened to them (4:23).

Apostles' report 4:23

As they commit the matter in prayer to God, they do not complain about their suffering.

Church's prayer 4:24-30

They relate the opposition to history.
Although God is the Creator of the universe, men have always rebelled against Him.
These leaders also have rebelled.
Yet everything they have done is part of God's plan.

Therefore, they ask God for boldness to speak His word.
They do not ask to be delivered.

God's answer 4:31

Their prayer was answered exactly as they asked.
They spoke the word with boldness.

Their prayer demonstrates what the Lord meant when He promised that prayer in His Name would be granted.
This prayer agrees with His purpose for them.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHURCH 4:32-6:7

As a result of this work of the Holy Spirit, the church evidenced unity in their life and ministry (4:32-35).

The description of the life of the early church in Jerusalem is completed with several incidents that demonstrate how the daily administration was handled.

Demonstration of love 4:32-5:11

The first incident deals with the demonstration of love through sharing.

Unifying results 4:32-35

The church was suffering because of their faith in Christ.
Baptized believers were cut off from families, many suffered economic loss.
Therefore they shared everything they had with one another.

Good example 4:36-37

A positive example of this sharing tendency was Barnabas.

Already known for concern for others and encouragement of the suffering, he sold property and gave the proceeds to help those in need.

Bad example 5:1-11

Ananias and Sapphira wanted the credit for using their possessions for the brethren but didn't want to pay the price.

They sold their property but kept part of the price.
Then they professed to give it all to the church.
They were judged by Peter and died.

The relationship of the early church was a family relationship.
All contributed to the welfare of the family.
This relationship was a testimony to unbelievers.
Ananias and Sapphira professed a love and responsibility for the family which they did not have.

Their false profession would hurt the reputation of the church.
The judgment was a public sign that even in a period of grace you can't play games with God.
It established at the beginning the consequences of not conforming to the operating principles God has established for the period (compare Num. 3:2-4).

Acceptance and opposition 5:12-42

The results of God's judgment were beneficial.
Fear came on the entire church (5:11).
The judgment caused them to examine their faith.
The authority of the apostles was firmly established (5:12).

Professors were scared out.
Only true believers would run the risk of identifying with the church (5:13).

In addition, the church grew rapidly (5:14).
Purging brought new growth.

As a result of the ministry of the apostles, many trust Christ (5:12-16).

The religious leaders become concerned about the effect of their ministry and arrest them (5:17-18).
God demonstrates His support of their ministry by freeing them.

When they return to their ministry, it is apparent that the leaders have no power to control them (5:19-25).

The leaders bring the apostles back for questioning (5:27-28).
They ignore the sign and accuse the apostles of continuing to preach Jesus.
Peter responds that they continue because God's authority is greater than theirs.
He has confirmed their message and commissioned them to preach it (5:29-32).
The conviction brought by Peter's answer angers them.
They want to kill the apostles (5:33).

God uses Gamaliel, a leading teacher, to warn them that they had better not try to destroy them.
If God is not in this, it will die soon enough without the main leader (5:34-39).
If the work is of God, they won't be able to stop it.
The council accepts Gamaliel's advice and releases the apostles, after beating them and warning them again to stop preaching about Jesus (5:40).

The apostles praise God that they were counted worthy to suffer for Him.

They continued to speak boldly about Jesus (5:41-42).

Appointment of the seven 6:1-7

The appointment of seven to administer assistance to the widows serves three purposes:

- 1) It describes how the early church organized to face an administrative problem.
- 2) It introduces Stephen and Philip, two men recognized as spiritual leaders, who become the focus of the next two chapters.
- 3) It shows how the church faced a significant problem in Jerusalem, the division between Hebraistic and Hellenistic Jews.

Judaism was divided by this controversy.

When the problem entered the church, the apostles recognized the secondary importance of the issue, but dealt seriously with it by naming respected spiritual leaders as administrators.

The result of the action was a positive testimony and additional growth of the church.

The problem 6:1-2

The prerequisites 6:3-4

The selection 6:5-6

The results 6:7

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH 6:8-8:3

Stephen, one of the men named to resolve the previous conflict, became the center of a new controversy with the Jews.

Preaching of Stephen 6:8-10

His powerful preaching about Jesus resulted in a new wave of persecution which affected the course of church history.

Accusation against Stephen 6:11-7:1

The Jews accused him because he spoke of the judgment coming on Jerusalem and of the end of the law.

Explanation by Stephen 7:2-53

Stephen answered the charge by demonstrating how God cared for Israel from the beginning but Israel always rebelled and rejected His messengers

His message contains nothing the prophets had not proclaimed repeatedly.

This generation was following the same pattern as their ancestors.

They are the ones who have despised the temple and the law.

His problem was not with the temple nor with the law.

They had profaned the temple and disobeyed the law.

Therefore, judgment was going to come against them.

Response from the council 7:54-60

The religious leaders of Israel are convicted by his accusations.

They attempt to plug their ears and stop Stephen.

Death of Stephen 7:60-8:1

Finally they stone him to death.

Persecution of the church 8:2-3

Stephen's death marks the beginning of a period of persecution which spreads the church throughout all Judea and Samaria.

The ground is thus laid for the next major movement of the story: testimony in Judea and Samaria.

TESTIMONY IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA 8:4-12:25

RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH TO PERSECUTION 8:4

As a result of the persecution the church scattered.

Everywhere they went they preached the word (8:4).

MINISTRY OF PHILIP 8:5-40

Among those moving throughout Judea and Samaria was Philip, another of the seven chosen to assist in the distribution of help for the widows.

Evangelization of the Samaritans 8:5-25

Ministry of Philip to the Samaritans 8:5-13

His message 8:5

Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans.

Their response 8:6

The signs 8:7

The results 8:8

As a result of his preaching and miraculous signs the people paid careful attention to his message about Jesus (8:5-8).

The profession of Simon 8:9-13

Among those listening was Simon, a powerful sorcerer who had led the people because of his mighty acts.

Simon heard Philip's message, believed and was baptized (8:9-13).

Ministry of apostles to the Samaritans 8:14-25

When the apostles heard what was happening in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to investigate.

The cause 8:14

The ministry 8:15-17

The new believers had not yet received the Holy Spirit.
Samaritan Judaism had been characterized by independence.
They had their own center of worship and Pentateuch.
They acknowledged no dependence on Israel.

To avoid this problem in the church and to demonstrate the dependence of these new members on the church at Jerusalem, identification with the apostles had to come before they received the Spirit.

The apostles had to recognize the authenticity of their conversion and identify with them by laying their hands on them.

In this way, God demonstrated the interdependence and unity of the body of Christ, the church.

The response of Simon 8:18-24

As these events were taking place, Simon watched the powerful evidence of God's presence and offered to pay for this ability.

While he may have genuinely turned to Christ, his interests have not changed.

Peter's accusation is stern.

Simon should repent and pray for forgiveness of his sin.

Instead of obeying this warning, Simon asks Peter to pray for him.

The preaching in other cities 8:25

When their ministry in that city was finished, Peter and John preached in other Samaritan villages on their way to Jerusalem.

God had begun a new work among the Samaritans also.

They too were now part of God's new people.

Evangelization of the eunuch 8:26-39

Philip also continues his ministry in Samaria.
God sends an angel to instruct him to go find an Ethiopian eunuch.

His instructions 8:26
His obedience 8:27-30a
His witness 8:30b-35

The eunuch is a Jewish proselyte who is seeking the truth.
The one seeking the truth is less than a fully accepted citizen of Israel.
When Philip explains the word of God concerning Jesus, the man readily trusts Him and identifies with Him by baptism.

The eunuch's response 8:36-38
Philip's departure 8:39

Evangelization in other cities 8:40

When this mission is complete, Philip returns to preach the word in the area around Caesarea.

CONVERSION OF THE PERSECUTOR 9:1-31

As the time of persecution continues, God performs an unexpected miracle which catches the church by surprise.

The persecutor of the church is confronted by a revelation of Jesus and trusts Him.

Paul's mission 9:1-2
Mission interrupted 9:3-9
The Lord's messenger 9:10-19
Paul's new mission 9:20-22
Response from Jews 9:23-25
Entrance with brethren 9:26-28
Results of new mission 9:29-31

God reveals that He will use this man to develop His work among the Gentile nations.

The church doesn't want to receive Paul because they can't believe it.
The Jews are amazed also.
As the reality of what God has done dawns on them, the church accepts him.
Many Jews turn to Christ.
The other Jews try to stop Paul from telling his story.
Most significantly, the persecution calms and God's work grows.

CONTINUATION OF MINISTRY 9:32-43

In the meantime, Peter's ministry continues.

Healing of Aeneas 9:32-35

His ministry was effective in the coastal region as he healed Aeneas in Lydda.

Raising of Dorcas 9:36-43

He also raised Dorcas at Joppa (9:36-43).

EXTENSION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES 10:1-11:30

Salvation of Cornelius 10:1-48

While Peter was in Caesarea, the Lord simultaneously spoke to Peter and Cornelius to bring them together.

Cornelius was a centurion who sought to please the Lord.

Peter was sent to tell him about Jesus.

Cornelius' introduction 10:1-2

Cornelius' vision 10:3-8

Peter's vision 10:9-16

Messengers' arrival 10:17-23

Cornelius' explanation 10:24-33

Peter's message 10:34-43

Hearers' response 10:44-48

God used supernatural evidence to demonstrate that the Spirit had come on the hearers and He had opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

Peter was shocked, but God's revelation was too clear to doubt.

When word of Peter's activities came to Jerusalem to the apostles there were stunned.

Peter had gone too far this time.

They called a meeting to discuss his activities (11:1-18).

Defense from Peter 11:1-18

The accusation 11:1-3

The accusation that he had gone to the house of Gentiles was presented.

The answer 11:4-17

Peter answered by explaining how God had revealed His plan to him.

He retells the whole story.

Peter's vision 11:4-10

Messengers' arrival 11:11-12

Cornelius' vision 11:13-14

Hearers' response 11:15-17

The acceptance 11:18

When the evidence of the Spirit's coming was described, they were convinced.

The coming of the Spirit on the Gentiles could not be denied without denying their own experience.

If God had done for the Gentiles the same as He had done for them, then He must be accepting them also.

Therefore, tongues was a sign to the Jewish Christians to demonstrate that God had accepted the Gentiles also.

Growth of Gentile ministry 11:19-30

Once God's confirmation of the acceptance of Gentiles into the people of God was recognized, the door opened wide for witness to the Gentiles.

Work in Antioch 11:19-21

Introduction to Barnabas 11:22-30

When the work in Antioch began to develop, the apostles sent Barnabas to investigate.

Inspection of work 11:22-24

Barnabas was excited about what God was doing.

Inclusion of Paul 11:25-26

He decided to go for Paul, the man God had named to carry on this ministry in the future.

Paul became his disciple until he was ready to assume the responsibility for the ministry.

Involvement in famine relief 11:27-30

When a prophetic message predicted famine in the Roman world, an offering was collected to help needy brethren throughout Judea.

Barnabas and Saul were asked to take the offering to the elders.

SALVATION FROM PERSECUTION BY HEROD 12:1-25

At about this time a period of persecution broke out under Herod.

Death of James 12:1-2

He killed James and, discovering a positive popular response among the Jews, decided to try again.

Imprisonment of Peter 12:3-6

Deliverance of Peter 12:7-11

He arrested Peter (12:3-6) but God freed him (12:7-11).

Response of church 12:12-17

The church was not expecting such a dramatic answer to their prayers. Nevertheless they praised God for His mighty act.

Results of persecution 12:18-25

For Herod 12:18-23

For the church 12:24-25

The final result of the persecution was judgment against Herod and triumph for the word of God.

The word was spread and the church strengthened as people saw what God had done.

TESTIMONY TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH 13-28

As a result of the confirmation of God's plan to accept Gentiles into the new people of God, when the church was spread throughout the world by the persecution, they preached the gospel everywhere.

This movement led to the missionary journeys to new frontiers.

Paul was one of the main participants in the spread of the gospel to these new areas.

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY 13-14

The first missionary journey recorded was made by Paul and Barnabas into nearby islands and Asia Minor

This journey was most significant because of the pattern established of rejection by the Jews and acceptance by Gentiles.

Call of Saul and Barnabas 13:1-3

Encounter with a false prophet 13:4-12

After God calls Barnabas and Saul to participate in this mission, their encounter with Bar-Jesus introduces a significant development in God's program.

Bar-Jesus is a Jew involved in sorcery.

He tries to resist Paul and Barnabas.

On the other hand, the pagan centurion wants to hear the word of God.

Bar-Jesus, though one of "God's people", disobeys the law and opposes the message concerning the Messiah.

The Gentile, who would not be expected to show interest in God's word, wants to know about Jesus.

This reversal of expected roles between Jews and Gentiles is seen throughout the remainder of Acts.

The fate of the two men is also a warning.

The Jew, who claims to see, is blinded for opposing God's word.

The Gentile receives spiritual sight to see the truth.

Testimony in Antioch 13:13-52

In Antioch, after Mark's departure (13:13), Paul and Barnabas have the opportunity to speak in the synagogue (13:14-41).

John's departure 13:13

Jewish invitation 13:14-15

Paul's message 13:16-41

Paul traces Israel's history up to David (13:16-22).

He shows that God has been gracious to Israel, but they resist Him.

David, on the other hand sought to do God's will.

When Jesus, David's Son, came to do the same, He was rejected and crucified (13:23-29).

Yet God demonstrated through the resurrection that He approved of Him (13:30-37).

Therefore, forgiveness of sins is now being offered through faith in Him (13:38-39).

If they don't trust Him, they are in danger of being judged by a pagan nation that God will send against them (13:40-41).

Hearers' response 13:42-43

Those who heard the message wanted to hear more the next week

Jewish opposition 13:44-52

When the whole town came to hear Paul, the Jews became jealous and opposed Paul

The Gentiles wanted to hear the word of God.

Therefore, Paul turned to the Gentiles with the offer of salvation.

The Gentiles rejoiced at the opportunity they had been given while the Jews continued to oppose Paul and his companions.

The Jews finally succeeded in driving them out of the city.

Opposition in Iconium 14:1-6a

The opposition continued when they moved on to Iconium also.
Again there they began the testimony in the synagogue.

When the Jews rejected the message, Paul turned to the Gentiles.
While many of the city accepted Christ, the Jews stirred up others.
Due to a plot to stone them they left town.

Testimony in Lystra 14:6b-20

Healing of a cripple 14:6b-10

At Lystra (14:6-20), the ministry began with the healing of a cripple.

Popular interpretation 14:11-13

The local people considered them to be gods.

Response of the messengers 14:14-18

Paul and Barnabas tried to direct their attention to the true God

Opposition from the Jews 14:19

When the Jews arrived, they made an alliance with the pagans to kill Paul rather than accept the word of the God they claimed to worship.

Deliverance by God 14:20

God intervened to spare Paul's life.

Return to Antioch 14:21-28

Following this incident, they returned to Antioch (14:21-28).
After the experiences they had, they encouraged those who had trusted Christ to remain firm but warned them that they were going to suffer for their faith.
They also named elders for each church.
When they arrived back in Antioch, they reported what God had done among the Gentiles.

COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM 15:1-35

Although the issue of salvation for the Gentiles had been settled by the revelation to Peter, the Jewish background of many in the church continued to raise problems.

At first the salvation of Gentiles provoked a debate about how they could be saved.
If Gentiles no longer had to become Jewish proselytes, what were the conditions?
Some Jews demanded that they be circumcised and follow the law of Moses.

The Jerusalem council was convened to resolve this issue (15:1-35)

The issue raised 15:1

The journey to Jerusalem 15:2-3

When the issue was raised in Antioch (15:1), the church sent Paul and Barnabas, along with some others, to go to discuss the matter with the apostles (15:2-3).

The confrontation before the apostles 15:4-5

When they reported what God had done, some Pharisees opposed their practice of not requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised and to live by the law of Moses

The council convened 15:6-29

Peter's report 15:6-11

When the council convened, Peter reminded them of how God had approved the salvation of Gentiles by faith alone.

Why should they add another requirement now?

He reminded them that the salvation of all men was by faith alone, even their own

Barnabas and Paul's report 15:12

Paul and Barnabas add their report of what God has done through them.

God has given evidence of His blessing on their work without requiring obedience to the law

James' conclusion 15:13-21

James concludes the discussion by reviewing Peter's report and relating the message of the prophets that Gentiles would be saved and be called by God's name.

Therefore, he proposes that they leave the Gentiles alone.

They should not be restricted by the church in a way that God Himself has not required (15:13-19).

James recommends that they write to the Gentiles, asking them not to conduct themselves in a way that would be offensive to Jews (15:20-21).

Specific suggestions are mentioned.

Council's action 15:22-29

The council accepts James' suggestion and sends a letter to the churches

Messengers are named to accompany Paul and Barnabas with the letter.

The response in Antioch 15:30-35

The people were grateful for the answer they had received

The work continues through the wise leadership God has given to His church.

SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY 15:36-18:22

Paul and Barnabas decide to visit the churches again on a second missionary journey

Preparation for the journey 15:36-41

As they prepare for the trip, God uses a dispute between them concerning John Mark to multiply their ministry on two new teams.

Since John Mark had abandoned them earlier, Paul did not want to bother with him again.

Barnabas saw the future potential in Mark and wanted to take him.

As a result, a sharp dispute occurred between Paul and Barnabas and they split.

No criticism is found against either man in Acts.

The strongest evidence of failure is the word describing the sharp dispute.

Both men had a valid argument.

Nevertheless, the division was not based on love.

God uses their weakness for His own purposes.

Paul's ministry is fruitful; and later he himself recommends Mark, thus attesting the value of Barnabas' investment in him.

Selection of Timothy 16:1-5

Another attempt at discipleship by Paul is described when he selects Timothy to work with him (16:1-5).

Timothy had valuable training in the home.

Besides, his reputation before the community was also excellent.

Therefore, Paul chooses to take him along on this trip.

Advance into Macedonia 16:6-11

When Paul tries to go into the same area visited on the first journey, he is prevented from doing so by the Lord.

After prayerful consideration of what the Lord wants to do, they are redirected to Macedonia by a vision of a man asking for help.

It is immediately apparent that this move another step away from Israel changes the religious environment.

Fewer Jews are present in the cities and a more direct confrontation with paganism is necessary.

The persecution continues but is multiplied because it now comes from both Jewish and pagan sources.

Message proclaimed at Philippi 16:12-40

When Paul begins to minister in Philippi (16:12-40), there is no synagogue.

He finds a women's prayer meeting and goes there.

Acceptance by Lydia 16:12-15

Lydia, a Jewish business woman and faithful worshiper of God, heard Paul's message and trusted Christ.

She represents the appropriate response demonstrated by Jewish people around the world, when they were seeking to follow Yahweh.

Deliverance of possessed girl 16:16-18

Complaint of her owners 16:19-21

Arrest of Paul and Silas 16:22-24

When they freed a girl from a demon (16:16-18), her owners complained because of their business loss and had Paul arrested (16:19-24).

Conversion of the jailer 16:25-34

After God demonstrated that the prison had no power over His servants, they stayed in the jail to tell the jailer about Jesus.

Amazed by what he had seen and heard, the man and his family trusted Christ.

Release of Paul 16:35-40

In order to demonstrate the injustice of the accusations and persecution of the early church, Luke relates the way the rulers tried to release Paul.

They wanted to send him away quietly.

Paul insisted that they come and escort them out since they had no right to arrest a Roman citizen without a formal charge.

In fear they came and led him out, thereby demonstrating his innocence.

Message proclaimed at Thessalonica 17:1-9

Paul went on to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue, to preach concerning Jesus.

Message 17:1-4

Persecution 17:5-9

Some of the Jews and many Gentiles received his message.

The rest of the Jews were jealous, however, and started a riot against Paul.

Message proclaimed at Berea 17:10-15

Paul moved on to Berea.

Response 17:10-12

Persecution 17:13-15

At Berea the Jews wanted to hear and many believed.

However, when the Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul was there, they went to stir up the crowds against him.

Message proclaimed at Athens 17:16-34

In the pagan cultural center of Athens, Paul was safe from the opposition of the Jews but faced a different kind of resistance.

Encounter with philosophers 17:16-21

There he encountered the pagan philosophers of the day.

Message 17:22-31

They listened attentively as he talked about another new religious idea.

Paul preached the message of the one true God.

He is not an idol; He is a Person.

He has overlooked man's foolishness and invited man to repent and to turn to Him.

If they do not repent and turn to God they will be judged by the One God raised from the dead.

Response 17:32-34

The resurrection was the hard part for the Greeks to accept.

Some made fun of the idea.

Others were willing to hear more later.

Only a few of these intellectual philosophers believed.

Message proclaimed at Corinth 18:1-17

From Athens Paul went on to Corinth where he stayed for a year and a half.

His support 18:1-3

He met and joined with Aquila and Priscilla in tent making to earn money.

His message 18:4-5

At the same time he preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Rejection by the Jews 18:6

When the Jews in Corinth rejected the message, Paul turned to the Gentiles with the message of salvation.

Faith of a remnant 18:7-8

His ministry there was received by a handful of individual Jews and many Gentile citizens of Corinth.

God's protection 18:9-11

God promised Paul that in spite of intense opposition, He would protect him.

The promise is confirmed when the Jews seek to take legal action against Paul.

His persecution 18:12-17

The governor refuses to become involved in their internal religious feuds.

He stayed firm even when they beat a synagogue ruler in front of him.

Return to Antioch 18:18-22

From Corinth Paul returned to Antioch.

Thus the stormy second missionary journey concludes.

The persecution begun against Paul on this visit continues to afflict the churches he founded in these cities.

THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY 18:23-21:16

After Paul has spent some time in Antioch, he leaves there to make a third missionary journey.

The main purpose of this trip is to strengthen the churches which were already established.

Ministry in Galatia and Phrygia 18:23

He does this first in Galatia and Phrygia.

Ministry in Ephesus 18:24-19:41

Special attention is directed on this trip to the work in Ephesus.

Instruction of Apollos 18:24-28

Apollos was preaching in Ephesus.

He was eloquent and had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.

He spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord.

But he only knew John's baptism.

John's disciples were preaching the message of John 3.

They preached that Messiah had come and that the people must repent of their sins because the kingdom is near.

They knew nothing about the church nor of the events which had occurred since Acts 2.

Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and explained to him the part of the story he still did not know.

He became a powerful spokesman for the church.

Instruction of John's disciples 19:1-7

Apollos represents another group that needed to be "called out" of Israel, and incorporated into the new people of God, John's disciples.

Luke uses Apollos to introduce their entrance to the church.

John's disciples had a special function in the transition period.

When their work was completed, God brought them into the church also.

Not all "devout" people who lived after Acts 2 had received the revelation of what happened there.

These men were disciples of John.

They had responded appropriately to his revelation.

Paul asks a test question to see where they are in the process of receiving revelation.

He assumes that they had believed (19:1-2).

Their response shows that they had not yet heard that the Holy Spirit had come.

They would have known of *His existence* from the Old Testament.

They have not heard about His coming in Acts 2.

Paul then asks them with what group they were identified.

They answered that they had been identified with John's group (19:3).

Paul explains the relationship between John's message and the message they have received (19:4).

John baptized for repentance and taught his followers to trust the Messiah, that is, Jesus.

When they hear this message, they immediately recognize its significance and choose to identify themselves with Jesus and His new program (19:5-6).

Paul lays his hands on them to show his identification with this new group and as an indication that they too have been accepted.

God confirms this by the external demonstration of the Holy Spirit's coming on them as He had to the rest of the church previously.

Instruction in the synagogue 19:8-10

After John's disciples had been dealt with, Paul turned his attention back to the synagogue.

When the Jews became obstinate and opposed Paul, he again turned his attention to the Gentiles.

He ministered there for two years.

Many Jews and Gentiles decided to trust Christ there.

Instruction of imitators 19:11-20

The mighty signs performed in Paul's ministry began to attract attention.

Some tried to imitate his work.

The sons of Sceva learned the hard way not to play with demons.

At the same time there was a positive influence as some who had practiced sorcery recognized the superior power of God and burned their books.

Persecution 19:21-41

At that time Paul decided that he ought to go to Jerusalem and began to plan his trip (19:21-22).

While he remained in Ephesus, some of the idol makers became aware of the threat Paul had become to their work in Ephesus.

They stirred up the people and started a riot (19:23-41).

Ministry in Macedonia and Greece 20:1-5

Following his plan to visit Macedonia and Greece and then move on to Jerusalem, Paul left Ephesus to minister there.

He stayed in that area for about three months.

When he was ready to move on, he changed his plans and returned through Macedonia because of a Jewish plot against him.

Ministry in Troas 20:6-12

As he traveled, he ministered in Troas also (20:6-12).

Paul's long message extended until midnight.

One young man, seated in a window, became sleepy, fell out of the window and died.

Paul demonstrated God's power in his ministry by raising the man from the dead.

Ministry in Miletus 20:13-38

Anticipating the possibility that he might never return to Ephesus, Paul took some time to encourage the elders while he was in Miletus.

He urges them to faithfully care for the flock God has given to them and to protect them from the wolves who would seek to harm them.

Everywhere Paul went he heard testimony that he would be arrested in Jerusalem.

Yet Paul was compelled by the Spirit to go.

God had revealed His plan to Paul and he was willing to follow it.

He had a stewardship to fulfill and the cost was unimportant (20:22-24).

Ministry in Tyre 21:1-6

As he continued toward Jerusalem, Paul also ministered in Tyre.

There also the Spirit spoke through the people to warn Paul of what lie ahead. They interpreted the prophecy to mean he should not go to Jerusalem.

Ministry in Caesarea 21:7-16

In Caesarea as well the prophecy was repeated.

He would be bound and handed over to the Gentiles.

Because of the prophecy of his arrest, his friends urged him not to go to Jerusalem.

Paul, however, was determined to obey God, even if that obedience should cost him his life. He had to go on to Jerusalem.

ROAD TO ROME 21:17-28:31

Even before Paul's arrival at Jerusalem, it becomes apparent that this is really a trip to Rome.

The end of the road is in Rome.

Though Paul knew arrest was ahead, he went on anyway, confident of God's will.

He witnesses along the way and on his arrival in Rome.

This was the purpose for which God had called him (compare Acts 9:15-16).

Paul's witness in Jerusalem 21:17-23:35

His detention 21:17-36

Meeting with elders 21:17-26

When Paul arrives in Jerusalem, he first reports to the elders.

They are concerned because some of the Jews have heard that he has been encouraging Jews to become Gentiles.

To prove that the charge is false, Paul identifies with those following Jewish practices.

The custom involved was a voluntary one.

These men were not legalists.

They were Christians concerned with a proper walk who used the law to demonstrate God's work in their lives.

Accusation 21:27-29

When the Jews find Paul in the temple area, they accuse him of speaking against Israel, the law and the temple.

They also accuse him of bringing Greeks into the temple.

The first part of the charge is somewhat true.

He did speak of the setting aside of Israel, the end of the law, and the destruction of the temple.

The charge concerning the Greeks was false.

Arrest 21:30-36

Because of the mob violence and attempt to kill Paul, the military commander went in to arrest Paul and investigate the charges against him.

His defense 21:37-23:10

Paul is given an opportunity to defend himself before the crowd.

Testimony to Jews 21:37-22:21

As Paul told the Jews of his past and the way God had convinced him of the truth concerning Jesus, they listened quietly until he mentioned his call to preach to the Gentiles.

Response by Jews 22:22-23

This was too much for them.

Again they want to kill him.

The issue was not salvation by faith but the commission to go to the Gentiles (21:37-22:23).

Examination by Romans 22:24-29

The commander didn't understand what the issue was but decided to examine Paul to find out.

Hearing with the council 22:30-23:10

He finally calls a private hearing with the Jewish leaders.

In the hearing, Paul focuses on the issue of the resurrection.

He demonstrates that they can't even agree together concerning the truth.

How, then, can they persecute him for his convictions?

He is not teaching anything that isn't also taught in the Old Testament.

His deliverance 23:11-35

Revelation of protection 23:11

God reveals Himself to Paul and assures him of His protection to enable him to witness in Rome also.

Plot by Jews 23:12-15

God's protection is demonstrated when the Jewish leaders plot to kill Paul.

The plan is exposed and Paul taken away by night to Caesarea (23:12-35).

Provision for protection 23:16-22

Transfer to Caesarea 23:23-35

Paul's witness in Caesarea 24-26

As the trial scenes progress, it becomes increasingly evident to all, including the neutral Roman officials, that Paul is not guilty of any crime worthy of punishment.

Yet the opposition continues.

Luke summarizes the proceedings in Caesarea.

Defense before Felix 24

Felix first hears the case (24:1-27).

The leaders try to win his favor and provoke his anger against Paul.

Their accusation 24:1-9

No evidence is presented to support their charge.

His defense 24:10-21

Paul responds that their charges are unfounded.

Felix' response 24:22-23

His personal testimony 24:24-26

Felix' delay 24:27

Felix recognized that he had no basis to punish Paul, yet he prolonged the proceedings to please the Jews and perhaps gain some extra income from one of the two parties involved (24:22-27).

He held Paul for two years without a conviction.

Defense before Festus 25:1-12

Finally, Festus replaced Felix and the case is heard again.

When Festus asks him to go to Jerusalem, Paul appeals to Caesar.

He is not willing to give the Jews another opportunity to plot his death.

Defense before Agrippa 25:13-26:32

In order to write a report to Caesar, Festus asks Agrippa, the last of the Herods, to hear the case and give him an opinion on the matter.

Festus' report to Caesar 25:13-27

Paul's defense 26:1-29

Agrippa's opinion 26:30-32

After hearing Paul's defense, Agrippa recognizes that Paul should not be in jail, much less in danger of death.

Nevertheless, because of his appeal to Caesar he had to be sent there.

Paul's witness on the way to Rome 27:1-28:15

His witness on ship 27

As they travel to Rome Paul gains the favor and confidence of the centurion on the boat.

Thus when the ship gets into trouble, Paul's prophetic revelation of their fate is significant in the decisions made (27:1-44).

His counsel could have saved them from the shipwreck.

In the end it did save their lives.

His witness in Malta 28:1-15

While they were on the island of Malta his testimony also was effective.

When bitten by a poisonous viper, all expected him to die.

Instead, Paul was miraculously saved.

The people changed from considering him a dangerous criminal to calling him a god.

He also healed the sick on the island.

As a result of Paul's ministry there, the prisoners were treated well on the island.

Paul's witness in Rome 28:16-31

Finally, after three months on the island they moved on to Rome.

Centurion's confidence in Paul 28:16

In Rome also it became clear that Paul was being persecuted on account of Christ, rather than for some serious offense.

Therefore, he had the confidence of the centurion and considerable personal freedom (28:16-31).

Testimony before the Jews 28:17-29

Appointment arranged 28:17-23a

Testimony presented 28:23b-29

His message 28:23b

Their uncertainty 28:24-25a

His commentary 28:25b-27

His conclusion 28:28-29

While waiting for his accusers, Paul is free to preach.

By law the accusers had to come within 18 months.

It is evident that the accusers are not going to come.

A final commentary on the state of Israel concludes the book.

The Jews in Rome, representing the nation, are divided concerning the message about Jesus.

Since they are not willing to commit themselves to follow their Messiah, Paul turns from them to the Gentiles (28:23-29).

Their blindness is recognized as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

They don't hear the message because they don't want to hear it.

Therefore, God is going to do His work among the Gentiles who want to hear the truth.

Residence in his own house 28:30-31

The pagan Roman government is seen at the end of the book permitting Paul to do what the Jews, "God's chosen people," want to hinder.

In Rome Paul is able to freely preach the word of God to all who came to him.

Thus God's work continues, in spite of the Jewish opposition.