

The Books of Acts and Romans are treated together here in the heading of “New Testament Writings” as they provide a bridge of Spiritual thought from the Gospels to the Epistles. Acts is the second and companion volume to the Gospel of Luke. Luke was a close friend and ministry partner with Paul and as such the Book of Acts tends to reflect distinctive Pauline theology. Acts of the Apostles is theology in historical narrative form that outlines the initial birth of the Church in Jerusalem as it radiated out through the Roman kingdom. Romans is a book written by Paul to the Roman church before he actually traveled there. It thus differs from other Pauline Epistles [letters] in that it is not directed to a known person or group of people. It is believed that a of Paul’s knowing of his ministry to the Gentiles and being a Roman himself, was asked to speak to a need they were concerned about. As such, this is a more general letter and comprises a marvelous development of Paul’s theology written to ground the Roman Church in the essentials of Christian faith, and is therefore a great baseline of thought for the balance of the New Testament Scripture.

Discipleship Note - there is a tendency to “dumb down” the message when teaching and preaching. It is thought that the difficulty inherent in the study of Scripture, is somehow made simpler when the message is “reduced to smaller bite-sized pithy bits.” Personally, I believe this denigrates the power of the Spirit to lift and challenge disciples to a new way of thinking and living. It is our intention at Authentic Discipleship to teach the Word as best and as clearly as we can, and allow the Power of the Spirit of God lift people to a new way of thinking and living in applying it as He sees fit.

1) Hermeneutical Introduction to Acts & Romans:

- a. The New Testament in general comprises a whole work comprised of component parts:
 - i. The 4 Gospels comprise a comprehensive 4 view introduction of the Messiah’s Kingdom Message.
 - ii. Acts – Luke and Acts are companion books – and interpretation of each is joined by the other. The Acts of the Apostles chronicle how the Spirit birthed and took charge of the early Church.
 - iii. Romans is a general letter written by Paul to around the predominantly Pagan Christian converts in Rome who were also salted with a group of Messianic Jews [Jews who came to faith that Jesus was the Messiah long prophesized in the Old Testament]. Because Paul had not met these Christians, his letter provides a generalized theology lesson which is priceless.
 - iv. Epistles – these are apostolic letters that were written and directed to either a specific group/problem at a particular location and purpose, or to a more general issue intended for a wider but still localized readership.
 1. There are a total of 21 epistles [letters].
 2. 13 of these were written by Paul.
 3. 8 are general – including Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter, 1, 2&3 John, Jude.
 4. 13 are specific to individuals or to cities/regions with specific thoughts or problems being addressed.
 5. Revelation – Apocalypse.
- b. Hermeneutical exegetical method holds that each Book was written to address specific situations and needs that the author was divinely inspired to speak into:

- i. Gospels – are essentially a wonderful combination of narrative including historical, biographical, theological, and prophetic themes and genre. The Gospels introduce a new form of theology – “Christology.” These books are written to demonstrate to different audiences that Jesus is the Messianic King foretold in Jewish Scripture. The Gospels include but are not merely historical narratives, although as such they are the closest things to history that we have.
 - ii. Acts – continues many of the Gospel themes having been written by Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke. Again, though not merely history, it is the closest thing to a history of the early church that we have, but it is a mistake not to realize it is also as primarily theology and prophecy.
 - iii. Epistles - are apostolic letters writing as occasion demanded.
 - 1. Titus – though Paul sent this to his disciple Titus and intended him to read it, it was more specifically addressed to the churches on Crete that Titus ministered to.
 - 2. Ephesus – was an important city, but the letter was intended to the greater region around it. It is written about general truth about NT theology and is a healthy complement to Romans.
 - 3. Colossians – was written to respond to Judaistic Gnosticism.
 - iv. Revelation – was about the apocalyptic wrap up of history, the end of days and time to be brought about by the Messiah, and the introduction of an entirely new world order... millennial - the 1,000 years period of the saints and Jesus on earth, followed by the New Heaven and Earth - and entirely new and completely Holy and perfect place for humanity and God to live forever in peace.
- c. Each Book was written to the People of God – the saints
- i. 1st to Israel – this recognizes that they had a specific heritage as the people of God.
 - ii. Then to Christian Churches – general heritage of all of humanity who were always intended to be blessed through the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants.

2) Main Message - Messianic Covenant replaced the Old Covenant - the Law under the Sinai Covenant replaced by Grace.

- a. Old Covenant is no longer in effect - it has not been merely amended, it has been replaced though the underlying foundational concepts and ideals remain.
- b. OC has been replaced by a far superior covenant... Grace is far superior to Law, as the Spirit life in the believer is superior to the Spirit life at the Jerusalem Temple. The New Covenant Church is under the direct indwelling authority of the Spirit, who takes responsibility for the growth and health of the Church.
- c. New Covenant is the logical progression and conclusion of the Old Covenant.
 - i. For example... the OC called for mandatory tithes – this was based on the Suzerain covenant framework that the OC emerged from. Tithes in this system were tribute to the king. Instead, the NC call for voluntary love offerings - with the Spirit living within, Christians are now children of God and heirs to His eternal Kingdom. We give now to advance His Kingdom of earth as a gift of gratitude in love.
 - 1. Tithes were mandatory gifts from the vassals to the Suzerain.

2. Voluntary offerings are expressions of love from a child to their parent, or to brothers and friends.
 - ii. OC law was Sinai mandate – it was involuntary in that as part of the covenant people you had to perform as prescribed or suffer consequences. NC is voluntary obedience through a changed nature – love compels obedience rather than the fear of repercussions.
 1. OC obedience was qualified by blessings and curses.
 2. NC is all blessing – obedience is a joyful expression of love.
 - iii. OC is exclusionist - it separated Israel from everyone else, not only was it separatist, it was segregationist and Jews felt nothing for non-Jews. NC is inclusionist – all humanity is welcome. God’s grace through Jesus compels love and acceptance of all others as part of common humanity and believers as brothers and sisters in the Kingdom.
 1. The OC allowed Israel to “boast” of their unique law relationship with God, no other people had the law and no other people were obligated to conform to the law. Instead of a loving community that integrated and open to outsiders who would be grafted into the community, the Law was used as an effective wall keeping the Jews in and all others out. This is not what God had intended.
 2. The NC superceded the law and removed the wall between all peoples. Pagan/Gentiles are no longer outsiders, or even 2nd class citizens when they respond to the Jewish message of faith. Instead, the people of the Messiah are all on the equal footing of grace with a common bond of love inherited as a gift of Grace through the Spirit.
 - iv. OC emphasis was on things material and physical; NC is all about the spiritual – the physical and material being of little value.
 1. The outer man in terms of what you do – Is not as important as the inner man in terms of who you are.
 2. One’s appearance means little; one’s true nature means everything.
 3. Messiah’s 1st coming redeemed the spiritual, His 2nd coming will redeem the physical.
 4. This was the opposite of what the Jews expected. They saw blessing in terms of wealth, honor and prestige; and they wanted to maintain their unique position with God and keep everyone else out. Although they knew the Abrahamic covenant foretold that Abraham would be a “blessing” to all people, they were unconcerned for humanity at large.
 - v. OT was about the coming of Messiah – it was always looking forward to when He would come.
 - vi. NT is about the arrival of Messiah – we look back to His 1st coming, but we are especially looking forward to His 2nd coming.
- 3) Paul – is a complex individual with a complex identity, and to more properly understand him, he needs to be thought of as a complete person... as a Jew, a Roman, and a Christian.
- a. Paul as a Jew:

- i. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and was named for the tribe's most famous individual – King Saul.
 - ii. He was a rabbinic disciple of Gamaliel – one of the greatest rabbis of that age. He was accepted as a man of great scholarship and learning.
 - iii. He was an up and coming Pharisee – very zealous about the law and the nation.
 - iv. His zealous nature caused him to approve of the stoning of Stephen, and of arresting and imprisoning of any Messianic Jews [“fallen Jews” in terms of the nation] who had abandoned the nation for the “Way.” On his way to arrest fallen Jews in Damascus, he met Jesus who redirected his life and purpose.
- b. Paul as a Roman:
- i. He came from an important city and probably an important family as well.
 - ii. He was born a citizen in an influential orthodox family in a university city know for its learning.
 - iii. Roman citizens were accorded rights and guaranteed protections under the Roman law that did not apply to non-citizen members under the Roman authority.
 - iv. To be born a Roman citizen attests to his family wealth and possibly aristocracy. Many people outside of Rome labored long and hard to earn their citizenship... which he received as a birthright.
- c. Paul as a Christian:
- i. He underwent a radical supernatural conversion. God stepped in and changed the trajectory of his life.
 - ii. He spent 14 years as a disciple after his conversion experience until he entered public ministry.
 - iii. His initial teaching of Christology [theology of Jesus] came from Jesus Himself.
 - iv. Paul understood better than others [including Peter and James] the unique change from the closed Jewish system under the Law to the open Christian system under Grace.
 - v. Paul spent 10 years in public ministry – primarily to Gentiles but also to non-Christian Jews, and also to Jewish converts to Christianity that wanted to combine Law and Grace.
 - vi. The special offering collected to respond to the suffering/need of the Christian brothers in Jerusalem in the spring of 57 AD is covered in Thessalonians.
 - vii. He was ultimately executed along with Peter in Rome by Nero. Paul was beheaded which was customary for Romans, while Peter was crucified which was customary for non-Roman outlaws and political enemies.
- d. Once you get your mind around all three aspects of Paul's identity, you need to wrap them up together because he saw things through this combined perspective, with Christ being central and over-riding all else

4) Chronology of Paul's Ministry and writings:

a. <u>Preparation and Ministry Occasion/Place</u>	<u>Year AD</u>
i. Pentecost	Jerusalem 33
ii. Conversion	Damascus Road 34
iii. Discipling	Turkey & Antioch 34-37

Bible Survey - NT 2.1 - Early Church - Acts of the Apostles

iv.	1 st Jerusalem visit	37	
v.	11 year span & 1 st Missionary journey	37-48	
vi.	2 nd Missionary Journey-1 st Macedonia	49-50	
vii.	18 months in Corinth	50-51	
viii.	2 nd Jerusalem Visit, Antioch incident	51	
ix.	Ephesian ministry	52-55	
x.	Final Macedonian ministry, Jerusalem	56-57	
xi.	Final Jerusalem visit, imprisonment at Caesarea	57-59	
xii.	Trial before Festus, voyage to Rome	59-60	
xiii.	Roman imprisonment	60-62	
xiv.	Final ministry in the East	62-64	
xv.	Return to Rome and execution	64-65	
b.	<u>Epistles – Letter</u>	<u>Occasion</u>	<u>Time</u>
i.	Galatians	1 st missionary	48-49
ii.	1-2 Thess	2 nd missionary	51-53
iii.	1-2 Corinthians	3 rd missionary	54-57
iv.	Romans	3 rd missionary	54-57
v.	Eph, Col, Phlm, Phil	1 st Rom imprisonment	60-62
vi.	1Tim – Titus	Liberty	63-65
vii.	2 Tim	2 nd Rom imprisonment	66-67
c.	<u>Acts – Chap</u>	<u>Occasion</u>	
i.	13 & 14	1 st missionary journey	
ii.	16-18	2 nd missionary journey	
iii.	19 & 20	3 rd missionary journey	
iv.	28	1 st Roman imprisonment	
v.	Not included in Acts	Liberty & 2 nd Roman imprisonment	

5) Geography Associated with Acts - remember that Luke in writing both his Gospel and Acts employed geography was an important element for story development. When you read these accounts by Luke, remember to pay attention to the traveling going on and that his readers would have been aware of the places he is writing about, much like you would be mindful of someone writing about your own community or neighborhood. When he wrote about Paul meeting Jesus on the Damascus Road, people would have traveled that road and would have been impacted by it. This is a clever way of drawing his readers into the story.

- 1st missionary journey – included Paul, Barnabas and John Mark. Journey was fairly short to Cyprus & South-Central Turkey from Antioch.
- Acts 15 – journey to Jerusalem confirming that circumcision and certain requirements of the OC law were not needed for inclusion in the Church.
- 2nd missionary journey – because of John Mark having abandoned the 1st journey, Paul and Barnabas split up – Barnabas and John Mark go back to Cyprus and their journey is not recorded. Paul takes Silas and revisits South Central Turkey where he picks up Timothy, then moves on to Northern Turkey, Macedonia & Achaia in Greece, back through Turkey, on to Jerusalem, and back to Antioch.

- d. **Acts 17 – Thessalonica & Athens – Paul had left Silas, Timothy and Luke behind. He had run out of money and took up tent making in Corinth for a few weeks until Timothy joins him with missionary support. Paul spent 1½ years in Corinth at this time, but wrote his letters later when word got to him of problems in the churches he started.**
- e. **3rd missionary journey – He moves pretty quickly through his original route visiting and strengthening old friends and churches, and then he spent 3 years in Ephesus. When he left Ephesus he then took a quick trip back through Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, & Corinth.**
- f. **Imprisoned in Caesarea – waiting for his case to be heard before Herod & Felix [Festus?] who were looking for a bribe, which Paul wouldn't do. Probably helps support that he was from a wealthy background because these corrupt leaders wouldn't expect much from a poor man. Paul is ultimately sent on his way to Rome after appealing to Caesar; he lands first in Malta and eventually gets to Rome where the book of Acts ends.**

6) Introduction to the Book of Acts

- a. **Begins pretty much where Luke's Gospel leaves off – remember that the two form a two volume set. Shortly after Jesus resurrection Acts begins and then moves quickly to Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost. As critical as the coming of Jesus and His death and resurrection is to the Gospel message, the coming of the Spirit and empowerment of the disciples at Pentecost is to Acts in the beginning of the Church age.**
- b. **Peter is the central character in early part of Acts, then as the story develops the focus moves to Peter and Paul, then it switches to Paul and Peter, then just Paul. This is not by accident... Luke is speaking to how the Church which began within the Jewish tradition then begins to emerge out of it, and then quickly develops a tradition of its own. With this development Peter remains in the Messianic Jews camp, while Paul is called to the Pagan nations.**
- c. **Remember that Peter would have little influence in the Roman world at large being a fisherman from a small Jewish village. On the other hand, Paul was a Roman citizen and a person of influence and could easily move about through the Roman kingdom.**
- d. **Although Acts is the closest thing we have to a history of the early church, it is primarily a prophetic and theological declaration for the church. That is why we have joined it with Romans as together they provide a nice look into the 1st century Church.**
- e. **It is curious that Luke thought it so important to report on the prolonged defenses Paul made in court – this takes up some 20-25% of the book. It undoubtedly had to have been an encouragement to the early church that began to be called to an account of their faith, but there is undoubtedly more to it than that. This is the earliest evidence of Apologetics ever written... something the Spirit knew the Church would need in the years to follow.**

7) What is the book of Acts about?

- a. **Acts is a Biblical transition from the Gospels to the Epistles. Along with Romans it provides a reasonably clear understanding of the world and belief of the earliest church in Jerusalem before the city and Temple were destroyed by Rome and the Church literally exploded outward in terms of influence throughout the known world.**

- b. It is about the New Covenant – this is the transitional establishment of the NC message of the Messiah, the New Age, the New Covenant, and the New People of God [the Church] being introduced to the whole world (Luke 24:48-49). This is in a very real sense, the Church’s coming out party.
- c. Jewish evangelical activities had already carried the books of Moses to much of the known world and especially throughout the greater region of Palestine. Wherever the Jews would have traveled to in search business and other opportunities, they would also have taken their faith and worship practices in the Synagogue. The early Messianic Jews would have connected with these Synagogue worship and these Christian missionary activities began in Jerusalem and radiated outward.
- d. The book starts in Jerusalem which is obviously the center of the Jewish world, and ends in Rome which is obviously the center of the Gentile world. Luke is making a point in doing this... this is part of his intended message as the Church moves out in power.
- e. Jerusalem and the Temple was the center of Old Covenant Spiritual power, while Rome is the center of political power – Acts is about New Covenant Spiritual Power radiating throughout the world and Messianic the King coming to the centers of earthly power.
- f. Why are Peter & Paul the main characters?
 - i. Peter represents Israel – he is the message to the Jews, and he breaches the barrier with the Gentiles.
 - ii. Paul represents the new world of Jews and Gentiles – he begins with a message to the Jews and then moves on to the Gentiles.
- g. Proclamation – Jesus is the Messiah/King, the Resurrection/Author of Life.
 - i. The lack of a body was key to the message. All the Jews had to do was to produce Jesus’ body and the game would have been over. No body and the fact that Jesus had been seen by great numbers of people meant He had resurrected.
 - ii. The resurrection proved He is the Messiah. The rapid expansion of the faith amid continuing miraculous works of power and grace proved His continued Supernatural Presence.
- h. Obstacles – Acts documents the progress of the gospel.
 - i. Initial ineffectual acts by the Jews/Romans against the church and its leaders are overcome directly by God.
 - ii. This is a book about power – specifically that God’s Spiritual power is far more Affective than the world’s political power.
- i. Companion to Luke – written by a Gentile scholar who was a close friend and liaison to a Jewish/Christian scholar writing specifically for Gentiles.

8) Internal Structure of Acts:

- a. Geographical structure is employed to demonstrate the centrifugal force of the Christian faith spinning out from Jerusalem throughout the known world.
 - i. Peter and Paul’s missions clearly demonstrate this outward movement.
 - ii. Dr. Tuck indicates there are “7 panels” that are identifiable by distinctive transitional/summary statements... these panels may be found as follows:
 - 1. Panel 1 – Establishment of the New Covenant message in Jerusalem: Peter in Acts 1:1-2:47

2. Panel 2 – Extension of the New Covenant message in Jerusalem: Peter in Acts 3:1-6:7
 3. Panel 3 – Extension of the New Covenant message beyond Jerusalem: Peter & Paul in Acts 6:8-9:31
 4. Panel 4 – Extension of the New Covenant message to Gentiles: Peter & Paul in Acts 9:32-12:24
 5. Panel 5 – Extension of the New Covenant message to the ends of the earth Part 1: Cyprus, Galatia, Gentile inclusion: Paul & Peter in Acts 12:25-16:5
 6. Panel 6 - Extension of the New Covenant message to the ends of the earth Part 2: Greece, Ephesus: Paul in Acts 16:6-19:20
 7. Panel 7 - Extension of the New Covenant message to the ends of the earth Part 3: Rome: Paul in Acts 19:21-28:31
- b. Geography in Luke – literary writing styles were adapted to take advantage of the language used at the time to develop a sense of movement and action. In Luke’s Gospel, he employed this action as Jesus was pressing on towards Jerusalem. Jesus... the Messiah/King was coming to the capital of the earthly Jewish Kingdom where He would be inaugurated. This is the meaning of the Triumphal entry on Palm Sunday... Israel’s King was coming. Remember also the limitations of the language of the era... ancient Greek had only about 5,000 word combinations whose meaning was derived by the context. Modern English by comparison has hundreds of thousands of words which allow great specificity that didn’t exist in the ancient language.
- c. Geography in Acts – unlike his Gospel where the action was pressing Jesus toward Jerusalem... compare Luke 9:51 “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” To Acts 19:21 where the action is pressing Paul on towards Rome “After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. After I have been there, he said, I must visit Rome also.”
- i. Acts 19:21 seems to be the turning point – being the counterpart to Luke 9:51 – Paul resolved... I must go to Jerusalem, then I must also see Rome.
 - ii. 23:11 – Paul is given a word from God – “so you must testify in Rome.”
 - iii. 28:14 – So he came to Rome.
 - iv. 28:28-31 – Finally the Book of Acts closes with the triumphal statement... “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen! For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. **Note that Paul preaching in boldly and unhindered is evidence that Paul is right where God intended him to be.**
- d. Note that this movement proves in both the Gospel and in Acts that God is in charge of history and is working out His will purposefully. Note also that the transitional/summary statements also emphasize the same message:
- e. Transitional/Summary verses concluding each panel:
- i. 2:47-48 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- ii. 6:7 – The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.
- iii. 9:31 – So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.
- iv. 12:24 – But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.
- v. 16:5 – But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.
- vi. 19:20-21 – So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing. Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”
- vii. 28:30-31 – And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

9) Themes of Luke-Acts:

- a. King-Messiah has arrived [Luke] and is resurrected [Acts] and the Kingdom of God is initiated [Luke] and is expanding [Acts].
 - i. In Acts, Luke continues to teach about Christology to a developing [emerging] Christendom with the advancement of the Kingdom of God.
 - ii. Acts 1:3 – this amounts to 40 days of post resurrection seminary study for the disciples, with Jesus teaching them clearly about the Kingdom of God. Wouldn't you have loved to have been there!
 - iii. Acts 1:6 – “is this the time you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” The presumption is that the kingdom will be restored, and Jesus confirms it is coming – just not how or when.
 - iv. Acts 2:22-36 – notice the symbols of Kingship... David, throne, Christ, right hand, Lord.
 - v. Acts 4:26 – [Ps 2] the nations are set against the Lord and His Anointed.
 - vi. Acts 5:42 – confirming the good news [Gospel] that Jesus is the Christ.
 - vii. Acts 7:47-49 – Jesus' deity is confirmed... heaven is my throne.
 - viii. Acts 7:55-56 – Jesus at the right hand of God, Son of Man standing - these are clear indications of Lordship... the right hand is the place of power, standing is reserved only for equals... all else must bow down.
 - ix. Acts 8:12 – Phillip preached the Kingdom of God... and the people believed and were baptized.
 - x. Acts 9:20 – “at once” Saul [Paul] preached that Jesus is the Son of God... He is the Christ [Ps 2; 2 Sam 7].
 - xi. Acts 17:2-3 – the Christ
 - xii. Acts 17:6-7 – Paul and Silas are arrested for “preaching about another king”... Jesus.
 - xiii. Acts 18:5 – The Christ was Jesus.
 - xiv. Acts 19:8 – Kingdom of God

- xv. Acts 20:24-27 – the gospel, the Kingdom, the whole counsel of God.
- xvi. Acts 28:23 – Testifying to the Kingdom of God.
- xvii. Acts 28:30-31 – proclaimed the Kingdom of God.
- xviii. Note that “Christ” appears 27 times in Acts... this is the main message of Luke.
- b. Spiritual power demonstrated by Jesus is continuing with the Apostles who are shown replicating Jesus ministry in miracles:

<u>Miracles:</u>	<u>Peter:</u>	<u>Paul:</u>
Healed man lame from birth	3:1-11	14:8-14
Indirect healings	5:15-16	19:11-12
Success caused Jewish jealousy	5:17	13:45
Delivered from deadly persecution	12:1-11	14:19-20
Dealt with sorcerers	8:9	13:6-8
Raised dead	9:40	20:9
- c. The Gospel Message is preached – “Word” – “witness” – “proclaim” all mean to “Gospelize.” It is Christology... telling the story of Jesus: who He is, what He has done, and His impact on my life.
- d. The Gospel content is that Jesus is the Messiah, and the resurrection proves it. Also the fact that the apostles claimed to have seen Jesus alive and are now continuing to do His work and miracles also prove the fact that Jesus is not just alive but is still King and advancing the Kingdom of God.
- e. Notice that Luke focuses on as the essence of his message since he doesn’t fully develop his thoughts completely, but rather uses a summary or schematic form.
- f. New covenant – forgiveness, Holy Spirit, Jew-Gentile (Peter-Paul), Kingdom, inclusion of the Gentiles. It took several years for the Apostles to come up to speed on what was really important – and that physical circumcision was replaced by circumcision of the heart, and being ceremonial clean was replaced by a clean heart.
- g. Holy Spirit is prominent – “the promise of the Father” articulated by Jesus during His 40 day “Disciple crash course” after His resurrection.
 - i. Holy Spirit was discussed and promised in the OC/OT, but was delivered in the NC/NT.
 - ii. OC was fulfilled by NC with the arrival and ongoing personal ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- h. Hostility of faithless Israel against their Messiah & His Church – before and after the resurrection (2:40, 2-5, 7, 13ff, see Luke 16:31)
 - iii. Both the Scriptural and historical writings of the era supports that the Jewish leadership continued refusing to believe God amid a preponderance of evidence. They simply did not want to believe because the change would have completely altered their world view and their social-cultural norms.
 - iv. Their problem was clear... they didn’t believe Moses, and so they would not believe if someone rises from the dead (Luke 16:27-31).
 - v. Where the Pagans responded to the “Word of God” with repentance, the Jewish leaders responded in “anger” - the Bible uses the word “*qumov*”... which means “wrath, fury, anger, rage, a state of intense displeasure based in some real or perceived wrong.” The conclusion is that the anger of God is due to the Jews’

- moral offense against God's rule, and this action has a focus on God's righteous punishment against them.
- vi. Luke describes the Jewish leaders as being "furious" twice in his gospel and twice in Acts, it is used a total of 16 times in scripture – twice also in Matthew, and once in Mark.
 - vii. Instead of responding rationally in repentance and belief... as the Pagans did, the Jews responded in anger and suppression... which not only totally failed, but proved their moral, ethical, and faith deficiencies.
- i. Power of God demonstrated in the advance of the Kingdom of God – in spite of the opposition both of Rome and the Jews, there is an unstoppable progression of God's Purpose and growth of the Kingdom.
- i. Today, most churches focus on numerical growth, rather than on the growth of "the word" meaning discipleship.
 - ii. Luke teaches that power is spiritual... not political, numerical, or financial.
 - iii. Bigness in the church institution may have nothing to do with proving that God's purpose is being fulfilled. We tend to envy the "successful" churches, but success in God's perspective is the "word" being preached, lives being transformed, and disciples maturing in faith.
 - iv. God's Power is never vested in great men or women, it is always vested in the Person Who sits on the Throne.
 - 1. We engage that power as we commune with God and see Him through faith on His Throne.
 - 2. We appropriate that power through prayer and intimacy – the quiet/closet variety of prayer, not the corporate public form. Intimate prayer is where we worship Him and/or cry out over the things we don't understand. This is where God enters in and provides spiritual comfort, application, and hope. And once prepared, He uses us as part of the advancement of His Kingdom... amazing!
 - 3. When Moses was challenged by the Amalekites, he appointed Joshua to engage in physical battle, while Moses, his brother Aaron and his brother-in-law went on the hill and engaged in prayer. While Moses held up his hands the Israelites prevailed, when he lowered his hands they faltered. It was not the mere physical raising of his hands that won the day, it was the demonstration of effective prayer that won the day – and this is a model of pastoral prayer.
 - 4. Prayer is not about pragmatism – it is a spiritual event, a spiritual happening, a spiritual engagement – it changes us first, then everything else.
 - 5. Prayer places the responsibility for action and change on God, and it opens us to be used as His instruments. In prayerful dependence we present ourselves to Him and offer our service as He deems fit.
 - 6. Whatever the circumstance or situation, pray about everything.
 - 7. The indwelling of the Spirit places us in the Presence of God at all times – scripture teaches that we are already there with Him in His Throne room,

- we are already raised with Jesus and are seated with Him, ruling with Him – in the innerman.
- v. Conclusion – this all fits with the message – “Jesus is King,” Jesus has the power – that is what the Apostles preached.
 - j. Paul moving and preaching from Jerusalem to Rome announced to the world’s major power – “prepare to be ruled” – you will bow before the King. This is the same message that the Bible concludes with in Revelation.
 - i. Jesus is King – this is the primary teaching of Luke in his gospel and Acts.
 - ii. Jesus coming to Jerusalem in the Gospel is much like Paul coming to Rome in Acts – it is the declaration to the Spiritual epicenter Jerusalem, and the political epicenter Rome that the True King has come.
 - iii. The Apostles message is the same as the church’s message – you will bow to the King, prepare to bow today and escape judgment.
 - k. Although God has used the Bill’s [Billy Graham and Bill Bright] mightily, the message of bowing has been lost and has misshaped much of evangelical thinking.
 - i. The concept of “just as I am” has mistakenly presented the idea that we don’t need to change and be transformed into a different manner of being and living.
 - ii. The “4 spiritual laws” have reduced repentance to a formula without serious consideration of sin - conviction, remorse, repentance, restitution and restoration.
 - iii. In our zeal to make the Christian faith available and approachable, we have removed the spiritual power behind it – there is a King on His Throne and we need to take Him seriously.
 - l. The theme of advancement amid opposition is a tension that carries throughout the New Testament... God’s Kingdom is advancing, but there are Spiritual forces arrayed against it that would thwart it and subvert it. It is only by the Power of the Spirit that carries God’s plans forward.

10) Outline and Content of Acts:

Panel 1 – Is about the establishment of the NC message delivered by the King in Jerusalem... 1:1-2:47

- a. Acts is directed to specific individuals... probably those who had underwritten the project of both volumes, though they were always intended for wider distribution. Acts is listed as the 2nd of two volumes... it is clear Luke intended the two to be read in sequence - 1:1-5
- b. The gospel is intended to be spread into the entire world by Jesus’ disciples, who are intended to continue His work in advancing the Kingdom until He returns - 1:6-11.
- c. Jesus leaving allows for the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower His disciples, they are to await the Spirit in Jerusalem... the epicenter of the Kingdom of God - 1:12-14.
- d. Continuity of the mission is reinforced amid the discontinuity of replacing a false brother [Judas] - 1:15-26. This continuity is also the final act under the Old Covenant. With the coming of the Spirit, Jesus demonstrates that He is in control of His Church and will choose leadership accordingly. Under the leadership of the Spirit, Apostles were no longer replaced when one fell asleep.
- e. Pentecost - is the birth of the Church as prophesized by Joel - 2:1-4.

- i. **Acts 2 is the emerging Church, and this is pretty much the only description we have of it so this is pretty special. It is important to understand a few basic things that shaped the 1st century Church:**
- ii. **These original Christians were Messianic Jews... meaning they were Jews who come to faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel in the line of the Davidic kingdom who would usher in the Kingdom of God. Most were either 1st hand or 2nd hand witnesses of the events, which obviously helped galvanize their faith.**
- iii. **Their initial expectation was that Jesus would be returning right away... it wasn't for some years later as Jesus return was being delayed that the 2 stage redemption really caught their attention. Not that Jesus was hiding the matter, but the timing certainly was left deliberately open.**
- iv. **These original Christians were outcasts from the Jewish Synagogue system of worship in Jerusalem. So they essentially Christianized the Jewish worship approach. They were also outcasts from Roman social order - the Jews were never in the mainstream, but the Christians were even further out there. This helped forge a tight knit community who were passionate about Jesus and living on the edge.**
- v. **With the Roman response to the Jewish revolts that were squelched by Vespasian, the Christian church got caught up in the backwash. It also helped further disperse the Christian community throughout the known world.**
- vi. **All of this created a very dynamic and fluid environment for the emerging church, which would take several centuries to work through many issues.**
- vii. **Jesus' direction of His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit is purposefully dramatic, as this is one of the seminal events of the New Covenant. It is probably also a deliberate reflection of the creation poem where the Spirit is described as "hovering over the water" (Gen 1:2). Both give the impression that Heaven is holding its Breath in rapt anticipation.**
- f. **The Spirit declares to the nations the birth of the Church amid a bewildered populace - 2:5-13.**
 - i. **The event of the Spirit's coming was manifest initially in a miracle of tongues - specifically disciples speaking in foreign languages recognized by foreigners but previously unknown to the speakers.**
 - ii. **This event was clearly not a description of the exhibition of an "ecstatic utterance" [Glossolalia]. Zondervan's pictorial encyclopedia explains the phenomena as such: "The NT doctrine of tongues [Glossolalia]—ecstatic spiritual utterances not consciously or rationally controlled by the speaker, but believed to be a direct product of divine operation and Spirit-filling—has a long pre-history in the OT. When Peter explained this phenomenon to the crowds of Jewish pilgrims gathered at Jerusalem, he did so in terms of the words of Joel (Acts 2:15-21). Secondly, in 1 Corinthians 14:21 f., Paul explained the evidential nature of tongues to the unbeliever from Isaiah (Isa 28:11).**
 - iii. **The Spirit's Presence in a disciple may result in such Glossolalia utterance... that being an unknown and/or nominally undecipherable manner of speaking generated by the expressed joy of the indwelling Spirit. It may also occasion the**

speaking in a known language to further God's Kingdom purpose. The expression of Glossolalia has cultural and Biblical support. Such utterance however, is not necessarily evidence of the Spirit's Presence, as not all will have the gift of tongues, and since Glossolalia may be counterfeited and is often not useful for the edification of the Church (1 Cor 13:1; 14:1-19).

- iv. It is reasoned that this event in Acts 2 was a deliberate Spiritual action of the Spirit to bring unity of language in marked contrast to the confusion of language at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:9). This conclusion encourages the notion of the Spiritual undoing of the effects of the Fall in Grace, and the replacement of the Law by Grace. Thus there is a distinction between the Acts language event and Glossolalia.
- g. The problem of sin, the Gospel message of Grace and the efficacy of Messiah's sacrifice is recounted in summary form with the Spirit confirmation evidenced in miracles - 2:14-41.
- h. A new environment of faith emerges in the aftermath of Pentecost - 2:42-47.
 - a. The confusion and fear of the people is replaced by the awe and wonder of the believers as an "other-worldly" and "counter-cultural" community of faith emerges.
 - b. The communal collaboration is in marked contrast to the individual success previously accepted as the standard of blessing in the Old Covenant. The reality of eternal life with God replacing temporal blessing in the land led to a different form of community.
 - c. A paradigm of evangelism emerged where the faithful preached and lived lives in conformance with their faith, and God added to their numbers. Meaning the Spirit was the responsible power behind the forgiveness cycle of conviction, remorse, repentance, restoration, and reconciliation that brings individuals to authentic faith (see Spiritual Formation 2.2 - Forgiveness Study & Practicum).

Panel 2 – The extension of the NC message in Jerusalem - 3:1-6:7

- a. Expansion and opposition - 3:1-4:31 - Pentecost issued a shock wave which rippled throughout Jerusalem and well beyond. What many observers considered a dead movement literally caught fire... Holy Spiritual Fire flamed through Jerusalem.
 - i. Miraculous healing and a sermon by Peter occasioned by the healing - 3:1-26.
 - a. 3:13 – servant... meaning a vassal King operating under the authority of the Suzerain King.
 - b. 3:14 - Jesus is identified as "the Holy and Righteous One - meaning God. In 15a He is identified as the "Author of Life" - meaning God.
 - c. 3:15 – we are His witnesses... meaning apostolic eyewitnesses.
 - d. 3:19 – message is to repent – to realize your sinfulness and failure, and turn away from it. It is a deliberate choice to live and be different.
 - e. 3:20 – in so doing we expect "times of refreshing" a reference to the Millennium... the glory days when Messiah reigns.
 - f. 3:21 – "times of restoring" = God will fix what is wrong with the world, and He doesn't need our help. Our commission is not to undertake Messiah's work; our commission is to preach the Word about Jesus. God's solution is

- to destroy this world completely, it will be incinerated, and a new whole and healthy world will be created inhabited by God's people.
- ii. **The Abrahamic Covenant & the Mosaic covenant - are about fixing the mess we caused in the Fall (Genesis 3) - 3:22-26.**
 - a. **Creation was declared by God to be inherently "Good" – b/f... meaning "good, pleasing, desirable; goodness; this can refer to quality as well as to moral goodness."**
 - b. **Man and woman's action in Gen 3 brought about curses.**
 - c. **Abraham was promised to be a blessing to the world... this promise still has force.**
 - d. **Mosaic covenant is about both blessings and curses – when we obey we are blessed; when we disobey we are cursed - this promise has been renegotiated by the King.**
 - e. **The New Covenant is present in the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12) are all blessings – this is a wholly new thing God is doing.**
 - iii. **The opposition of the Jews sharpens and is pierced by the witness of Peter - 4:1-22.**
 - a. **4:25-27 is about Ps 2 applied to Israel by Peter**
 - i. **The original psalm was written about pagan opposition to Israel.**
 - ii. **Luke now applies this to Israel's leaders – this is harsh criticism!**
 - b. **4:31 "the word of God" = Gospel message**
 - b. **The witness of the early church - 4:32-35 - the communal nature of the early church recorded here is not necessarily a prescribed socialism, but rather a movement of the individual disciple by the Spirit to be a blessing to their community of faith. This is a form of "love offering."**
 - i. **The Church has internal opposition as well as external opposition - 5:1-16. The story of Ananias and Sapphira may seem a little out of place, but the purpose of this section is to reaffirm the witness of the Spirit in the Church. The Church was a movement of pure faith, and Ananias and Sapphira were the 1st examples of corruption to try to sneak in.**
 - ii. **The result of the corruption is that God acted directly in putting them to death. Peter's comment is just an explanation not a command for human action - 5:9-11.**
 - iii. **As the Church gained traction the resistance grew as well but didn't thwart God's Kingdom advance - 5:12-20.**
 - iv. **5:20 "all the words of this life" = Gospel message**
 - v. **5:41-42 "teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" = the Gospel message was being advanced and it could not be stopped by human action, or spiritual opposition.**
 - c. **The growth of the "Church as an Holistic Spiritual Organism" - an entity of faith united by the indwelling Spirit, now requires the birth of the "church as organization" - acting as a means to minister effectively as numbers grow without losing the priority of prayer and preaching - "it is not desirable to neglect the word" - 6:1-7.**
 - i. **What is this passage saying about the ministry of pastors? It says that the priority of senior spiritual leadership is teaching and preaching the word, and prayer. If**

- you are not fundamentally committed to prayer, don't go into the pastorate or Church leadership, do something else.
- ii. What is the "Church"? It is a bifurcated entity where the primary value is of an "Organism" [Church with a capital "C"]. This constitutes a spiritual body created by God. It is the Bride of Christ. However, secondarily it is an "organization" or institution [church with a small case "c"]. This is where the body meets and congregates... it is what allows for corporate teaching, preaching and worship.
 - iii. The Bible teaches about the Church primarily as an Organism... this is the eternal value of the Church of Christ.
 - iv. Spiritual gifts and ministerial offerings are provided for the edification and health of the Organism – there are 2 general gifts exemplified in 1 Peter 4:11:
 - a. Speaking – or word gifts - preaching, teaching and prayer are prophetic Word gifts. This is all about guiding and edifying the flock in Spirit and in Truth.
 - b. Service – or deed gifts - administration, organization, facilitation, etc. This is about providing service and coordination so the work of ministry can go on. It is also about dealing with the needs of the people - both Spiritual and physical.
 - v. Biblical Church leadership - (see Theology 3.1-The Church):
 - a. Pastors are NOT CEOs - pastors are shepherds... if you want to be a CEO go into corporate business because the Church is not an enterprise, and though it must be run effectively and prudently... it was never intended to be operated as a business. This is a major failure of the modern church era and our focus on church success with its emphasis of quantitative analysis of numerical and financial growth; rather than upon qualitative analysis of Spiritual maturity and ministry empowerment.
 - b. Elders are NOT church businessmen - Elders are the successors of the Apostles and they are to be word gifted... they study the word, teach/preach and pray. This is the meaning of Acts 6:2, and it is not optional. Elders who act primarily as money managers are in truth not fulfilling the role of Biblical eldership.
 8. Deacons are NOT merely workers directed by pastors or elders - Deacons are the successors of the '7 appointed' in Acts 6:3... they are ministry/service leadership, but they are also students and disciples of the Word. They are expected to be full of the Holy Spirit, mature in their faith, and devoted to prayer and study.
 9. Pastoral staff & board of directors deal with the organizational side of the church.
 10. Pastors, Elders, and Deacons are shepherds who look out for the sheep and also look out for wolves.
 11. The "Church" is the organic unity of believers joined and held together by the power of the indwelling Spirit.
 - a. The organization or institution of the "church" is different... it is the organizational structure that allows the organic Church to

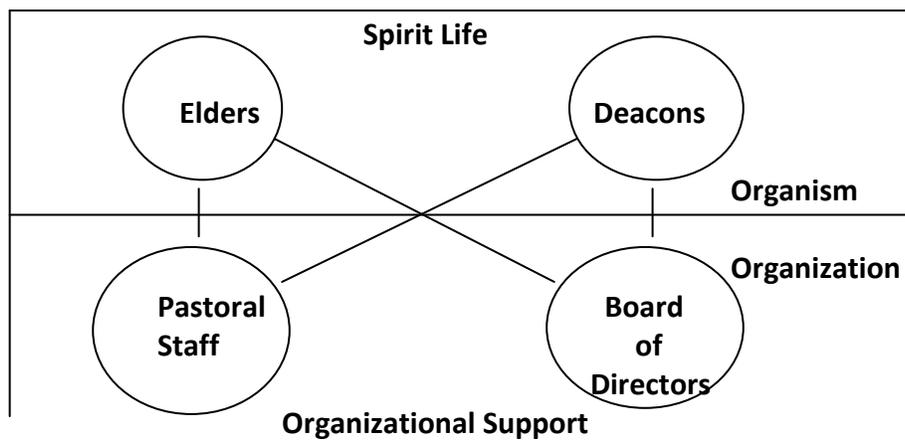
effectively gather, function, and fulfill its purpose as ordained by Jesus. As such, it is an institution of men and women.

- b. Biblical Christianity is “Christology” the study and rightful worship of Jesus as God’s Messiah; “churchology” is the study and progression of the institution of the organized church; but Christology is not equated with churchology.

12. “Full” - is used by Luke in 5:2, 20, 21; 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55; 8:23; 11:24; 13:10; 17:16 - it comes from the Greek *pleres* meaning to be “full or filled up (as opposed to empty), used in the context of a vessel that is capable of being filled, or alternatively of a surface completely covered in every part; in relation to an individual in the context of the soul which is thoroughly permeated and saturated; also means to be complete or perfect lacking in nothing.”

- a. When Luke employs this adjective, he does so to indicate that the internal nature or condition of the person’s heart that is characterized as being either completely good or desperately wicked.
- b. Full means to be completely saturated... to the point of overflowing.

13. Church Org-Chart:



- a. This chart demonstrates the interaction and cohesion of the Church.
- b. The Organism is the necessary and invaluable part of the Church. It exists with or without the organization support.
- c. The organization has little value apart from the Organism. Apart from the Organism it is only another imperfect institution of Fallen humanity.
- d. It is more than unfortunate that 80-90% of most activity in church leadership goes to supporting the organization rather than the Organism.

vi. 6:7 = the end of panel 2

Panel 3 - Extension of the New Covenant beyond Jerusalem - 6:8-9:31

- a. Ministry of Stephen - Deacon & 1st Christian Martyr - 6:8-8:3

- i. **Stephen is a deacon in the church who is involved in word ministry, in service ministry, and in synagogue/Church leadership.**
- ii. **Stephen's defense – 7:1-53 – is a powerful but lengthy apologetic of the Church and condemnation of the Jewish leaders. This is one of several lengthy apologetics Luke records. It is apparent that Luke was providing substance for the defense of the faith for his readers. He begins his defense with a review of Israel's history of rebellion to provide a context for his complaint against the Jewish leaders:**
 - a. **Abraham – the Jews as his descendents are heirs of the promise, Jews have been privileged among the nations. Abraham was justified – that is found righteous by God – because of his great faith.**
 - b. **Joseph – went from pampered favorite son to a slave in Egypt, from trusted servant to prisoner, but God elevated him to vassal ruler under Pharaoh. Most important, he became the deliverer who saved the nation of Israel.**
 - i. **His brothers were jealous because he was daddy's favorite.**
 - ii. **Joseph was probably a brat, but God proved faithful to him and molded him into his purpose.**
 - iii. **Joseph is an archetype of Jesus –**
 - 1. **In his family's 1st coming he was not recognized 7:12.**
 - 2. **In his family's 2nd coming he was recognized and given the honor due him.**
 - c. **Moses – went from poor slave to prince of Egypt, to shepherd, to deliverer who liberated Israel.**
 - i. **At his 1st coming (at 40 years old) he attempted to stop a fight between brother Hebrew's and was rebuffed. They did not know he was their appointed deliverer.**
 - ii. **At his 2nd coming (at age 80) he is recognized and succeeds in saving Israel.**
 - iii. **In 7:19-22 God is represented by an intermediary – namely angels or ministering beings while Israel is represented by an intermediary – namely Moses.**
 - iv. **It is Dr Tuck's conclusion that God used angels throughout the OT to do His will, rather than going there Himself or sending the Son. In the OT the Bible uses names of heavenly visitor's such as Lord, etc., in the NT before and after Jesus, it is all angels doing the visitations.**
- iii. **Stephen's execution by stoning - 7:54-8:1 - after the lengthy argument Stephen offers under the inspiration of the Spirit, the reaction of the Jewish leaders is short and swift and demonstrates the difference between God's faithful servant, and the wicked hearted leaders of the Jews. Stephen was obviously a Messianic Jew as stoning was an execution reserved for Jews and by Jews as called for in the Law.**
 - a. **V54 - The text reveals Stephen as being full [saturated] with the Spirit... so much so that in looking toward heaven he sees God and Jesus.**
 - b. **V 55-56 - in the Old Covenant only known prophets occasionally "saw" God in a vision, because the Spirit came upon them but didn't reside within them as what occurred after Pentecost. Here Stephen is seeing God and**

- Jesus as if he were part of the heavenly scene. God seated on His throne means He is in the judgment seat of complete power and authority. Being seated at the right hand of the King would mean that Jesus has joined the Father in holding court in the position of primary counsel and authority. However, that Jesus is standing is interesting... it is as if He is not merely acknowledging Stephen but welcoming him into heaven. Amazing!
- c. V 57 - the Jews here are seen covering their ears and screaming so they can't hear Stephen, indicating their wickedness is so great and their love of God is cold that they are not open to reason or grace.
 - d. V 58 introduces Saul [Paul] as a bystander who heard this entire argument with a closed mind and heart. In 8:1 Luke indicates that Saul gave his full approval to executing Stephen. One can only imagine sometime later while on the road to Damascus when Jesus confronts Saul what he was thinking about his persecution of the Church of Christ, and why he considered himself the "least" of the Apostles (1 Cor 15:9).
 - e. V 59-60 - in indicating that Stephen had "fallen asleep" Luke is providing assurance to the reader that death is not to be feared for the Christian. Death comes to all humanity, but those in Christ only "fall asleep" to awake in Paradise. This is an incredibly powerful passage.
- iv. Saul [Paul] is introduced as zealously persecuting Christians in Jerusalem - 8:1-3.
- b. Ministry of Philip – chap 8:4-25
 - i. Philip preaches in Samaria – the initial radiating out of the word from Jerusalem and Judea – and the Samaritans heard and responded in faith to his message that Jesus is the Christ.
 - a. Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to confirm what Philip had done and to deliver the Spirit. This is interesting... other verses show that the Spirit came upon the people without the laying on of hands as an expression of the power of God, so why were Peter and John necessary? It may be that God wanted Peter and John to see firsthand the Gospel radiating out to non-Jews as Peter in particular had difficulty initially getting past his bias against eating certain foods and against interacting with the Pagan converts. This may be one way God is grounding Peter to the freedom that exists in Christ through the Spirit.
 - b. The message is that the Spirit testifies as to the adoption/sonship as members of the Body of Christ – the Church. All who receive the Spirit are on equal footing. There are no 2nd class citizens in the Kingdom of God - only heirs as sons and daughters... whether Jewish or Pagan background makes no difference.
 - c. The interaction with Simon the Magician demonstrates that the work of the Spirit is directed by God's Sovereign power... it is not open on any other grounds but the will of God.
 - ii. Philip and the Ethiopian "eunuch" -
 - a. It is really interesting that Philip is told by the Spirit to go up to this officer in the chariot. Phillip is attendant to the Spirit and acts as prodded. Luke

- wants to make sure the reader understands that life in the Kingdom of God is inclusive where eventful service leads to the miraculous. The Spirit continues to move people in such ways today, if we are willing to listen and prudently act in faith.
- b. The translation of “eunuch” is difficult here because of the prohibition against emasculated males being included in or adopted into the Jewish community of faith (Deut 23:1). An emasculated male would not be given access to the Temple for worship. The answer to this may be found in the Septuagint [Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Covenant], where high ranking Pagan officers and government officials were sometimes referred to as “eunuchs.” This not meaning emasculated, but high ranking military or government officers, and that is probably the case here. It is also likely that he was either a Jewish proselyte or convert because he had a copy of the text of Isaiah and had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple... both things very improbable for a non-Jew to do.
 - c. This is the first example of a foreign dignitary miraculously coming to faith, and of an evangelist so moved and directed by the Spirit. Luke punctuates this thought by stating at the conclusion of the official’s conversion, Philip is whisked away by the Spirit.
- c. Saul’s conversion - 9:1-31 - Saul the persecutor becomes Paul the evangelist.
- i. 9:1-14 shows again that the Spirit is the driving force of the Church. These miraculous events demonstrate the power of Messiah coursing through the Spirit into the Church to advance the Kingdom of God.
 - ii. 9:15-16 is a key segment - as Christ came to suffer and die for the expansion of the Kingdom of God, so also some of His chosen leaders will do so also.
 - a. Paul knows this from the beginning... and throws himself into the mission in wild abandon. Such is the depth of his conviction that Jesus is the Messiah. Paul was prepared to suffer anything, to go anywhere, to follow God and honor Him with all he was, had, or will be. Paul’s was a ministry of radical faith.
 - b. Another aspect of this passage is God’s prescriptive will [ordained calling], verses proscriptive will [preferred calling] and permissive will [free will decision]. Life in the Spirit is a combination of these three aspects of God’s will.
 - iii. 9:17-19 the adventure begins for Paul in awe and wonder, with God’s power growing in Paul and with Peter still center stage but with Paul’s mission rising.
 - iv. 9:20-30 demonstrates the inception of the Ministry of Paul – having been introduced in the Stephen stoning and Damascus conversion events, now he began to “proclaim” (speak/preach) “Jesus (content)...
 - a. Luke is teaching that all the Apostles and Disciples had one message – Jesus is the Messiah.
 - b. The Apostles proclaimed this message continually, it is the only message – the Gospel (Good News) is that the Messiah has come, and He is coming back for His own!

- c. The early church was a Spirit driven/led Organism, and would later become an institutional organization. The former was totally new and different; the later was little different from the worldly political power of national governments.

- v. 9:31 is the end of Panel 3.

Panel 4: Extension of the New Covenant Message to the Gentiles - 9:32-12:24 - Peter is still the main voice but Paul's voice is clearly growing.

- a. Ministry of Peter –9:32-11:18 - Peter is clearly the initial pivotal figure along with the 12 especially as the Church known as the “Way” takes hold and develops in Jerusalem. Even as the Way moves out into the Gentile Pagan world, Peter remains the primary spokesman. However, Paul's influence keeps growing as the Holy Spirit is actively expanding the Church.
 - i. 9:32-35 - in Lydda a Gentile paralytic is healed.
 - ii. 9:36-42 in Joppa Dorcas a Gentile woman is raised from the dead.
 - iii. 10:1-8 in Caesarea a Roman Centurion Cornelius is given a vision of an angel inviting him to send for Peter.
 - iv. 10:9-16 is about Peter's vision regarding the sheet descending from Heaven with animals unclean to the Jewish food restrictions... Peter is strongly warned not to call anything unclean that God has made clean.
 - v. 10:17-33 demonstrates that God has ordained a meeting of Peter and the Gentile Centurion. It is likely that Peter might not have accepted Cornelius' invitation had God not prepared Peter with the vision of unclean food made clean by God's decree.
 - vi. 10:34-43 has Peter realizing that God has opened the door for salvation equally with the Gentiles.
 - vii. 10:44-48 is a turning point for the Jewish-Gentile emerging Church... notice in 8:14-16 Philip called for Peter and John to come and lay on hands so the Gentile-Jew converts might receive the Spirit. The notion of God's working through the Gentile world is apparent, and finally in 10:44-47 where the Spirit comes upon the Gentiles before Peter finished preaching – there was no need for him to lay hands on them. Clearly this is a work of God, not of Peter. This is important given the amount of Supernatural set up and push that it took to get Peter pointed the right way. It is now apparent that it is God who saves, heals, anoints and indwells, and our part as witnesses is to teach and preach.
 - viii. 11:1-18 has Peter speaking before the Jerusalem Church professing what God had done. The door is now opened to Gentile evangelism. This turn of events is obviously something God knew the Messianic Jews needed to see and hear.
 - ix. 11:19-30 has the faith expanding through Syria and Antioch where Barnabas sent from Jerusalem and Paul invited into the evangelistic mission. The Church though now a culturally combined society, remains an integrated instrument of the Spirit with members gladly helping the poor and oppressed.
 - x. 12:1-19a Herod has James the brother of John martyred but Peter is miraculously spared, and as the message continues to take hold it is clear that the opposition cannot suspend it or stop it.

Bible Survey - NT 2.1 - Early Church - Acts of the Apostles

- xi. 12:19b-23 has Herod put to death by God demonstrating that God had enough of Satan's puppet king harassing His Church.
- xii. 12:24 is the last verse of Panel 4.

Panel 5 - Part 1 of Extension of the New Covenant Gospel message to the ends of the earth: Cyprus, Galatia, and Gentile Inclusion - Paul and Peter - Acts 12:25-16:5:

- a. 12:25-13:3 - Paul, Barnabus, and John Mark leave Jerusalem and return to Antioch. As Luke is a close associate of Paul's and wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles; John Mark was a close associate of Peter's and wrote the Gospel of Mark.
- b. This passage gives a wonderful insight into the workings and ministry leadership collaboration in the early Church:
 - i. Apostles and elders are center stage in the emerging Church – 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; with Peter still the primary spokesman for the apostles centered at the birthplace of the Church in Jerusalem. However, James the 1/2 brother of Jesus, is the primary spokesman for the elders.
 - ii. As the Apostles died, they were not replaced as at the beginning of the Jerusalem ministry before Pentecost. This is significant and would seem to be a transitional period from "apostolic shepherding" to "elder shepherding."
 - iii. As the Old Covenant and the Law and worship institution changed with the advent of the New Covenant, changes followed in the leadership.
 - a. Leadership - The Sanhedrin 72 Elders are replaced 1st by the Apostles in the early days and then by the Church Elders who convened periodic councils to consider issues and determine courses of action. As Moses was the spokesman for God in the OC, apostles and elders are the spokesmen in the NC under the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Prophets - The OC prophet had the primary responsibility of identifying and anointing the earthly King, and for authoritative determination of the will of the Lord as pertains to His people - exhibited in "Thus says the Lord" to be God's spokesman to direct the King as to God's will. With Messiah having arrived, the last OC prophet was John the Baptist; this part of the ministry ceased. The NC prophet now focused on Word ministry... "Making straight the Path of the Lord."
 - i. Prophecy means "to speak for" or "to be a spokesman" and specifically to be "God's spokesman." Prophecy as a gift is a speaking ministry.
 - ii. Another meaning of "Prophet" is to be a "seer" or one who can see into and relate obscure truth or future events. In biblical framework, these were people who received a message from heaven and were God's spokesmen to the people. In the Pagan framework, these were people who employed divination, trances, etc. to reveal things usually for money, and usually with demonic connection.
 - iii. In the OC the Spirit came upon a Prophet and would give voice to God's will and message for His people. In the NC the Spirit resides continually in all disciples and we all have equal access to the same

- Spirit, but even now there are those who are called and Supernaturally gifted and equipped to minister to the Church... see below 'd'.
- iv. Barnabus was considered among the early Church prophets.
 - v. Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible offers this explanation of regarding Barnabus: *Βαρνάβας* Greek from the Aramamaic *בְּרַ נְבוֹאָה*, meaning *son of prophecy*. This was interpreted by Luke (Acts 4:36) as *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*, meaning "Son of encouragement" (RSV), "exhortation" (ASV), or "consolation" (KJV). This description was intended by Luke not as a scientific etymology but as an indication of Barnabus' character. Barnabus was a noted member of the early Jerusalem church and an active missionary to the Gentiles.
- c. **Teacher - In the early Church, teaching had to do with connecting the OC heritage and the Scriptures into the NC emerging Church as the new people of God.**
- i. Teaching meant you had a treasure of OC knowledge to draw from and the illumination of the Spirit to make it understandable and applicable to the faithful.
 - ii. One reason the long passages of Paul's defense are included in Scripture is the role played by the teacher... essentially they were the "apologists" or defenders of the faith.
 - iii. Paul was considered among the early Church teachers.
 - iv. Thus the pairing of Barnabus and Paul makes great sense in terms of evangelism, and it is apparent that from the earliest times teams were employed pairing different gifted individuals to accomplish God's redemptive work.
- d. **In today's Church - The application of prophecy or the office of prophet and teacher is the ministry of teaching or revealing the truth of God's Word.**
- i. Occasionally some are moved to declare what the Will of the Spirit is in terms of defining issues and ministry in helping to guide individuals and groups - this is still "prophetic ministry."
 - ii. Some are better at mining the truth out of scripture – these are the "Scriptural Exegetes."
 - iii. Some are better at delivering the mined message – these are the "Orators who preach & teach in Homiletics" - this is applying the exegetical work in practical application for the congregation.
 - iv. "Exhorter's" help with the application of the message - they encourage the faith of the people in terms of applying the Word to the practical aspects of an individuals or groups life.
 - v. "Teachers" help make clear the Word of God so the Spirit may apply it to the individuals or group life and ministry. Teaching the Word as preserved in Scripture is different from the homiletic preaching usually associated with conventional weekly church services.

- vi. These gifts are each “Spiritual” because they are bestowed by the Spirit for the edification of the Church. Because one person is not necessarily equipped with all of these gifts, it makes great sense to have a teaching team engaged in presenting God’s Word to the flock in a balanced and comprehensive manner. Hearing from one teacher is monophonic, while hearing from several is stereophonic. As stated above in c:iv, team leadership was employed at the earliest of times in the church.
 - vii. In the Church today, “Apostolic ministry” encompasses a broad use of these gifts in one person usually for the outreach ministry of evangelism and church planting, because one person rarely has all the gifts necessary to preach, teach, lead and evangelize, etc. the local church. Thus it is almost always preferable to have “Ministry Teams” engaged where individual gifts are combined and directed.
- c. 13:4-12 - Ministry of the team on Cyprus - Paul’s worth demonstrated:
- i. V4 - again demonstrates the priority of the Spirit as the active agent in the Church. Luke wants his readers to understand that the Spirit is in complete control of the Church through those who are indwelt and obedient to His voice.
 - ii. V5 - confirms that they again “proclaimed the Word of God” - that is the Gospel of Jesus.
 - iii. 6-12 - develops the story of a Roman Pro-Counsel” Sergius Paulus and one of his attendants, a Jewish “sorcerer” named “Bar Jesus” but is called “Elymas” which means “sorcerer, magician, and fortune teller.” In this short story Luke conveys several key ideas:
 - a. The Roman Pro-Counsel while not an enemy of Christ was wary of the Jews who were hard to manage in the best of circumstances. The text identifies him as an intelligent man, and he showed wisdom by ordering the evangelists to come to him to understand their motives in their tour through his domain.
 - b. The Jewish attendant Elymas practiced sorcery, magic and fortune telling which was not an accepted Jewish practice being illegal under Jewish Law; but acceptable under Roman law. Luke’s readers would have recognized this man as a seedy and unreliable character.
 - c. Saul/Paul as a Jew was a learned Pharisee leader, and as a Roman citizen he had all the rights and privileges associated with it. Paul’s pronouncement against Elymas validates both his Roman authority over the Jews but also his Spiritual authority over evil.
 - d. The result is the Pro-Counsel observes Paul’s pronouncement over his attendant, and he understands and more importantly he believes and becomes a Christian. Paul’s dual citizenship allowed this event to unfold.
- d. 13:13-52 - Ministry of the team in Pisidian-Antioch - the action now begins with Paul:
- i. Paul and Barnabus in the local synagogue leads to Paul’s evangelistic preaching - 13:13-41.
 - ii. The initial response of the Jews is favorable and the team is invited back for more discussion - 13:42-43.

- iii. Luke then shows that the Gentiles are eager to hear God's word and the Jews are exposed as being jealous because of the word Paul preached - 13:44-45.
 - iv. The Jews who rejected Jesus in Jerusalem, are now rejecting the Word of God preached by Paul and his team. The Jewish leaders persecution of the Way leads to the team's symbolic statement of shaking the dust off their feet... indicating that God was rejecting the faithless Jews (Matt 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5). The ministry now takes a turn from the Jews to the Gentiles who receive the Good news gladly - 13:46-51.
 - v. This transition is confirmed in the disciples being "filled" with joy and the Spirit - 13:52.
- e. 14:1-7 - Ministry of the team in Iconium - Paul is now depicted as the leader with Barnabus in a supporting role.
- i. 14:1 indicates the Jewish 1st priority that Jesus also displayed. The Jews had the opportunity to hear and respond, and then the mission went out to the Gentiles. It is interesting that many Jews responded favorably to the Gospel message, and that many also took exception to the Gentile inclusion... this was a long-time problem that developed out of the Jew's world view as the exclusive people of God.
 - ii. 14:2 continues the expansion amid opposition theme of the Gospel.
 - iii. 14:3 is an important reminder for evangelists of all ages - namely that as witnesses we are to "speak boldly" while the Lord brings home conviction to individual lives.
 - a. The Greek text has the verb *παρησιάζομαι* translated as "to speak boldly," or more precisely "to preach fearlessly or courageously." The intent of this statement is to demonstrate that the evangelists were doing their part, and that the Spirit was upholding and supporting them. The picture is a partnership in the Spirit, where the Spirit provided signs and wonders to confirm the message preached by the evangelists.
 - b. Our responsibility as ministers of the Gospel is to "witness" that is to speak with Grace and conviction the Word God has planted in our hearts... or in other words to speak what we know and have experienced.
 - c. This command to speak boldly is used 7 times in Acts (9:27 & 28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26); and once each in Ephesians (6:20), and in 1st Thessalonians (2:2).
 - d. As ministers [or ambassadors] of the Gospel, the degree of our personal commitment is evidenced with the manner in which we witness (see Spiritual Formation 1.5 "prayer practicum 3 - developing spiritual vitality). Knowing God Personally and intimately is what is at the heart of this, it is an expression of a 1st hand experiential relationship instead of merely knowing something about God in a 2nd hand manner.
 - e. Yet it is always God's Spirit that empowers us and convicts others. Our responsibility is to be faithful witnesses, God's responsibility is to convict and transform people in the transformation cycle of conviction-remorse-repentance-restoration-reconciliation (see Spiritual Formation 2.2 "Forgiveness study and practicum").

- iv. 14:4-7 shows the Gospel message has the power to polarize people into the camps of “sheep” [the people who respond to God’s Grace] and the “goats” [those who refuse God and oppose His will]. This is true of the Church and the world throughout the ages. However the polarization is not apparent until the Word is preached and responded to.
- f. 14:8-21a - Ministry of the team in Lystra and Derbe (Galatia).
 - i. 14:8-10 is an interesting story where the text says that the Spirit through Paul heals a man crippled from birth, somewhat reprising the miracle of Jesus who healed a man blind from birth (John 9:1); and where Peter healed a man born crippled (Acts 3:1-8). In the Jewish faith world view, one was born with or suffered such defects as a result of sin curse... either by the parents of the person or the individual them self (John 9:2). By healing one so cursed, they are challenging the Jews understanding of the Law and proving Grace to be superior to the Law.
 - ii. 14:11-18 plays off a local known fable where the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes visited the city disguised as men who punished the inhabitants for not welcoming them. The wild response of the city is to avoid punishment again.
 - iii. 14:19 demonstrates the spiritual opposition that continued to follow Paul and Barnabus, and also proved the mortality of the evangelists.
 - iv. 14:20-21 again demonstrates that God is in control of the acts of men, and no doubt strengthened the faith of the disciples and brought fear and repentance to the opposition in the city.
- g. 14:21b-28 - Ministry of the Kingdom of God flourishes.
- h. 15:1-21 - The first controversy of the early Church - how much of the Mosaic Law and Old Covenant remain as constraints and standards of identity for the Church?
 - i. Messianic Jews come down from Judea and preach circumcision + Grace.
 - ii. Paul and Barnabus sent to Jerusalem to confer with the Apostles as to what standards will apply to Gentile converts.
 - iii. This is the first council of elders of the emerging Church and becomes a basis for the Synods of the Church.
 - iv. The words of Peter acknowledge that the Law was a burden the Jews could not carry, and since God accepted the Gentiles as equal members of the Kingdom, no further constraints should be enforced.
 - v. James weighs in quoting Amos 9:11-12 (Acts 15:15-18) confirming as an elder how the OT prophecy comes into play. This is a great example of the ministry of an elder.
 - vi. Peter and James words are embraced by the council, but because of the fierce opposition of the Judaizers - those who argued of the continuation of the Law + Grace, to promote harmony in the Church they gave in to minimal constraints prohibiting:
 - a. Food polluted by idols - due to an historical problem that lead to syncretism in Judaism.
 - b. Sexual immorality - a problem due to the cultural context of Pagan worship in the cities in which the Gentile Church was gaining traction.

- c. **Meat of strangled animals and consumption of blood - both hailing from Jewish food preparation prohibitions.**
- vii. **Why these 4 abstentions? Circumcision seems really not to fit with the 3 others... what is the significance?**
 - a. **The church is providing a new covenant symbol – where repentance, baptism, and sealing with the Holy Spirit are testimony to true faith.**
 - b. **These abstentions are symbols of the faith community’s counter-cultural position. They are everyday evidence of our “called-out” lives... even though entrance into the community of Grace is a onetime event. Thus the symbol is an ongoing reminder of how the community is different from the surrounding community.**
 - c. **What this means is that Christians aren’t meant to be like everyone else, we’re called to be different. We have a higher calling and should not descend into the norm of popular culture.**
 - d. **Circumcision was a sign in the flesh of the Abrahamic covenant. These abstentions called pagan believers to demonstrate their difference from their pagan past.**
- viii. **These abstentions were intended to demonstrate a changed lifestyle and was their sign to their community.**
- ix. **Zondervan’s Expository Commentary states of this compromise: To sum up, we may say that two types of "necessary" questions were raised at the Jerusalem Council. The first had to do with the theological necessity of circumcision and the Jewish law for salvation, and that was rejected. The second had to do with the practical necessity of Gentile Christians to abstain from certain practices for the sake of Jewish-Gentile fellowship in the church and the Jewish Christian mission throughout the Diaspora, and that was approved.**
- i. **15:22-29 - Is the summary statement of the compromise between the Judaizers Law + Grace position, and the Grace alone position. This council compromise is an important reminder for the Church today:**
 - i. **Understand the theological imperatives underlying any controversy.**
 - ii. **Always seek to maintain unity of faith, and accept alternate practices where they don’t compromise what is foundationally true.**
 - iii. **Understand that there will always be differences in faith practices, but do not allow those to alienate groups or denigrate truth.**
 - iv. **Accept that there will always be theological questions, but there are ways we can minimize their destruction of the unity of the Body and/or the disruption of fellowship among believers.**
[see explanation and discussion under [Biblical Literacy/Theology/Introduction to Theology](#)].
- j. **15:30-35 - the result of the agreement is rejoicing among the faithful.**
- k. **15:36-41 - However, serious differences prevented Paul and Barnabus from continuing their ministry as a unified team. The result is that Barnabus and John Mark split as one**

team, and Paul and Silas as another. Though unfortunate, as two teams they now may evangelize a much larger area.

- I. 16:1-5 - Timothy is added to the team of Paul and Silas, and Paul is shown here as being in submission to the Jerusalem council in having Timothy circumcised so as not to unnecessarily offend the Messianic Jews.
 - i. This is an important and often overlooked leadership insight. Christians and even their leaders are not meant to be independent agents of the Gospel. Christians are intended to live in community in submission first to the Spirit and secondly to a elder mentor, and thirdly to one another in love. Submission is not merely hierarchical oversight to a church board. There is great value to mature oversight.
 - ii. Paul could have ignored the Messianic Jew's problem of the merging of Jew [chosen ones] and Gentile [all the others] into one unified organic Body of believers. In his desire for unity and peace in the body, he acquiesced and had Timothy circumcised... a practice he elsewhere stated had no value - see Rom 2:25ff, 4:11; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 2:12, 5:6ff; Eph 2:11; Phil 3:3; Col 2:11; Tim 1:10. Obviously this was an important topic for the Church as it appeared in so many of Paul's writings.

Panel 6 - Part 2 of the Extension of the New covenant Message to the ends of the earth - Greece and Ephesus - Paul's ministry is now the focus of Luke's story - 16:6-19:20.

- a. 16:6-10 - notice the active role of the Spirit in guidance of Paul and the evangelist's ministry:
 - i. 16:6-8 - indicates that Paul was in a dependent submission relationship with God, and the Spirit was actively guiding him.
 - a. It seems obvious that Paul had a strategic plan that he had developed most likely with help and input from his team and from the elders in Jerusalem. Strategic planning is always a good foundation! God gave us a brain and He expects us to use it.
 - b. More importantly, Paul was also in a submissional/dependent relationship with God... and was sensitive to the Spirit's promptings. Paul allowed the Spirit to direct his mission. God gave us a heart that with careful nurturing remains tethered to His Heart... this allows us to remain submitted in the center of God's will.
 - c. This combination of mission strategic planning and Spirit guidance is critical to all ministry.
 - ii. 16:9-10 - tells us that Paul after his obedience to the Spirit, had a Spiritual vision. Paul understood this as a "Calling" to Macedonia and acted on it.
 - a. This takes great maturity... too many baby Christians launch out in well intentioned but ill-advised actions.
 - b. God is in control of His Church - it is important for mature Christians to remain centered on God, seeking His Heart, and remain sensitive and willing to submit to His calling when revealed.
 - c. See Spiritual Formation/SF 1.9 - Prayer Practicum 7 - Discerning the Spirit of God in Decision Making.

- b. **16:11-40 - ministry in Philippi:**
 - iii. **16:11-15 - in response to the team's obedience in going to Macedonia, and of their practice of worshipping on the Sabbath, they encountered Lydia who responded to the team's evangelistic message. This was a Spiritual encounter brought about by obedience to the Spirit.**
 - iv. **16:16-19 - the "fortune telling girl" or "seer" had a "spirit" that enabled her to speak accurately of unknown events.**
 - a. **Many Christians presume that there is no "spiritual reality" in Pagan faiths. In this passage it is taken for granted that this woman was not insane, and that she had a genuine spiritual gift.**
 - b. **The text makes it apparent that the girl rightly understood who Paul and his team were and who they served. Paul's exorcism makes it apparent that the spirit was demonic.**
 - c. **It is important to understand that there is an objective reality of spiritual life and power in Pagan faiths. It is not merely superstition or delusion. There is something real there.**
 - d. **Pagan faiths promised a positive benefit with tangible results... and they provided a modicum of validation. However, they did so at the destruction of the people involved, as it is equally apparent that the girl was a slave both to the demon who possessed her and the men who used her for their personal benefit.**
 - e. **This is not merely the "dark side" of spiritual reality, it is the evil that opposes God and destroys those who serve it. In the end we all serve someone - we either serve Jesus, or the maligned usurper Satan.**
 - v. **16:20-40 - reveals more of the opposition of the world amid growth of the Kingdom of God confrontation. Evil exists in many forms including Pagan spiritualism and materialism and will not go quietly, but we can recognize it and have confidence that God will prevail... because "greater is He [Jesus] who is in us, than he [Satan] who is in the world" - see 1 John 4:1-6: Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.**
- c. **17:1-15 - Ministry in Thessalonica and Berea:**
 - i. **17:1-4 - demonstrates Paul's normal practice of searching for a Jewish community in each new city he entered and begin there his evangelistic apologetic reasoning**

from the Scripture that Jesus was the Messiah. The text says a number of the Jews accepted and believed along with a number of “God fearing Greeks and prominent women.”

- a. The Jews had been scattered among the Pagan nations since the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the deportations that resulted in the 8th and 6th centuries BCE. The “Diaspora” is a term that refers to the dispersion [scattering] of the Jews outside of Jerusalem during the 1st century BCE and 1st century AD under Greco-Roman rule.
 - b. Wherever the Jews went they would congregate together in enclaves to protect their heritage and identity. Synagogue worship on the Sabbath as well as other days of the week or during festivals were also common.
 - c. These communities would attract and encourage “Proselytes” those non-Jews who were interested in the faith or in the process of converting to Judaism. “God fearing Greeks” would typically be proselytes.
 - d. “Prominent women” would refer to women whose husbands or families were in high social/political standing and thereby desirable to be associated with. A number of these also became proselytes.
 - e. Jews were generally not well liked or accepted in Pagan communities because they would keep to themselves and practice their own faith and cultural heritage. Associating with prominent people helped them gain acceptance in their adopted cities.
- ii. 17:5-9 - indicates that some of the Jews resented the inroads the evangelists were making with the Greeks, and instigated a commotion so as to discredit Christians. Another example of the opposition amid growth the Church sustained in the 1st century AD.
 - iii. 17:10-12 - reveals that the Bereans were more responsive and nobler than the Thessalonians.
 - iv. 17:13-15 - even though a Church was established in Thessalonica, the fact that the Jews would travel the some 45 minutes to make trouble for the evangelists indicates the Thessalonian Church had to have contended with strong opposition.
- d. 17:16-34 - Ministry in Athens:
 - i. 17:21 - While in Athens Paul engages the Synagogue and the public in his evangelism about the Gospel. Luke makes an interesting comment about the Athenians "doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas."
 - a. This reveals much of the Athenians who loved to think and talk, but evidently were challenged about taking action. Luke’s comment about the Athenians is confirmed by Cleon... a fifth-century B.C. politician and general in his evaluation of his fellow Athenians; and also by Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.).
 - b. Pagan and so called “Folk Religions” typically have a hierarchy of gods with city-states and regions adopting a patron god who looks out for them. The Athenians were conscious of the possibility of overlooking and thereby offending a god, so this notion of an altar to “an unknown god” was sort of an insurance policy.

- c. The altar originated several hundred years earlier when a severe plague broke out in Athens that decimated the populace. They presumed they had offended some god and began a protracted process of sacrificing hordes of animals in a vain attempt to placate the offended god.
 - d. Epimenides was a 6th century BCE Greek seer and philosopher-poet of great intellect and insight, who the Athenians sought out to solve their plague problem. Epimenides was from the Greek Island of Crete and the city of Knossos an ancient Minoan city. Acknowledging the futility of the Athenian's sacrificial acts, Epimenides proposed a means for understanding their problem in three presumptions:
 - i. That there was another god involved in the plague that was unknown to them.
 - ii. This unknown god is great enough and good enough to do something about the plague.
 - iii. Any god great enough and good enough to do something about the plague is also great enough and good enough to smile upon us in our ignorance... if we acknowledge our ignorance and call upon him.
 - e. Epimenides solution was to set free a flock of multicolored sheep on the side of Mars Hill with the prayer that the unknown god would forgive them and take pity on them in their ignorance. He asked for a sign that from the hungry sheep god would choose those he wanted to lay in the luxurious grass at the place of god's choosing instead of eating, which would obviously be the natural thing for them to do. This supernatural event would result in these chosen sheep to be sacrificed in gratitude. The humility of the populace and the wisdom of Epimenides was answered with relief of the plague and the altar commemorated the event.
 - f. Paul used his knowledge of this event to shame the smug Athenians into hearing his argument... a wise and astute move indeed! But this provides an important reminder for the evangelist... know your history and understand the people you are attempting to connect with. The message must be meaningful to them to gain traction.
- ii. 17:23b - Paul's statement "what you worship in ignorance I will proclaim to you in knowledge" caught their attention based on the Epimenides saga. Paul then launches into a revelation on the true nature of God.
 - iii. 17:31-32 - indicates that after Paul's long evangelistic statement, a number refused his argument based on the "resurrection of the dead."
 - a. Greek philosophy and religious belief was based on a dualistic conception of the cosmos - natural (or material), and supernatural (or immaterial). The body thus had both a material (or physical) component, and a spiritual (or immaterial) component.
 - b. They held the belief that the spirit was eternal and would enter into the shadow world [Hades] at death. They believed that the spirit was and the spiritual life was the important thing, not the material; and also that the

life a person had lived in the material world, would be reflected in the spiritual world.

- c. For the Greeks and Romans, death was not to be feared by people of good nature, thus Paul's argument of a fallen nature needing redemption for physical resurrection was a concept that took some while to sink in. Ultimately many came to faith.
- e. **18:1-22 - Ministry in Corinth:**
 - i. As Paul enters Corinth which was the Roman Provincial Capital of Achaia, where he meets a Messianic-Jewish couple who had been forced out of Rome in 49 AD due to conflicts in the Jewish community most likely between the Messianic Jews and those who rejected Jesus as Messiah. This couple [Aquila and Priscilla] were "tentmakers" with whom Paul worked and lived while there. It is likely that Aquila and Priscilla were the source and impetus of Paul's writing to the Roman church.
 - ii. Corinth was a city known for its Pagan sexual debauchery. This would have presented quite a moral challenge for the established Jewish and fledgling Messianic-Jewish community. Steadfastly protecting their identity would be one way to ensure they did not get caught up in "syncretism" - the merging of Pagan concepts with their own faith. This would have been particularly hard on the Pagan converts.
- f. **Chap 18:24-28 - Ministry of Apollos** – an educated Jew named Apollos taught accurately about Jesus but knew only the "baptism of John."
 - i. Being baptized into the name of Jesus was a formal identification in the OT tradition of the "scapegoat" (Leviticus 16) and "Passover lamb" (Exodus 12). This dealt with the necessary atonement before God.
 - ii. The coming of the Messiah and His crucifixion in Jerusalem was the pivotal moment in redemptive history. As news radiated out into the known world, there were moments like this where eye witnesses had the opportunity to correct the partial understanding or experience of other believers.
- g. **Chap 19:1-20 - Ministry in Ephesus:**
 - i. 19:2 – "did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed and were baptized?" – Pauline theology indicates that the indwelling of the Spirit is "THE SIGN" of true belief.
 - ii. 19:7 – Holy Spirit comes when Paul lays his hands on them and then evidence of the Spirit is demonstrated.
 - a. Laying on of hands – the conferring of the Spirit is sometimes spontaneous, and sometimes deliberate – but the point is that God is doing the work, and that all who participate are equally brothers.
 - b. Speaking in tongues – while Pagan societies in their worship often used "Glossolalia" the speaking in "ecstatic utterances," these were not recognized as known languages as what occurred at Pentecost. This Spirit led unification of language is the sign of the reversal of the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:9).
 - c. In 1st Corinthians 12, Paul teaches that the Spirit seals believers at the moment of their belief. Spiritual giftings are given to believers so they may

be equipped for ministry in the Church. These are Supernatural gifts that were not necessarily present before the persons Spiritual Birthday. Then in Philippians 1:6 Paul teaches that the security of salvation is based on God, not on our human works, though we can cooperate with the Spirit and allow Him to move us more forcefully into the Spirit life.

- d. A key question asks whether these are “Descriptive or Prescriptive” events?
 - i. Descriptive says what has happened, while Prescriptive says how things should happen.
 - ii. This seeming 2-step process of 1) coming to faith and it’s sealing with the Spirit, and 2) the exhibition of Spiritual Life in giftedness - is more about punctuating or ratifying the occurrences as Christian Life radiates outward as being equal with what occurred in Jerusalem at Pentecost with the 12. This is not a different experience, just a different manifestation of it.
 - iii. The author is teaching that the truth was radiating outward from Jerusalem (Temple-Spiritual center) through Judea (primarily Jews), to Samaria (mixed Jews/Gentiles), then outward to Asia & Greece (Gentiles).
 - iv. Again, it is important to emphasize that it is not Peter or Paul giving the Spirit; it is always God giving the Spirit... though we may have the blessing of being a facilitating agent and partner in His ministry.
- iii. 19:8-10 represents 2 ½ years of ministry: The message here is that being obedient and consistently working in your calling often takes time before it comes to fruition.
- iv. 19:11-20 demonstrates that the miraculous ultimately confirms the growth in time. The model is to stay true to your calling.
 - a. 13-16 is an interesting story within a story - why were these prominent Jews invoking Jesus Name? Presumably their motivation was personal, and not about building the Kingdom of God. That they were beaten and driven away in humility demonstrates their disingenuous nature, and the reality of Spiritual conflict between God and evil is hereby reinforced.
 - b. 17-20 demonstrates the need for separation of Pagan practices from True Spirituality in Jesus... the two are polar opposites. The work of the Spirit is to polarize sheep from goats.

Panel 7 - 19:21-28:31 - Part 3 Extension of the New Covenant Message to the ends of the Earth - Rome:

- a. 19:23-41 - Confrontation of “The Way” and the enterprise of Pagan idolatry.
- b. 20:1-21:16 - Paul’s journey toward Jerusalem.
- c. 21:17-23:11 - Trouble brewing in Jerusalem.
- d. 23:12-26:32 - Paul’s trial in Caesarea.
- e. 27:1-28:15 - Paul’s journey to Rome.
- f. 28:16-31 - Paul’s ministry in Rome.