

# ACTS

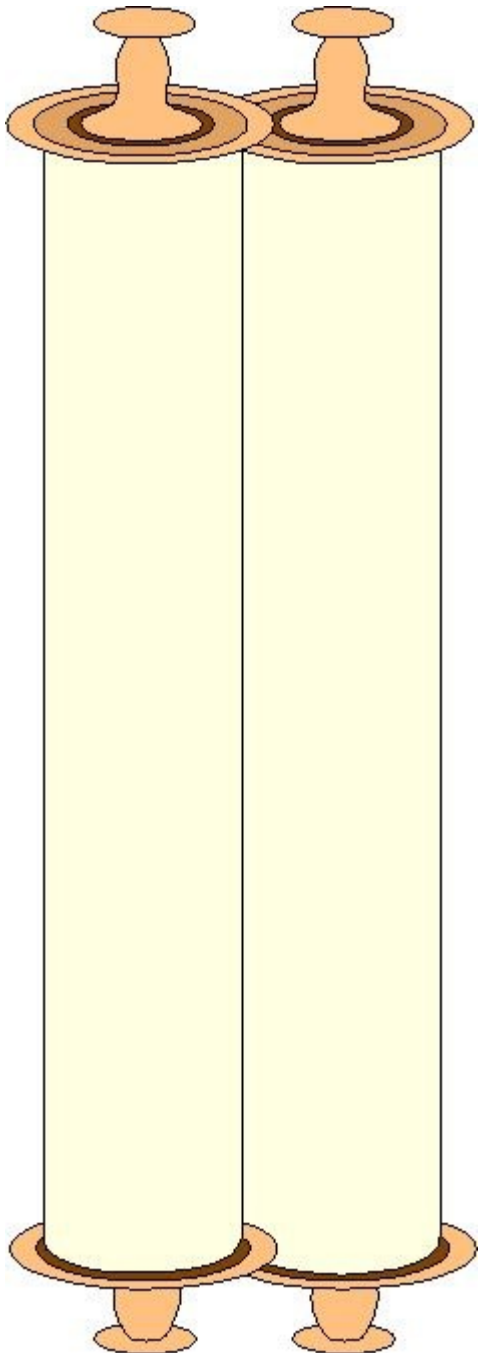
**A Bible Study**

**Part 1.**

**Chapters 1-12**



*John West 2020*



## ACTS

Acts was written by Luke, the author of the third Gospel. He accompanied the apostle Paul at various times on his missionary travels and these occasions can be identified in the 'we' passages 16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, 27:1 to 28:16. Paul refers to him as "doctor" in Colossians 4:14.

Luke's Gospel was addressed to Theophilus and was introduced as follows:-

*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

Acts is addressed to the same person (probably a person of some standing—"most excellent Theophilus"). Luke-Acts could have been one account, limited by the size of a scroll, breaking it down into two parts. Some have thought that because it mentions nothing of Paul's martyrdom (around 67AD) and not even the outcome of his trial in Rome, that Acts was probably written around 63AD. Others think that Luke deliberately left his account of the spread of the gospel and Paul's ministry open-ended and that Acts therefore could have been written around 70AD or later.

## AN OUTLINE OF ACTS *John West 2020*

**JERUSALEM:** 1 The Ascension. Matthias Chosen.

2 Pentecost

3 Crippled beggar

4 Peter & John Sanhedrin

5 Ananias & Sapphira. Jailing

6 Deacons. Stephen arrested

7 Stephen's defence, stoning

**SAMARIA**

8 Persecution & scattering. Philip

Samaritan 'Pentecost'. Ethiopian.

**DAMASCUS**

9 Saul/Paul's conversion

**LYDDA/JOPPA**

Peter healing

**CAESAREA**

10 Cornelius. Gentile 'Pentecost'

**JERUSALEM**

11 Peter's account of the Gentiles

**ANTIOCH**

Church growth. Barnabas sent

**JERUSALEM**

12 Peter's escape from prison

**FIRST JOURNEY 46-48** Paul and Barnabas (John Mark)

13 **CYPRUS, PISIDIAN ANTIOCH**

14 **ICONIUM, LYSTRA & DERBE, ANTIOCH (SYRIA)**

15 **JERUSALEM—Council**

**SECOND JOURNEY 49-52** Paul and Silas

SYRIA, CILICIA

16 **DERBE, LYSTRA** Timothy

PHRYGIA, GALATIA, **TROAS** Vision Macedonian

SAMOTHRAE, NEAPOLIS

**PHILIPPI (MACEDONIA)** Lydia, Prison, Jailor

17 **AMPHIPOLIS, APOLLONIA**

**THESSALONICA** Rioting

**BEREA** More opposition

**ATHENS** Preaching the unknown God

18 **CORINTH** Aquila & Priscilla, Crispus,

**EPHESUS** Reasoning at the synagogue. Apollos

CAESAREA, ANTIOCH,

**THIRD JOURNEY 53-57**

GALATIA, PHRYGIA

19 **EPHESUS** Two years preaching and miracles

Demetrius stirs trouble

20 **MACEDONIA,**

**GREECE (Corinth?),**

**MACEDONIA (Philippi)**

**TROAS** Eutychus raised

ASSOS, MITYLENE, KIOS, SAMOS,

**MILETUS** Met Ephesian elders

21 **COS, RHODES, PATARA, TYRE, PTOLEMAIS**

**CAESAREA** Prophets' warnings

**JERUSALEM** Paul arrested

22 Addresses the people

23 Addresses the Sanhedrin. Plot to kill.

**CAESAREA** Letter to Felix

24 Trial before Felix

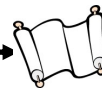
25 Trial before Festus. Before Agrippa

26 Paul's testimony to Agrippa

27 **En route to ROME** Shipwreck

28 **MALTA**

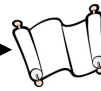
to **ROME**



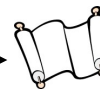
**Galatians 48-9?**



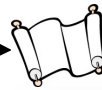
Athens



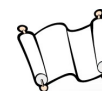
**1&2 Thessalonians 51-52**



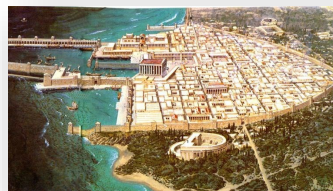
**1 Corinthians 55**



**Romans 57**



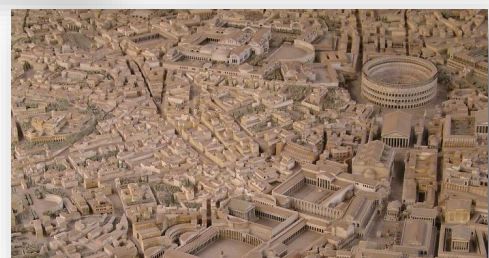
**2 Corinthians 55**



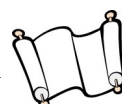
Caesarea



Ephesus



Rome



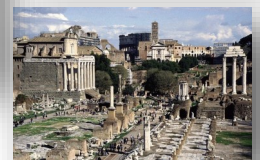
**Ephesians Colossians Philemon 60 Philippians 61**  
**1 Timothy 63-65 2 Timothy 66-67**



Philippi



Corinth



Thessalonica



## THE ASCENSION

1. Read through Luke's introduction to his Gospel (quoted on page 1) and compare it to his introduction to Acts (1:1-2). What do these passages tell you about Luke's style of writing? What at this stage do you think is his purpose in penning Acts?
2. When you read 1:3, what other purpose do you see in Luke writing Acts?
3. Read 1:4-8. Why do you think that Jesus told "these men" to wait? What did they expect was going to happen and what did Jesus have in mind for them? Do we learn anything from this about our ministry as a church in the world?
4. Read 1:10-11. Why did Jesus leave them? Refer to v8 and also John 16:7-15.
5. Read 1:15-26. How was the replacement for Judas Iscariot chosen? Give reasons why you would or wouldn't recommend this process for the church today, in appointing people to positions of ministry?
6. How many and who made up the company of those who were believers and what were they doing? (v12-15) What might we learn from this?



Mount of Olives



Model of old Jerusalem

## PENTECOST

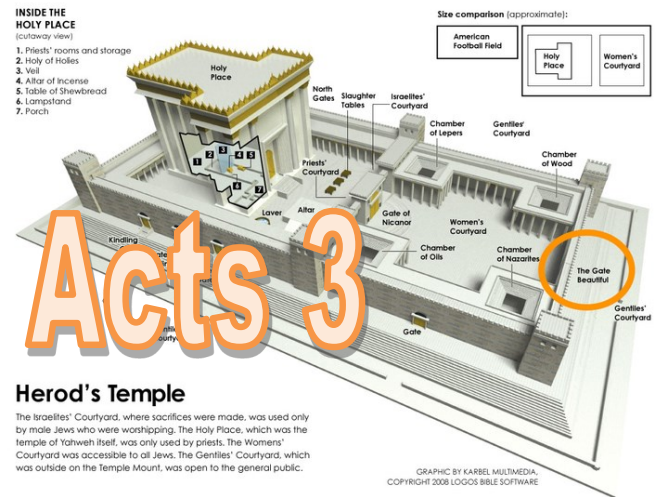
The Day of Pentecost was the 50th day after the Sabbath of the Passover week (ie a Sunday). Pentecost was a Week of Harvest (Exodus 23:16 also known as the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:10) and the day of firstfruits (Numbers 28:26). Jews and Jewish converts (proselytes) would come from around the Mediterranean to celebrate. Presumably those who were “altogether” were those mentioned in 1:14-15.



1. Read 2:1-4 and comment on the experience here of being filled with the Spirit. Why do you think that the Spirit enabled them to speak in tongues? (vv5-12). Do you think that the church needs these experiences (the filling and tongues) today and if so, why and how might they happen? What might it look like if this happened in your church?
2. Comment on the change that took place in the disciples.
3. Read 2:14-26 and list the main points that Peter makes in his address to those who gathered. What does this teach us about the essentials of the gospel message?
4. Bearing in mind that Peter was speaking to a Jewish audience, are there any things we might change in our presentation about Jesus to people in our culture?
5. V17 seems to indicate that Peter saw that they were living in “the last days” and that we still live in that period. What did Joel see as signs of this age in which they and we live? (vv17-21) .
5. Read 2:37-41 What did Peter say was the appropriate response to the message?
6. What promises were given?
7. Read vv42-47. What were the results for those who responded?
8. Do we see all these things happening today? Should we? And if so, how might they come about?

## HEALING THE CRIPPLED MAN

1. Read 3:1-10. What do you think this story tells us about the crippled man's expectations and about our priorities when it comes to what we really need.
2. Read 3:11-26 How does Peter use the opportunity with a crowd gathering?
3. What are the main points that Peter includes in his address here? What does he include, which is of relevance to his Jewish listeners? How do his points compare with his preaching on the Day of Pentecost?
4. What response is Peter looking for? v19, v26.
5. In v16, whose faith is being referred to? The man's? or Peter's and John's?
6. What part does faith play in healing (or prayer generally?) How much faith do you need? Who needs to have faith, the sick person or the one praying, or both?
7. Discuss the role of healing in Christian ministry. What might be the advantages and pitfalls? How does Peter avoid those pitfalls here?



## ON TRIAL

The Sadducees were a Jewish sect from the priestly line and controlled the Temple. They did not believe in resurrection. The captain of the temple guard ranked just below the high priest. The Sanhedrin made up of rulers, elders and teachers made up the Jewish supreme court. Notice how many new believers eventuated from Peter's preaching. (v4)



1. Read 4:1-12 As Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin, how does Peter use this opportunity to proclaim the gospel? What are his main points?
2. Read 4:13-21 When is it right to defy the authorities and when is it wrong? (refer also to Romans 13:1-7).
3. Read 4:23-31 The response of the believers to the order to desist preaching about Jesus was to pray? Notice the structure of the prayer. How do they address God before they request anything? Then, what do they ask for?
4. What were the results of their prayers? Recount a time when you have experienced prayer that greatly encouraged you in your Christian life and witness.
5. Read 4:32-37 What were the features of the early church fellowship? Should we still be doing these sorts of things in this day and age? Have circumstances changed? Where have you seen Christian sharing like this?

## ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA. MORE TRIALS

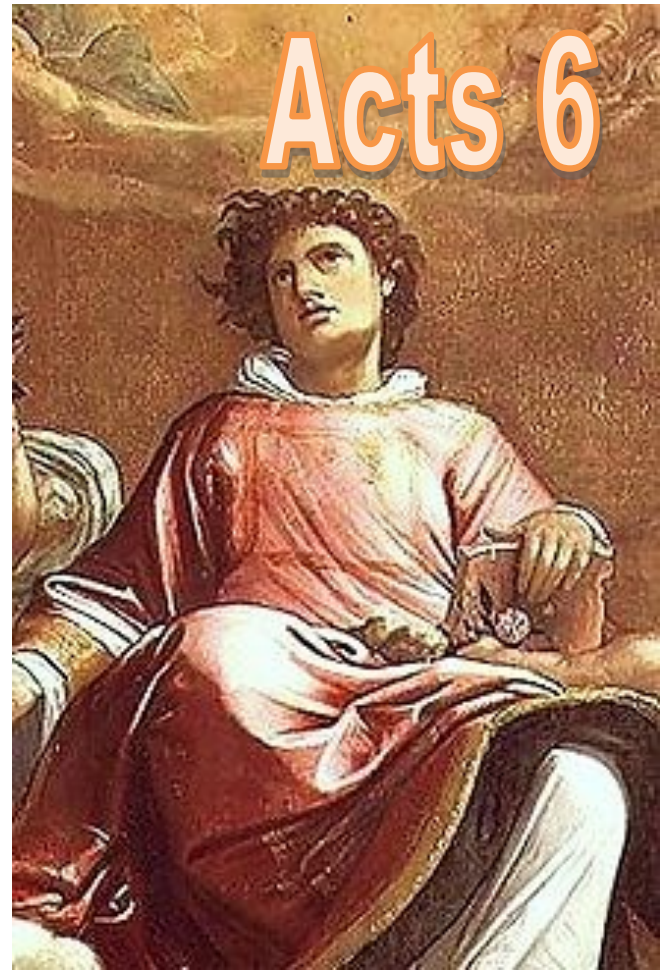
1. Read 5:1-11 This story may seem harsh to us. Why might such measures have been necessary at this stage of the Church's development? What was the underlying problem with Ananias and Sapphira?
2. Read 5:12-16 What were some of the events following the encounters in vv1-11? Tell of when you may have experienced or read about times when the church grew in numbers? How did it come about?
3. Read 5:17-28 What was motivating the Sanhedrin to behave as they did? V17. Can you recount a time when you were motivated by similar emotions? How may we combat those feelings?
4. Read 5:29-32 What is the content of this speech by Peter and the others? What are the similarities with previous speeches?
5. What do you think it means to say that the Holy Spirit is a witness to these things. (v32)
6. Read 5:33-39 How relevant is Gamaliel's advice to situations and movements that arise in the church today?
7. Read 5:40-42 Discuss how persecution may strengthen the church.





## DEACONS CHOSEN—STEPHEN

1. Read 6:1-7 What was the ministry priority for the twelve disciples/apostles?
2. What were the qualifications required for those ensuring a fair distribution of food to the most vulnerable? How does this compare with the qualifications we look for in parish ministry positions (Councils, Op Shops, Welcomers etc) or diocesan jobs (Samaritans, Aged Care, Schools etc) today?
3. What appeared to be the result of their decisions? (v7) Why do think the one thing led to the other?
4. Read 6:8-15 What else was Stephen able to do as well as serve?
5. What two specific charges were brought against Stephen?



## STEPHEN'S DEFENCE

1. Read 7:1-47 And write down the main events in Stephen's history lesson to the Sanhedrin.
2. Bearing in mind the accusations made against him in the previous chapter, explain how Stephen's history lesson, and especially his conclusions in 7:48-53 answer the charges.
3. What conclusions may we draw from vv48-50 about our church buildings and other holy places?
4. Read 7:54 to 8:1 What else do we learn about the character of Stephen? What may we learn from him
5. Why do you think Luke mentions Saul's (Paul's) part in the killing of Stephen?



## SCATTERING

1. Read 8:1-8 How did the early church grow through persecution? How may hardship in the world (amongst believers and unbelievers) lead to growth today?
2. Read 8:9-25 What do you think Simon saw that caused him to believe?
3. Why do you think it was important for Peter and John to go and pray that the Samaritans receive the Spirit vv14-17? Why did they not receive the Spirit at their baptism in Jesus' name?
4. Read 8:18-25 What do think Simon saw that impressed him so much? What was wrong with his attitude? What might be the dangers for us as we observe dramatic demonstrations of God's Spirit at work?
5. Philip was, like Stephen, one of the seven chosen to serve (6:5). Notice his ministry in 8:5-8. Read 8:26-40 and comment on the way he was guided to speak to the Ethiopian (who may have been a convert to Judaism). Share times when you may have felt God's prompting to speak to someone.
6. Read Isaiah 53 and answer the Ethiopian's question in 8:34.
7. Within a short space of time the gospel has gone from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria. Now it is being carried to Ethiopia by this new convert. Can you recount other times when the gospel has spread far and wide?



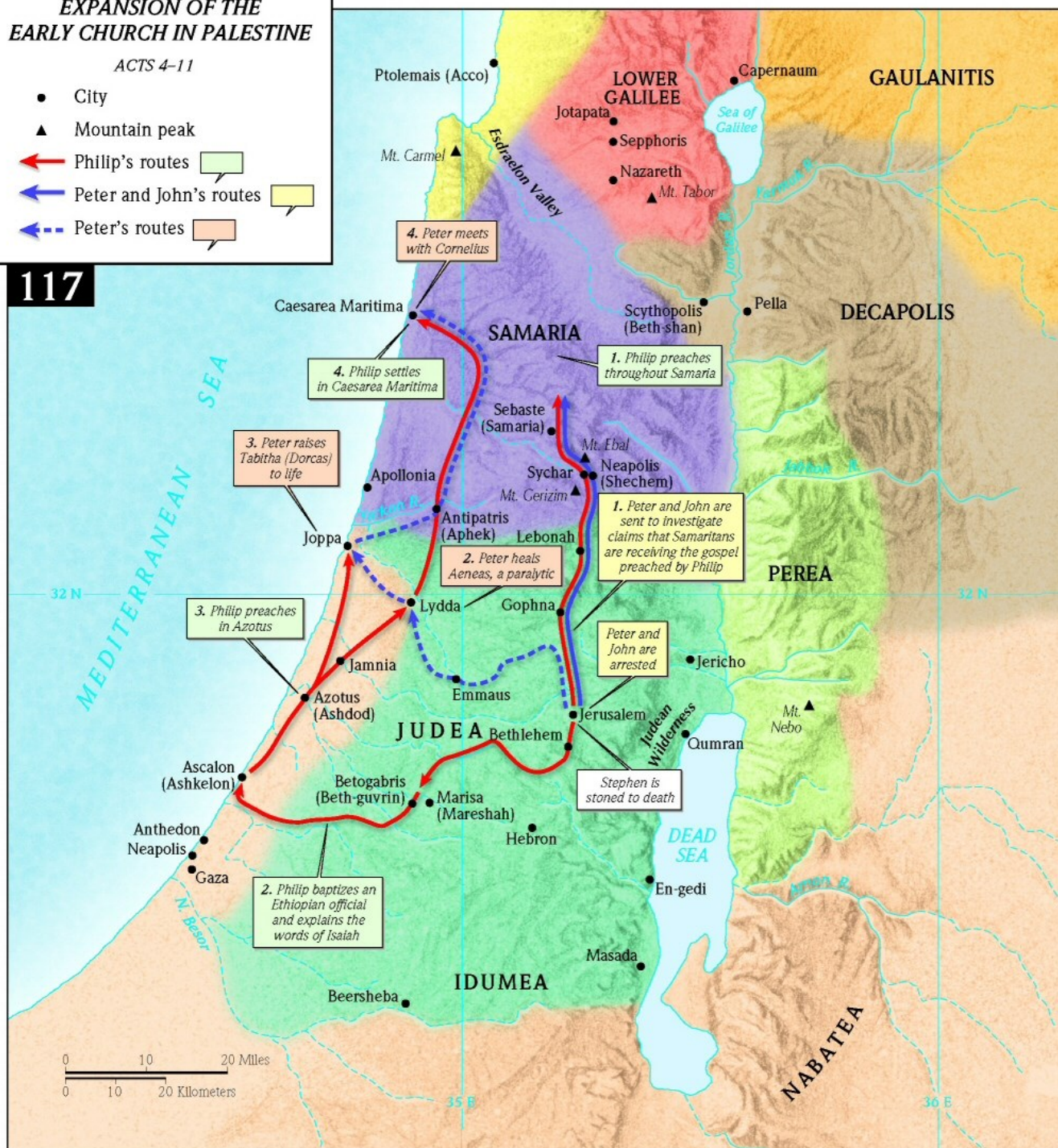


# EXPANSION OF THE EARLY CHURCH IN PALESTINE

ACTS 4-11

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Philip's routes
- Peter and John's routes
- Peter's routes

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## PAUL'S CONVERSION AND EARLY MINISTRY

ACTS 9:1–30; 11:19–30; 12:24–25  
GAL. 1:11–24

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ⌋ Pass
- ← Paul sent to Damascus
- ←····· Paul spends time in Arabia
- ←- - Paul returns to Jerusalem
- ←- - Paul flees from Hellenists
- ←- - Paul and Barnabas travel to Antioch
- ←- - Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem
- ←- - Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch
- Kingdom of Agrippa I



## SAUL—DAMASCUS ROAD

1. Read 9:1-19 Not everyone has a conversion experience like Saul, but we are exhorted to be able to give an account of our faith and Saul as Paul will retell this story in Acts. You might like to *briefly* share your own experience of coming to know Christ as your Saviour and Lord.
2. What part does Ananias play in the story? Recount a time when you have been reluctant to follow God's leading, but found blessing in obedience.
3. Read 9:19b-31 Note, the almost immediate opposition to Paul. As a new believer what example does he leave for Christians today?

## PETER

4. Read 9:32-42 What was the result from the healing of Aeneas and Tabitha (Dorcas)?
5. Have you heard of people being raised from the dead in more recent times? Share the story. What do you think it would take to see events like this happen today?



Road to Damascus

## PETER & CORNELIUS

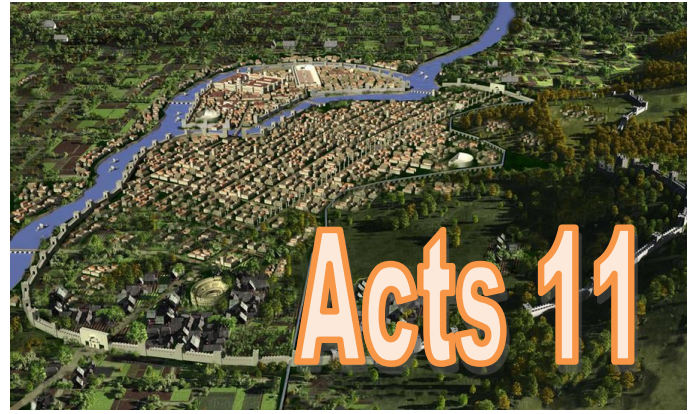
1. Read 10:1-8 Can you tell of a time when you or someone you know had a direct instruction from God?
2. Read 10:9-23 What was the original purpose of the laws concerning clean and unclean foods (Leviticus 10:10 and 11:4ff)? How does that purpose relate to the separation of Jew and Gentile? What has changed in Peter's day since the law was written? (See Ephesians 2:11-22)
3. Read 10:23-48 Peter makes another speech in vv34-43. What points does he make in this one?
4. What is different following the preaching here (10:44-48) compared with Acts 2:38-41 (to Jews) and Acts 8:12-17 (to Samaritans)? What does this tell us about the way that God works through his Spirit?





## PETER'S REPORT

1. Read 11:1-18 Should the Jewish Christians have been surprised that God had included the Gentiles? (See Genesis 12:1-2, Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:7-8 for example).
2. Read 11:19-26 Why was it important to have Barnabas and Paul travel to Antioch (see map p12) to stay with them for a year?
3. Read 11:27-30 Agabus appears later in Acts. Prophecy in the Bible can take the form of inspired praise, direct messages of guidance to individuals or groups, direct warnings from God with calls to repentance and reform, and prediction concerning the future (usually as either an assurance of God's control over the situation or as an alert to take some evasive action). What sort of prophecy did Agabus bring, and what action was taken as a result?
4. What do we learn from this chapter about the relationship between the Jewish Jerusalem church and the largely Gentile church at Antioch?

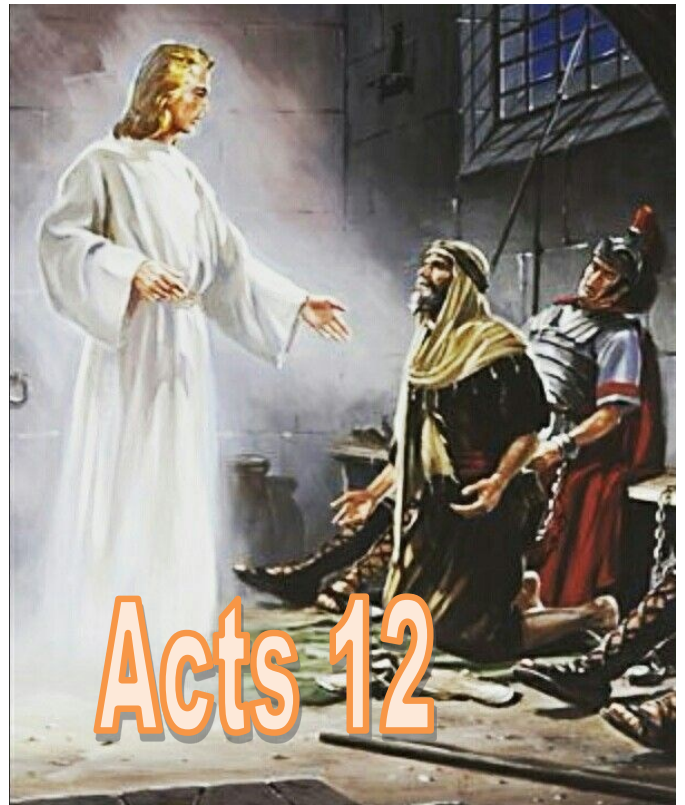


Antioch in Syria



## PETER IN PRISON

1. Read 12:1-5 Herod (Agrippa I) was the nephew of Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded and tried Jesus. What does v5 tell you about the power of prayer in the face of persecution?
2. Read 12:6-19 What was the result of church praying? Were they expecting Peter to be released? What may we learn from this?
3. Read 12:19b-25 What do we learn in this passage about God and his purposes and how might this knowledge encourage us today?



John Mark was perhaps the man who ran away in Mark 14:51-52 and the author of the Gospel bearing his name