

BIBLE STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Acts is unique in that it is the book which fills in the details between the resurrection of Jesus, and the epistles which make up the bulk of the rest of the New Testament. Its author, Luke, was not one of the twelve apostles, but is referred to by Paul as ‘the beloved physician’ (Col.4:14; see too 2 Tim.4:11; Philemon 24). With good reason, the so-called ‘we’ passages in Acts are said to indicate when he was physically with Paul (see Acts 16:10-40; 20:5-15; 21:1-18).

Acts constitutes the second volume of Luke’s two-volume work consisting of the Gospel of Luke and Acts (which is the history of the Church after Jesus’ ascension). It has been seen as the acts of the apostles or the acts of the Holy Spirit but it can be seen, more accurately, as the continuing work of Christ (see Acts 1:1 and compare with Luke 1:3; we do not know the exact identity of Theophilus). It is a work of theological history - of history written with Gospel intentions. As a rough structure, it follows the scheme of Acts 1:8, from Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) to all Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12, including Damascus and Antioch in Syria), and to the ends of the earth (Acts 13-28). Acts 28 finishes about the year A.D. 62, not with the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul which occurred a few years later. The only reasonable explanation for this is that A.D. 62 was when Luke wrote Acts. Even the ardent liberal, Adolf von Harnack, came to see this. This means that volume one, the Gospel of Luke, was written even earlier.

Commissioning on Earth and Returning to Heaven (Acts 1:1-11)

For what follows, note too Luke 24:36-53.

1. What is the first book that Luke refers to? (1:1-2) Who is Theophilus? What did Luke do in the Gospel of Luke? What is significant about the way this is expressed? _____

2. What did Jesus do in the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension? (1:3) What did this provide? Can we say that Christianity is full of wonderful ideals, and the history does not matter? What was the content of Jesus’ message? _____

3. Why did the disciples have to wait in Jerusalem? (1:4-5) What is the difference between the baptism of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus? _____

4. What did the disciples ask Jesus? (1:6; remember 1:4) What does this indicate about their thinking? _____

5. What was Jesus' answer to this? (1:7) What can we know and of what must we be content not to know? _____

6. What is promised to the disciples? (1:8) In what terms is this promised? When did the promise come true? How would the witness of the disciples work out in history and geography? _____

7. What happened then? (1:9) _____

8. What did the two men (angels) say to them? (1:10-11) What can be said about Christ's second coming? _____

Restoring the Twelve (Acts 1:12-26)

1. Where did the disciples return to? (1:12) _____

A Sabbath Day's journey was not meant to be very far. The Pharisees thought it no more than a kilometre.

2. Once they arrived, where did they go? (1:13) Who was gathered there? Who was missing? Who else was there? (1:14) What were they all doing? (recall 1:4-5) _____

3. Who spoke to the company of Christians? (1:15) How many were there? _____

For the numbers, compare 2:41; 4:4.

4. What has to be fulfilled? (1:16-17) What does this mean for our understanding of Scripture? What human person and what divine person wrote the Psalm? (see Psalm 69:25; 109:8; also Matt.22:43) _____

5. What had happened to Judas? (1:18-20) Reconcile this with Matthew 27:3-8. How are the verses from Psalms fulfilled in Judas' betrayal of Jesus? (note their original contexts) _____

6. How does the qualification of an overseer (1 Tim.3:1-7) differ from that of an apostle (Acts 1:21-22)? What did the apostle have to see? Why are there no apostles today? _____

7. Who were the two candidates? (1:23-25) Who was chosen? Why do you think the number had to be made up to twelve again? (see Luke 22:30; Rev.4:4, 10; 21:14) _____

8. How was the choice made? (1:26; Prov.16:33) Some commentators have said this was a wrong move. What do you think? Is it something we should do today? _____

The Day of Pentecost and its Aftermath (Acts 2:1-47)

In the Old Testament, this was one of the three major festivals, along with the Passover and Tabernacles (or Booths). It was called the Feast of Weeks (or harvest, to celebrate the ingathering of the firstfruits), and it took place fifty days after the Passover Sabbath - hence *Pente-cost*. Note too that it always fell on a Sunday.

1. Where were the Christians gathered? (either the apostles or the 120 of 1:15) __

2. What three things showed that God was mightily at work? (2:2-4; see Ex.19:16 for the giving of the law on Mt Sinai) How unique is this, and how repeatable is it meant to be? _____

3. From verses 5-11, what does it mean to speak in tongues? Is it ecstatic gibberish or was it understood? (2:6, 8, 11) How is it a reversal of the Tower of Babel curse? (Gen.11:4-9) _____

There is nothing quite like hearing one's own heart language. At dinner time in one state Assembly I sat next to Pastor Shem who cut out the rest of the diners by speaking to me in Bislama, obviously because he missed it as he was studying in Australia.

4. How is the coming of the Spirit in power like being drunk, and how is it unlike being drunk? (2:12-13; Eph.5:18) How are we meant to combine rational, intelligible and godly theology with a zealous and exciting exuberance? _____

5. Who was the spokesman for the apostles? (2:14) Compare him to the Peter of Matthew 26:69-74. What changes had taken place? (John 21:7, 15-17; Acts 2:4) How did Peter address his hearers? Why? _____

6. What is his first statement? (2:15) Why does he say this? What does this reveal about apologetics? _____

7. How does Peter make his first point? (2:16; read Joel 2:28-32) Why is this important? _____

8. When are the last days? (Acts 2:17; Heb.1:1-2) What would you say to someone who tells you that we are in the last days? _____

9. What does Joel prophesy concerning what will happen in the last days? (Acts 2:17) Connecting Joel with Acts, what can we say about prophecy and speaking in tongues? (see too 1 Cor.14:4-5) Who prophesies? (2:17-18) Is this the same as preaching? (note 1 Tim.2:11-12) _____

10. What point is Peter making in verses 19-20? Is it meant to be literal? (note Luke 23:44-45; Isa.13:10) Has this already happened? (see Acts 2:16) Is it like saying 'It is raining cats and dogs' or 'This is a red letter day'? _____

11. To whom is salvation offered? (2:21) How is salvation obtained? Who is the Lord in Joel 2:32? Who is the Lord in Acts 2:21? What does this show us? _____

12. How does Peter gather his audience in again? (2:22) How does he describe Jesus? What cannot be denied about His signs and wonders? (see Luke 11:14-15, 20; John 5:36)? _____

13. How are human responsibility and divine sovereignty brought together? (2:23; see Gen.50:20; Luke 22:22) How does this liberate us, by keeping us from minimizing sin or falling into despair? What point is Peter making? How closely does he make the application of his point? _____

14. The crowd were behind the crucifixion of Jesus, but what did God do? (2:24) What is the point here? How was it not possible that Jesus should remain dead? (note the 'therefore' from Phil.2:8-9) _____

15. Does Peter seek first to explain the crucifixion or the resurrection and ascension? (2:25-36) How important is this, and how different to a lot of modern evangelism? What does it mean when it comes to explaining salvation? _____

16. What does Peter quote in verses 25-28? From Psalm 16:8-11, was David originally writing about himself or directly prophesying the coming of the Messiah? _____

John Owen: 'If the Scripture has more than one meaning, it has no meaning at all.' That is not right. David in Psalm 16 is writing about himself yet its full meaning is only seen when Christ comes. Christ fulfils it for His people, including David.

17. What point does Peter make in verse 29? How important is this for understanding the full meaning of Psalm 16? _____

18. In what capacity did David write? (2:30) What had God sworn with an oath, and what would this mean? (2:30-31; see Psalm 132:11-12) _____

19. What had happened, and what does Peter claim about this? (2:32; see John 20:19-20; Acts 1:9-11) What claim is being made here? How important is this? _____

20. What is Peter's point from Psalm 110:1? (2:33-35) Could this refer to David? _____

21. Peter's immediate conclusion comes in verse 36. What has God declared regarding Jesus? Who is He? What does each title mean? But what had God's covenant people done to Him? _____

22. How did Peter's sermon affect his hearers? (2:37) What do they ask? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this? (John 16:8) What is the progression from Acts 2:14-36 to verse 37? _____

Charles Spurgeon: 'Too many think lightly of sin, and therefore think lightly of the Saviour.'

C. S. Lewis: 'the greatest barrier I have met is the almost total absence from the minds of my audience of any sense of sin.'

James Denney said the kingdom of God is not for the well-meaning but for the desperate.

23. Carefully analyse everything that Peter says in verse 38 in answer to their question. Can we have Christ but not the Holy Spirit? (John 7:37-39; Rom.8:9) __

To repent means, as the Shorter Catechism says, for the sinner, 'out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose, and endeavour after, new obedience.'

J. A. Alexander: repentance is 'an entire revolution of the principles and practice, of the heart and life.'

24. What is added in verse 39? Is the language covenantal? (see Gen.17:7, 10; Deut.29:10-12) What would this mean for baptism? _____

25. What else does Peter say to the crowd? (2:40; see Phil.2:15) Is salvation only about being acquitted? What does this mean for us? _____

'The world behind me, the cross before me' goes the chorus, and rightly so. Calvin commented on Peter's sermon that 'whereas there was a great multitude converted unto Christ with one sermon, an hundred sermons can scarce move a few of us'.

My faith looks up to Thee,/ Thou Lamb of Calvary,/

Saviour Divine:/

Now hear me while I pray;/ Take all my guilt away;/

O let me from this day/ Be wholly Thine.

26. What resulted from Peter's sermon? (2:41) How was the number determined?

Growing as a Church (Acts 2:42-47)

1. To what four things did the early Christians devote themselves? (2:42) How zealous were they? _____

These people 'continued steadfastly' (NKJV) or 'devoted themselves' (NIV, ESV) to meeting together.

2. What is meant by, and how do we devote ourselves to:

(a) the apostles' teaching (see 1 Pet.2:2) _____

I know a fellow - a very sad case - who once told me: 'I do not have any theology; I just worship God in the spirit.'

Spurgeon: 'The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is the religion of Christ's Church.'

(b) fellowship (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor.13:14; Mal.3:16) _____

(c) the breaking of bread (Jude 12; Acts 20:7, 11; Luke 22:15-20) _____

(d) prayer (Matt.6:6; Acts 1:13-14) _____

3. What else took place among the early Christians? (2:43) Comment on the awe and on the miracles (note 2 Cor.12:12). _____

4. How did they live together? (2:44-45; note Acts 5:3-4) Why did they do this? What does it show, and what is saying to us today? (Gal.6:10; Eph.4:28; 1 John 3:17) _____

John Wesley and C. S. Lewis gave away what they earned from their writing. John Bunyan:

*A man there was, tho' some did count him mad,
The more he cast away, the more he had.*

John Chrysostom describes this as 'an angelic commonwealth'.

5. Describe the life recorded in Acts 2:46-47 _____

John Stott comments that joy and awe (vv. 43, 46) are 'a healthy balance in worship'.

Michael Green: 'Evangelism is a many-splendoured thing.'

Healing the Lame Beggar: What does that prove? (Acts 3:1-10)

This healing has ongoing ramifications.

1. Where were Peter and John going? (3:1) When? What does their going to the temple show us? _____

2. Who else was there? (3:2) What was his condition? How did he get there? ____

3. For what did he ask Peter and John? (3:3) _____

4. What did Peter tell him? (3:4) Why? _____

5. What did the man do and what did he expect? (3:5) Did this man ask for a miraculous healing? _____

Professor E. M. Blaiklock said the man had faith but G. Campbell Morgan says that there is no indication of it. This seems to be right, and verse 16 probably refers to Peter's faith, not the beggar's.

6. What did Peter tell him about what he did not possess? (3:6) But what did he then add? _____

I once had to listen to an elder appeal to the presbytery, and argue that without money, there is no church.

7. What happened next? (3:7) _____

8. How did the man respond? (3:8; see Isa.35:6) What things might this teach us? _____

9. Who saw him? (3:9-10; note 4:16) Were the miracles 'done in a corner'? How did the people respond to what had taken place? _____

This miracle dominates proceedings for the next couple of chapters.

Peter's Sermon in Solomon's Portico (Acts 3:11-26)

1. Who ran to Solomon's portico, in the eastern area of the temple? (3:11) In what frame of mind were they? _____

2. How does Peter address the crowd? (4:12) What is the wrong way to interpret the miracle? _____

3. What points does Peter make in verse 13? Why does he make the emphases that he does in this verse? _____

4. How does he drive home the application in verse 14? (Luke 23:18-19, 23-25)

5. What are the main claims that Peter makes concerning Jesus in verse 15? _____

David Murray (former Anglican bishop of Perth): 'I wouldn't have a clue whether Jesus physically rose from the dead, but what I do know is Christ is risen.'

Lillian Hadley (when she was Moderator of the Uniting Church in Perth): 'Personally, I don't think it makes a lot of difference whether you see the resurrection as something which happened physically or metaphorically.'

Are those two opinions anywhere near to what Peter is saying? _____

6. Who healed the beggar - Jesus or Peter? (3:16) How did the healing come about? _____

7. How does Peter soften his sermon in verse 17? (see 1 Cor.2:8) _____

8. Should they have realised that the Christ would suffer? (3:18; e.g. Isa.53) How should we read the Old Testament? (Luke 24:26-27) _____

9. What does Peter tell them to do, and what does he promise them? (3:19) How different is that from many modern gospel invitations? _____

10. What is promised if the hearers repent? (3:20) For how long must Christ remain in heaven? (3:21) _____

11. How does Peter show this from Deuteronomy 18:15-18? (3:22-23) Were the Jews looking for such a prophet? (John 1:21; 6:14; 7:40) _____

Muslims argue that Moses had Mohammad in mind!

12. What is the message of all the other prophets? (3:24) _____

13. What are the privileges which the Jews enjoy? (3:25-26; note Gen.12:3) Why was the Messiah sent to the Jews first? (3:26) What would you say to those who interpret the Old Testament apart from Christ? (Luke 24:44-45; John 5:39, 46-47) _

The Name That Saves (Acts 4:1-12)

1. Who arrived on the scene? (4:1-2) What particular part of the gospel message caused them so much offence? _____

2. What did they do to the apostles (particularly Peter and John)? (4:3) _____

3. Despite the persecution, what was the response to this? (4:4) To what number had the church grown? (4:4; recall 2:41) What effect can persecution have on evangelism? _____

4. Who gathered together the next day in order to interrogate the apostles? (4:5-6)

There were 71 members of the Sanhedrin.

5. What was the big question that they asked? (4:7) _____

6. How is Peter described in verse 8? (see Acts 13:9; Eph.5:18) Is that a usual state or something which is experienced in greater or lesser ways? What do you note about Peter's respectful tone? _____

7. What point does Peter emphasise in verse 9? Why does he begin here? _____

8. What is the answer to their question? (4:10) Again, what does Peter drive home about their sinfulness and God's counter action? What is the explanation for the healed man? _____

In 1996 Richard Andrews (a diver) and Paul Schellenberg (an engineer) publicised some Rosicrucian nonsense that Jesus' body was buried in Languedoc in southern

France. The claim was that ‘the bodily Resurrection of Christ was used by the church for its own political gains.’ Peter would have been mystified by that theory! But it seems to have a life of its own.

9. How does Peter show this from Scripture? (4:11; Ps.118:22; see Mark 12:1-12) Who is the cornerstone in the new temple? _____

10. What is declared about Jesus? (4:12) _____

‘We Cannot But Speak’ (Acts 4:13-22)

1. List all the things that are said about Peter and John in verse 13. How significant is all this for us today? _____

Note too John 7:14-15.

Also, it does not mean that Peter and John were illiterate. After all, they both wrote epistles.

2. Why could the Sanhedrin not do much? (4:14) What does this show us? _____

3. After the departure of Peter and John, what did the members of the Sanhedrin say to themselves? (4:15-16) What does this indicate about the nature of sin? (Rom.1:18; John 15:25) _____

Aldous Huxley wrote of ‘Christianity’s unfortunate servitude to historic fact’!

4. What do they see is the problem? (4:17) What is their proposed solution to it? _____

5. What solemn charge did they issue to Peter and John? (4:18) _____

6. What was the answer of Peter and John? (4:19-20) What is the greater 'compulsion' - the threats of the Sanhedrin or the force of truth? What do you make of the phrasing in verse 19? Formally, the Sanhedrin could have only replied one way - what was that? Hence in what position were they placed? _____

On 27 July 1681 in Edinburgh, one of the Scottish covenanters, Donald Cargill, was hanged. At the scaffold he took out his weather-beaten Bible, turned to Psalm 118, and sang verses 16-29 in the metrical version. As he was ordered to climb the ladder, he declared: 'And now this is the sweetest and more glorious day that ever mine eyes did see ... The Lord knows, I go up this ladder with less fear and perturbation of mind than ever I entered the pulpit to preach ... Now, I am near the getting of the crown which shall be sure, for which I bless the Lord, and desire all of you to bless him that he hath brought me here, and made me triumph over devils, men, and sin.'

7. What did the Sanhedrin do then? (4:21) What motivated them? What does this show us about them? _____

8. What is said about the healed man? (4:22; cf. 3:2) How does this make it more difficult for the Sanhedrin? _____

Prayer Based on the Word (Acts 4:23-31)

1. What did Peter and John do after they were released? (4:23-24a) What sort of fellowship and what sort of prayer might we have expected? _____

2. Instead, what did they first acknowledge in prayer? (4:24b) Why is this so important? _____

The word for ‘Sovereign Lord’ here is somewhat unusual, and it looks like our word ‘despot’. It does not mean that God is a despot but that He is absolutely sovereign. The same word is used in Luke 2:29; 2 Peter 2:1; and Revelation 6:10.

3. To what Psalm do they refer? (4:25-26) What does this part of the Psalm say? Who are the divine and human authors of the Psalm? _____

4. Who was gathered together against Jesus? (4:27) How is Jesus described? _____

5. What did they do against Jesus? (4:28) How could this be true? _____

William Cowper: *God moves in a mysterious way,/ His wonders to perform.*

Note Daniel 4:34-35.

6. What do they pray for? (4:29) How surprising is this? Could they have prayed something along the lines of Psalm 91:1-6? What will take place at the same time? (4:30) _____

7. What was the result of the prayer? (4:31) _____

Communal Life in the New Testament Church (Acts 4:32-37)

1. How are the early Christians described? (4:32) How was this reflected in their daily living? _____

2. What was the testimony of the apostles? (4:33) How was this shown? What was the result? _____

3. What else do we learn about how the early Christians lived? (4:34-35) _____

The Marxist slogan *From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs* is actually derived not so much from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of 1874, but from Acts 2:45; 4:35 and 11:29. Shorn of the materialism, totalitarianism, brutality and falsehood inherent in Marxism, the slogan should be quite acceptable to the Christian.

4. Who was Joseph Barnabas? (4:36-37) How was he a son of encouragement? (cf. Acts 9:26-27; 11:20-23; 13:13 and 15:36-40; note Col.4:10) What was he? Where did he come from? What did he do? _____

How a Levite came to own land is uncertain, except that he was from Cyprus (note Acts 15:39).

Hypocrisy in the Church (Acts 5:1-11)

This is something of a New Testament parallel to Joshua 7.

1. What did Ananias and Sapphira do? (5:1-2) Were they allowed to keep back anything? What was their most objectionable sin? _____

2. Of what does Peter accuse Ananias? (5:3) What could they have done? (5:4) To whom had they lied? What do these verses tell us about the status of the Holy Spirit? Can we lie to a force or an influence? _____

3. What happened to Ananias? (5:5) Who slew him - God or Peter? What effect

did Ananias' death have on all who heard what Peter said? _____

Note 2 Kings 1:9-10, 11-12, 13-15. It is God who answers Elijah's prayer for judgment.

4. What did the young men do with Ananias' body? (5:6) _____

5. Who arrived three hours later? (5:7) Of what was she ignorant? _____

6. What did Peter ask her? (5:8) Why? Was she culpable in her own right before God? What sentence was pronounced on her? (5:9) _____

7. What happened to Sapphira? (5:10-11) Why? Who took away her life? What resulted from her death? Why is this so crucial in our understanding of God? ____

Everett Harrison sees no reason to question the salvation of Ananias and Sapphira but there seems little reason to believe it.

Apostolic Power (Acts 5:12-16)

1. What did the apostles do in abundance? (5:12) See Acts 2:43; 3:6-8; 14:1-3; 15:12; 2 Cor.12:12. What did this indicate? (see Matt.10:8) Are we meant to do likewise or is this meant to be, for the most part, distinctly apostolic? Can we be misled if we are not clear on this? (Matt.24:24; 2 Thess.2:9) Are signs and wonders the centre of the gospel message? (Matt.16:1-4) _____

2. In the aftermath of the Ananias and Sapphira episode, how did the general populace respond? (5:12b-13) What does this have to say to us today? _____

James Packer cites one American critic who said that North American Protestantism is man-centred, manipulative, success-oriented, self-indulgent and sentimental - 3,000 miles wide and half an inch deep.

3. How did general fear go hand-in-hand with growth? (5:14; see John 15:2) _____

Calvin: 'There is a certain secret majesty in holy discipline and in sincere godliness.'

4. What else took place? (5:15-16) Howard Marshall sees this as superstition, but what do you notice about the extent of the healing? (5:16) Should we expect this today? What is the right way to respond to what is said in this section of Scripture? _____

Bruce Barron tells of a supposed revival in Vancouver led by Charles Price. Some 350 people walked forward to be healed. Six months later, it was found that 39 were dead, 301 were still sick, five were healed, and five were insane.

Benny Hinn claimed that when he visited Orlando's General Hospital in 1976, there were mass healings, but the hospital issued a statement that 'no such events have ever occurred at General Hospital'.

John Owen: 'There was no certain limited time for the cessation of these gifts ... It is not unlikely, but God might, on some occasions, for a longer season put forth his power in some miraculous operations, and so he yet may do, and perhaps doth sometimes.'

True Conviction (Acts 5:17-42)

This is the second outbreak of persecution deriving from the healing of the lame man in Acts 3.

1. What did the priestly party of the Sadducees do next? (5:17-18) What motivated them? _____

2. What happened during the night? (5:19; see also 12:7-9) Where were the apostles told to go, and what were they told to do? (5:20) What did they do in response? (5:21a) _____

3. What did the Sanhedrin find out about the apostles? (5:21b-23) What should they have concluded from this? _____

4. What were the captain of the temple and the chief priests concerned about? (5:24) _____

There was only one high priest at a time, but there could be a number of chief priests.

5. What did the captain and the chief priests find out then? (5:25) How did they respond? Why did they do what they did? (5:26) What motivates them? _____

6. Whom did the apostles face then? (5:27) How difficult would this have been?

7. Of what did the high priest remind the apostles, and what was his charge? (5:28) _____

8. What was Peter's reply? (5:29) When is this allowed? (e.g. Ex.1:15-17; Dan.3:14-18; 6:6-7, 10-11) How can this help us today? _____

9. Explain the significance of the two parts to verse 30 _____

10. How is Jesus presented in verse 31? What do we need to know first, that Jesus is Prince (Leader, Lord) or Saviour? Why is this important? Where is Christ now? What two things does God give? _____

11. Who are the two witnesses to these things? (5:32) Who are the outward witnesses and who is the inward witness? To whom is the Holy Spirit given? _____

12. How did the Sanhedrin respond to this? (5:33) _____

13. Who was Gamaliel, and what was his advice? (5:34-39; see 22:3) How did he frame his argument? What two examples of fraudulent Messiahs did he give? When might we use arguments like this? What do you make of Gamaliel? _____

14. How did the Sanhedrin respond to his mild advice? (5:39-40) Does it fit in well with Gamaliel's advice in verse 39? Why did they have the apostles beaten?

15. What effect did this have on the apostles? (5:41) How can we understand their thinking? (Matt.5:10-12) _____

16. What was their teaching in the temple and from house to house? (5:42) How is this very appropriate to Jews or to people with some acquaintance with the Old Testament? _____

The First Deacons (Acts 6:1-7)

Acts 6 does not contain the Greek word for 'deacon' (*diakonos*), and James Monroe Barnett considers it 'virtually certain' that the Seven held an office that was unique and cannot be equated with the diaconate. John MacArthur and Ormonde Plater agree. Of the Seven, Stephen took to preaching (Acts 6:8-7:60) and Philip preached (Acts 8:5,12,40), baptised (Acts 8:12), and evangelised (Acts 21:8) - not activities that are traditionally identified with the diaconate. Chrysostom refused to see the Seven as deacons.

However, Acts 6 does refer to the noun *diakonia* in verse 1 and the verb *diakonein* in verse 2. Alexander Strauch's comment seems quite justified: 'it is reasonable to assume that the Seven became at least a prototype of later deacons.' J. B. Lightfoot goes further than Strauch: 'I do not see how the identity of the two can reasonably be called in question.' Calvin agreed they were deacons. As early as Irenaeus of Lyons in the late second century the Seven were viewed as deacons. In fact, a council meeting about the year 314 at Neocaesarea in Cappadocia declared that 'In even the largest towns there must be, according to the rule, no more than 7 deacons. This may be proved from the Acts of the Apostles.' In the fifth century the church historian Sozomen wrote: 'Again, there are even now but seven deacons at Rome, answering precisely to the number ordained by the apostles, of whom Stephen was the first martyr; whereas, in other churches, the number of deacons is a matter of indifference.'

1. In the midst of all the blessing, what problem emerged in the church? (6:1) What had the church been doing, and what was the complaint? How had Israel looked after its poor? (Deut.14:28-29; 24:17; note the character of God in Deut.10:17-18) _____

Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jewish Christians.

It is significant that diaconal work was clearly being carried out before there was an official diaconate. One should also point out that Acts 14:21-23 and Titus 1:5 make it clear that churches operated before there were elders to teach and rule in an official capacity.

2. What did the twelve apostles do in response to the complaint? (6:2) What do they mean by their declaration in verse 2? _____

3. Who was to be chosen to 'serve tables'? (6:3) Comment on each of their qualifications? Who chooses them? And who appoints them? _____

Calvin says: 'they must not be hard and wooden.'

4. To what were the apostles to devote themselves? (6:4) _____

'Overbusyness' or 'busyness' in too many fields - all legitimate no doubt - can be as destructive as laziness in the kingdom of God.

The two offices were not mutually exclusive in an absolute sense. Paul was both a teacher (1 Tim.2:7) and one who remembered the poor (Gal.2:10).

5. Whom did the congregation choose? (6:5) _____

6. What did the congregation do? (6:6) What did the apostles do? And what happened to the seven men? What do you make of the fact that they all had Greek names? _____

7. What is said about the growth of the church? (6:7) Who were converted to Christ? Why was this remarkable? _____

The Testimony of Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60)

1. What is said about Stephen, one of the seven 'deacons'? (6:8) Comment on this. _____

Stephen and Philip (see 6:8 and 8:6) are the only two non-apostles to perform signs and wonders in the book of Acts, leaving aside 13:8 and 19:14.

2. Where was the opposition to him coming from? (6:9) _____

'Freedmen' would indicate slaves who had obtained their freedom. Cyrene is in North Africa, while Cilicia and Asia were in what we would now call Turkey. It was Judaism of the Dispersion which was so opposed to him, perhaps more so than the Judaism of Palestine.

3. How did they fare against Stephen? (6:10) _____

4. So what did they do next? (6:11; note Mark 14:63-64) How typical is this? _____

5. What did they then do with the crowd and the elders and scribes, and finally

Stephen? (6:12) _____

6. What were the charges against Stephen? (6:13-14; note Mark 14:58; John 2:19-21) How are the false charges really a kind of counterfeit truth? _____

The holy place is the temple.

7. What does verse 15 indicate about Stephen? (recalling Moses in Ex. 34:29-35) and Jesus in Matt.17:2) _____

8. What does the high priest say to Stephen? (7:1) To what is he referring? _____

9. How does Stephen address them? (7:2) Then comes the history lesson! How does he refer to Abraham? What do we learn from this? _____

10. Show how God is not confined to one land from 7:2-4. _____

11. Then what happened? (7:5-7) What does this tell us about the nature of faith? _____

12. What is said about God's covenant with Abraham? (7:8) _____

13. What happened to Joseph, one of the twelve patriarchs? (7:9-10) Again, what does this tell us about faith? _____

14. How did Jacob's family end out so unexpectedly in Egypt? (7:11-14) Can we easily read God's will from His sovereign acts in history? _____

Exodus 1:5 has seventy persons, whereas the Greek translation (the LXX) has seventy-five.

15. What happened to Jacob in Egypt, and where was he buried? (7:15-16) What is this telling us about the Promised Land? _____

16. What happened just before the time when redemption from Egypt drew near? (7:17-22) List all the unexpected things. Why is faith not straightforward? _____

17. What did Moses hope the Israelites would understand, but they did not? (7:23-29) Why did he flee to the Midian desert (north-west Arabia, although the Midianites were rather nomadic)? _____

18. What happened to Moses after forty years in Midian? (7:30-34) Who appeared to Moses? What was His message? How did God look on the sufferings of His people? How is Midian holy ground? (7:33) _____

The angel in the burning bush is also referred to as the Lord (Ex.3:4-6). The word 'angel' often means 'messenger', so the Messenger of the Lord could be the Lord, like the Word of God is God (John 1:1).

19. What did God do through Moses and how did the Israelites view him? (7:35-40) Where was the church at this time? (7:38) What does this show about the connection between Israel and the Church? _____

20. What was the great sin of the Israelites? (7:41; Ex.32) _____

21. What is the explanation for the exile in the eighth century B.C.? (7:42-43; Amos 5:25-27) Why does Stephen raise this point? What is its significance in the context of his sermon? _____

22. The tent or tabernacle was the sign of God's saving presence. Where was it at this time and how was it made? (7:44-46) Why is this significant? _____

23. What was recognised even when the temple was built? (7:47-50; see Isa.66:1-2; 1 Kings 8:27) What is behind Stephen's message? (Matt.12:6) _____

*Jesus, where'er Thy people meet,
There they behold Thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.
For Thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring Thee where they come,
And going, take Thee to their home.*

- William Cowper

Stephen is making three points:

- (a) God is not confined to one land (7:2-7, 9-10, 15, 33, 38, 44);
- (b) God is not restricted to a building (7:47-50);
- (c) God's people are often persecuted, even by those professing to be God's own people (7:9, 17-19, 38-43).

24. How does Stephen address his hearers? (7:51) Why does he call them 'uncircumcised in heart and ears'? (cf. Lev.26:41; Deut.10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:26) In what way can the Holy Spirit be resisted? (cf. Isa.63:10) By whom? By whom can He not be resisted? To whom are Stephen's hearers compared? _____

25. How did their ancestors treat the true prophets? (7:52; Luke 11:47-51; 13:34) Who is the Righteous One? (Acts 3:14-15) _____

26. What privileges had they received? (7:53) By what means? (Deut. 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Acts 7:38, 53; Heb. 2:2) How had they responded? _____

27. How did the sermon go over with its hearers? (7:54) _____

28. What did Stephen see? (7:55-56) Who is the Son of Man from Daniel 7:13? _____

It is interesting that normally Christ is said to be *seated* at the right hand of the Father, but here He is *standing* (cf. Ps.110:1; Mark 14:62).

Condemned on earth, Stephen will be vindicated in heaven.

29. How did the crowd respond to Stephen's words? (7:57) What followed? (7:58) How do they interpret Stephen's words? _____

This is surely just a lynching, because of John 18:31.

30. Who else was present? (7:58b) What was his task? What was his attitude? _____

31. What did Stephen cry out before his death? (7:59-60) What is extraordinary about this in terms of to whom it is addressed? What about the content of the two cries? _____

The NKJV adds that Stephen was calling on God. That is simply not there in the text.

The Scattering of the Church (Acts 8:1-4)

1. What was Saul's (Paul's) attitude to Stephen's execution? (8:1) Why? What happened as a result of Stephen's death? (8:1) Whom did it immediately affect? Where did they go? (note Acts 1:8) What about the apostles? _____

2. What happened to Stephen's body? (8:2) What is said about the grieving of Christians here? _____

3. What about Saul (Paul)? (8:3) What does this tell us about the temperament of Saul (Paul)? What was driving him? _____

4. What did the Christians do who were scattered because of persecution? (8:4) _____

Philip and Samaria (Acts 8:5-40)

1. Where did Philip go? (8:5) What do we know about the Samaritans? (e.g. 2 Kings 17:24-32; John 4:4, 9, 20-21; 8:48; Luke 10:25-37; 17:16) What was his proclamation to the people there? _____

Dennis Johnson calls Samaria a 'covenantal no man's land' between Judaism and paganism.

In going *down* to Samaria, Philip was actually going north.

2. What did the crowds in Samaria hear and see? (8:6-7) What examples are given? _____

Note that Philip, who was not an apostle, did miracles.

3. What is then said about the response in Samaria? (8:8) _____

4. Who was in Samaria? (8:9-11) How had he lived? How had people regarded him? _____

'So near and yet so far' is one of the proverbial sayings of life, and it is well-illustrated in this account of Simon Magus. 'Magus' means 'great' in Greek.

Simon was used to being regarded as a man of spiritual power. According to second and third century documents, Simon went from bad to worse, and became the father of all kinds of Gnostic heresies. Justin Martyr who came from Samaria says that there was a statue in Rome to honour Simon.

5. How did the people respond to Philip's preaching? (8:12) What was the content of that preaching? What was part of their conversion? Why does it mention that women too were baptised? _____

Verse 12 seems to indicate that circumcision lies behind baptism because only males were circumcised under the old covenant whereas both males and females are baptised.

A. A. Hodge: 'A Church has no right to make anything a condition of

membership which Christ has not made a condition of salvation ... All have a right to claim admittance who make a credible profession of the true religion; that is, who are presumptively the people of Christ. This credible profession ... involves a competent knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; a declaration of personal faith in Christ and consecration to his service; and a temper of mind and habit consistent therewith.'

6. How did Simon respond? (8:13) What did he do? What especially impressed him? _____

7. Who was sent to Samaria at the news that Samaria had received the gospel? (8:14) By whom? _____

8. What did Peter and John do? (8:15) Why? (8:16) What did Peter and John do then? (8:17) _____

How is it that people believed in Christ, but did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John arrived? In other words: Why the two stages? All of the New Testament tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who makes Christ known, so a person in whom Holy Spirit dwells is also a person in Christ (John 7:37-39; Rom.8:9-10). So why do people believe in v.12, but do not receive the Holy Spirit until v.17? There are four possible answers:

(a) we should expect a two-stage view of salvation. For example, the Catholics have baptism, then confirmation, and the Pentecostals have belief in Christ, then the baptism in the Spirit. The problem with this view is that this is almost the only text that comes anywhere near supporting this approach.

(b) the Samaritans all had a defective faith. Not just Simon, but all of them.

(c) verse 16a refers to the gifts of the Spirit. He was present for salvation but not for gifts. This is Calvin's view, and is quite possibly correct.

(d) this was an extraordinary situation because of the Samaritans. God deliberately withheld the Spirit in some sense to confirm to the Jerusalem church that the Samaritans were actually converted. So this is, in effect, a kind of Samaritan Pentecost. That probably has most going for it.

9. Before we look ahead, look back at verse 13. What makes it look like Simon was a believer? Was Philip right to baptize him? What is the warning signal? What is the main purpose of miracles? (John 10:37-38) Is there is a wrong kind of attachment to miracles (John 2:23-24) Ever watched a faith healing service, and thought: 'There is something wrong here'? _____

The NIV Study Bible notes say: 'It is difficult to know whether Simon's faith was genuine.' That is to make obscure what becomes perfectly plain.

10. On what was Simon focused, more than the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life? (8:18-19) Connect that to his thinking as a sorcerer? (8:9-11) What has happened? Can you think of examples that could be somewhat similar today? _____

He was at the bargaining table with God: 'let me buy Your favour so that I can be a big shot in the kingdom'.

11. How did Simon think that he could obtain this power? (8:18-23; 1 Pet.1:18-19) _____

'Simony' is the name for buying ecclesiastical office. Tetzl, the indulgence seller, proclaimed in 1517: 'As soon as the coin in the coffer rings/ The soul from purgatory springs.' Martin Luther exploded at that teaching.

12. What does Peter tell Simon? (8:20-23) Why does he not soft-pedal in any way? _____

J. B. Phillips' paraphrase of verse 20 is not actually a paraphrase: 'To hell with you and your money!' In verse 23, Peter alludes to Deuteronomy 29:18. Peter is telling Simon that he had reduced God to the status of an idol.

13. On what is Simon focused in verse 24? Does it seem like he has repented? _

14. What should we learn from this episode? _____

15. What did Peter and John do then? (8:25) _____

Recall that the book of Acts tells of the going out of the gospel from Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Acts 1-7 deal with Jerusalem; Acts 8-12 of Judea and Samaria; Acts 13-28 of the gospel's going out into all the world, finally to reach Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire.

16. To where was Philip told to go? (8:26) Who told him? Comment on what is said about this place. _____

Gaza was the southernmost of the five Philistine cities.

17. What did Philip do? (8:27) Whom did he meet? What was his job in life? Where had he been? What does this reveal about him? What does the Old Testament tell us about eunuchs - and Gentile eunuchs at that? (Deut.23:1; Isa.56:3-8) _____

The Ethiopian eunuch was a court official of Candace (which is, like Pharaoh, a title, not a name). Candace was the name given to the queen mother of the Ethiopian court.

The Ethiopian eunuch was quite possibly a dark-skinned man from what we would call the Sudan.

18. What was the Ethiopian eunuch doing in his chariot? (8:28) _____

19. What did the Spirit tell Philip to do? (8:29) _____

These are not church growth principles - you target key groups in society - but gospel principles. The desert road to Gaza is a most unlikely place to meet potential converts.

20. What did Philip hear, and what did he ask the eunuch? (8:30-31) _____

In the ancient world it was common to read aloud, perhaps because manuscripts could be difficult to read. When Augustine visited Ambrose of Milan in 384, he found the great bishop reading silently, and commented on this because it was an unusual practice.

Chance happenings are all predestined. Adoniram Judson was the first American missionary to Burma (Myanmar). He was the son of a Congregational minister, and he was studying at Brown University, where he met a witty anti-Christian student named Jacob Eames. Under Eames' influence, Judson abandoned any Christian convictions that he had, and finally came to tell his parents who were heart-broken. He then set off to the fashionable world of New York in the hope that he would write plays and become famous. After five weeks, he was making his way back home to Plymouth. He had to stay in an inn. The only room available was next to a man who was dying. All night, Judson could hear the man groaning and struggling for breath, while Judson brooded about death. The next morning he saw the inn-keeper and asked how the young man was. He was told that he had died, and he was also told that his name was Jacob Eames. Judson knew that this could be no coincidence. One word tolled in Judson's mind: "Lost!"

21. What exactly was the Ethiopian reading? (8:32-33; Isa.53) _____

He was not playing computer games or reading *The Da Vinci Code*.

22. What did the Ethiopian ask Philip, and how did Philip go about answering his question? (8:34-35) _____

Sigmund Mowinckel wrote an immense book on the prophecies of the Messiah, and when he came to Isaiah 53 said that he did not know to whom it was referring but it was not Jesus Christ. Thankfully, liberal German theology was not yet invented in the first century.

I once taught in an English staffroom with a Jewish woman. I had an opportunity to ask her about Isaiah 53, and she at first said it referred to Jeremiah who suffered a lot. 'Yes,' I said, 'but he did not pay the penalty for sins.' 'Okay,' she replied, 'it fits Jesus of Nazareth better than anybody, but I don't like to think about it.'

23. What happened next? (8:36) _____

24. The NKJV has verse 37; virtually all other translations do not. But the Ethiopian eunuch must have made some profession of faith in Jesus as the Christ, the one upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all. Taking verse 37 as authentic, what is the eunuch's confession? _____

25. What happened next? (8:38) What is the place of baptism in the Christian life? _____

Baptism is immediate, but not indiscriminate. Peter of Ghent was a Franciscan missionary in Mexico in the sixteenth century. He wrote concerning himself and another Franciscan missionary: 'Often we baptized in a single day 14,000 people, sometimes 10,000, sometimes 8,000.' That does damage.

26. Who drew Philip to Gaza and who whisked him away? (8:26, 39) In what state of mind was the eunuch? How is joy a fruit of the Spirit? (Gal.5:22-23) __

H. L. Mencken defined Puritanism as the fear that somewhere, somehow, someone is enjoying himself. Very clever, but the Puritans taught that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

27. Where did Philip find himself? (8:40) What did he do? Where did he end out? _____

Azotus is Ashdod in the Old Testament; it was a Philistine city. Caesarea was the seat of Roman authority over Judea (see 21:8; 23:23-24).

Paul on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-22)

This is the best-known conversion in history, that of the apostle Paul, known originally as Saul. Luke, as the author of Acts, records this conversion three times, in chapters 9, 22, and 26. On the road to Damascus, Paul (I will call him that for convenience) was both converted to become a Christian and commissioned as an apostle.

1. What parts of this are applicable to Paul in becoming an apostle and what parts to him in becoming a Christian? (1 Cor.9:1; 15:8; 1 Tim.1:15-16) _____

2. What was Saul (Paul) doing? (9:1-2; recall Acts 8:1, 3) What did he do? What motivates Paul? How is Christianity described? _____

Calvin describes him as 'a wild and ferocious beast'. Paul was travelling about 240 kilometres, which would have taken about a week, to get to Damascus in order to arrest Christian men and women.

3. What happened to Paul? (9:3-4) Where was Paul? What did the voice ask him? What is significant about the way that this is expressed? (note 1 Cor.12) ___

You should read the liberal theologians on this! Joseph Klausner says that Paul had an epileptic fit. Others say he had sunstroke. William Sargant writes of Paul's excitability, his total collapse, his hallucinations, and the brainwashing that followed. If you are desperate not to be a Christian, you will believe anything. Sargant himself plied his patients with drugs, and developed a Deep Sleep Therapy.

4. What did Paul cry out? (9:5; see 26:14-15. Did Paul have doubts about his Pharisaism before this? _____

John Stott says that he did. He must have been impressed by Stephen's death, he must have wondered about the reports of Jesus' words and miracles, and his own conscience must have spoken to him. Stott cites Carl Jung (of all people!): 'fanaticism is only found in individuals who are compensating secret doubts'.

5. What was Paul told to do next? (9:6) What is said about the men travelling with Paul? (9:7) In what state was Paul? (9:8) Why is this significant? (note John 9). What did he do for his first three days in Damascus? (9:9) _____

6. Who was at Damascus? (9:10) How is he described? What is he told to do by the Lord? (9:10-12) _____

Straight Street is apparently still there in Damascus, the main road running east-west. Ananias was not keen to meet with this firebrand, Paul.

7. What is Ananias' response? (9:13-14) What does this indicate about Paul's reputation? _____

8. Does Paul invite Jesus into his heart, or does Christ arrest Paul who had been going to arrest Christians? _____

*Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee
Hadst Thou not chosen me* (Josiah Conder).

9. How is Paul described in verse 15? What task does the Lord Jesus entrust to Paul? _____

10. What else will be part of Paul's new ministry? (9:16) _____

11. What does Ananias do then? (9:17) How does he address Paul? What happens to Paul? _____

12. Then what happened to Paul? (9:18) Is baptism an optional extra? What does baptism signify that circumcision does not? _____

13. What happens next? (9:19) For how long does Paul stay with the disciples at Damascus? _____

14. What is the first message that Paul proclaimed to his fellow Jews? (9:20) How did those in the synagogue in Damascus respond? (9:21) What else can be said about Paul's message? (9:22) Where do the sermons in Acts start - at Jesus

as Saviour or Jesus as Lord? What does this teach us? Summarise Paul's view of Jesus from 2 Cor.8:9; Phil.2:6-7; Col.2:9. _____

Paul Escapes to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23-31)

1. What happened after many days? (9:23) What were the Jews doing in order to carry out their plot? (9:24) What is said about Saul (Paul)? _____

Because of Galatians 1:18, the 'many days' must be at least two full years (remembering that the Jews count part of a time period as a whole).

2. How did Paul escape? (9:25; 2 Cor.11:33) Is it obligatory for the Christian to always stand and fight? When is escape lawful, and when is it wrong? _____

3. What happened when he came to Jerusalem? (9:26; see Gal.1:22-23) How realistic is this? _____

4. What was the contribution of Barnabas ('son of encouragement')? (9:27) How can we do likewise? _____

5. Because of this, what was Paul able to do? (9:28) In what manner did he preach? _____

6. Whom did he especially offend? (9:29) Granted that they were Greek-speaking Jews, why might this be a little surprising? _____

These are not the Christian Hellenists of Acts 6:1.

7. What did the brothers do then, and why? (9:30) Again, is it lawful before God to escape in certain situations? _____

8. Describe the church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria at this time? (9:31) _____

Peter and Apostolic Healings (Acts 9:32-43)

1. To where did Peter go? (9:32) _____

Lydda was north-west of Jerusalem, about halfway to Joppa on the Mediterranean coast.

2. Whom did he find in Lydda? (9:33) What was his condition? _____

3. What did Peter do? (9:34) In whose name did he do it? Why is this important? What does it show about Jesus? What was the effect of the healing? (9:35) _____

4. Who lived at Joppa, and how is she described? (9:36) _____

5. What happened to her? (9:37) What did her fellow Christians do? _____

6. What message did they send to Peter in Lydda (not far from Joppa)? (9:38)
What does this imply about their hopes, and also about who could fulfil them? __

7. What did Peter do in response? (9:39) Where was he taken? Who else was
there, and what were they doing? _____

8. What did Peter do? (9:40) What did he say to Tabitha? What happened next?
What did Peter do in verse 41? What is all this teaching us? Does it remind you
of Jesus' miracles? (e.g. Luke 8:53-55) _____

9. What resulted from this miracle? (9:42) _____

10. With whom did Peter stay? (9:43) Why is this somewhat strange? _____

Peter and Cornelius: A Gentile Becomes a Christian (Acts 10:1-48)

Acts 2 told of the conversion of Jews and proselytes from all over the known world while Acts 8 told of the conversion of many Samaritans and of an Ethiopian eunuch. In Acts 10 we read of the conversion of a Gentile ‘God-fearer’ who was not circumcised. Peter will refer to this in Acts 15:1-2, 7-9.

1. Who lived at Caesarea? (10:1-2) How is he described? What is the difference between being awakened and being saved? (cf. 11:13-14) What does this tell us about conversion? _____

Caesarea, not Jerusalem, was the centre of Roman government over Judea.

When the American missionaries arrived in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) in 1820, they found the people more than ready to embrace the Christian gospel. In 1982 I came across a small village in inland Santo, which was a heathen area, when one man and his family had broken with heathenism and was ripe for Christian instruction.

2. What was Cornelius doing when an angel appeared to him in a vision? (10:3-4) How does God regard his prayers and good works? (see Lev.2:2) _____

3. What is Cornelius told to do? (10:5-8) Whom does he send? How does he obey? _____

4. What was Peter doing the next day? (10:9) Where was he? _____

5. What happened next? (10:10-16) How was Peter feeling? In what state was he? How many times did the vision come to him? What is behind his answers? (Lev.11; note Ezek.4:13-15) What is he told in verse 15? What implications does this have for how the old covenant is related to the new covenant? _____

6. What is the New Testament's teaching on the Levitical food laws and Jew-Gentile relations? (Mark 7:14-15, 17-19; Gal.3:28; Eph.2:14-16) _____

7. Did Peter understand the vision? (10:17) What happened as he pondered the vision? (10:17-18) _____

8. What did the Spirit tell Peter as he was still perplexed? (10:19-20) _____

9. What did Peter do next? (10:21) _____

10. What did the three men tell Peter? (10:22) What did Peter do in response? (10:23a) _____

11. What does the story so far have to say to us about obeying God even when we do not fully understand His reasoning? Can you think of some possible examples? _____

Calvin says that Cornelius was 'conquered by the authority of God'. So too was Peter.

12. What did Peter do the next day? (10:23b-24) What happened the day after that? _____

Caesarea was about 50 kilometres from Joppa.

13. What did Cornelius do when he first met Peter? (10:25) Why did Peter stop him? (10:26) Did they not know that Peter was the first pope?! _____

John Stott: 'Peter refused both to be treated by Cornelius as if he were a god, and to treat Cornelius as if he were a dog.'

14. What does Peter say to Cornelius? (10:27-29) What does Peter realise now? (see Deut.10:17-19) What is implied about the Old Testament food laws and Jew-Gentile relations? _____

15. What does Cornelius tell Peter? (10:30-33) In what spiritual condition was Cornelius? _____

16. What do verses 34-35 mean? _____

17. What is the history, and the message based on that history, of which Peter speaks? (10:36-43) How does he describe Jesus? What are the main points that he emphasises? How is Jesus the Lord (10:36) and judge (10:42) who offers remission of sins? (10:43) What is significant about how the gospel is presented?

18. What happened next? (10:44-48) Why were the Jewish Christians amazed? How is this a mini-Pentecost? What conclusions does Peter draw? What comes

first here - baptism or faith? Why were Cornelius and his friends baptized? _____

Peter Explains the Grace of God (Acts 11:1-18)

1. What did the apostles and the brothers in Judea hear about the expansion of the gospel? (11:1) Can we try to imagine how big an issue the calling in of the Gentiles would have been for Hebrews? _____

2. How did the circumcision party react to this? (11:2-3) Of what two 'sins' did they accuse Peter? Not too much later than this, what happened to Peter himself? (Gal.2:11-14) _____

The circumcision party were professing Christians who read the Bible in a 'flat' way, and considered that all the ceremonial law in the Old Testament carried through into the New.

3. How did Peter explain things to them? (11:4) Why is that important? _____

4. Summarise Peter's summary! (11:5-18) _____

5. How does Peter connect the calling in of the Gentiles and the Mosaic food

laws? (11:12) Was Cornelius a saved man before all this? (11:14) _____

6. How was the gospel presented - i.e. why the call to Cornelius' household? (note Acts 2:39; 16:31) What is the event 'at the beginning'? (11:15) What happened then? What does Peter remember? (11:16; see 1:5) _____

7. What conclusion does Peter draw? (11:17) Is it permissible for the Church to withhold baptism from people whom it has good reason to believe are Christians?

8. How did the Christians in Jerusalem respond to this? (11:18) Who is it who grants repentance? _____

Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:19-29)

1. What happened after the scattering of the early Christians after the death of Stephen? (11:19; see Acts 8:1,4) What does this indicate? _____

2. What happened at Antioch? (11:20) Who triggered this off? To whom did they preach? What did they preach? _____

Antioch in Syria was the third largest city in the Roman Empire (after Rome, then Alexandria). It was the second largest city in the eastern half of the Empire,

and much larger than Carthage in North Africa, which was the second largest city in the western half of the Empire. There was more than one Antioch in the ancient world (see Acts 13:14).

3. What resulted from this? (11:21) How is this explained? _____

4. Who was sent to investigate this? (11:22; like Peter and John in 8:14) Why was this a most suitable choice? _____

5. What did Barnabas do and how is he described? (11:23-24) What resulted? _____

6. What did Barnabas do in order to help the work? (11:25-26; see 9:30) What is said about the followers of Jesus? _____

The word 'Christian' only appears three times in the New Testament, the other two occasions being Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16.

7. Who came to Antioch? (11:27) From where? What does this indicate? _____

8. What did Agabus prophesy? (11:28) By whom did he do so? Are there prophets today? What took place? _____

Claudius was the emperor from A.D. 41-54, succeeding Caligula, and preceding Nero.

9. What did the church at Antioch do as a result? (11:29-30) How was the collection made? How did they send it to Judea? (this must be the trip mentioned in Galatians 2:1) _____

James, Peter and Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12)

1. What did Herod Agrippa I (a grandson of Herod the Great of Matthew 2 fame) do? (12:1) _____

2. Who was put to death in this persecution? (12:2) What had Jesus prophesied concerning him and John, his brother? (Mark 10:39) Looking ahead, compare James' fate to that of Peter. Why the difference? _____

This James is John's brother, not the Lord's half-brother mentioned in Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19 and 2:9. This James was the author of the epistle of James.

3. What did Herod Agrippa do next, and why? (12:3) When did this take place? _____

4. What happened to Peter? (12:4) Who guarded him? What did Herod Agrippa intend to do? _____

Normally there were not executions around Passover time.

5. What was the church doing at this time? (12:5) _____

6. What was Peter doing the very night before Herod was about to bring him out to the people? (12:6) How well guarded was he? _____

7. Who arrived, what did he say to Peter, and what happened as a result? (12:7) _____

Recall Acts 5:17-20.

8. Then what did the angel tell Peter? (12:8) _____

9. In what state of mind was Peter? (12:9) _____

He was not 'naming it and claiming it'!

10. What did the angel do next? (12:10) How supernatural is all this? _____

11. What happened to Peter then? (12:11) What does it mean that he 'came to himself'? What is he now sure of? _____

12. To where did Peter go? (12:12) Which Mary is this? What were the Christians doing at her house? Who was John Mark? (cf. Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13; Col.4:10; 2 Tim.4:11; the Second Gospel, which may be the Gospel of Peter written down by Mark) _____

13. What does Peter do, and who comes to the door? (12:13) _____

14. What does she do when she recognises Peter's voice? (12:14) _____

15. What is the response of those who were praying for Peter? (12:15) Was Peter released because of their believing prayers? Does this remind you of the response to the resurrection of Jesus? What does all this show us? _____

16. What finally happened? (12:16) _____

17. What does Peter do then? (12:17) Why does he mention James? What does this indicate about this James? Where did Peter go? _____

The 'other place' was probably not Rome. Antioch is a likely candidate because in Acts 15 Peter was back in Jerusalem (Antioch is a lot closer to Jerusalem than Rome is).

18. What happened in the aftermath of all this? (12:18-19) What does this reveal about Herod Agrippa? Where did he go next? _____

For the soldiers' fate, note Acts 16:27-28.

19. What contention arose in verse 20? What took place and why? _____

20. What did Herod Agrippa do? (12:21) _____

The ancient world set a lot of store by oratory, which meant that tyrants were fond of droning on and on, as they have continued to do in the modern era. Fidel Castro of Cuba holds the record at seven hours and ten minutes in 1986. He once put Pope John Paul II to sleep.

21. What did the people do? (12:22) How did Herod respond, and what did God do? (12:23) What is the lesson to be learned from this? _____

Josephus mentions this in his *Jewish Antiquities*.

22. As a contrast, what else happened? (12:24) What does this unusual expression mean? _____

23. After the mission of Acts 11:29-30, what did Barnabas and Paul do? (12:25) Whom did they bring with them? Where did they go? _____

The First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)

Sent by the Spirit and the Church (Acts 13:1-3)

Churches exist on this earth to do three main things: to worship God; to edify and build up the saints; and to evangelise the world.

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria. The year is about A.D. 46.

1. Who were the five leaders in the church at Antioch? (13:1) What are they called? Compare this to Crete almost twenty years later (Tit.1:5). _____

J. A. Alexander understands them to be one and the same, but that is uncertain. Of the five, Simeon called Niger ('Niger' means 'black', so we assume that refers to the colour of his skin; he was probably from Africa); Lucius of Cyrene (which is north Africa, and probably not Luke, the author of Luke-Acts); and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod Antipas.

2. What was the congregation doing? (this may possibly refer only to the prophets and teachers) (13:2) What did the Holy Spirit tell them to do? Who chose Paul and Barnabas? What happened next? (13:3) How costly was this for the church at Antioch? What do you think about missionaries who send themselves? _____

Charles Simeon was at Cambridge for over fifty years, but he used to refer to India as his diocese. One of the men who went out to India was Henry Martyn, who was Simeon's assistant and friend, and a very capable man. Simeon wrote that 'the more our love abounds towards the heathen, the more will the zeal of others be provoked for the salvation of our neighbours'.

What do we say that we look for: good preaching, good music, good coffee, good programmes for the children, good facilities ... ?

Note that elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are expected to desire to be elders and also to be recognised by the church.

To Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)

1. Who sent Paul and Barnabas? (13:4) To where? How did they get there? _____

2. Where did Paul and Barnabas go to, and who went with them? (13:5) Where did they first proclaim the word of God? _____

John is John Mark, the man we know as Mark.

3. Whom did they meet at Paphos? (13:6) _____

Paphos was the seat of Roman authority in Crete, and was about 140-150 kilometres from Salamis.

'Bar Jesus' means 'son of Jesus', which is another indication that Jesus was not an uncommon name in the New Testament period.

4. Who was the proconsul, and how is he described? (13:7) What does he do? __

5. What did Elymas, the magician, do, and why? (13:8; note Acts 8:9-11; 19:19)

6. What does Paul do? (13:9-10) What is happening with Saul's name? What do you make of his blunt speech? _____

7. What curse did Paul pronounce upon Elymas? (13:11) What happened? What does this show? _____

8. How did Sergius Paulus respond? (13:12) Carefully think through the link between faith and miracles. _____

In the Synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-43)

Note here the history lesson (13:14-25), the appeal to the Old Testament (13:26-37), and the call to believe (13:38-41).

1. Where did Paul and his companions go to next? (13:13) What happened there? Do things go wrong in Christian work? _____

Mark may have just got homesick, or he may have had second thoughts about calling in the Gentiles.

2. Where did Paul and Barnabas go to next? (13:14) Why did they go to the synagogue first? (cf. Rom.1:16) _____

Antioch in (or 'towards') Pisidia is not the same as Antioch in Syria which was a much bigger city.

'Sitting down' may signify a readiness to teach (see Luke 4:20).

3. What was read to the congregation? (13:15) What did the rulers of the synagogue do then? _____

Remember that Paul was a rabbi.

4. What was Paul's stance while preaching? (13:16a) _____

This seems to be unlike Jesus' stance in Luke 4:20-21.

5. How does Paul address the congregation? (13:16b) What does this teach us? __

6. What does he remind them about God's work, especially in Egypt? (13:17) __

7. Fill out the main details of the historical outline that Paul gives in verses 18-20a) _____

8. What does he say about the period of the Judges and the beginnings of the kingship? (13:20b-21) _____

9. What is said about David? (13:22) Up until this point, would his hearers have disagreed with anything that he had said? _____

10. What does he claim in verse 23? _____

11. How does he summarise the ministry of John the Baptist? (13:24-25) Would they have disagreed with this? What is Paul doing here? _____

12. What does Paul say in verse 26 that would have endeared him to his hearers and what does he say that confronted them? _____

13. What accusation does he make concerning the rulers in Jerusalem? (13:27) What had they failed to understand? _____

14. What is said about the death of Jesus? (13:28-29) Does Paul explain its meaning? What is said about it? _____

15. What is announced then? (13:30) What followed Jesus' resurrection? (13:31) Was this 'done in a corner' (to cite Acts 26:26)? _____

Death hovers over all. William Wordsworth referred to 'the sunless land', while Oscar Wilde tried to joke about it: 'This wallpaper is appalling. One of us will have to go.'

16. What does he urge upon them in verses 32-33? What is the meaning of Psalm 2:7? _____

17. What other texts does he appeal to? (13:34-35) Explain Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10. _____

18. How does David not quite fit Psalm 16:10, although in the original context David is referring to himself? (13:36) _____

19. Contrast David and Christ in death (13:37). _____

20. What is proclaimed through Jesus? (13:38-39) How rare is the appeal to the atonement in the book of Acts? How are Moses and Jesus contrasted? _____

21. Why does Paul cite Habakkuk 1:5 in Acts 13:40-41? What does he mean? How does Habakkuk fit in with the message of the gospel? _____

22. What did the people in the synagogue beg from Paul? (13:42) _____

23. Who followed Paul and Barnabas? (13:43) What did the apostles say to them? _____

To the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-52)

1. What happened on the next Sabbath (Saturday) in Antioch in Pisidia? (13:44) _____

2. How did most of the Jews respond? (13:45) What motivated them? What weapon did they use? What does this indicate? _____

3. What was the reply of Paul and Barnabas? (13:46) Why was it necessary to go to the Jews first? (cf. Rom.1:16) How were the Jews unworthy of grace? What would Paul and Barnabas do next? How should we understand this? (note 14:1; 16:13; 17:1) _____

4. How did Paul and Barnabas understand Isaiah 49:6? (13:47) Who is the Servant in the Isaiah passage? _____

5. How did many of the Gentiles respond? (13:48-49) How is this to be explained? _____

The Living Bible is very misleading in its paraphrase: 'as many as wanted eternal life, believed.'

6. Who followed next, and who triggered this off? (13:50) _____

7. How did Paul and Barnabas respond? (13:51) What is the meaning of this? (see Matt.10:14) What are the implications of rejecting the gospel? _____

Iconium was about 145 kms from Antioch, but still in the region of south Galatia.

8. How were the disciples after all this? (13:52) What place has joy in the Christian life? (see 8:39) _____

To Iconium (Acts 14:1-7)

1. Where did Paul and Barnabas go? (14:1) What happened? What pattern are we seeing here in Paul's journey? _____

2. What did the unbelieving Jews do? (14:2) _____

3. What did Paul and Barnabas do in response? (14:3) How long did they stay? How did they preach? What is the purpose of their signs and wonders? _____

4. How did the city of Iconium respond? (14:4) How common was this? (see e.g. John 10:19-21) What is Barnabas called in verse 4? _____

5. What did their opponents, both Jews and Gentiles, seek to do next? (14:5) What did Paul and Barnabas do as a result? (14:6) What does this teach us? _____

Lystra and Derbe were south of Iconium, in Lycaonia in the province of Galatia.

6. What did they continue to do? (14:7) What does this teach us? _____

In Lystra, a Pagan Backwater (Acts 14:8-20)

In 1796 George Hamilton told the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland that 'to spread abroad the knowledge of the gospel among barbarians and heathen nations seems to me highly preposterous, in so far as it anticipates, nay, as it

even reverses, the order of nature. Men must be polished and refined in their manners before they can be properly enlightened in religious truth.' This episode shows how wrong that is.

1. Who was at Lystra? What did Paul see in him? What did Paul do to him? What is the purpose of the miracle? (14:8-10) _____

Lystra was a rustic cultural backwater, full of pagan superstitions.

2. How did the people explain this? (14:11; see too 28:6) In what language were they speaking? Comment on the fact that on strict monotheistic soil, the Bible stakes its claim that the Word became flesh (John 1:14). _____

3. Whom did they mistake Paul for, and whom did they mistake Barnabas for? (14:12) _____

Zeus is Jupiter in Latin, while Hermes is Mercury in Latin (the little messenger who zipped around the sun). Darrell Bock suggests that this was because Barnabas was older, but it is more likely that it was because he was bigger, and little Paul did more of the speaking.

Ovid told a story about the same gods who in disguise visited an elderly couple. They received them and became priests, while the rest of the town was destroyed by flood.

4. What did the priest of Zeus want to do? (14:13) _____

5. When Paul and Barnabas realised what was going on, what did they do? (14:14; recall Caiaphas in Matthew 26:65) _____

6. What do Paul and Barnabas call their hearers? (14:15; contrast to 13:26) List all the key points that Paul and Barnabas make in verse 15. Why does he begin with these points? _____

Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* had an ominous alternative title, *The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*.

One often hears in evangelical circles today that evangelism is telling people about Jesus. Yes, but how we do that so that it may make sense?

In the early 1830s in Madagascar, a married couple went to a maker of idols to have a household god made. There was some delay, and the couple was obliged to wait until evening. The maker brought home a branch of a tree from the forest, and began to prepare the god. He used the one piece of wood to make the idol, and to fuel the fire that was boiling his rice. The couple paid for the idol, and returned home. Soon afterwards, a young Christian visited the couple, and read Isaiah 44:10, 14-17 to them. The woman, Rafaravavy, was convicted of the folly of idol worship, and came to trust in Christ.

7. What do they explain to the people of Lystra in verse 16? (cf. 17:30; Rom.3:25) Does greater light imply greater responsibility? (Luke 12:47-48) _____

8. What was God's revelation to the Gentiles in the Old Testament period? (14:17; Rom.1:20; Ps.147:7-9) _____

9. What were Paul and Barnabas scarcely able to do? (14:18) _____

10. What happened to Paul? (14:19) Contrast verse 13 and verse 19. _____

Human nature is unstable. Brutus killed Julius Caesar in the Roman Senate, and the crowd swung behind him, then against him as they listened to Mark Antony. Crowds welcomed Christ coming into Jerusalem with 'Hosanna to the Son of David' (Matt.21:9). A few days later, it was 'Crucify Him'.

11. What did Paul do after he recovered the next day? (14:20) _____

The Return Journey, then Home (Acts 14:21-28)

1. What did Paul and Barnabas do at Derbe? (14:21) What did they do after that? For what purpose? (14:21-22a) Why do you think they adopted a 'preach and return' method? Should we learn anything from that? _____

2. How did Paul and Barnabas encourage their earlier converts? (14:22b) What does he say about entering the kingdom of God? _____

3. Who are appointed in every church? (14:23) How are they set apart? Why did they do this relatively quickly? (cf. Tit.1:5) To whom do Paul and Barnabas commit them (either the congregations or the elders)? How binding is this on the church today? _____

4. Where did they go to next? (14:24) _____

5. Then where did they go? (14:25) And after that? (14:26) What is said about this Antioch in Syria? _____

6. What did they tell the whole church gathered together? (14:27) What is remarkable about this first missionary journey? _____

7. Where did Paul and Barnabas stay for a time? (14:28) _____

It must have been at this time that Paul heard what had happened at Galatia, and so had written his agitated letter to the Galatians (cf. Gal. 1:6; 3:1; 4:20; 5:7).

The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35)

This happened after the epistle to the Galatians was written.

1. What then began to be taught? (15:1) Where did these teachers come from? How might they have framed their 'gospel'? (e.g. Gen.17:9-14; Lev.12:3) _____

As above, note Galatians 1:6; 3:1; 4:20; 5:7 and then Gal.5:2, 4.

2. How did Paul and Barnabas react to this? (15:2) How did the Church go about seeking to resolve the issue? Who was present at the council? Regarding church government, what do you make of the fact that there was a council and elders as well as apostles? _____

There has always been those who consider that councils create more crises than they resolve. In the fourth century Gregory of Nazianzus famously lamented:

For my part, if I am to write the truth, my inclination is to avoid all assemblies of bishops, because I have never seen any Council come to a good end, nor turn out to be a solution of evils. On the contrary, it usually increases them.

Yet councils have biblical warrant.

3. Where did Paul and Barnabas pass through on the way to Jerusalem? (15:3) What did they do there, and what was the response? _____

4. What did they do at Jerusalem? (15:4) _____

5. How did the Pharisaic Christians respond? (15:5) What was their understanding of salvation, and how did they argue their case? What parts of the law of Moses are binding today, and what parts are not? _____

Think through 1 Corinthians 7:19.

6. Who was present at the Jerusalem council? (15:6) _____

7. When did Peter speak? (15:7) What did he say? To what was he referring? (cf. Acts 10) _____

It is not easy to date the Cornelius episode but it would have been some ten years earlier. The lapse of Peter and Barnabas would have been not long before this (Gal. 2:11-14).

8. What other points does Peter make in verses 8-9? _____

9. What, then, is the argument in verse 10? What yoke has been lifted? (cf. Gal.5:1; Matt.11:29) How were the Israelites not able to bear this yoke? _____

10. What is the way of salvation for the Jew, and what is the way of salvation for the Gentile? (15:11) How does this help us in presenting the gospel? _____

11. How did the assembly respond to this? (15:12) Then who held the floor? What did they say to the assembly? What was the role of signs and wonders? _____

12. Who spoke next? (15:13) _____
 This is James the Lord's brother, not James the son of Zebedee and one of the twelve.

13. On what does James pick up in beginning his speech? (15:14) What does he quote? (15:15-18; see Amos 9:11-12) Who is included in this rebuilt and restored tent of David? Is the church 'new Israel'? (for another example, see Jer.31:31-34 and Heb.8:8-12) _____

14. What conclusion does James draw from this? (15:19) _____

15. What are the four issues that are raised? (15:20) What do each of these commands mean? How would you explain this? How do we get from verse 1 to

verse 20? _____

I. Howard Marshall: 'Probably no section of Acts has aroused such controversy as this one or led to such varied historical reconstructions of the actual situation.' As for the decrees, Calvin views them as necessary and important, but as whole, temporary.

16. What point does James make in verse 21? Of whom is he thinking? _____

17. What did the council decide to do? (15:22) Who was behind this decision? (this is why, for example, John Stott insisted on unanimity before his churchwardens enacted anything new) Who was sent? Where? _____

18. What did the letter say? (15:23-29) How authoritative was it? What was the general aim? Why were Judas and Silas sent with Paul and Barnabas? What can we learn from this? _____

19. What did the delegation do at Antioch? (15:30) _____

20. How did the congregation at Antioch respond? (15:31) _____

21. How are Judas and Silas described? (15:32) What did they do at Antioch? _____

22. How did this all finish up? (15:33-35) _____

Verse 34 is ‘But it seemed good to Silas to remain there’, but most versions omit it. It prepares the way for verse 40 but would seem to contradict verse 33.

The Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:26-18:22)

Even Apostles Dispute (Acts 15:36-41)

In this second missionary journey, Paul goes further, and brings the gospel to Greece (i.e. Achaia in the south and Macedonia in the north). The dates may have been from late A.D.49 to A.D.52.

1. What was Paul’s original plan to Barnabas? (15:36) _____

2. What did Barnabas want to do? (15:37) Why was this a problem? (see 13:13)

3. What was Paul’s opinion about this? (15:38) _____

4. What happened as a result? (15:39) What did Barnabas do in response? _____

5. What did Paul do? (15:40) Whom did he take with him? _____

6. To where did Paul go, and what did he do there? (15:41) _____

Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:1-5)

1. Whom did Paul meet at Derbe? (16:1) What was his family background? (note too 2 Tim.1:5; 3:15) _____

2. What was Timothy’s general reputation amongst the local Christians? (16:2) _____

3. What did Paul want to do with Timothy? (16:3) What did this entail? Why

can Paul be so flexible in evangelism and so unbending on the gospel? (see Gal.5:2, 4) What does 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 have to say to us? _____

4. What did they do as they travelled throughout the cities? (16:4) _____

‘The decisions’ is τὰ δόγματα (transliterated as ‘ta dogmata’). They possessed real authority.

5. What twofold effect did this have on the churches? (16:5) _____

The Macedonian Call (Acts 16:6-10)

1. To where did Paul, Silas, and Timothy go? (16:6) Why would the Holy forbid them to preach in Asia (the western part of what is now Turkey)? _____

2. They headed in a north-westerly direction. What did they try to do at Mysia? (16:7) Who stopped them from going into Bithynia? Did they know they were being guided? Did they know exactly what was happening? (recall Abraham’s journeying in Gen.11-12) _____

3. To where did they go? (16:8) Where is Troas? _____

4. What happened at Troas? (16:9) What would this mean for the spread of the gospel? _____

5. What did Paul and the rest do then? (16:10) _____

This was a momentous decision, and it took the gospel westwards. Notice the 'we' in verse 10. This is the first of the so-called 'we' passages in Acts. It may indicate that Luke lived as a physician in Troas.

The Gospel Comes to Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)

1. How did they all get to Philippi? (16:11-12) How is Philippi described? Where was it? How long did they stay there? _____

2. Where did they go on the Sabbath day? (16:13) Whom did they meet? _____

This probably means there were not many Jews in Philippi. To build a synagogue, ten Jewish men were required. It seems there was only a ladies' prayer meeting, and more than likely many of them were not Jews but God-fearers.

3. Who was Lydia? (16:14) Where was she from? (note Rev.2:18-29) What did she do for a living? What did the Lord do for her? How necessary is this for salvation? _____

Lydia may have been a widow or even divorced, to be working like this. She was probably fairly wealthy as purple indicates a niche market.

4. Who was baptized? (16:15) What does this indicate? What did she urge Paul and the others to do? (again, this may indicate wealth and a fair-sized house) _____

5. Who met them as they were going to the place of prayer? (16:16) How did this slave girl make a living? What do you make of this? (Deut.18:10; 1 Sam.28:8; Micah 3:11) _____

6. What was she crying out? (16:17) _____

The demons recognise Messianic and apostolic authority (e.g. Mark 1:21-28), but this woman's apparent endorsement of Paul and the others might well have made things rather awkward for them.

7. What happened after a number of days? (16:18) What was Paul's frame of mind? What did he do? What resulted from that? _____

8. How did her owners respond to this? (16:19) What accusation did they make against Paul and Silas? (16:20-21) What do you think they may have been referring to? What motivated them? _____

9. What happened to Paul and Silas as a result of this? (16:22-24) _____

The beating was illegal since Paul and Silas were Roman citizens (Acts 16:37-39; 1 Thess.2:2).

10. How did Paul and Silas respond to all this? (16:25) What does this teach us?

Alexander Solzhenitsyn spent eight years in a Soviet labour camp, and wrote: 'Bless you, prison for having been in my life.' Madame Guyon was gaoled for ten years, 1695-1705, and wrote:

*Nought have I else to do:
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom most I love to please,
Doth listen to my song.*

11. What did God do next? (16:26) Why do you think He did this? _____

12. What was the jailer doing when this happened? (16:27) What did he then intend to do? Why? What does this reveal about his identity and world view? _____

Better death than dishonour! Better death than failure! So he was ready to leap into the next world, in order to escape shame in this world.

13. What did Paul do to change the situation? (16:28) _____

14. How did the jailer respond? (16:29) Why was he trembling? _____

15. What was the great question that he asked of Paul and Silas? (16:30) Does this differ at all from the question of the rich young ruler? (Matt.19:16) _____

Remember the crowd on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:37.

16. Analyse each part of the answer given to the man (16:31-32; see Acts 2:38; Rom.10:9) Are we saved by being sincere or loving? To whom was the gospel offer made? What else would have been added in verse 32? _____

Charlotte Elliott: *Just as I am, without one plea/ But that Thy blood was shed for me.*

Augustus Toplady: *Nothing in my hand I bring,/ Simply to Thy Cross I cling.*

Charles Wesley: *O Jesus, full of pardoning grace./ More full of grace than I of sin.*

17. What did the jailer then do, and what was done to him? (16:33) Who was baptized? (see 16:15) _____

Chrysostom: 'He washed and was washed; he washed them from their stripes, and he himself was washed from his sins.'

18. What did the jailer do then? (16:34) What goes with the experience of

conversion? (16:34) _____

How changed was this man in just a few verses!

19. What did the magistrates try to do the next day? (16:35) What did the jailer tell Paul? (16:36) _____

20. What was Paul's perhaps surprising answer? (16:37) How do we decide when to respond like this and when to follow 1 Peter 2:23? _____

Paul was surely providing some kind of legal protection to the fledgling church at Philippi, so that the magistrates would not be so ready to persecute the Christians. George Whitefield did something similar when he lodged charges against rioters in Hampton and won, but then did not enforce the punishment. The point was made that Methodist preachers could be protected by law.

21. How did the magistrates respond when they heard this? (16:38) _____

22. What did they do next? (16:39) What does this sort of apology mean? Why did they ask Paul and Silas to leave the city? _____

23. What did Paul and Silas do next? (16:40) _____

The Gospel Comes to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)

1. To where did Paul and Silas go next? (17:1) What was in Thessalonica? _____

2. What did Paul do for the next three Saturdays? (17:2) What was his

presentation of the gospel to Jews? (17:3) How is this appropriate? _____

3. Who made up the fledgling church at Thessalonica? (17:4) How 'natural' a community was this? _____

4. Who was hostile to this, and why? (17:5) What did they do as a result? How dangerous was the situation? _____

It was at Jason's house that Paul and Silas were staying.

5. Whom did the mob grab? What did they do to him? What was the accusation made against Paul and Silas and the early Christians? (17:6-7) What did they mean by it? Why was it a clever accusation? Why do pagan civil authorities dislike talk of Jesus as King of kings? _____

6. How did the people and the civil authorities react to this? (17:8) _____

7. What resulted from all this? (17:9) _____

Off to Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

1. What did the brothers do at Thessalonica? (17:10) Why was this done by night? (cf. 17:5-9) Where did Paul and Silas go to? What did they do when they arrived there? _____

Berea was about 80 kilometres southwest of Thessalonica.

2. Why are the Jews in Berea praised? (17:11) What did they do to earn this

praise? What is this teaching us? How good are modern Western people at this? _

3. Who came to faith in Christ? (17:12) How diverse was the early Church? ____

4. What did the Jews at Thessalonica do, and why? (17:13) _____

5. What did Paul do as a result, and what did Silas and Timothy do? (17:14)
Why the difference? _____

6. To where did Paul go? (17:15) What did he tell his helpers to do? _____

Paul at Athens with Hostile Philosophers (Acts 17:16-34)

Athens was the cradle of democracy, and the home of philosophy, where Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno had lived and thought and worked. The names have come down to us. C. S. Lewis was president of the Socratic Club at Oxford University from 1942 until he left for Cambridge in 1954. Eric Metaxas runs a Socrates in the City group in New York.

1. For whom was Paul waiting? (17:16) What was his state of mind? What brought this about? What does this tell us about God Himself? (Ex.20:4-6; note Ex.34:14; Isa.42:8) What is this telling us about evangelising the lost? _____

The NIV says that Paul was ‘greatly distressed’, but it is the word for ‘provoked’. It is used in a bad sense in 1 Corinthians 13:5 where Paul says that love is not easily provoked; it is patient. In Acts 17 the connotation is good.

The Acropolis in Athens had a forty foot high statue of Minerva, and there were

idols everywhere. It was said that there were more gods than men in Athens. William Carey used to weep in geography lessons as he pointed out lands where the gospel was not known. This led to his leaving for India in 1792 where he stayed for the rest of his life. He was 'provoked' by idolatry. In 1811 Henry Martyn made a terrible journey in the oppressive heat to Shiraz in Persia. Here he preached to Muslims. He once heard of Jesus, supposedly in the fourth heaven, bowing down and clinging to the robes of Mohammed. He wept at this, and said: 'I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified - it would be hell to me, if He were to be always thus dishonoured.'

2. As Paul waited for Silas and Timothy, what two places did he go to, and what did he do there? (17:17) What is said about the way he evangelised? _____

3. What philosophers did he meet in the market place? (17:18) What did they think of him? _____

The Epicureans did not fear God or judgment, and they thought of life in terms of pleasure. The Stoics, however, believed in self-sufficiency, and looked at life in terms of 'the stiff upper lip'. So far as God was concerned, they saw God and the world as one - there was a kind of World-Soul that operated the world. They were the educated sophisticated elite of a fading pagan culture.

Many of the translations say that they mocked Paul as a 'babbling', but it is actually 'seed-picker'. He is like a bird which picks up bits and pieces - a scavenger, a third-rate journalist. The Jerusalem Bible has 'this parrot', while Sir William Ramsay has 'ignorant plagiarist'. It would be like being accused of google-searching snippets of knowledge, or of owning the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, and nothing more.

4. What did the philosophers do next? (17:19) For what purpose? _____

Some have said that Paul was under arrest, but that is hardly likely. It would be more like an evangelical Christian appearing on Q & A.

5. What do they say about Paul's message? (17:20; see 17:18, 31) _____

Some have thought that Paul was misunderstood to be teaching two gods - Jesus and the goddess *ἀνάστασις* which is feminine, referring to a goddess. But it is not likely that he could have been so badly misunderstood. More probably, Paul is simply emphasising the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

A. C. Swinburne:

*That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never.*

It is a common view - when you are dead, you are fertilizer.

6. What does Luke tell us about the Athenians? (17:21) Does this sound familiar?

7. What is Paul's opening statement? (17:22) _____

The word for 'religious' in Greek is also the word for 'superstitious', so the KJV has Paul telling the Athenians that they were 'too superstitious'. That is what Paul *thought* - see verse 16 - but it is unlikely to be what he *said*. Religion will not save anybody, but it is a starting point.

8. What had Paul seen, and how does he use this? (17:23) How does this help us to evangelise? _____

Peter Kreeft believes this may go back to Socrates himself who was a stone-cutter. In any case, there have been a number of altars found which are inscribed 'To the unknown gods.' Epimenides advised the Athenians during a plague to sacrifice sheep and put up altars to unnamed gods.

Try to be aware of your audience. Gordon Keddie: 'Parrot evangelism is not personal evangelism!'

Raymond Panikkar's *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* used verses like this to say that Christ could be known in Hinduism. Paul is saying that the Athenians have a sense of reverence for what they do not know.

9. What is the first thing that Paul tells the Athenians about God? (17:24; see 14:15; Isa.42:5) Why is this so crucial? _____

10. What was the next thing that Paul told them about God? (17:25; see 1 Kings 8:27-30; Ps.50:7-15) _____

I once heard of a minister who said that God created us because He was lonely. No, He is self-sufficient; He does not need anything, including us.

11. What does Paul tell the Athenians about human beings? (17:26) Why is this so important to grasp? (Col.3:10-11) _____

The NKJV has 'He has made from one blood' while the NIV and ESV have 'from one man'. There is no great difference in the meaning.

In India, William Carey referred to the caste system as 'one of the strongest chains with which the Devil ever bound the children of men.'

When William Wilberforce published his *Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, in 1807 just before the slave trade was abolished that same year, he cited both Colossians 3:11-12 and Acts 17:26.

In April 2005 twin girls were born to a middle-brown couple in Nottingham in the UK. One twin was white, the other was close to being black (darker than middle-brown anyway). Their grandparents on both sides consisted of white mothers and black fathers.

12. What implication flows from this? (Acts 17:27; note Genesis 1:26 and Jer.23:23-24) _____

Seneca: 'God is near you, with you, within you.'

In the second century B.C. the Roman playwright, Terence, wrote: 'I am a human being, and I consider nothing human to be alien to me.'

13. What is Paul's point in 17:28, and how does he make it? Not everybody can do this, but what is being done here? How may it help us? _____

Paul cites two pagan authors. 'For in him we live and move and have our being' goes back to Epimenides in the 6th century B.C., while 'we are also (NKJV) or indeed (ESV) His offspring' comes from Aratus in the 3rd century B.C.

And there is more - in Titus 1:12 Epimenides is cited as a kind of prophet. Then Menander is quoted in 1 Corinthians 15:33, although it is probably some kind of proverbial saying.

My favourite argument against the feminists who advocate abortion is the issue of sex selection. At the end of May 2012 President Barack Obama opposed a bill to outlaw abortion on grounds of sex selection (the bill was lost in the House of Representatives because it could not get the necessary majority. It would have been fairly meaningless as people would have given other reasons for the abortion). Sex selection has led to hundreds of millions of baby girls being aborted across the world, especially in India and China. The pro-abortion side is trapped by its own rhetoric - it is a woman's right to kill little girls.

Cite contradictions in the Qur'an against Islam (e.g. when Allah tells Muhammad to pray for forgiveness); cite George Orwell against those who think that communism is the bulwark against fascism (e.g. in his *Homage to Catalonia* in 1938 he decided that they were just thugs trying to murder their fellow human beings). All truth is God's truth, no matter who says it.

14. Hence what can be said about God if we understand the nature of human beings? (17:29) _____

Calvin: 'Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.'

15. Is God's judgment in the New Testament 'softer' than in the Old Testament? (17:30; see Rom.3:25; Heb.10:28-29) Why is it different? What does God command? Whom does He command? _____

16. What day has God fixed? (17:31) How will He judge the world? How do we know this is true? Why does Paul mention the resurrection before explaining the crucifixion? _____

See Psalm 96:13; 98:9; Dan.7:13; Matt.25:31-33; John 5:27; Acts 10:41-42. Christianity is unashamedly historical; it all hinges on Christ's rising from the dead.

17. Discuss the three responses in 17:32-34.

(a) **there are those who sneer** - 17:32a. It is the same word used back in Acts 2:13. The Jerusalem Bible says that 'some of them burst out laughing'. What are some parallels today? _____

The god Apollos is supposed to have said: 'But when the earth drinks up a man's blood once he has died, there is no resurrection.' Pliny the Elder thought that the resurrection of the body was a mad idea.

Footnote: Sir William Ramsay, who was usually very sensible, thought that Paul failed here and was disappointed, and so changed his message to that of 1 Corinthians 2:2. There is no evidence of this at all.

(b) **there are those who want to investigate further** - 17:32b. Is this a polite evasion or genuine caution? _____

(c) *there are those who come to faith* - 17:34. _____

It must have taken some courage for Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, to stand apart from his fellow members of the Brains Trust and confess faith in a crucified and risen Saviour. Some other men joined him, as did a woman named Damaris.

To Corinth (Acts 18:1-17)

1. What was Paul's next stop after Athens? (18:1) _____

2. Whom did he meet up with there? (18:2) Why were they in Corinth? _____

In A.D. 49 the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, which naturally affected Christian Jews also.

3. Why did Paul stay with Priscilla and Aquila? (18:3) _____

4. How did he spend his spare time? (18:4) _____

5. Who arrived next? (18:5; cf.17:15) How did Paul present the gospel to Jews? _

6. How did the Jews respond to Paul's message? (18:6) How did Paul respond to their response? (note 13:51; Ezek.33:1-7) _____

7. To whom did Paul then go? (18:7) Where did he live? _____

He is not the Titus of Galatians 2:1 or the epistle to Titus.

8. Who was converted to the Lord Jesus? (18:8) Who else believed? What happened to them as a result? _____

9. What was the vision given to Paul? (18:9-11) Why was it given? What is the specific content of its comforting message? How long did Paul stay in Corinth as a result? What did he write about this time? (1 Thess.3:6) _____

10. Who was the proconsul of Achaia (southern Greece)? (18:12) What did the Jews do to attack Paul? What charge did they make? (18:13) _____

11. What was Gallio's response to this, and why did he respond this way? (18:14-15) What do you make of his response? _____

12. Then what did he do? (18:16) _____

13. What did the mob do to Sosthenes? (18:17) Who was he? How did Gallio respond? Does that sound familiar? _____

Sosthenes may have been a Jew who converted to Christianity (see 1 Cor.1:1). Crispus is called the ruler of the synagogue in Acts 18:8 but there may have been more than one, or he may have succeeded Crispus when he became a Christian, and then become one himself.

Back in Antioch (Acts 18:18-22)

1. For how long did Paul stay in Corinth? (18:18) To where did he go next? How did he get there? Who went with him? What did Paul do at Cenchreae? Why? (Num.6:1-21; Acts 21:20-24) What do you make of this? _____

2. What happened at Ephesus? (18:19) What was Paul asked in verse 20? What was his reply? _____

3. What did he do next? (18:21) How certain were his plans? (note James 4:13-15; 1 Cor.4:19) What does this tell us about God's guidance? _____

4. What were the next two destinations of Paul? (18:22) In what way was each significant? _____

The Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)

The Start

1. For how long was Paul at Antioch in Syria? (18:23) Then where did he go? For what purpose? _____

Apollos and Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28)

1. To whom are we introduced in Acts 18:24? Where did he come from? How is he described? _____

2. What did he know, how did he preach it, and what did he not know? (18:25; see 19:1-7) _____

3. Where did Apollos preach? (18:26) What did Priscilla and Aquila do when they heard him? What does this tell us about Priscilla as a woman? Why did they correct Apollos privately? _____

4. Where did Apollos go to next? (18:27) How was he to be received? How can good things nevertheless carry dangers within them? (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6-7) What did Apollos do when he arrived there? How do we receive faith? _____

5. How is Apollos' preaching described? (18:28) What was the content of it? _____

Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41)

1. What did Paul do while Apollos was at Corinth? (19:1) Whom did he find at Ephesus? How many? (19:7) _____

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, and presumably Apollos made his way back there (1 Cor.16:12).

Ephesus was a leading city in the Roman Empire. The Temple of Diana, which was one of the seven wonders of the world, was there.

2. What did he ask them? (19:2; he must have had his suspicions of them) What was their surprising reply? _____

If they knew of John the Baptist and were baptized by him, they would have known something of the Holy Spirit's coming (Luke 3:16), but had not experienced it in an Acts 2 sense.

3. What did Paul ask next? (19:3) What was the answer? _____

John's baptism was not Christian baptism, but preparatory for it.

4. What did Paul explain about John's baptism? (19:4) _____

John Stott does not see them as Christians at all, but F. F. Bruce and John Calvin view them as pre-Pentecost believers.

5. How did they respond to that? (19:5; see 10:48) _____

This was probably a shorthand way of referring to Trinitarian baptism (Matt.28:19).

6. What resulted from this? (19:6) What is this indicating? (Acts 2:4, 17; 10:46) How many were involved in this? (19:7) _____

7. What was Paul able to do for the next three months? (19:8) What was his topic? (note Daniel 2:36-45) _____

8. What happened after that? (19:9) How did he respond? Whom did he take with him? Where did they go? _____

The so-called Western text of Acts says that this took place between 11.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m., which was siesta time.

Tyrannus is an odd name for a teacher!

9. For how long did he continue? (19:10; note 20:31) Who heard the word of God during that time? _____

10. What did God do through Paul? (19:11) Was this meant for all Christians or for the apostles? _____

11. How extraordinary were these miracles? (19:12) _____

Robert Tilton used to send anointed miracle cloths to people who wanted him to perform miracles!

Ric Weinman wrote a book, *Your Hands Can Heal: Learn to Channel Healing Energy*.

12. In response, what did some of the Jewish exorcists decide to do? (19:13) What was their motive? Who especially took up this practice? (19:14) _____

13. What was the answer of one evil spirit? (19:15) What happened after that? (19:16) What did the spirit do to the exorcists? What might we learn from this? _

This is a kind of exorcism in reverse!

14. How did the residents of Ephesus respond to this? (19:17) _____

15. What did many of them do? (19:18-19) What does this indicate about saving faith? (see Luke 19:6-10) _____

Ephesus was the occult capital of the empire. The KJV translation is ‘curious arts’. It is associated with the word for ‘busybody (1 Tim.5:13), for being more curious about things than we ought to be.

Eustathius tells of an Ephesian wrestler at Olympia who was unbeatable while he wore an amulet on his ankle.

A friend of mine who had been a 33rd degree Freemason told me: ‘When I became a Christian, I burnt all my Masonic books.’

16. What does Luke say to describe the overall situation? (19:20) _____

17. What did Paul resolve to do? (19:21) How did he resolve to do this? What were his intentions? _____

‘Spirit’ (ESV) could possibly be ‘spirit’, which would make it a reference to Paul’s human spirit.

18. Who went ahead of him? (19:22) To where? Where did Paul stay? _____

19. What happened then? (19:23) How is this disturbance described, and how is Christianity described? _____

20. Who was Demetrius? (19:24) On what was his business based? _____

The cult of Artemis ('Diana' in Latin) was very strong in Ephesus. The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world. Pliny the Elder said that it had 127 columns although there is only one left standing today.

21. How did Demetrius present his case to his fellow craftsmen and workmen? (19:25-27) To what motives does he appeal? Which do you think is the stronger motive? _____

22. How did they respond to Demetrius' rallying call? (19:28) _____

23. What did the mob do in verse 29? _____

24. What did Paul want to do? (19:30-31) Why was he stopped? By whom? _____

The Asiarchs were not Christians but keepers of the imperial cult (the Roman religion, including emperor worship) in Asia (i.e. Turkey).

25. How is the mob described? (19:32) How realistic is this? How should we respond to mobs? (Ex.23:2a) _____

In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, after the assassination of Caesar, the Roman crowd is swayed first by the murderer, Brutus, and then by Mark Antony.

26. Who sought to address the crowd? (19:33-34) How did the mob respond to him? Why? What resulted? What is mob rule like? _____

Alexander was a Jew, but does not seem to have been a Christian Jew, so far as we know.

27. How does the town clerk quieten the crowd? (19:35) To what does he appeal? _____

He seems to be referring to a meteorite.

28. What does he tell them to do? (19:36-40) How does he convince them to settle down? _____

He argues four things: the cult of Artemis is in no danger; there are no charges of sacrilege or blasphemy; there are legal procedures available; the crowd was in danger of antagonizing the Roman authorities.

Paul in Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 20:1-16)

1. What did Paul do after the uproar in Ephesus had subsided? (20:1) Is a pattern emerging? Where does he head from Ephesus? _____

2. What did he do on the way to Macedonia (i.e. northern Greece)? (20:2) Where did he go from there? _____

3. How long did he spend in Achaia? (20:3) Why did he move on? _____

Macedonia would include cities like Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.

4. Who went with Paul? (20:4) Where did they go, ahead of Paul? (20:5) _____

This becomes connected to the collection because of the famine in Judea (1 Cor.16:1-4; 2 Cor.8:16-24 - although Titus is never mentioned in Acts).

Troas was in Asia, across the Aegean Sea from Macedonia.

5. What did Paul and Luke (and presumably Silas) do? (20:6) What is the time framework? _____

6. What did Paul do at Troas? (20:7) What day of the week was it? (cf 1 Cor.16:1-2; Rev.1:10) What was the church doing at this time? Why did he speak for so long? _____

7. How is the atmosphere described in verse 8? _____

8. What happened to Eutychus? (20:9) Why is this account recorded in Scripture?

‘Eutychus’ means ‘lucky’!

9. What miracle then takes place? (20:10; recall 9:40) _____

10. What then took place? (20:11) Why did this meeting go on for the whole night? _____

‘Broken bread and eaten’ may indicate the Lord’s Supper and a meal. The Lord’s Supper was perhaps a full meal or part of a meal (cf. 1 Cor.11:17-22).

11. How were the Christians at Troas after all this? (20:12) _____

12. Where were the Christian team and Paul intending to meet up? (20:13) How did they get there, and how did Paul get there? _____

Assos was not far from Troas.

13. What happened at Assos? (20:14) Where did they sail to after that? (20:15-16) What were Paul’s intentions? To where was he headed? Why was he wanting to avoid Ephesus? _____

Chios was where Homer was born, and Samos was where Pythagoras was born.

Paul Addresses the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17-38)

Paul preached to Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13); to the unsophisticated pagans of Lystra (Acts 14); and to the philosophers at Athens (Acts 17). But in Acts 20, during his third missionary journey, we have Paul speaking to Christian elders from Ephesus who have travelled the 48 kilometres to meet him at Miletus.

1. What did Paul do, having reached Miletus? (20:17) Whom does he call to go to Miletus? Who is involved in governing and teaching the church? _____

It must have taken these Ephesian elders a day or two to get to Miletus. Elders ('presbyteroi') are mentioned earlier in the book of Acts, in 11:30; 14:23; 15:4, 6. Note too that in verse 28 they are called overseers (see Tit.1:5, 7).

2. What does Paul tell them after they arrive? (20:18; see 20:31) Why is this important? _____

3. What does he tell them about his ministry? (20:19) From whom did he encounter the most trouble? _____

It is hard to say he served them with humility without destroying what he is saying.

J. A. Alexander links these tears with the trials that Paul had to endure, but they may have been tears of concern and urgency (Rom.9:2-3; 2 Cor.2:4). William Cowper wrote of George Whitefield:

*He lov'd the world that hated him: the tear
That dropp'd upon his Bible was sincere.*

For opposition in Ephesus, see Acts 19 and 1 Cor.15:32; 2 Cor.1:8-10.

4. What did he teach them? (20:20; note v.27) Where? _____

Gordon Keddie says that Paul taught from the pulpit and in the home. In seventeenth century England, Richard Baxter would visit 800 families each year at Kidderminster.

Paul, however, meant that he taught in public in the synagogue and in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). 'House to house' is probably referring to church meetings, because there were no buildings for Christian public worship at this stage.

5. What is a summary of the gospel? (20:21) Why are repentance and faith both necessary? _____

William Perkins: 'These words summarise the complete duty of a minister as a public angel or interpreter.' Calvin: 'repentance and faith are tied together in an unbreakable connexion.'

6. What does Paul know about the future? (20:22; see too 1 Cor.16:7-9) Where is he heading? _____

The NKJV has 'bound in the spirit', meaning Paul's own human spirit, but the NIV has 'compelled by the Spirit' and the ESV has 'constrained by the Spirit'. Paul knew what he wanted and what he could pray for but he did not know what would happen. See too Romans 15:30-32.

7. What does he know about what will happen to him in Jerusalem? (20:23) How does he know this? (mind you, one would not need to be clairvoyant to know that Paul was heading for trouble in Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism) _____

At Tyre, the disciples warned him not to go on (Acts 21:3-4). Then at Caesarea at Philip's house, Agabus told him something similar (Acts 21:10-14).

See too 2 Tim.3:12 and John 15:18-20.

8. What matters more: faithfulness or safety? (20:24) To what does he compare life? What is emphasised about the gospel? _____

If he had wanted to claim his superannuation and play golf, he would have headed back, but he pressed on.

James Hudson Taylor formed the China Inland Mission in 1865 to send workers into provinces where the gospel was little known. No appeals were made, but the motto was 'Advance, always advance.'

Amy Carmichael: 'If the praise of man elates me and his blame depresses me; if I cannot rest under misunderstanding without defending myself; if I love to be loved more than to love, to be served more than to serve, then I know nothing of Calvary love.'

Blaise Pascal: 'Self will can never be satisfied, even if it were to secure everything it wanted; but we are satisfied the moment we give it up.'

9. What does Paul tell the elders next? (20:25) What is the atmosphere of this meeting? (see verse 38 for how they are affected by this) _____

This verse seems to contradict what Paul said in the later Pastoral Epistles. The Pastoral Epistles were written after Acts was completed about A.D. 62, and, naturally, before Paul was beheaded about A.D. 66. They refer to a ministry to do with Ephesus (1 Tim.1:3; 2 Tim.1:15-18).

Paul may only mean in Acts 20 that they will see him no longer - he had been in Ephesus for three years but now he was leaving. The NIV and ESV both overdo the translation to imply that the Ephesian elders would never see him

again. Paul may only be referring to this particular trip. But perhaps the solution is that the Pastoral Epistles do not actually say that Paul went back to Ephesus. Timothy was there, but Paul may only have been nearby, on his way to Rome, then to Spain (see Rom.15:22-25).

10. What does it mean to have a good conscience, or a conscience clean or pure of all blood guilt? (20:26; note Acts 24:16; Ezek.33:1-7) What does his use of the word 'testify' imply? _____

The NKJV and ESV have 'testify; the NIV has 'declare', which is not quite the word.

In April 1521 Martin Luther appeared at the Diet of Worms before the emperor Charles V. Luther asserted: 'I do not set myself up to be a saint, nor do I argue about my life, but about the doctrines of the Christ'. Luther was declared a notorious heretic by both pope and emperor. But he stood firm: 'Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.' He may have added: 'Here I stand, I can do no other.'

11. What was Paul's claim in verse 27? Explain that this works out in practice.

12. What does Paul tell the Ephesian elders to do first of all? (20:28; see 1 Tim.4:16) What are they called here? (note 20:17) Who made them overseers? What are overseers to do? (see Isa. 40:11; Ezek.34:12; 1 Pet.5:1-3) How is the church of God obtained (or saved)? _____

In 1656 Richard Baxter published his *The Reformed Pastor*, which was based on a sermon he delivered to a meeting of Worcestershire's voluntary association of ministers based on Acts 20:28. Baxter's well-known lines are:

*I'll preach as though I ne'er should preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men.*

Richard Baxter: 'many a preacher is now in hell, who hath a hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it.' 'O brethren!' he cried, 'it is easier to chide at sin, than to overcome it.' Baxter: 'preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others.' Calvin: 'It would be better for him to break his neck going up into the pulpit, if he does not take pains to be the first to follow God.'

The KJV has ‘over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers’, but it should be ‘in which’ or perhaps ‘among which’.

Baxter : ‘We must let them see that nothing pleaseth us but what profiteth them; and that what doeth them good doth us good; and that nothing troubleth us more than their hurt.’ Timothy Witmer says the shepherd has four tasks: knowing, feeding, leading and protecting.

F. F. Bruce says this should be read as ‘the blood of His own’, with ‘Son’ being understood. But the NIV, ESV, and NKJV are quite literal in opting for God’s purchasing the church with His own blood. God as God does not have blood (John 4:24). It is like when the Catholics and the Orthodox refer to Mary as the Mother of God. Is Christ God? Yes. Is Mary His mother? Yes. Then Mary is the Mother of God. She is the mother of His human nature, not His divine nature (hence Acts 1:14). The blood of God clearly refers to God in His human nature.

*From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.*

Or:

*I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood.*

This is the church that Jesus refers to at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19-20).

13. What does Paul warn about in verses 29-30? Where will some of these fierce wolves come from? (20:30) How will they deal with the truth? (see 2 Peter 2:1; 3:16) How do wolves dress up as shepherds? (see Matt.7:15 and then Jer.28:1-3, 10-11, 15-17 for an Old Testament example) Who does more harm - an heretical Presbyterian minister or a Muslim propagandist? What happened at Ephesus after this? (1 Tim.1:3-4, 18-20; 2 Tim.1:15; 2:17-18; Rev.2:6) _____

The Old Testament prophets are full of denunciations of false prophets e.g. Jer.23; Ezek.13.

Calvin says that ‘ambition is the mother of all heresies’.

The Irish Presbyterian evangelist, W. P. Nicholson, visited New Zealand in 1933 when liberal theology had already been embraced by many lecturers and students at Knox College in Dunedin. Nicholson never minced his words, and offended many when he said: ‘The road to hell is paved with the skulls of Presbyterian ministers.’ There was uproar - this was most ungentlemanly. Nicholson did not

take a backward step: ‘And I see there is plenty of material here to keep the road in good repair for many years to come.’

14. From verse 31, show what it means to be watchful and serious. Why is Paul such a good example for us? _____

15. To what does Paul commend the Ephesian elders? (20:32) What does the word of grace achieve for us? (see for examples, John 6:40; Rom.10:9; Jude 24; John 17:17) What is the inheritance that Paul is speaking about? (1 Peter 1:3-4) _____

16. What could Paul say about himself? (20:33) Why is that important? (1 Sam.12:1-3; 2 Cor.12:14) _____

17. Hence, how did he live at Corinth and also at Thessalonica? (20:34; see Acts 18:2-3; 1 Thess.2:9) _____

18. How are we to live? (20:35) To what word does Paul appeal? _____

Paul does not cite Jesus very often (cf. 1 Cor.7:10; 1 Cor.9:14 and 1 Tim.5:18; 1 Cor.11:23-25). Probably, the apostles remembered some sayings of Jesus that never found their way into one of the four Gospels. That would not be surprising (John 21:25).

J. A. Alexander cites an old pagan poet, which serves as a contrast: ‘Silly the giver, lucky the receiver.’

19. What takes place next? (20:36-38) What does this show us about Christian fellowship? (Ps.119:63) _____

On the Way to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16)

1. From Ephesus, where did Paul and the others (‘we’) go? (21:1) How? _____

2. Where did he go to after that? (21:2) How did he get there? _____

3. What happened after that? (21:3) What sort of ship was it? _____

4. With whom did Paul and the others (Silas? Timothy, Luke) stay at Tyre? (21:4) For how long? What were they told through the Spirit? _____

This is somewhat difficult. The explanation seems to be that the prophecy was true, but the interpretation drawn from it was up for debate (hence 1 Cor.14:29). If that is the way to interpret verse 4, some detail is left out of the verse.

5. What is said about the farewell at Tyre? (21:5-6) _____

6. Where did they arrive next? (21:7) For how long did they stay? Whom did they meet there? _____

7. Where did they arrive the next day? (21:8) Whom did they meet there? Who was he? (cf. Acts 6:1-7) _____

8. Who was in Philip's family? (21:9) What does this tell us about women and the gift of prophecy? (see Ex. 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14-15; Isa.8:3; Acts 2:36) How does this fit in with 1 Timothy 2:11-12? _____

9. Who is Agabus? (21:10-11; he is present in 11:28) What does he do and what does he say? In whose name does he speak? _____

10. What was the people's response to this prophecy? (21:12) _____

11. What was Paul's response? (21:13; recall 21:4) What was Paul determined to do, and ready to suffer? How do you explain his rejection of the interpretation of the prophecy? _____

Wayne Grudem has argued that New Testament prophecy is fallible, unlike Old Testament prophecy. The infallible New Testament prophecy is apostolic; New Testament prophecy is unlike this, and has to be evaluated. The better interpretation might be that the prophecy was accurate but the lesson deduced from it was not binding.

12. Since Paul was unyielding, what did the people do eventually? (21:14; notice the 'we' i.e. Luke too apparently tried to talk Paul out of going to Jerusalem) What was their attitude when Paul decided to press ahead? _____

13. What was the next destination? (21:15) Who went with Paul? (note the 'we') Who else went with him, and where did they lodge in Jerusalem? (21:16) _____

Paul Meets up with James (Acts 21:17-26)

1. How was Paul received in Jerusalem? (21:17) _____

2. Where did Paul go on the following day? (21:18) With whom? (note the 'us') Who was present? _____

3. What did he tell them? (21:19) What was one of the main points of his doing this? _____

4. How did they respond to this? (21:20a) What is then said about the thousands of Jewish Christians? (21:20b-21) How was Paul misrepresented by some? _____

5. What do they fear? (21:22) What do they suggest in order to alleviate the situation? (21:23-24; see Num.6:1-21; note also Acts 18:18) What do they hope will result from this? _____

6. To what else do they refer? (21:25; see 15:28-29) How would this help the Jewish Christians? _____

7. What did Paul do the next day? (21:26) What are we to learn from this? (see 1 Cor.9:19-23) Would you have gone this far? _____

Paul under Arrest in the Temple (Acts 21:27-36)

1. What happened after almost a week? (21:27) Who stirred up trouble against Paul? _____

2. Of what did they accuse Paul? (21:28) _____

By 'this place' and 'this holy place', they mean the temple in Jerusalem.

3. What did they latch onto in order to make this accusation? (21:29) _____

There was a dividing wall of partition in the temple which was supposed to keep Gentiles from the inner sanctuary (see Eph.2:14).

4. What was the mood of the mob in verse 30? What did they intend to do? (21:31) Who was informed of the trouble? What do you make of mobs? _____

5. What did the tribune of the cohort do in response? (21:32) What did the crowd do when the Roman authorities arrived? _____

6. What did the tribune order to be done to Paul? (21:33) How was he frustrated? (21:34) So what did he do? _____

7. What did the soldiers do, and why? (21:35-36) How important is civil order, even if it is not Christian? _____

Paul's Testimony to a Hostile Mob (Acts 21:37-22:29)

Paul faced great danger in Jerusalem as he did elsewhere, notably in Ephesus.

1. What does Paul ask the tribune or commander? (21:37) What does the tribune guess from Paul's question? _____

2. Whom did the tribune think that Paul might be? (21:38) What did this Egyptian terrorist do? _____

The commander is Claudius Lysias (see 23:26), and he mistakes Paul for an Egyptian 'dagger man' (sikarios). Josephus refers to this revolt.

3. How does Paul introduce himself, and for what does he ask? (21:39) _____

4. What did the tribune do next, and what did Paul do next? (21:40) _____

Paul speaks in Aramaic (22:2; NIV) or, less likely, Hebrew (ESV, NKJV). Aramaic is a dialect of Hebrew.

5. How does Paul address the crowd? (22:1) What does he call his speech? (22:1) _____

6. What effect does his speaking in Aramaic have on the crowd? (22:2) _____

7. What is Paul's background, and what does he say about his upbringing? (22:3)

Gamaliel was the best-known Pharisaic teacher of his day (see also 5:34).

8. Why did Paul persecute the Christians? (22:4) How does he refer to Christianity? (see too 9:1-2) What was he doing in order to eradicate Christianity? (22:4-5) Who could testify to his zeal? Why was he on his way to Damascus back in Acts 9? Can we be religious, indeed monotheists of the Abrahamic faith, but not saved? (see 1 Cor.15:9; Gal. 1:13-14; Phil.3:5-6) _____

9. What happened to Paul on the way to Damascus? (22:6-11) Who apprehended him? Did Paul invite Jesus into his life? How does he address Jesus? (22:8, 10) How does this differ greatly from how he previously viewed Jesus? _____

10. How does Paul speak of Ananias? (22:12) Why does he describe him in these terms? _____

11. What did Ananias say to Paul, and what resulted? (22:13) _____

12. How did Ananias describe God and how did he describe Jesus? (22:14) What did he emphasise here? _____

13. What would Paul's task be from here on? (22:15) What happened next, and what was promised to him? (22:16) How is a Christian described? _____

Who is Jesus of Nazareth? A prophet? A great man? A wonderful teacher? He is the risen Lord of all creation, the one whose death has brought about the forgiveness of sins for His people.

14. What does Paul recall next? (22:17) What happened to him there, and why did he have to leave Jerusalem? (22:18) _____

15. What did Paul say in reply to the Lord? (22:19-20) What point was he making? _____

Paul seems to be saying that he had credibility amongst the Jews because he initially persecuted the Christians. Or he could be saying that he has many things to atone for!

16. What was Paul told then by the Lord? (22:21) _____

17. If it was the resurrection that set the Gentiles off (cf. Acts 17:30-34), what was it that set off the Jews? (22:22) What does verse 23 indicate about their state of mind? What did most Jews expect that Yahweh would do to the Gentiles when the Messiah came? _____

18. What did the tribune order next? (22:24) What is his method of questioning?!

19. What does Paul say in his 'Excuse me' moment? (22:25; see Acts 16:35-40) _

This was known as the flagellum where a person was whipped with thongs with rough pieces of metal or bone. Men often died under it. This was not the Jewish flogging, but a cruel Roman flogging.

20. What was the tribune's response to this news? (22:26) _____

21. What did the tribune do next? (22:27) How did the tribune become a Roman citizen, and how did Paul become one? (22:28) _____

Messalina, the wife of the emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54), used to sell Roman citizenships, but Paul inherited his from his father - but we have no other details about how he acquired it. It does look like a case of one-upmanship for Paul. Presumably, Paul's father did something remarkable for the Roman Empire. Cicero, a Roman senator, said that 'To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him an abomination, to slay him is almost an act of murder.'

22. How did the soldiers and the tribune respond to this news? (22:29) _____

A Good and Shrewd Conscience (Acts 22:30-23:10)

Paul presented the gospel to Jews and God-fearers in a synagogue (Acts 13), unsophisticated pagans (Acts 14), sophisticated philosophical Gentiles (Acts 17), Christian elders (Acts 20), a hostile Jewish mob (Acts 22), and now to the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 23). Paul is before the council of priests and elders. Most of the priests were Sadducees and most of the elders and teachers were Pharisees.

1. What happened the next day, and for what purpose? (22:30) _____

2. How does Paul address the Sanhedrin? (23:1) What is his first point? _____

Conscience is not our final authority in religion (1 Cor.4:4). But a good conscience is very important (Acts 24:16; 2 Tim.1:3).

3. Who was Ananias, and what did he command to be done? (23:2) What does this indicate about him? _____

4. What is Paul's fiery response? (23:3) What might this indicate about him? What is the meaning of his statement? (Matt. 23:27; Ezek.13:9-14) _____

Paul was obviously a man with a quick tongue, as was William Wilberforce. Whatever else we say, it is a terrific sledge.

5. What was Paul then told? (23:4) _____

6. What did Paul say in response to that? (23:5; he is citing Exodus 22:28) What do you make of this? _____

Some say that Paul had been away from Jerusalem for so long that he did not know the high priest, while others say that Paul's eyesight was going and he could not see him properly. Augustine, Calvin, and I. Howard Marshall all think that Paul was being sarcastic - he is saying that Ananias was hardly behaving like a high priest. Or was Paul thinking as David did in his attitude to Saul (1 Sam.26:7-11)? Ananias was a whitewashed wall and God did strike him down - when the Jewish War broke out in A.D. 66, Jewish Zealots murdered him.

7. Who was present in the Sanhedrin? (23:6) What did Paul declare? What resulted from that declaration? (23:7) _____

This is the 'divide and conquer' approach.

8. What were the beliefs of the Sadducees? (23:8; note Luke 20:27-40) What did the Pharisees believe? _____

Resurrection is actually the main issue here.

F. W. Farrar in the late nineteenth century says that Paul was guilty of unworthy and devious behaviour. But surely Paul is being shrewd (see Matt.10:16; 1 Sam.21:10-15).

9. In the clamour, what did some of the Pharisees say? (23:9) _____

The Pharisees did not believe in Jesus' resurrection, but they did believe in the resurrection of the dead to usher in the Last Judgment.

10. How risky was Paul's strategy? (23:10) What were the tribune's orders? _____

The word is used in the Septuagint (LXX) of Judges 14:6 to describe Samson's tearing of the lion to pieces.

11. How shrewd are we allowed to be in the Christian life? Is it in order to say to a Muslim: 'We both believe in the resurrection of the dead'? Should we introduce the Muslim community to the homosexual lobby? _____

Paul's Life in Danger (Acts 23:11-22)

1. How did the Lord (Jesus) encourage Paul at this time? (23:11) Where would he end out? _____

2. What did some of the Jews do in a plot against Paul? (23:12) What does this reveal about them? How many were involved in this conspiracy? (23:13) _____

3. What were the details of this plot? (23:14-15) Who was involved in it? How was it to be carried out? _____

4. Who heard about this plot, and what did he do? (23:16) _____

We know almost nothing about Paul's family situation, but Paul's sister would have been raised in a household where her father was a Roman citizen.

5. What did Paul ask to be done as a result? (23:17) _____

6. What did Paul's nephew tell the tribune? (23:18-21) How approachable was the tribune? _____

7. What did the tribune tell Paul's nephew? (23:22) _____

Sent to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-35)

1. What did the tribune (Claudius Lysias) do then with Paul? (23:23) Who was sent with Paul the prisoner? What does this indicate? When did they leave? To where were they going? _____

The hour was 9.00 p.m. and unless it was a full moon, horsemen would avoid travelling at night.

Caesarea was the place of residence of the governor.

2. How did Paul get there? Whom was he to meet? (23:24) _____

Felix was the governor of Judea from A.D. 52-59. The year at this time would probably be A.D. 58. Not that he lived up to it, but his name means 'happy'. He was known as a cruel and licentious man. Tacitus, the Roman historian, describes him as one who 'exercised the authority of a king with the spirit of a slave'. He married a Jewess, Drusilla, but he treated the Jews with great cruelty. He had married Drusilla, who was his third wife, by enticing her, with the help of a magician, to divorce her husband, the king of Emesa.

3. What did Lysias' letter to Felix say about Paul? (23:25-30) What clearly motivates Lysias? What obviously does not bother him much? _____

4. Where did they reach that night? (23:31) What happened the next day? (23:32)

Antipatris was a little over halfway to Caesarea.

5. What did Felix ask about Paul? (23:33-35) What did he decide to do then? Where was Paul sent to? _____

Paul before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)

1. Who arrived after five days? (24:1) Who was their spokesman? What did they do? _____

Tertullus sounds like he was probably a Gentile; it is not a Jewish name.

2. How does Tertullus begin his case against Paul? (24:2-4) How is this entirely predictable? _____

3. How does Tertullus describe Paul? (24:5) _____

4. Of what does Tertullus accuse Paul? (24:6) How are Christians described? Why? What really happened? Of what does Tertullus profess himself confident? (24:8) _____

There are manuscripts which add between verse 6 and verse 8: 'and we would have judged him according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come before you.' It would be somewhat inappropriate to imply such a criticism of the tribune, Lysias.

5. Who else supported the charge against Paul? (24:9) _____

This implies that Tertullus was not a Jew.

6. What did the governor do to Paul? (24:10) How does Paul begin his defence? What is his first point? (24:10-11) _____

7. What does Paul deny doing? (24:12-13) What does he assert about the charges? (24:13) _____

8. What does he vigorously assert in verses 14-16? Examine each point that he makes. _____

9. What does Paul say he came to do in coming to Jerusalem? (24:17) _____

10. How does Paul back up what he was saying? (24:18) Whom does he blame for the trouble? (24:18-19) What is lacking in their accusations? _____

11. How does Paul seek to deflect the accusations? (24:20-21) What might we learn from this? _____

12. What is said about Felix's knowledge of Christianity? (24:22) How does he describe it? How does he respond? _____

Somehow - perhaps through Drusilla - Felix picked up the basic Christian claims. He had been governor for about six years by this time (i.e. from A.D.52), so he had plenty of opportunity to learn of Christianity.

13. What orders did Felix give to the centurion regarding Paul? (24:23) What does this indicate about him? _____

14. What does Felix do after that, with his wife Drusilla? (24:24; see Mark 6:20) What kind of person does this? _____

15. What three things does Paul raise in his preaching? (24:25) How is Paul's preaching described? Why would Paul have raised these matters? What was Felix's response? Compare this to the modern presentation of the gospel. _____

As Calvin puts it, Paul 'did rub Felix sore upon the gall'.

Charles Simeon: 'We must see our desert and danger as transgressors of the law, before we can ever fully appreciate the gospel.'

16. What does Felix do in verse 26, and what does it reveal about him? What was he hoping for? For how long was Paul in prison? (24:27) What else motivated Felix? _____

Robert Browning: 'God stoops o'er his head,/ Satan looks up beneath his feet - both tug.'

Who in heart not ever kneels

Neither sin nor Saviour feels (George Herbert).

The Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:1-12)

1. What did Festus do soon after he arrived in Caesarea? (25:1) _____

2. What did the chief priests and the Jewish leaders do, and for what did they ask? What was their real plan? (25:2-3) _____

3. What was Festus' counter-proposal? (25:4-5) Was this unwitting (as the ESV Study Bible says) or do you think he was suspicious of the Jews? _____

4. When did Festus make his way to Caesarea? (25:6) What was to take place? _

5. What did the Jews attempt to do? (25:7) How did they fail? _____

6. What was Paul's comprehensive defence? (25:8) _____

7. What did Festus offer next? (25:9) Why? What do you think his motives are?

8. Paul goes onto the offensive in verse 10. What points does he make? _____

9. What are his points in verse 11? What does he do then? _____

As a Roman citizen, Paul was entitled to appeal to Caesar if his life was in danger.

10. How did Festus reply to this? (25:12) _____

The emperor was Nero (A.D. 54-68), often regarded, rightly, as one of the most depraved of the emperors. However, he did start reasonably well.

Before Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 25:13-27)

1. What happened after a few days? (25:13) _____

This is Agrippa II, the son of Agrippa I (from Acts 12) and the great grandson of Herod the Great (from Matt.2). Bernice was his sister, and a woman of many marriages, some failing and others ending in the death of her husband. She was widely rumoured (e.g. from Josephus and Juvenal) that she was involved in an incestuous relationship with her brother, who never married.

2. What did Festus do with Paul's case? (25:14-15) Why do you think he did this? _____

3. What had the Sanhedrin asked Festus, and what was his reply? (25:16) What does this indicate about both parties? _____

4. What had Festus made of the charges against Paul? (25:17-20) What had he offered Paul? (25:20) _____

10. What was Festus' evaluation of all this? (26:24) What is this teaching us? ___

In a loud voice he told Paul that his 'many letters' were driving him mad.

11. What is Paul's response to Festus? (26:25) _____

The same word is used to describe the Gerasene demoniac after Jesus had cast the demons out of him (Mark 5:15). These are words of truth and reason, says the NKJV. They are 'the sober truth' (RSV) or 'rational words' (ESV).

Picking up the vibes, Paul then turns to Agrippa, who would have known more of the Old Testament.

12. What assertion does Paul make in verse 26? Why is this important in presenting the Christian gospel? (Acts 4:16; Matt.10:26-27; John 18:20; 1 Cor.15:5-8) _____

13. How does Paul try to corner Agrippa? (26:27; recall 26:2-3, 22-23) _____

Paul is on trial, but he puts Agrippa on trial.

The Old Testament is a Christian book.

Agrippa was only born in A.D. 27, but he knew of the Christian claims. When Christ was crucified, it was during the Passover festival. Josephus says that three million came to Jerusalem for the festival. That is an exaggeration, but the numbers must have been very high. In His rising from the dead, Christ did not appear to two camel-drivers in the desert, but to hundreds of people.

14. What is Agrippa's reply? (26:28) Is it a matter of evidence or sin? (John 3:19; 5:44; 8:43-45; Rom.1:18) _____

'You almost persuade me to become a Christian' (Acts 26:28; NKJV). Or it may be that the NIV is right: 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?' (the ESV is similar) The RSV has an exclamation: 'In a short time you think to make me a Christian!' The NASB has: 'In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.' F. F. Bruce has: 'In short, you are trying to persuade me to act the Christian.' The tone of voice is also obviously important. Agrippa was probably being dismissive and sarcastic.

15. What offer does Paul make, and what hint does he drop? (26:29) _____

Paul's wish is simple: 'Everybody a Christian, nobody a prisoner.' Samuel Rutherford had a clear conscience as he neared the end of his ministry. He told his parishioners: 'I gave Christ to you with good-will.'

Philip Doddridge:

O happy day, that fixed my choice

On Thee, my Saviour and my God!

He added:

'Tis done! The great transaction's done!

I am my Lord's and He is mine;

He drew me, and I followed on,

Charmed to confess the voice divine.

Agrippa never sang that. There was no happy day that fixed his choice upon his Saviour and his God.

16. What happened next? (26:30-32) What did Agrippa say to Festus? How ironic is this? _____

Shipwreck on the way to Rome (Acts 27:1-44)

1. To whom was Paul delivered? (27:1) What was to be the destination? _____

2. Where did they sail? (27:2) Where was the ship made? Who went with Paul? (see 19:29) _____

Andramyttium was a port situated north of Ephesus on the west coast of Asia (Turkey)

3. Where did they stop? (27:3) How did the centurion Julius treat Paul? What did he allow Paul to do? What does this teach us? _____

4. Where did they sail to next and why? (27:4) _____

The island of Cyprus would give the ship some protection from strong winds.

5. Where did they come to next, and how did they get there? (27:5) _____

6. What did Julius find there, and what did he do? (27:6) _____

7. What else is said about the next part of their journey? (27:7-8) Does the author sound like he knows he is writing non-fiction? _____

They are travelling much further south than they would have hoped for; they were not travelling the most direct route.

8. How are things becoming more ominous? (27:9) How is the voyage described? What was Paul's advice to them? (27:10) _____

The Fast refers to the Day of Atonement which is the only compulsory fast in the Old Testament. This means that it is autumn, and heading into winter.

9. To whom did the centurion listen? (27:11) _____

10. What was the next projected stop? (27:12) Why was this decided upon? In what state of mind was this voyage undertaken? _____

11. What did they do next, and why? (27:13) Why were they careful? _____

12. But what happened next? (27:14) _____

13. What happens next? (27:15-20) List all of the things which went wrong, and what they tried to do to alleviate the situation. What is their frame of mind in verse 20? _____

14. What was their situation when Paul addressed them? (27:21) What was his first point? Was this a wise one? _____

15. What was the conditional promise revealed to Paul? (27:22-26) Who revealed it to him? What events had to take place? _____

16. What did the sailors suspect about midnight of the fourteenth night? (27:27)

17. What did the sailors do next? (27:28) Why do you think this is included in the Bible? _____

18. What did the sailors go to do next? (27:29-32) To whom did they pray? What did Paul tell the centurion and the soldiers? What did the soldiers do in response? _____

19. What did Paul tell them all about dawn? (27:33-38) How had they all been struggling? Before eating, what did Paul do? How many persons were on the ship? After eating, how did they lighten the ship? How are we to understand God's promises, Paul's assurance and practice of prayer, and the vigorous efforts they make to save themselves? Can we fit all this together? _____

20. What did they plan to do in the daylight? (27:39) What happened to the ship? (27:40-41) _____

21. What did the soldiers plan to do, and why? (27:42; recall 16:27) _____

22. How did the centurion intervene? (27:43) What was his motive? What happened? (27:43-44) _____

Kindness on Malta (Acts 28:1-10)

1. Where did they all land after the shipwreck? (28:1) _____

2. How did the native people (barbarians i.e. not Greek speakers) treat them? (28:2) What might they possibly have done to shipwrecked people? What did they actually do? Is there such a thing as common grace and natural law? (note Rom.2:12-16; 1 Tim.3:7) How should this help us to understand life in a fallen world? _____

3. What happened when Paul gathered a bundle of sticks? (28:3-4) How did the natives interpret this? (cf. Jonah 1:7-10) _____

Mark 16:18 possibly has some connection with what happened to Paul, but Mark 16:18 is not a certain text.

4. What happened to Paul, and how did the Maltese then view him? (28:5-6) What does this reveal about pagan society? _____

5. Who was Publius? (28:7-10) How did he treat 'us' (another indication of

Luke's presence)? What was wrong with his father, and what did Paul do? What happened as a result? Do you think these people were all healed because they had faith in Christ? How did the people then look after Paul and the others? _____

Rome At Last! (Acts 28:11-31)

1. How long did they remain on Malta? (28:11) Then what happened. Describe the ship. _____

The two gods on the ship would have been Castor and Pollux.

2. Trace the next stage of their journey (28:12-13) _____

3. What happened at the sea port of Puteoli? (28:13-14) Then where did they arrive (on the outskirts at least)? _____

4. Who came out to meet him at Rome? (28:15) What effect did this have on Paul? _____

The Forum of Appius was some forty miles from Rome, and the Three Taverns a few miles closer. Usually a visiting emperor was welcomed from about ten miles outside the city.

This was Paul's visit to Rome. When he wrote the epistle to the Romans some years earlier he had not yet been there, although Romans 16 indicates that he knew a lot of people.

5. What were Paul's conditions in Rome? (28:16) _____

6. What did Paul do then, and what did he explain to local Jewish leaders? (28:17-19) _____

7. How does Paul present his case to the Roman Jews? (28:20) _____

The hope of Israel is the resurrection of the Messiah.

8. What do the Roman Jews say about Paul's case, and about Christians? (28:21-22) _____

In A.D. 49, about eleven years before this, the emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from Rome, although many returned after Nero became emperor in A.D. 54.

9. What did Paul then have an opportunity to do? (28:23) What did he explain? _

10. How did the Roman Jews respond? (28:24) _____

11. How did Isaiah 6:9-10 apply to this situation? (28:25-27; note Matt.13:14-15) What does this mean? How do conversions come about? As we have seen before, what was it to lead to? (28:28) How did he know the Gentiles would listen? _____

Verse 29 looks like a repetition from verse 24.

12. What was Paul's lifestyle in Rome? (28:30) What was he able to do? (28:31) How does this all fulfil Acts 1:8? Why does Acts finish as it does? _____

At the end of Acts 28 the year is A.D. 62. This presumably is when Luke wrote Acts, which means that Luke's Gospel (i.e. volume one) must have been written earlier.. While detained in these conditions, he probably wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. After his release, he wrote the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus).