



But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
(Acts 1:8)

THE BOOK OF ACTS

“The Book of Acts in Seven Ps”

An Overview of the Book of Acts

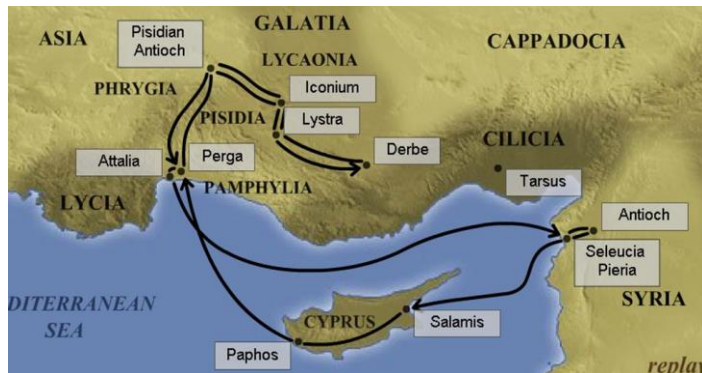
Sat 14 Jan 2023

The Bible Church

Overview of the Book of Acts In Seven P's

The Outline

1. Preamble – Author & *Acts* as continuation of *Luke*
2. Purpose of the Book of Acts
3. Pace of spread of Gospel
4. Proclamation – strategic cities & speeches
5. Paul – persecutor to preacher to prisoner
6. Politics – Roman rulers & *Acts* as apologetic history
7. Power – Acts of the Holy Spirit



PREAMBLE: Luke, author of “LUKE-ACTS”

What we already know about Luke

- A Gentile (inferred from Col. 4:11); only Gentile writer in NT.
- A historian aiming to write accurately and cogently. His “method” explained in Luke 1:1-4.
- A reliable medical-author, writing in stylish, cultured Greek; showed his knowledge and powers of observation.



PREAMBLE: Luke, author of “LUKE-ACTS”

Now we learn more about Luke

- Paul’s fellow worker (Philemon 24) and travel companion (the “we” passages in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16)
- A most loyal friend.
He was with Paul in prison; the only one with Paul in the 2nd imprisonment (“... only Luke is with me”, II Tim. 4:11).
- A “world-Christian”, spreading his faith beyond his hometown (Antioch, Syria), and Philippi, the city in which he may have settled. (Peter Wagner)



PREAMBLE: ACTS as Continuation of LUKE

Acts is “part two” of a two-part story

- It connects to “what previously happened” (Acts 1:1-2).
- After Jesus’ death and resurrection, what happened?
- *Acts* explains the amazing spread of the Gospel, overcoming barriers of geography, race, social status, and religion.
- People, events, teachings are presented at a blistering pace!
- *The Book of Acts* enables us to understand
 - how Christianity grew out of Judaism;
 - the challenges faced by the early church;
 - how the various churches started;
 - the background to the NT epistles.



PREAMBLE: ACTS as Continuation of LUKE

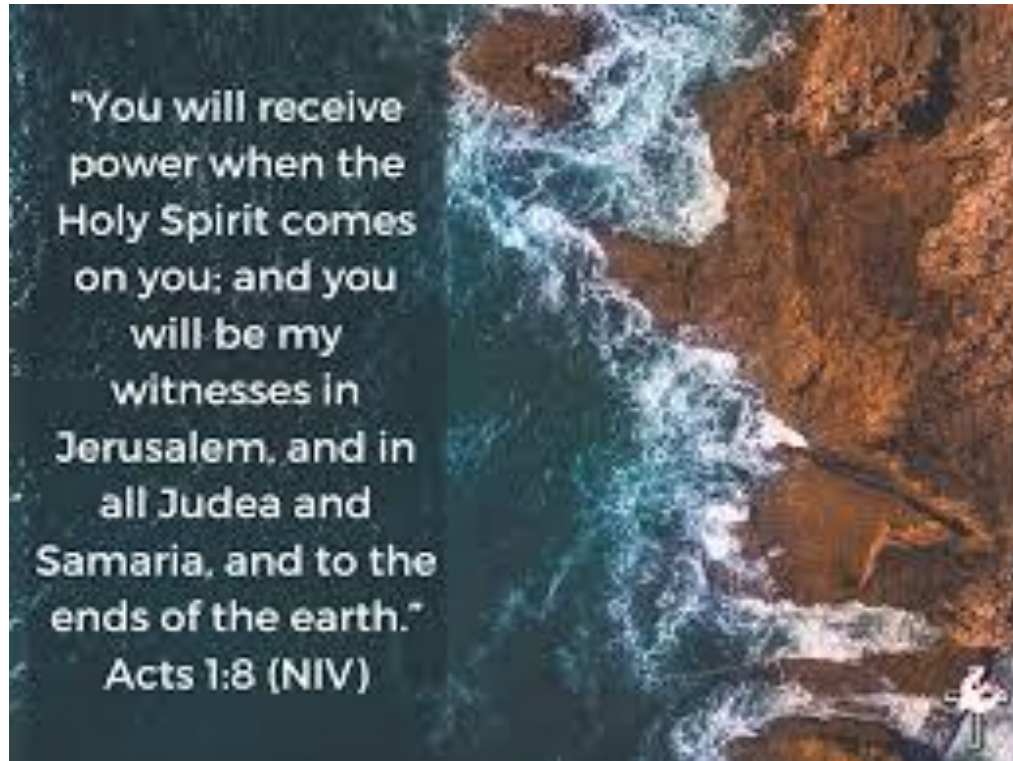
Themes and language from Luke continue in Acts.

1. God's direction of history
stressed by Luke's use of "it is necessary"/"had to be fulfilled" (Greek $\delta\epsilon\iota$ [dei]) Acts 1:16, 21; cf. Luke 9:22; 17:25; 24:7).
2. The resurrection, exaltation and authority of Jesus (Luke 24)
are highlighted in the account of Jesus' ascension (1:9-11) and central to the speeches of Acts (2:24, 31-33; 3:15; 5:20; 25:19).
3. The prayer life of Jesus (Luke 3:21; 9:28-29; 22:31-32) continuing in the prayer life of the early Christians (Acts 1:13; 2:42; 4:24,31; etc).



PURPOSE of ACTS

- The Gospel of Luke is an account of Jesus' words and deeds up to His ascension.
- Acts is an account of how, after Jesus' ascension, the Gospel spread "to the ends of the earth" in fulfillment of Jesus' instruction in Acts 1:8.



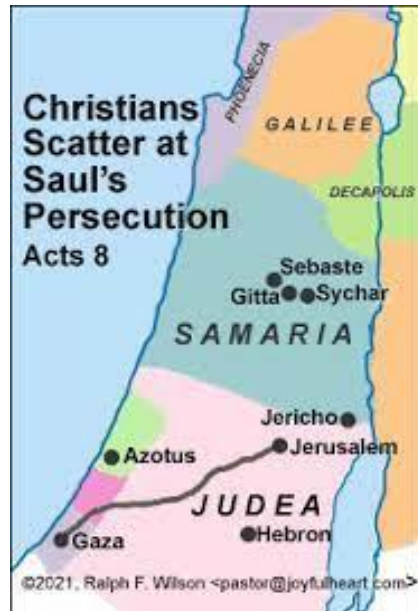
Key Verse: Acts 1:8

A VIDEO



Animation of the spread of Christianity
in the book of Acts

Division	Witness in Jerusalem		Witness in Judea & Samaria	Witness to the Ends of the Earth	
Text	1:1	3:1	8:5	13:1	21:17 28:31
Topic	Power of the Church (Pentecost)		Progress of the Church	Expansion of the Church	Paul's Three Journeys Paul's Trials & Journey to Rome
Focus	Jews		Samaritans	Gentiles	
	Peter		Philip & Peter	Paul	
Location	Jerusalem		Judea & Samaria	Ends of the Earth	
Timeline	About 5 years (30-35 CE)		13 years (35-48 CE)	14 years (48-62 CE)	



PACE of Spread of Gospel

(1) Acts 1:1 – 8:4 Witness in Jerusalem

The church is born, tested, purified and strengthened

- After appearing to His disciples for 40 days (1:3) Jesus gave His instruction in 1:8.
- Jesus then ascended into heaven.
- Ten days after His ascension, Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to empower His disciples was fulfilled (on the day of Pentecost).
- The church was born.
- 3,000 people responded to Peter's 1st sermon.
- Thousands more responded to Peter's 2nd sermon.
- Ananias & Sapphira died for their treachery.
- Seven deacons selected to assist the apostles.
- Church was persecuted and Stephen martyred.

PACE of Spread of Gospel

(2) Acts 8:5 – 12:25 Witness in Judea & Samaria

The persecuted church scattered and continued to expand

- Martyrdom of Stephen scattered the church.
- Philip went to Samaria and successfully witnessed to the people hated by the Jews.
- Apostles Peter & John confirmed their faith. Samaritan believers received the H.S.
- Saul dramatically converted on the road to Damascus.
- In a special vision, Peter realised that Jesus had broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile.
- Roman centurion, Cornelius & other Gentiles converted.
- Disciples first called Christians in Antioch (11:26).
- Herod Agrippa I executed apostle James, brother of John.
- Peter miraculously escaped from prison.

PACE of Spread of Gospel

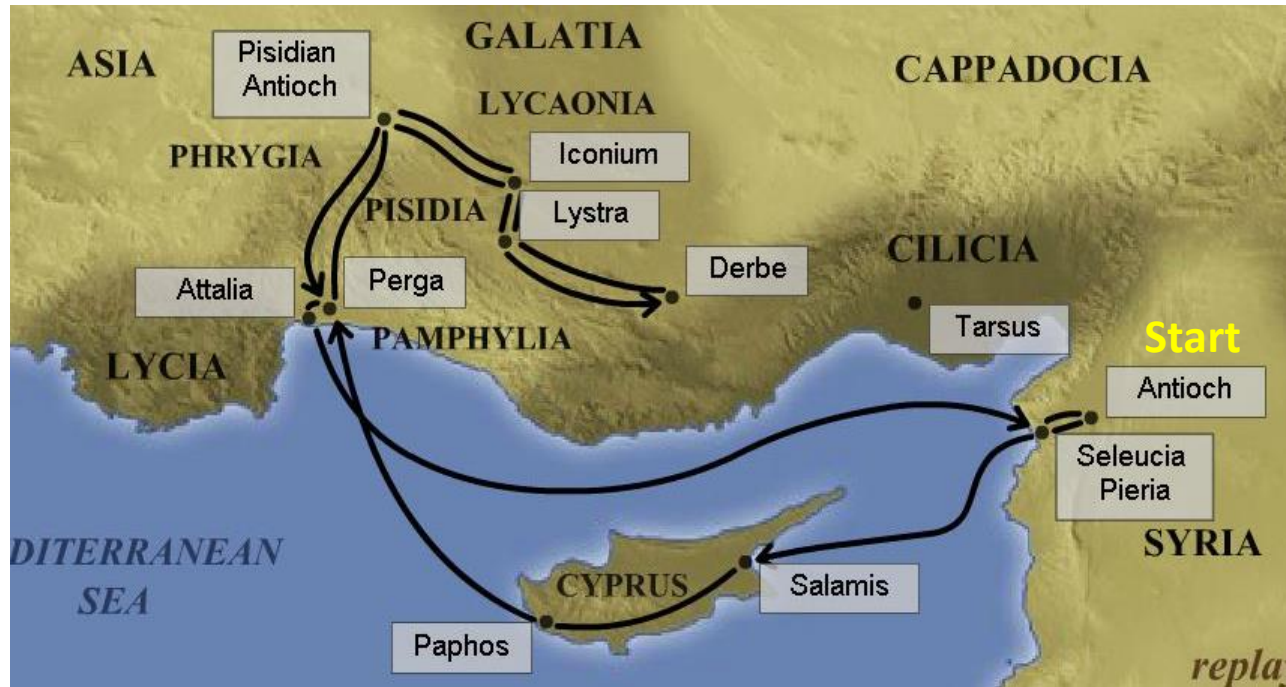
(3) Acts 13 - 28 Witness to the Ends of the Earth

Church expanded into Asia Minor and Europe

- With chapter 13, focus switches from Peter to Paul.
- All three of Paul's missionary journeys started from Antioch (see maps).
- First journey was to Asia (province of Galatia in Asia Minor).
- So 20 years after Pentecost, the influx of Gentiles posed a problem.
- Should Gentile converts be accepted into the church by baptism, without circumcision? This issue was settled by the Council at Jerusalem (50 CE).
- In 2nd journey, Paul spent much time in Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth.
- In 3rd journey, Paul spent three years in Ephesus.
- On returning to Jerusalem he was arrested.
- Thereafter he was a prisoner in Caesarea (58-59 CE)
- His appeal to Caesar required a journey to Rome.



Paul's 1st Missionary Journey (46-48 CE)



Lystra :
Timothy's Birthplace
(Acts 16:1)

Overview of the Cities Visited

- (Salamis)
- **P**aphos – Deception; Conversion of Pro-consul
- **P**erga – Desertion (John Mark returns to Jerusalem)
- (Pisidian) **A**ntioch – Dispute
- **I**conium – Division
- **L**ystra – Delusion
- (**D**erbe)

Paul's 2nd
Missionary Journey
(50-52 CE)



PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey (53-57 CE)



Proclamation: Strategic Cities

- Paul capitalised on the strategic cities and “highways” ([appendix 3](#)) of the Roman Empire in taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
- Major centres of Paul’s ministry include Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth and Rome.
- These were major centres of commerce, culture and religion in the Roman Empire.



Proclamation: Speeches

- About 20% of Acts consists of (36) speeches, primarily from Peter and Paul.
- This is in the best tradition of Greco-Roman historians who provide speeches appropriate to their settings, often up to 35% of the text.
- But Luke was not just using speeches as a literary device.
- The speeches contain the earliest basic tenets of gospel proclamation:
 - ✓ The promises of God in the OT are now fulfilled.
 - ✓ Jesus the Messiah has come and will come again as Judge.
 - ✓ All who hear should repent and be baptized.
- See appendices 1-2 for the central truths in the ten major speeches in *Acts*.



Paul: Persecutor to Preacher to Prisoner

- Acts 21 marks a “career change” in the life of Paul.
- From persecutor to preacher to prisoner
- From chapter 21 on, to the remainder of Acts (58-62 CE), we see Paul under arrest – a prisoner.
- After his arrest (21:27 ff.), Paul’s five trials take up 5 chapters.

Trial No.	Before	Place	Text
1	Jewish Crowd	NW corner of Temple area	22:1 ff.
2	Sanhedrin	Room inside the Temple	23:1 ff.
3	Governor Felix	Caesarea	24:1 ff.
4	Governor Festus	Caesarea	25:1 ff.
5	King Herod Agrippa II	Caesarea	26:1 ff.

- Throughout we see Jewish hostility and prejudice alongside Roman friendliness and impartiality.

Politics: Roman Emperors

- Period covered by Acts (30-62 CE) corresponds with early Roman Empire.
- Four emperors reigned during this period: Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero.

1. Tiberius (14-37):

- Jesus had His public ministry and died during his reign (Luke 3:1)



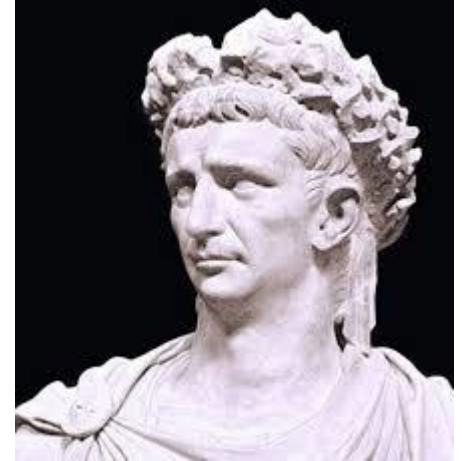
2. Gaius aka Caligula (37-41):

- considered himself a god and ordered his statue set up in the Temple at Jerusalem.
- he was assassinated before order implemented, thus averting a Jewish revolt.

Politics: Roman Emperors

3. Claudius (41-54):

- only emperor mentioned by name in *Acts* (11:28; 18:2);
- quite decent compared to Gaius and Nero;
- reaffirmed privileges granted to Jews – no requirement to worship the emperor;
- expelled Jews from Rome for disturbances (18:2), apparently over the preaching of Christ.



4. Nero (54-68) (adopted son of Claudius):

- an insane sadist;
- blamed the fire (in 64) which destroyed Rome, on Christians;
- started first serious persecution of Christians;
- Peter and Paul martyred.



Politics: Roman Governors in Judea

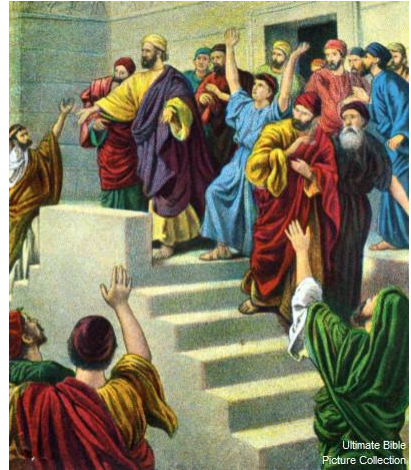
- Roman provinces were either “imperial” or “senatorial” (appendix 4).
- Judea (“imperial”) was under a series of governors or procurators of whom Pilate is the best known.
- After Pilate were Felix and Festus (Acts 24-25).
- Galilee was under a puppet king (from the Herodian dynasty) whose ultimate loyalty was to Rome:

- Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12), was the grandson of Herod the Great. He died in 44 C.E.
- Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:13-27) was named king in 50 C.E. His wife Bernice was his sister!



Politics: Acts as Apologetic History

- Apologetic history does not mean history that aims to apologise.
- An apologist is a defender – a defender of a belief or an idea.
- As apologetic history, the purpose of Acts was to defend.
- Luke was concerned about people’s perception of Christianity.
- Wherever Christianity went, it seemed to be accompanied by trouble, disorder and protests (by antagonistic Jewish leaders).
- Luke was keen to set the record straight.



What was *Acts* defending?

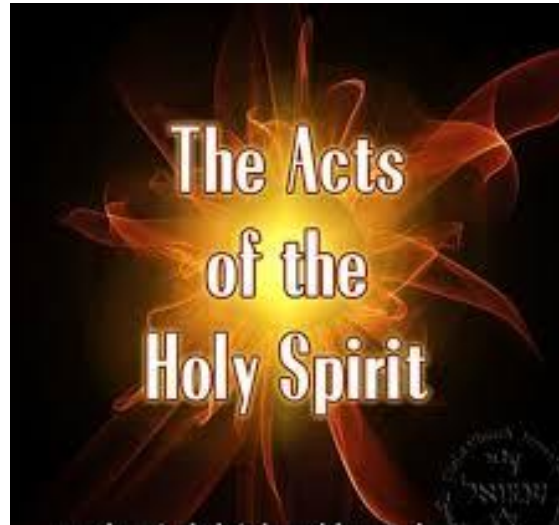
Luke was establishing to the secular authorities that Christianity was:

1. Harmless. Some Roman officials had embraced it themselves (Cornelius; Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus)
2. Innocent. Roman judges found no basis for prosecution (Felix; Festus; Gallio, proconsul in Corinth)
3. Lawful. Not a new religion which would require approval by the state, but the true fulfilment of Judaism (which already enjoyed religious freedom under the Romans).



Power: Acts of the Holy Spirit

- The book of Acts could be justly called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit”.
- The Holy Spirit is mentioned nearly 60 times in the book.
- Take note each time emphasis is placed on the workings of the Holy Spirit - in the spread of the Gospel, in the ministries and decisions of the church, and in the lives of the believers.
- *Acts* is not about the activities of over zealous humans but the acts of the Holy Spirit to bring the message of salvation to the ends of the earth.



Ten Major Speeches in Acts

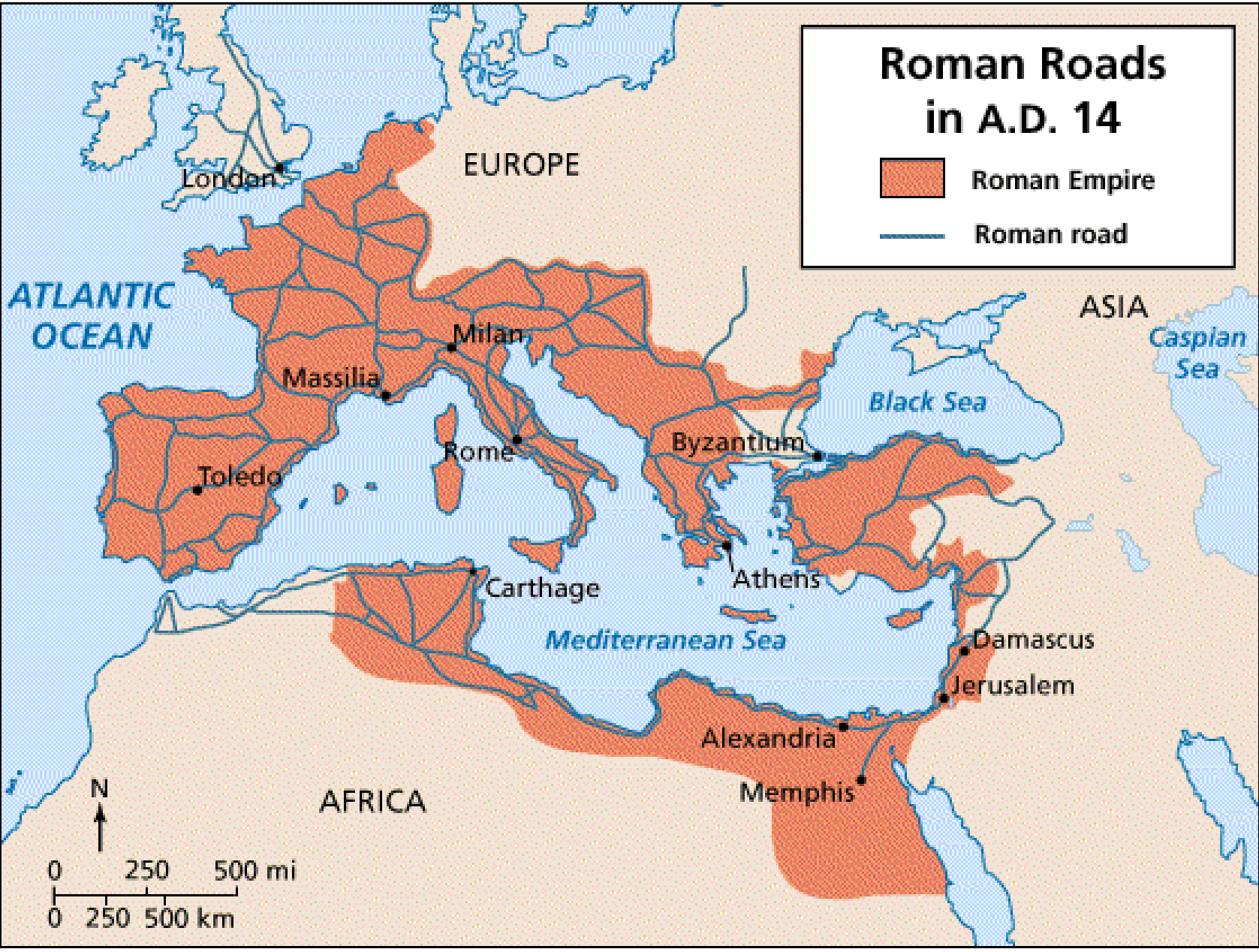
Appendix 1

Peter's Sermons	Audience	Central Truths
1. Acts 2:14-41	International group of God-fearing Jews in Jerusalem for Pentecost	Gift of the Holy Spirit proves that now is the age of salvation. Jesus' resurrection validates His role as Messiah.
2. Acts 3:11-26	A Jewish crowd in the Jerusalem Temple	The healing power of Jesus' Name proves that He is alive and at work. Those who rejected Him in ignorance can still repent.
3. Acts 10:27-48	The Gentile Cornelius and his household.	God accepts persons of all races who respond in faith to the gospel message.
Stephen's Sermon	Audience	Central Truths
4. Acts 7:1-60	The Sanhedrin	God's people capped a history of rejecting the leaders He had sent them by killing the Messiah.

Ten Major Speeches in Acts

Appendix 2

Paul's Mission Sermons	Audience	Central Truths
5. Acts 13	Jews in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch	Paul's mission sermons illustrate the changing focus of the early Christian mission work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Jews ii. Gentiles iii. Development of Christian leaders
6. Acts 17	Pagan Greeks at the Areopagus in Athens	
7. Acts 20	Christian leaders of the Ephesian Church	
Paul's Defense Sermons	Audience	Central Truths
8. Acts 22:1-21	Temple crowd in Jerusalem	The defense sermons emphasized that Paul was innocent of any breach of Roman law. Paul was on trial for his preaching of the resurrection of Jesus.
9. Acts 24:10-21	Roman Governor Felix	
10. Acts 26	Jewish King Agrippa II	



“All Roads Lead to Rome”

Appendix 4

Senatorial & Imperial Provinces



Greco-Roman Deities in *Acts*

Appendix 5

Greek Name	Roman Name	Position	Ref. in Acts
Hermes	Mercury	God of heralds	14:12
Zeus	Jupiter	Ruler of all gods & men	14:12, 13
Ares	Mars	Areopagus (Mars Hill) named after him. War-god	17:22
Artemis	Diana	Goddess of Fertility	19:21-40
Dike	-	Justice	28:4



Zeus



Hermes