



# THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

A Study of Sermons In Acts

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APRIL - JUNE 2023

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Class Description: The term *gospel* was reserved for royal announcements made when a king had “good news”. Heralds would stand in the center of ancient villages and marketplaces crying out messages of political hope, victory, and salvation. While it appeared Roman emperors were reigning, a true king and kingdom radically different than what the world ever witnessed was inaugurated. The Gospel of King Jesus turned the world upside down. Not by brute military force but by the message of a resurrected King—the One who died a humiliating death but made death powerless through His resurrection. As ambassadors of the King, the apostles heralded this message from the boroughs of Jerusalem, to the countryside of Samaria, and ultimately to the ends of the earth. Good news about a new king and kingdom demands a call to action. Today, we are called to proclaim this same message and carry out lives worthy of that calling. Our primary objective this quarter is to examine the transformative message of King Jesus from sermons taught in Acts and how this gospel led to growth of the kingdom of God. If this same message turned the world upside down in the first century, then who are we to suggest that it cannot today? May God bless our study.

Class objectives:

- Understand the transformative power of the Gospel
- Dethrone the kings of the world and reclaim Jesus as our King
- Equip us to be planters and waterers
- Encourage boldness in times of adversity to share the Gospel with our community

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## Class Schedule

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>April 2, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching at Pentecost, Part 1 (2:14-40)</b>	<b>April 9, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching at Pentecost, Part 2 (2:14-40)</b>	<b>April 16, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching Revival and Restoration (3:11-4:4)</b>	<b>April 23, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching with Boldness, Part 1 (4:5-31)</b>	<b>April 30, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching with Boldness, Part 2 (5:17-42)</b>	<b>May 7, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching with Boldness, Part 3 (7:1-53)</b>	<b>May 14, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching a Universal Gospel (10:34-43)</b>	<b>May 21, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching Salvation (13:16-42)</b>	<b>May 28, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching in a Pagan World, Part 1 (14:14-17; 17:22-31)</b>	<b>June 4, 2023</b>
<b>Preaching in a Pagan World, Part 2 (14:14-17; 17:22-31)</b>	<b>June 11, 2023</b>
<b>Pastoral Preaching (20:17-35)</b>	<b>June 18, 2023</b>
<b>Persuasive Preaching (26:1-23)</b>	<b>June 25, 2023</b>

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## Resources

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Bates, M. W., *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King*

Beale, C. K. and Carson, D.A., eds, *Commentary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*

Bruce, F.F., *The New International Commentary of the New Testament: The Book of the Acts*

Thompson, A. J., *New Studies in Biblical Theology: The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus—Luke's account of God's unfolding plan*

Witherington III, B., *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

The **English Standard Version** (ESV) will be used as the basis of our study. Other versions of Scripture will be consulted and notated within our study.

## Sermons in Acts

	Acts 2	Acts 3	Acts 4	Acts 5	Acts 7	Acts 10	Acts 13	Acts 14	Acts 17	Acts 20	Acts 26
<b>The Speaker</b>	Peter (with the eleven, 2:14)	Peter (with John, 3:11)	Peter (with John, 4:1-7)	Peter & other apostles (5:29)	Stephen	Peter (10:34)	Peter (with companions 13:13-15)	Paul & Barnabas	Paul (17:22)	Paul (20:16, 17)	Paul (26:1)
<b>The Audience</b>	Jews from every nation (2:5)	Solomon's Portico (3:11)	Rulers, elders, scribes (4:5-6)	Sanhedrin (5:27)	Council, elders, scribes, high priest	Cornelius & household (10:27)	Israel & Gentiles in synagogue (13:16)	Crowds at Lystra (14:11)	Arcepagus (17:22)	Ephesian elders (20:17)	Agrippa, Bernice Festus Prominent men (25:23)
<b>Occasion</b>	Pentecost	Healing & gathered crowd (3:12)	By what power or name? (4:7)	Escape, arrest, prohibition (5:27)	False witness testimony	Messengers from Cornelius (10:35)	Invitation to speak (13:16)	Healing; Barnabas & Paul are gods (14:11-13)	'Jesus & the resurrection' (17:18-20)	Farewell address	Defense (26:1)
<b>Introduction</b>	Joel fulfillment, God's action (2:16-17)	God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, our fathers (3:13)	An act of kindness (4:8-9), obedience to God (4:19)	We must obey God...the God of our fathers (5:29-30)	What God did...what our fathers did	God sent message that Gospel is for all (10:34, 36)	God's action in Israel's history to David (13:16-23)	We are human We bring good news (14:15)	Altar, worship, God, creation, humanity (17:22-29)	Boldly testifying & proclaiming the whole counsel of God (20:21, 25-28)	Hope in the promise His conversion & manner of life (26:4-18)
<b>The Events</b>	Jesus' ministry You killed him God raised him We saw him We saw him (2:22-32)	You killed him God raised him We saw him (3:13-15)	You killed him God raised him We saw him (4:10-11, 20)	You killed him God raised him We saw him (5:30-31)	Resist the HS Betrayed & murdered the Righteous One	Jesus' ministry They killed him God raised him We saw him (10:36-42)	John's ministry They killed him God raised him They saw him (13:23-37)	God was involved in your lives..witness (14:16-17)	God raised him from the dead (17:31)	Hece wokes not sparing the flock, men will speak twisted words to draw away (20:29-30)	Christ must suffer Rise from the dead Proclaim light to everyone (26:22-23)
<b>The Offer</b>	Forgiveness, HS, salvation from day of the Lord (2:38, 21, 40)	Sins wiped out Refreshing & Restoring Blessing (3:16, 19, 21, 25-26)	Salvation (4:12)	Repentance & forgiveness of sins granted (5:31-32)	Offering could not be given due to the actions of the crowd	Forgiveness HS Life (10:42-43, 44; 11:15-18)	Forgiveness Justification Message of Salvation (13:38-39, 46, 48)	Repentance (14:15)	Judgment is coming (17:30-31)	Be alert Pay careful attention Commended to God & his word (20:28-35)	Repentance & turn to God
<b>The Response</b>	Acceptance Repentance Baptism (2:38, 41)	Repent & turn to God, listen, turn (3:16-26)	Threats	Enraged, wanted to kill...beaten ...rejoicing (5:40-42)	Enraged Murder Scattering	Believe Repentance Forgiveness Baptism (10:43, 47-48; 11:17-18)	Believe (13:39, 48)	Crowds difficult to restrain Paul is stoned by Jews (14:18-19)	Repent; some believed (17:30, 34)	Prayer Weeping Embracing (20:36-38)	Felix accusation; Agrippa almost persuaded; claims Paul's innocence (26:24-32)

Adapted from Thompson, Alan J., *New Studies in Biblical Theology: The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus—Luke's account of God's unfolding plan*, 91.

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## Introduction to Sermons in Acts

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*“Before you can hear it with your ears, hear it with theirs. Before you can understand it today, understand it back then.”*

1. Who wrote Acts? To whom was it written? Why was it written? (Lk. 1:1-3, Acts 1:1-3)
  
2. Why is it important for us to study sermons in Acts? (Gal. 1:6-12; 2 Pt. 1:16-2:3; Heb. 2:1-4)
  
3. Between the resurrection and the ascension, how did Jesus prepare his disciples for their commission? (Acts 1:3; Lk. 24:25-27, 36-43, 44-48) How might this preparation shape their message in Acts?
  
4. *Gospel* comes from the Greek word G2098 *euangelion*, *eu*-prefix means “good” and *angelion* “announcement” or “news”. Used 76 times in the New Testament, *gospel* was linked to a royal announcement of good news. Describe the gospel of Jesus Christ in the following passages:
  - i. Mk. 1:14-15 –
  
  - ii. Mt. 4:23 –
  
  - iii. Lk. 4:18-19; 43 –
  
  - iv. Rom. 1:1-5; 16-17 –
  
  - v. 1 Cor. 15:1-5 –

5. Given the following passages, what is foundational in the message preached in Acts?
- i. 1:3 "...appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."
  - ii. 1:6 "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"
  - iii. 8:12 "But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."
  - iv. 14:22 "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."
  - v. 19:8 "And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God."
  - vi. 20:25 "And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again."
  - vii. 28:23 "From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets."
  - viii. 28:31 "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."
6. What is Luke's purpose in documenting the following summary statements in Acts?
- i. 6:7 "And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."
  - ii. 9:31 "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."
  - iii. 12:24 "But the word of God increased and multiplied."
  - iv. 16:5 "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily."
  - v. 19:20 "So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."
7. As kingdom citizens, what is our role today? (1 Cor. 3:6-9)

## Five Characteristics of Preaching in Acts<sup>1</sup>

### 1. God-centered

- Sermons in Acts begin with God
- Focus is on God's actions in history and the fulfilment of his purposes and promises given in Scripture
- Emphasis on God's initiative and how we are accountable to him

### 2. Audience-conscious

- What is said about God varies from context to context
- Sensitivity to and awareness of what the audience knows or doesn't know
- "Audience Adaptation"
  1. Sermons are not "here are some things you should know about God"
  2. Preceded by some occasion (Pentecost, a healing, an arrest)
  3. Often tied to specific opportunities by questions or invitations (Acts 2:12, 4:7, 5:27-28, 17:18-20, 10:33, 13:15)
  4. Core elements of God's saving purposes and Jesus' death and resurrection remain the same despite variety of audiences
  5. Verbs of teaching, proclaiming, refuting, reasoning and persuading

### 3. Christ-focused

- Focus on Christ found in all sermons whether the sermon is for those with or without a biblical background
- Goal is to present Christ
- Historically grounded accounts of the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection that focus on what Christ did, what happened and reality of eyewitness account (we are witnesses of this...)
- More than just an explanation of a historical event rather reveals the climax of God's saving purposes in Christ throughout Acts "preaching the resurrection" (4:2, 33; 17:18)
- Resurrection demonstrates the lordship of Jesus (2:35-36; 10:42; 17:31)

### 4. Response-oriented

- Not response-*driven*; message is not delivered in order to manipulate a desired response
- Through warnings and promises, preaching in Acts always appealed to a response in repentance and faith

### 5. Boldness

- "To be clear in the face of fear"
- Used five times in its noun form (2:29, 4:13, 4:29, 4:31, 28:31)
- Used seven times in its verb form (9:27, 9:28, 13:46, 14:3, 18:26, 19:8, 26:26)

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Alan J., *New Studies in Biblical Theology: The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus—Luke's account of God's unfolding plan*, 90-99.



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## Preaching at Pentecost (2:14-40)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who is credited for the first sermon in Acts? (2:14)
2. Why do you think Peter is the one who delivers this sermon? (Mt. 16:13-20; Jn. 6:66-69; Jn. 18:10-11; Acts 1:3-8)
3. Before he begins to speak, what happens to Peter along with the eleven? (Acts 1:5, 8, 2:1-4)

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup> For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

<sup>18</sup> even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

<sup>19</sup> And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

<sup>20</sup> the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,

before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

<sup>21</sup> And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

<sup>22</sup> “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— <sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. <sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. <sup>25</sup> For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;

<sup>26</sup> therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.

<sup>27</sup> For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.

<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

<sup>29</sup> “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, <sup>31</sup> he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. <sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

<sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies your footstool.”

<sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

### *The Audience*

4. Describe the audience represented. Where are they from? Are they religious? What kind of understanding would you expect they would have of OT Scripture? (2:5-13)
  
5. What were they seeing and hearing? What was their initial question? Is this an appropriate question to ask given the circumstances? What were some accusing the apostles of? (2:5-13)
  
6. Compare and contrast the events in 2:6 with the events at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11).

### *The Occasion*

7. Why did the audience come together? (2:6, 11)
  
8. What is the celebration of Pentecost? Is there significance that the events of this day fell on Pentecost? (Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26)

### *The Message (2:14-40)*

9. Peter moves immediately to the OT story to explain what is happening with Jesus and his followers (2:14-21)
  - a. What OT Scripture does Peter quote? What is the immediate OT context of this quotation (Joel 2:12-14, 26-27)?
  
  - b. Joel and other OT prophets had spoken of what was going to take place in the “last days”. When Peter quotes this prophecy on Pentecost, what is he suggesting about the “last days”? When did the “last days” begin and when will they end? (1 Pt. 1:10-12, 20).

- c. Who received the “pouring out of my Spirit”? What was the result of the “pouring out of my Spirit”?
- d. What is the “day of the Lord” phrase typically associated with?
- e. Define the phrase “calling upon the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26). What is the result of this “calling”? How does “calling upon the name of the Lord” connect with 2:22-24?

10. He tells the story of Jesus: life, death, resurrection, exaltation (2:22-24)

- a. How was Jesus introduced in 2:22? In what two ways did God publicly endorse Jesus?
- b. According to 2:23, who was responsible for Jesus’ death (see also Rom. 8:32)?
- c. Who was responsible for “raising up” Jesus?

11. Jesus, the Davidic messianic King, is foretold in Israel’s Story (2:25-31)

- a. What OT Scripture does Peter quote? What is the immediate OT context of this quotation? Why does Peter consider this a prophecy (2:33)?
- b. What facts regarding David are acknowledged by Peter (2:29-30)? What did God swear to David in Ps. 132:11?

12. Dead, raised, and exalted as King (2:32-33)

- a. Peter does not merely proclaim Jesus’ resurrection, rather, he claims they are witnesses of the resurrection appearances, a common emphasis throughout Acts (2:32, 3:15, 4:33, 5:32, 10:39,41, 13:31). Why is it important to distinguish an eyewitness account?

- b. If Jesus was raised from the dead, then where was he now? What did Jesus receive from the Father? Who witnessed and what did they witness?
13. Israel's Story once again (2:34-35)
- a. Where was David in contrast to Jesus? What enemy was David unable to defeat?
  - b. What OT Scripture does Peter quote? What is the immediate OT context of this quotation? What does Jesus say about this quotation (Mk. 12:35-37)?
14. The point of the gospel (2:36)
- a. Who was credited for establishing Jesus as both Lord and Christ?
  - b. Based on our understanding of the word "gospel", how does 2:36 proclaim the gospel?

*The Response (2:37-47)*

15. What cut them to the heart? What problem are they seeking to find a solution for?
16. What was offered to the audience?
17. What further exhortation was given by Peter?
18. How did the gospel change their lives?

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## Preaching Revival and Restoration (3:11-26)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who preached this sermon and how would his experiences with King Jesus prepare him for this occasion? (2 Pt. 1:16-21; Lk. 5:17-26)

<sup>11</sup> While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. <sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus<sup>[c]</sup> has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

2. What were the apostles doing before this sermon is preached? (2:42-43)

<sup>17</sup> "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup> that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, <sup>21</sup> whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. <sup>22</sup> Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. <sup>23</sup> And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' <sup>24</sup> And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. <sup>25</sup> You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' <sup>26</sup> God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

### *The Audience*

3. Who is in the audience and why are they at the temple? (3:1, 2, 9, 12, 17; 4:1)

*The Occasion*

4. Describe the scene in 3:1-11. Where are they? What attracted the crowd? How would you describe their response to the scene that plays out? Where does Peter end up preaching? In what ways did Peter show he was aware of his audience (3:6, 12)?

*The Message (3:13-26)*

5. Peter goes to Israel's Story to explain a healing--he appeals to the God who raised Jesus from the dead and tells the gospel story (3:13-15)
  - a. There are several titles listed to describe Jesus. List each title and comment on its importance.
    - i. 2:13, 26 -
    - ii. 2:14 -
    - iii. 2:15 -
    - iv. 2:18, 20 -
    - v. 2:22 -
  - b. Luke emphasizes what God did vs what the audience did in apostolic preaching throughout Acts. List what God did in 2:13, 15 vs what the audience did in 2:13-14. What is the contrast between "you killed" and the "Author of life" in 2:15?
6. Faith in the resurrected Jesus heals (3:16)
  - a. Whose faith "in his name" made this man strong?
  - b. What can this man participate in now that he is refreshed and restored with "perfect health"? (Lev. 21:17-20)

### *The Healings of Jesus, Peter and Paul*

Luke's narratives often draw parallels between related events. It seems he intentionally reported similar healings performed by Jesus, Peter, and Paul.

- Jesus: L.3:31-32 Jesus prayed prior to receiving the Holy Spirit  
Peter: A.1:14 Peter and apostles praying before Spirit poured out on them  
Paul: A.9:11 Paul prayed prior to Ananias came and gave him the Spirit
  
- Jesus: L.5:17-26 Jesus heals a paralytic (lowered thru roof)  
Peter: A.3:1-10 Peter heals a man lamed from birth  
A.9:33 Peter heals a paralytic (Aeneas)  
Paul: A.14:8-10 Paul heals a man crippled from birth
  
- Jesus: L.7:11-17 Jesus raises widow's son  
L.8:41-56 Jesus raises Jairus' daughter  
Peter: A.9:36-43 Peter raises widow (Dorcas)  
Paul A.20:9-12 Paul raised Eutychus to life
  
- Jesus: L.8:43-48 Woman with hemorrhage healed by touching Jesus' garment  
Peter: A.5:15-16 People healed by Peter's passing shadow  
Paul: A.19:11-12 People healed by handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul

Although we can't be certain, it seems Luke wants us to understand that the same God who worked in Jesus is also at work in Peter and Paul, and by extension, to any of the new community of believers who were empowered by God's Spirit.

#### 7. How to respond to the gospel and saving benefits for responders (3:17-21)

- a. How do you reconcile Peter's comment that the audience, including the rulers, "acted in ignorance"? (Gen. 50:20; Lk. 23:34; 1 Cor. 2:8). What was revealed by "all the prophets"? (Isa. 52:13-53:12)
  
- b. What is the audience called to do? What blessings will they receive? What is the "times of refreshing"?

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<sup>1</sup> Used with permission from Curtis Byers

- c. What is the "time for restoring all things"? Why would Peter make a reference to "times of refreshing" and "times of restoring all things" in light of healing the lame man (Isa. 35:5-6)?
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- 8. Testimony of the prophets (3:21-26)
    - a. What three prophets spoke of the coming Messiah, according to Peter?
  
    - b. What was their testimony of the coming Messiah in the following prophecies?
      - i. Deut. 18:15-16, 19
      - ii. 2 Sam. 7:11
      - iii. Gen. 12:1-3
  
  - 9. Compare and contrast this sermon with Peter's Pentecost sermon.

*The Response (4:1-4)*

- 10. What was the response of the audience? Where does Peter end up after his sermon, and how does this compare to Lk. 22:54-62?



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## Preaching with Boldness, Part 1 (4:5-31)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who preached this sermon? What was he filled with in 4:8 and how was this a fulfillment of what Jesus promised during his ministry (Lk. 12:11-12, 21:14-15)?

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup>greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup>But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup>On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup>And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. <sup>12</sup>And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

<sup>13</sup>Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup>But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. <sup>15</sup>But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, <sup>16</sup>saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup>But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." <sup>18</sup>So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, <sup>20</sup>for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." <sup>21</sup>And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. <sup>22</sup>For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

<sup>23</sup>When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup>And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, <sup>25</sup>who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

"Why did the Gentiles rage,  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
<sup>26</sup>The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers were gathered together,  
against the Lord and against his Anointed"—

<sup>27</sup>for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup>to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. <sup>29</sup>And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup>while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." <sup>31</sup>And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

### *The Audience*

2. Who was the audience and how would you describe their attitude towards Jesus and his disciples (4:1-2, 5-6, 8b, 13, 14-18, 21)? What do you know about Annas the high priest and Caiaphas' involvement with Jesus' trial several weeks before Peter and John stand before them (Jn. 18: 12-14)?

*The Occasion (4:5-7)*

3. Why are Peter and John standing before the Sanhedrin? What question initiates Peter's sermon (4:7)?

*The Message (4:8-12)*

Main theme: authority and power

4. Compare and contrast this sermon with Acts 2 & 3 sermons.
5. Who's responsible for the healing of the lame man? Specifically, with what you know of where Jesus currently is, why can he be responsible for this healing (2:33)?
6. The "name of Jesus" is central to Peter's sermon (4:10, 11, 12). What two things were accomplished by the "name of Jesus"? How might 4:12 be offensive in today's world?
7. Peter quotes Ps. 118:22 in 4:11 (also quoted in 1 Pt. 2:4-10). Jesus also quoted this Psalm in Lk. 20:17. Who are the "builders"? Who is the "stone"? Who selected the "stone"? Note "what God did" vs "what you did" (2:23-24; 3:15; 4:10).

*The Response (4:13-31)*

8. What was the response of the Sanhedrin? Compare the discussion that they had in 4:15-17 with the discussion in Jn. 11:45-53.

9. Describe what the Sanhedrin saw in Peter and John in 4:13. What did they ask for in their prayer (4:29)?

- Boldness – “to be clear in the face of fear”; provides the freedom to proclaim the truth of God’s saving purposes in the Lord Jesus along with the accompanying warnings and promises even in contexts of opposition, threats of personal harm, persecution or death.
- Used five times in its noun form (2:29, 4:13, 4:29, 4:31, 28:31)
- Used seven times in its verb form (9:27, 9:28, 13:46, 14:3, 18:26, 19:8, 26:26)

10. What was the response of the apostles and their friends?

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## Preaching with Boldness, Part 2 (5:17-42)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who preached this sermon (5:29; 5:18)? What are the apostles *regularly* conducting among the people (5:12-13)? Luke's account of Peter's shadow falling on the sick is connecting him to what events in the life of Jesus (Lk 4:40-41; Lk. 8:43-48)?

<sup>17</sup> But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy <sup>18</sup> they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. <sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, <sup>20</sup> "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." <sup>21</sup> And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. <sup>22</sup> But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, <sup>23</sup> "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." <sup>24</sup> Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. <sup>25</sup> And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." <sup>26</sup> Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

<sup>27</sup> And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

<sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup> And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. <sup>36</sup> For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup> So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; <sup>39</sup> but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, <sup>40</sup> and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. <sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

### *The Audience*

2. Who was the audience and how would you describe their attitude towards Jesus and his disciples (5:17, 24, 26, 27, 33)? Who is also part of the audience and how would you describe his attitude towards the apostles (5:34-39)?

*The Occasion (5:17-28)*

3. The apostles are arrested at the behest of the high priest and the party of the Sadducees
  - a. Why do the Jewish leaders arrest the apostles (5:17, 28)? Why are they placed in a *public* prison?
  - b. What occurs overnight in the prison? What might Luke be alluding to in the life of Jesus in 5:19-23?
  - c. What are they told to do? Why is this message called “the words of this *Lifè*” (11:18; 13:46, 48; Jn. 6:68-69)?
  - d. Why did the captain with the officers detain the apostles *without* force? Are there similarities in Luke’s gospel account (Lk. 20:19; 22:2)?

*The Message (5:29-32)*

Main theme: God rather than human beings must be obeyed if their commands come into conflict with one another

4. Compare and contrast this sermon with Acts 2, 3, & 4 sermons.
5. There is an *inclusio* (two slices of bread that make up the sandwich) in Peter’s argument
  - a. What are the “two slices of bread” (5:29, 32)?
  - b. The “middle” part of the sandwich is why we should obey God rather than men. What three truths is God given credit for in 5:30-32? What is proclaimed from these three Divine accomplishments (1 Cor. 15:3-5, 24-26)? Based on the *immediate* context, how can we demonstrate obedience to God rather than men?
6. What is implied by stating “you killed [Jesus] *by hanging him on a tree*” (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13-14)? Compare this statement to “God exalted him”. Why is Jesus referred to as “Leader and Savior” (3:15)?

7. What is offered to the audience in 5:31?

*The Response (5:33-42)*

8. What is the initial response of the crowd?

9. Summarize Gamaliel's speech in 5:35-39. What is highlighted as the primary cause why these "movements" failed? How does this compare to the good news of Jesus Christ?

10. What is the result of Gamaliel's speech (5:40-42)? Why did the apostles leave this scene rejoicing? What were they *publicly* and *privately* doing after they were released?

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## Preaching with Boldness, Part 3 (7:1-53)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who preached this sermon? What was he chosen to do in Chapter 6? What qualifications did he meet (6:3, 5)? What was he doing among the people (6:8-10)? How did he appear before the council members (6:15)?

And the high priest said, “Are these things so?”

<sup>2</sup> And Stephen said: “Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, <sup>3</sup> and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ <sup>4</sup> Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. <sup>5</sup> Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. <sup>6</sup> And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. <sup>7</sup> ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’ <sup>8</sup> And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

<sup>9</sup> “And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him <sup>10</sup> and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. <sup>11</sup> Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. <sup>12</sup> But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. <sup>13</sup> And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. <sup>14</sup> And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. <sup>15</sup> And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, <sup>16</sup> and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

<sup>17</sup> “But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt <sup>18</sup> until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph. <sup>19</sup> He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive. <sup>20</sup> At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house, <sup>21</sup> and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. <sup>22</sup> And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

<sup>23</sup> “When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup> He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand. <sup>26</sup> And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?’ <sup>27</sup> But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?’ <sup>28</sup> Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ <sup>29</sup> At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

<sup>30</sup> “Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. <sup>31</sup> When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: <sup>32</sup> ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. <sup>33</sup> Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. <sup>34</sup> I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.’

### *The Audience*

2. Who disputed with Stephen and what do we know about their character (6:9-14)? Who was in the audience (6:12, 7:1)?

## Summary Statements in Acts

Acts is commonly divided into *summary statements*, highlighting the growth of the kingdom. Consider these six statements as road signs to inform the reader where they have been and where they are going within the narrative. Acts 6 provides us with the first of six summary statements:

- 6:7 - And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
- 9:31 - So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.
- 12:24 - But the word of God increased and multiplied.
- 16:5 - So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.
- 19:20 - So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.
- 28:31 - proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

<sup>35</sup>“This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. <sup>36</sup>This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. <sup>37</sup>This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. <sup>39</sup>Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, <sup>40</sup>saying to Aaron, ‘Make for us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ <sup>41</sup>And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. <sup>42</sup>But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

“Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?  
<sup>43</sup>You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’

<sup>44</sup>“Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. <sup>45</sup>Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, <sup>46</sup>who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup>But it was Solomon who built a house for him. <sup>48</sup>Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

<sup>49</sup>“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?  
<sup>50</sup>Did not my hand make all these things?”

<sup>51</sup>“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. <sup>52</sup>Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, <sup>53</sup>you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

<sup>54</sup>Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup>But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup>And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” <sup>57</sup>But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. <sup>58</sup>Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup>And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup>And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.



*The Occasion (6:10-14)*

3. Two different charges were brought against Stephen, expressed three different ways.
  - a. List these charges.

<u>Charge 1</u>	<u>Charge 2</u>
6:11	
6:13	
6:14	

- b. What similarities are found in these accusations towards Stephen and those against Jesus before his crucifixion (Mt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65)? Did Jesus ever say what he and Stephen were accused of saying (Jn. 2:13-22)?

*The Message (7:1-56)*

Main theme: God's presence is not confined to the temple and God's people have consistently refused God's messengers

4. Read the sermon and underline each phrase that pertains to God's presence not limited to the temple. Read the sermon again and circle each phrase that pertains to God's people consistently refusing His messengers.
5. What four OT stories does Stephen refer to? Consider their significance with the audience to whom he is preaching.
  - a. 7:2-8 -
  - b. 7:9-19 -
  - c. 7:20-45 -
  - d. 7:46-50 -
6. In his dynamic conclusion, what does Stephen call his accusers and why would that be extremely offensive (Exod. 32:9; Deut. 10:16)? Who does Stephen identify his accusers with?
7. Why do you think Luke devotes such a large amount of his narrative to Stephen's sermon?

*The Response (7:57-8:3)*

8. What is the initial response of the crowd (7:54)? What did Stephen say that caused them to rush on him (7:55-56)? Why would this statement ignite such a response?
  
9. What happens to Stephen and who is introduced to the Acts narrative (7:56-60)?
  
10. Compare the similarities to Jesus' death with the death of Stephen.
  
11. What happens to the group of Christians in Jerusalem?

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## Preaching a Universal Gospel (10:34-43)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who preached this sermon and why would he have not initiated preaching to Cornelius on his own? (10:28, 11:2-3)
2. Why do you think Peter was chosen to preach first to the Gentiles? After all, Paul was the Lord's *chosen instrument to carry his name before the Gentiles*. (Mt. 16:19)

<sup>9</sup>The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. <sup>10</sup>And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance <sup>11</sup>and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. <sup>12</sup>In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup>And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." <sup>14</sup>But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." <sup>15</sup>And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." <sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

<sup>17</sup>Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate <sup>18</sup>and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. <sup>19</sup>And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup>Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." <sup>21</sup>And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" <sup>22</sup>And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." <sup>23</sup>So he invited them in to be his guests.

The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup>And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup>When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. <sup>26</sup>But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." <sup>27</sup>And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. <sup>28</sup>And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. <sup>29</sup>So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me." <sup>30</sup>And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing <sup>31</sup>and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. <sup>32</sup>Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' <sup>33</sup>So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

<sup>34</sup>So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup>but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup>As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), <sup>37</sup>you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: <sup>38</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup>And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup>but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup>not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup>And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." <sup>44</sup>While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup>For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup>"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" <sup>48</sup>And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

### *The Audience*

3. Who is in the audience (10:24)? Where are they located? How does Luke characterize Cornelius (10:1-3, 22, 33)?

*The Occasion*

4. Luke is very thorough to accurately describe the chronology of the events that join Peter with Cornelius. Describe what happens on each day.
  - a. Day 1 (10:3-8):
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Day 2 (10:9-22):
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Day 3 (10:23):
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. Day 4 (10:24-33)

*The Message (10:34-43)*

5. What is the main point of Peter's message, according to 10:34-35? Exactly what does this statement mean in the immediate context? When does he understand this new concept?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Witherington suggests "this is the most comprehensive review of the career of Jesus found in any of the sermons in Acts". Why might this be the case given the audience to whom he is preaching to? List the events of Jesus' life as described by Peter, starting with the "word that he sent to Israel".
  - a. 10:36 –
  - b. 10:37-38 –
  - c. 10:39-41 –
  - d. 10:42-43 –
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Compare and contrast this sermon to Peter's Pentecost sermon.

*The Response (10:44-11:18)*

8. What events occur while Peter is preaching? Who was amazed at these events?
  
9. Did Cornelius and his house receive the Holy Spirit before or after baptism? Why do you think these events happened in this order?
  
10. How did Cornelius and his household respond to the command given by Peter? How did the “circumcision party” initially respond to this monumental event (11:2-3)? After Peter’s explanation and eyewitness account from the six brothers (11:17-18)?

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## Preaching Salvation (13:16-42)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who preached this sermon? What do we know about him before his conversion to King Jesus (7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1)? What does Luke say about him after his conversion (9:20-22)?

### *The Audience*

2. Who is in the audience (13:16, 26, 43)? How might the audience shape Paul's message (think about Peter's sermons in Acts 2 & 10)?

<sup>16</sup> So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:

“Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. <sup>17</sup> The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. <sup>18</sup> And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. <sup>19</sup> And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. <sup>20</sup> All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. <sup>21</sup> Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. <sup>22</sup> And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ <sup>23</sup> Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. <sup>24</sup> Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. <sup>25</sup> And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’

<sup>26</sup> “Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. <sup>27</sup> For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. <sup>28</sup> And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. <sup>29</sup> And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup> But God raised him from the dead, <sup>31</sup> and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. <sup>32</sup> And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, <sup>33</sup> this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“‘You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you.’

<sup>34</sup> And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

“‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’

<sup>35</sup> Therefore he says also in another psalm,

“‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’

<sup>36</sup> For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, <sup>37</sup> but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. <sup>38</sup> Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, <sup>39</sup> and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. <sup>40</sup> Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about:

<sup>41</sup> “‘Look, you scoffers,  
be astounded and perish;  
for I am doing a work in your days,  
a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’”

*The Occasion*

3. Where are Paul and Barnabas? Why are they there (13:2-3, 13-14; Rom. 1:16-17)?
  
4. What circumstances brought the audience to this location (13:14-16)? Before any words are spoken, how would you describe the audience's attitude? Friendly? Hostile? How does this compare to prior sermons we have studied?

*The Message (13:16-41)*

*Paul begins with Israel's Story (17-22)*

5. Who is featured as the "leading role" in the Israel's history? List the verbs that describe God's actions towards Israel in 13:17-22.

*The Story of Israel leads to the Story of Jesus, beginning with the voice crying in the wilderness, John the Baptist (23-25)*

6. What was the purpose of John the Baptist's ministry and why might Paul reference him at this point in his sermon (Lk. 3:4-6, Jn. 1:29-34)?

*The Salvation Story: Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (26-31)*

7. What is the "message of this salvation" (see also Acts 4:12)? What two things did the Jews not know (13:27) and what was accomplished because of their ignorance?

*Continuing Israel's Story (32-37)*

8. What is the "good news that God promised to the fathers"? Note the OT testimony: Ps. 2:7, Isa. 55:3, & Ps. 16:10.

*How to respond, saving benefits, warning (38-41)*

9. What "word of exhortation(s)" is given to the audience? Note the OT testimony: Hab. 1:5
  - a. 13:38 –
  - b. 13:39 –
  - c. 13:40 –

*The Response (13:42-52)*

10. List four responses and consequences of Paul's preaching.

a. 13:42-43 –

b. 13:44-47 –

c. 13:48-49 –

d. 13:50-52 –



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## Preaching in a Pagan World, Part 1 (14:14-17)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Who preached this sermon and who is with him? Why did they end up in Lystra (13:50-14:7)?

<sup>8</sup> Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, <sup>10</sup> said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. <sup>11</sup> And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" <sup>12</sup> Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup> And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

<sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, <sup>15</sup> "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. <sup>16</sup> In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup> Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." <sup>18</sup> Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

<sup>19</sup> But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. <sup>20</sup> But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. <sup>21</sup> When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. <sup>23</sup> And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

### *The Audience*

2. Who is in the audience and what language are they speaking (14:11)? How might the audience shape Paul's message?

### *The Occasion*

3. Compare and contrast the events with Peter in 3:1-7 with what happens to Paul in 14:8-10.

4. How does the crowd respond to what they just saw (14:11-13)?

It is important to understand the context as to why the crowd responded in this way. A famous Greek myth recorded by Ovid set in the Phrygian hill country, very likely the same region where they preached this sermon, certainly plays a role in the crowd's response to the miracle. Witherington summarizes the Greek myth:

Here came Jupiter [Zeus] in the guise of a mortal, and with his father came Atlas' grandson [Mercury or Hermes], he that bears the caduceus, his wings laid aside. To a thousand homes they came, seeking a place for rest; a thousand homes were barred against them. Still one house received them humble indeed, thatched with straw and reeds from the marsh; but pious old Baucis and Philemon of equal age, were wed in that cottage in their youth, and in that cottage had grown old together; there they made their poverty light by...bearing it in a contented spirit. It was of no use to ask for masters or servants in that household, the couple was the whole household, together they served and ruled. And so when the heavenly ones came to this humble home and stooping entered by the lowly door, the old man set out a bench and urged them to rest their limbs, while over this bench Baucis threw a rough covering. Then she raked aside the warm ashes on the hearth and fanned yesterday's coals to life...Then she took down from the roof some fine-split wood and dry twigs, broke them up and placed them under the little copper kettle. [The tale proceeds to explain how they prepared the best meal they possibly could for their guests, even attempting to set up couches on which the gods could recline and dine in comfort. They then seek to kill their only goose to feed the gods, but he eludes them.] Then the gods told them not to kill the goose. "We are gods," they said, "and this wicked neighborhood shall be punished as it deserves, but to you shall be given exemption from this punishment".

*The Message (14:14-17)*

5. What question does he pose to the audience? Why do Paul and Barnabas tear their garments and rush to the crowd (Mk. 14:63)?
6.
  - a. What affirmation does Paul suggest? How does this compare to Peter's in 10:26?
  - b. What does Paul call their religious practices?
  - c. What is the "good news" that he proclaimed?
7. How had God dealt with non-Israelite nations in the past? How did he witness to these nations?

*The Response (14:18-23)*

8. What is the initial response in 14:18?
  
9. Who comes to Lystra and what did they say to the crowds? What happens to Paul?
  
10. How does Paul display boldness?

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## Preaching in a Pagan World, Part 2 (17:16-34)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Why was Paul in Athens and who was he waiting on (17:13-15)?

<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbling wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" <sup>20</sup> For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." <sup>21</sup> Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

<sup>22</sup> So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. <sup>26</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup> for

"In him we live and move and have our being";

as even some of your own poets have said,

"For we are indeed his offspring."

<sup>29</sup> Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. <sup>30</sup> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

<sup>32</sup> Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." <sup>33</sup> So Paul went out from their midst. <sup>34</sup> But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

### *The Occasion*

2. What did he see (17:16)? How did it make him feel (17:16)? What did he decide to do (17:17)? Where did he end up preaching?

### *The Audience*

3. Who was in the audience (17:18, 19, 22)? What was their initial response to Paul (17:18-20)? How does Luke describe the audience in 17:21?

Stott summarizes the following regarding Epicureans and Stoics:

The Epicureans, considered the gods to be so remote as to take no interest in, and have no influence on, human affairs. The world was due to chance, a random gathering of atoms, and there would be no survival of death, and no judgment. So human beings should pursue pleasure, especially the serene enjoyment of a life detached from pain, passion and fear.

The Stoics, however, or ‘philosophers of the porch’ (the stoa or painted colonnade next to the agora where they taught), founded by Zeno, acknowledged the supreme god but in a pantheistic way, confusing him with the ‘world soul’. The world was determined by fate, and human beings must pursue their duty, resigning themselves to live in harmony with nature and reason, however painful this might be, and develop their own self-sufficiency.

To oversimplify, it was characteristic of Epicureans to emphasize chance, escape and the enjoyment of pleasure, and of the Stoics to emphasize fatalism, submission and the endurance of pain.

F. F. Bruce summarizes the following regarding Epicureans and Stoics:

Stoicism and Epicureanism represented alternative attempts in pre-Christian paganism to come to terms with life, especially in times of uncertainty and hardship; post-Christian paganism has never been able to devise anything appreciably better. But Stoics and Epicureans alike, much as they might differ from each other, agreed at least on this: that the new-fangled message brought by this Jew of Tarsus was not one that could appeal to reasonable people. They looked on him as a retailer of secondhand scraps of philosophy, “a picker-up of learning’s crumbs”, a type of itinerant peddler of religion not unknown in the Agora, and they used a term of disparaging Athenian slang to describe him.

*The Message (17:22-31)*

4. What was Paul’s perception of the Men of Athens and how was this constructed (17:22-23)?
  
5. Paul shapes his message to proclaim the living and true “unknown” God in five ways:
  - a. *God is the creator of the universe* (17:24). If God made everything and rules over all, then what can obviously not confine Him?
  
  - b. *God is the sustainer of life* (17:25). God cannot be served by humans—why? Who is dependent on whom?
  
  - c. *God is the ruler of all nations* (17:26-28a). As ruler of all nations, what is God’s ultimate goal for his people?
  
  - d. *God is the father of human beings* (17:28b-29). If human beings are God’s offspring (creation), why is it absurd to think that God can be “formed by the art and imagination of man”?
  
  - e. *God is the judge of the world* (17:30-31). What does “times of ignorance” imply? What is commanded of “all people everywhere”? Why? Why is “a man” able to judge the world?

*The Response (17:32-34)*

6. There are three different responses:
  - a. What is the first response? Why? From what you know about the audience, who would probably respond this way?
  - b. What is the second response? Why? From what you know about the audience, who would probably respond this way?
  - c. What is the third response? Was Paul's teaching successful? How should we measure success when it comes to evangelism?

*Thought questions*

7. Although we typically do not encounter idolatry as Paul did in Athens, how would you define idolatry in our world today? What do you find as important in Paul's approach to the Athenians and how does this help you with your tools for evangelism?
  
8. How was Paul's boldness manifested in Athens?

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## Pastoral Preaching (20:17-35)

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### *The Speaker*

1. Describe Paul's work in Ephesus (19:10, 20, 20:1; 1 Cor 16:8-9). How long was Paul in Ephesus? (19:8, 10; 20:31)

### *The Occasion*

2. Where is Paul when he delivers the sermon (20:17)? What is unique about this sermon compared to all the other sermons we have studied in Acts?

### *The Audience*

3. Who was in the audience (20:17-18)? Describe their relationship with Paul. Who was also in the audience (21:1)?

<sup>17</sup>Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. <sup>18</sup>And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; <sup>20</sup> how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by<sup>[d]</sup> the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup> But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup> And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, <sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup> And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

## *The Message*

Witherington suggests: “It is not an accident that this speech sounds more like the Paul of the letters than any other of his speeches in Acts. The following chart will show the similarities in content:

<b>Term/Concept</b>	<b>Acts</b>	<b>Paul’s Letters</b>
Reminder of how he lived when with his converts	20:17-18	1 Thess. 2:1-2; 5:10-11; Phil. 4:15
Paul’s work called serving the Lord	20:19	Rom. 1:1; 12:11; Phil. 2:22
On humility (refusing to claim anything for himself)	20:19	2 Cor. 10:1; 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:6
On his fears/showing personal concern		Rom. 9:2; 2 Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18
Jewish persecution	20:19	2 Cor. 11:24, 26; 1 Thess. 2:14-16
Taught from house to house	20:20	Rom. 16:5; Col 4:15; Phm. 21
Helpful/profitable teaching	20:20	Gal. 4:16; 2 Cor. 4:2
Preaching to both Jew and Greek	20:21	Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:20
Faith in our Lord Jesus	20:21	Rom. 10:9-13
Paul’s uncertainty about his future	20:22	Rom. 15:30-32
Lack of attempt to preserve his own life	20:24	2 Cor. 4:7-5:10; 6:4-10; Phil. 1:19-26; 2:17; 3:8
His job – to preach the gospel of God’s grace	20:24	Gal. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 6:1
Being innocent of his converts’ blood	20:26	1 Thess. 2:10

Paul’s sermon can be divided into three portions, relating to the past, the future and the present:

#### 4. The Past (20:18-21)

- a. What are four aspects of Paul’s ministry that “you (Ephesian elders) yourselves know”?
- b. How does Paul summarize the message that he proclaimed (20:20-21, 25)?
- c. Why does Paul want to remind them of the past message and manner of life he led?

#### 5. The Future (20:22-27)

- a. What was Paul’s expectation when he arrives in Jerusalem (20:23)?
- b. What was important to him? Not important to him (20:24)?
- c. How does Paul envision his role in relationship to his converts in 20:26 (Ezek. 33:1-6)?



6. The Present (20:28-35)

- a. What are leaders of the church called in 20:17, 28a, 28b? What does this say about their mission? Who should elders first keep watch over? Then who can they watch over?
- b. What does Paul know about the future of this flock after his departure? Where will the deception come from? Are these warnings new news? What exhortation does he give to the Ephesian shepherds?
- c. Although he was leaving them, what power did Paul count on to be present, sustain and protect the Ephesians?
- d. Why does Paul close his message to the elders with 20:35? Within the overall context, is he talking about monetary giving?

*The Response (20:36-38)*

7. How did the Ephesian elders respond? What do we know about the Ephesian church in future writings (Rev. 2:1; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 3:1-7)?