

Study Notes - Acts Chapter 1

Benjamin Winslett - 2013

Main Points

Written by Luke and addressed to the same recipient as Luke's gospel account, Theophilus.

- Acts 1:1, Luke 1:3

Jesus Spent 40 days with the disciples between His resurrection and ascension.

- Acts 1:3

Jesus foretold of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost (Fulfilled in chapter 2).

- Acts 1:4-8.

The Disciples were still looking for a restoration of national Israel.

- Acts 1:6
- Also consider Hebrews 8:13, 10:9, Mth 23:39, Mth 9:16-17
 - Even if there is some sort of future restoration of physical Israel (Romans 11 *may* allude to this), Old Testament worship is no longer acceptable.
 - This would not be to the exclusion of gentile believers. (Eph 2:14)

So called 'Commission' given.

- Acts 1:8
- See also Mth 28:19-20, Mrk 16:15, Lke 24:47

Jesus ascended back to Heaven with the promise made to return in like manner.

- Acts 1:9-11

A good picture of the church 'acting' as the church, as the remaining Apostles with the women and brethren gathered in prayer.

- Acts 1:12-14 (Picture of early Church life)

Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as an Apostle after Judas' suicide by hanging.

- Acts 1:15-26
 - The validity or Divine Endorsement of this action has been debated through the centuries. Many believe the Apostles rushed to judgment and that Paul was God's chosen replacement to be numbered with '*the twelve.*'
 - Old Testament prophesies of Judas Iscariot.
 - Psalm 109:8, Zechariah 11:12-13
 - Other account of Judas' hanging.
 - Matthew 27:3-10

Acts Chapter 2, Overview and Notes

Acts 2 is a familiar chapter to us. It is probably one of the most 'preached' chapters in Acts among our people. In this chapter, you have the 'launching' of the church into this world. Prior to this time, the Church was in existence but could be compared to a ship in dry dock. She was built, but she had yet to be launched. In Acts 2, as the Holy Spirit fills the Apostles and they begin preaching to those around them, the Church launched out as a boat which just set sail to chart the seas.

Some believe the Church was founded in Acts 2. This is not accurate, in that there was Church (disciples *assembled* to worship) all through Jesus' ministry. His disciples had been baptized into the Church. He had personally founded it (Mth 16) in His ministry. In this chapter, 3000 were *ADDED* to it (verse 41).

V1-4 The Holy Ghost manifests Himself

- On the Day of Pentecost, the Jewish feast of the harvest.
 - The law being a 'shadow' of things to come, 'ripe' fruit would be gathered into Jesus' Kingdom at this feast.
- Literal cloven tongues of fire descended on them.
- Filled with the Holy Ghost, as was prophesied by Jesus in John 14:15-18.
 - Jesus promised the disciples 'another comforter,' the Holy Ghost Who would be with them in like manner as He was during His ministry.
- The Apostles spoke with tongues (languages).
 - The gift of tongues was the ability to speak in foreign languages of which the speaker apparently had not prior knowledge.
 - See verses 9-11 for the list of nationalities which heard them speak their native tongues, not simply Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic (more universal languages like English today).

V5-13 The Reaction to this Miracle

- As folks hear of this miracle they gather to see.
- Verse 6, they were confounded, or confused.
 - The Apostles were Galilean but spoke in the hearers' native languages/tongues.
- The Apostles were preaching salvation, the wonderful works of God!
 - The gift of tongues was a sign by which the hearers could believe the words which were spoken. As important and miraculous as this gift was, it's intent was not to be an impressive miracle for the sake of itself. Rather, it pointed to Christ.
- Some mistook the Apostles and perhaps even their hearers for drunkards.
 - Apparently, some had not hearing ears.

V14-36 Peter's explanation and sermon

- Rather than being drunk, what happened was actually the fulfillment of a prophecy with which they Jews in their presence would be familiar, Joel 2:28-32.
 - This passage in Joel is proof of the Holy Spirit as a person in the Old Testament.
 - Disagreement exists over the occurrence of the sun being darkened and moon as blood. It would seem Peter considered this prophecy fulfilled as he spoke.
 - 'Saved' (v21) is synonymous with 'delivered' in Joel's prophecy.

- Salvation IS deliverance, whether from penalty of sin, death in sins, physical death itself, or a temporal calamity and destruction here on Earth.
 - A good question to ask when finding the word 'saved' in the Bible is 'Saved from what?'
- Peter begins confronting their sin of rejecting Jesus.
 - Jesus was delivered by God to Earth (Galatians 4) and delivered by God from death (Romans 1).
 - God gets credit for deliverance. Man gets credit for wickedness. Let's leave it at that!
- Death is no march for Jesus!
- David's prophesy of Christ's resurrection, Psalms 16:8-10.
 - David did not fear death (flesh rested in hope) because God would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption (physical decay in the grave).
 - As Peter said, David is dead. This prophesy applies to David's descendant, Christ Jesus.
 - In this instance, as with other Old Testament references, Hell more than likely refers to the grave/death rather than the Lake of Fire.
 - We know at Death that Jesus went to God (Hebrews 9:14).
- Form of a sermon demonstrated.
 - Preach Christ from scriptures.
 - Call to action, repentance as reaction to the information.

V37-40 Preaching Received

- Pricked in heath, indication regenerated soft heart, not depraved stony heart (Eze 11:19)
- Repent! Promise and call to repent is to all God shall call!
- Save (deliver) yourself from this wicked generation and their impending judgment.

V41-47 Pattern of the Early Church

- Continuity in Apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (all parts of the atmosphere of Church culture).
- Mutual sharing of burdens as brothers and sisters.
- The Church thrived!

Study Notes – Acts chapter 3

Notice the order. 1) A miracle is performed. 2) Christ is preached. 3) The call to action, repentance, is given. 4) Two distinct reactions.

Verses 1-11: Peter and John go to the temple to worship and preach Christ and upon arriving, heal a man crippled from infancy.

- This man was laid at the gate called *Beautiful*.
- This man was in essence a beggar, living off the generosity of others as he could not work.
- Peter's response is that of the preacher! While we do seek to help those less fortunate with food (See James chapter 1), our primary task in the Church is to share the blessings of the gospel of Christ (such as I have – the gospel – give I thee.)
 - What's better, medicine or healing? What the child of God experiences in the gospel is far better than silver and gold!
- When God heals a man, he is totally healed. No relapses! Peter and John are not 'snake oil' salesmen! This man was never healthier.
- This occurred in *Solomon's Porch*. This is the same place in the temple where Jesus spoke the famous words in John 10, *“my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life...”*

Verses 12-18: After gaining the attention of the people through the miracle, Peter preaches Christ to them!

- *“Why look on us?”* The true response of a preacher! Look not on us, but on Christ whom we preach (1 Corinthians 2:2, 2 Corinthians 4:5).
- Peter preaches unto them the gospel: The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 for a great definition of the gospel being the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- This healing was accomplished by *“His name through faith in His name.”*
 - Not the crippled man's faith in Christ, but the faith of Peter and John in Christ.
 - Often faith healers will claim they are unable to work a miracle due to the sickly person's lack of faith. It is clear from this text that it is the HEALER'S faith under consideration.
 - The gift to heal was 'apostolic' belonging to only the Apostles and those ministers on whom they laid hands (see Philip, Acts 8).

Verses 19-26 After preaching Christ, Peter exhorts them to repentance or face national judgment.

- The primary lesson is that there is a judgment coming upon the nation of Israel (the same judgment Joel prophesied of in Joel 2). Only those Jews who repented would be spared from the destruction coming (Titus' siege in AD 70).
 - *Sins blotted out* (v19), *times of refreshing* (v22), *destroyed from among the people* (v23) all speak of believing Jews delivering themselves through repentance.
 - Notice this will take place in *“these days”* (v24), indicating that this judgment was impending and occurred in the First Century AD.

What was the result? Read ahead, chapter 4:1-4

Acts Chapter 4 – Overview and Study Notes

In this chapter is the persecution following when Peter and John preached their first sermon inside the Temple directly after they healed the man lame from his youth. It begins with the threats of the unbeliever but ends with a powerful testimony that God is with His flock as they work in His name.

Verses 1-4 The reaction to Peter's preaching.

- 5000 Jews believed.
- Many powerful Jews did not believe, resulting in the arrest of Peter and John.

Verses 5-12 Peter's sermon to his accusers.

- This occurred on the day following their arrest.
- Peter, as promised by Jesus, is filled by the Holy Ghost and given the words to say. (Matthew 10:19-20)
- Again, Peter's preaching is centered on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- See v.12: Salvation is in JESUS ALONE.
 - Whereby we MUST be saved.
 - Not through personal merit, church membership, religion, or decisions to believe.

Verses 13-22 The lengths to which some powerful unbelievers go to suppress the Gospel.

- Believing the gospel made Peter and John look of less intelligence to their accusers.
- The miracle performed was obvious, yet they would rather suppress the purpose of the Church in favor of their own power and agenda.
 - To silence them, they threatened them.
 - Yet, Peter and John remain steadfast in obedience to God!

Verses 23-30 A prayer of intercession.

- The prayer begins and ends with praise (a worthy hint).
- Psalm 2 is quoted (verse 25, why did the heathen rage...)
- God's 'Determining Before' had reference to the fact that He placed limits on what Christ's persecutors could do to Him. Thus, they beg that God also limit the actions of the wicked men withstanding them so that they could 'speak Thy word.'

Verses 31-37 God's answer to the prayer and following days in the Church.

- As they prayed, the place was shaken. God answered with an earthquake and they were FILLED with the Holy Ghost and preached with boldness.
- Verse 33, great GRACE was upon them. May this GRACE rest upon us today as we work in Christ's vineyard!
- Because they were of one accord and in perfect gospel fellowship, believers sold goods they had in excess so poorer disciples could survive. What a blessing! This is true fellowship in Christ!

Verse 36 marks the introduction of Barnabas to us, who would later become Paul's companion in the ministry.

Acts Chapter 5, Overview and Notes

V1-11 The sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

- Chapter 4 ends with people selling things they had in excess and giving the proceeds to the church for her expenses.
- The sin of Ananias and his wife was not their lack of generosity. The sin was lying about the percentage of the proceeds they were giving. Their claim was giving 100% of the sale but in reality they lied and kept back a percentage secretly. Lying was the sin.

V12-16 The work continues.

- Despite the persecution of the previous chapter, the Apostles are again preaching in the Temple.
- The Church was generating a huge amount of interest. Folks were literally lining the streets!

V17-28 A great deliverance.

- This is perhaps one of the most entertaining happenings in Acts. The Apostles were arrested but released by an angel during the night who commanded them to preach in the morning in the Temple. As they were preaching, the Sanhedrin (ie., the council) had convened to try them. Upon learning of the escape, a messenger brought the news that the Apostles were **again** preaching in the Temple. Insult to injury!
- The Sanhedrin apprehended them yet again and began their questioning.

V29-40 Peter's reply and the Sanhedrin's final decision.

- Peter's reply rings true today: We ought to obey God rather than men! From this point, Peter preaches Christ to them yet again.
- Though 'cut the heart' (as opposed to being pricked in the heart), they were reasoned with by a Jew named Gamaliel that if this movement be of God (and of this fact who could deny?) then they were fighting against God. Who can win a battle against the Almighty?
 - Saul of Tarsus (The Apostle Paul) grew up being taught 'at the feet of Gamaliel' (See Acts 22:3).
- The Sanhedrin released them, but not before beating them and ordering them to cease from preaching Jesus to the people.

V41-42 The interesting reaction of the Disciples.

- How would you reply? After being arrested, jail broken, arrested again, interrogated, beaten, and forbidden to preach Christ, they went and rejoiced. Why!? Because they were found worthy to suffer for Christ's name.
 - Have we suffered much in the name of Christ?
 - If no, we might 'consider our ways' and examine our priorities. Satan targets the zealous!
 - **If yes, then rejoice that your discipleship was authentic enough to render notice from the enemy!**

Acts Chapter 6, Overview and Notes

Verses 1-4 Interchurch controversy and solution.

- This controversy was over treatment of Hebrew widows over Grecian widows.
 - Acts 10 gives us the first Gentile convert and baptism (Cornelius), so it is likely that these were Jews who lived in Greece and spoke the Greek language, rather than actual biological Greeks.
 - This would be similar to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), who was more than likely a Jew carried away into Ethiopia to be a eunuch.
 - Widows are to be taken under the financial support of the church. See 1 Timothy 5:1-14.
- The Apostles had the brethren seek men to appoint over this work, and it is reasoned that this is the first mention of deacons in the Bible, though it is apparent that two men, Stephen and Philip, preached the word.
 - The word 'serve' in verse 2 is the same greek word which translates Deacon later in the Bible.
 - Perhaps some were ordained as deacons and others as elders.
 - Philip was later called Philip the evangelist meaning either he was originally ordained as an evangelist (elder) rather than a deacon **OR** he was ordained as an elder at a later date. Evangelist is listed as a type of elder in Ephesians 4:11.
- What's important is the Apostles' reasoning – preachers should spend their time in the word and not be cumbered with the physical work of the church. Each has their role and job.
- Further reading – 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Verses 5-8 The people select 7 faithful men.

- Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas were selected for this work.
- These seven men were ordained by the presbytery (the twelve Apostles). Workers of this degree must be 'official.'
 - Presbyteries and ordinations are mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Titus 1:5.
- The gospel continued to thrive, see verse 7.
- Stephen began to 'stand out' among his brethren in a preaching way.

Verses 9-15 Stephen accused because of his preaching

- Because certain unbelievers had no reply for the mighty preaching of Stephen, they sought to end his ministry by persecution.
 - As is common, they did so by taking what he said and misrepresenting both his intent and message.
 - Further, they brought false witnesses to actually fabricate lies against him to the Sanhedrin (the Council).
 - Notice their accusation – Stephen said Jesus was going to destroy Jerusalem. (They did use a portion of the truth in their false witness against him, for Jesus was going to judge Jerusalem and did in A.D. 70. Satan usually uses a little truth in his lies to sell them to people.)
 - **Stephen's face shown as an angel! What a testimony of his witness!**

Acts Chapter 7, Overview and Study Notes

The seventh chapter of Acts, though long, has two main events. First, the sermon preached to the Sanhedrin by Stephen, ordained in chapter six. Second, their reaction to Stephen's message. Some key points to take in:

- Stephen's knowledge of the Bible. He was a scholar!
- Stephen's usage of the Old Testament to point to Christ while also showing their traditional, national rebellion.
- The angry reaction of the council.
- Christ's loving vision to Stephen, even at his death.
- The introduction of Saul of Tarsus.

Verses 1-53 Stephen preaches Christ and repentance to the Sanhedrin

- Verse 1 quotes the high priest asking, 'Are these things so?' This is in reference to the claims of the false witnesses from chapter 6, verses 13-14.
- Stephen's sermon contains 3 main parts.
 - Part 1, he begins with Abraham's call to leave Ur and follows Israel's history from Abraham through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Egypt, and eventually Moses.
 - Point, this great man Moses spoke of the coming of Christ (Acts 7:37, Deut. 18:18).
 - Part 2, Moses through Solomon.
 - Point, Solomon built a temple, but God is now interested anymore in temple worship.
 - Part 3, a call to repent of their rejection of Christ while confronting them for carrying on their tradition of proud rebellion.

Verses 54-60 Their reaction – Stephen is stoned

- Their reaction was to be cut to the heart. In short, they were infuriated at his message.
- 'Gnashed with their teeth' cut indicate biting but more than likely it indicates an angry countenance with grit teeth (consider the phrase 'weeping and gnashing of teeth').
- Stephen is blessed with a vision: He saw right into Heaven, Jesus being on the right hand of God.
- AFTER this they rushed him, dragged him from the city, and stoned him.

As they're stoning him, Stephen called upon God and prayed for their forgiveness, then fell asleep (how merciful of God!).

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 8

Acts chapter 8 records some of the evangelistic journeys of a first century preacher named Philip (not to be confused with the Apostle of the same name). Though this Philip was a preacher, he was not an apostle. Rather, he is entitled 'Philip the Evangelist' in Acts 21:8, where he is listed as 'one of the seven' men ordained in Acts chapter 6 (along with Stephen, whom we studied prior).

Also, in this chapter the promise of God that the gospel would be preached in Samaria was fulfilled.

V 1-4 Aftermath of Stephen's stoning.

- Many of the disciples, except the Apostles, were scattered.
 - The Apostles remained at Jerusalem.
- The Church buried and mourned Stephen.
- Saul continued persecuting the church.
- Those scattered shared the gospel.

V 5-25 Philip preaches Christ in Samaria

- Philip preached Christ in public to a multitude of people who received his preaching and great signs were done by Philip, resulting in a visit from the Apostles.
- Simon (Simon Magus) joined the Church but was quickly reprimanded by Peter for attempting to buy the Apostles' gifts with money.
 - Notice verse 18 – this gift to perform miracles was only transmitted by the hands of the APOSTLES, not normal ministers like Philip.
 - Simon is recorded in non-biblical histories to have been a very great menace to the Church and even possibly the originator of Gnosticism.

V 26-40 The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.

- Eunuch was probably a Jew serving as a Eunuch in Ethiopia.
- This is Biblical evangelism!
 - God sent the preacher. God prepared the recipient.
 - Eunuch was hungry for something he couldn't find with the priests of Jerusalem.
 - Eunuch's interest was Isaiah 53, a detailed description of Christ.
- Philip gives the qualification of Baptism – belief in Christ. (v37)
- The eunuch's baptism was by immersion.
- Philip went on preaching, the eunuch left rejoicing!

Study Notes – Acts chapter 9

Verses 1-9 The quickening of Saul of Tarsus

- This chapter begins with Saul, a Pharisee, rabidly seeking Christians to incarcerate and torture them, even tempting them to blaspheme (Acts 26:11), with authority from the government.
- En route to Damascus, Saul encounters Christ! Jesus strikes him down and regenerates him.
 - Notice this happened without any preacher but contrary to Saul's nature.
 - This demonstrates God's sovereign grace in the new birth!
 - As with Saul, so it is with all of God's children. (John 3:8, 1 Tim 1:16)
 - Salvation is ALL of God and none of man! (Every preacher who had preached to Paul had been imprisoned or worse).
- This was the greatest change in Saul's (future, Paul) life.
- Saul was left temporarily blind.

Verses 10-22 Saul's reception into the church

- God sends Ananias via a vision to Saul of Tarsus.
- When Ananias was doubtful, God tells him Saul is now a praying man.
- As Ananias arrives to Saul, he touches him and Saul's sight is restored.
- Saul is immediately baptized and spends days presumably studying with the disciples (and probably grieving his past sins).
- The church was AMAZED that God changed Saul's heart.

Verses 23- 31 Saul escapes the Jews who sought to kill him and heads to Jerusalem

- Saul is let out the window in a basket to escape the Jews once they heard he was now a believer.
- The saints in Jerusalem were afraid of him, so Barnabas (called Son of Consolation, a natural intercessor) pleaded Saul's case.
- The number of churches multiplied (v31)

Verses 32-43 Peter heals Aeneas and Dorcas (Tabitha)

- Leaving Saul, this chapter tells us more of Peter's ministry.
 - Peter healed a man named Aeneas who was sick with 'palsy' for eight years.
 - Palsy is what we call paralysis.
 - After this, who regions were filled with Christians.
 - God grants a believing woman, Tabitha called Dorcas, the restoration of her life as Peter prays for her. (The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much!)
 - After this, again there is a great flux of church growth.
 - **If you notice, zeal and action on behalf of church members yields church growth consistently throughout Acts. Hint hint... :-)**

Overview and Study Notes for Acts Chapter 10

Acts chapter 10 gives the narrative of the first true Gentile convert to Christianity, Cornelius. As we study, notice carefully Luke's description of Cornelius. Without a doubt, God's Sovereign Grace had changed the heart of this dear brother. However, despite being alive in Christ, Cornelius was ignorant of the gospel truth and was not yet a baptized disciple. Thus, God sends a preacher, Peter, to teach him of Christ.

Points to observe

- Cornelius was the first Gentile convert.
- Cornelius is described in a way that shows him to be a recipient of Grace, rather than unregenerate. (Compare his description with that of the natural man in Romans 3:10-18, Ephesians 2:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 2:14.)
- Peter's vision of unclean beasts as God's message for him to preach to Gentiles (cleansed).
- Peter sees the vision three times and three Gentiles sought Peter.
- Compare the experience of Cornelius with 2 Timothy 1:10, which says gospel preaching brings *'life and immortality to light.'*

Verses 1-8 Introduction of Cornelius

- Cornelius was a centurion, a devout man, who feared God and whose prayers had been heard by God (testifying God had cleansed him).
- God sends an angel who tells Cornelius to send for Peter. Cornelius sends three men.

Verses 9-18 Peter's vision of unclean beasts

- Peter has this vision on the housetop, used much like porches and decks today.
- The vision of unclean beasts is intended to show Peter that God has cleansed Gentiles through Christ as well. He should preach to them and receive them as brethren!

Verses 19-33 Peter accompanies the Gentiles to Cornelius' house

- In verse 22, 'warned' is *chrematizo*, which means 'to utter an oracle.' (Strong's)
 - The corresponding English definition for *warn* means 'to notify; to summon.' (OED)
- As Peter arrives at Cornelius' home, Cornelius is a bit overzealous and Peter corrects him.
- In verse 28, Peter reveals his vision pertains to Gentiles whom God hath cleansed.
- Cornelius recounts his instruction to send for Peter.

Verses 34-43 Peter's observation

- Peter observes, based upon this experience and vision, that in every nation those who fear God and work righteousness are 'accepted with him.' (See 1 John 2:29, Ephesians 1:3-12)
- 'God is no respecter of persons' is a phrase pertaining to Jew/Gentile favoritism.
- Peter preaches Christ unto them and they believe. They have remission (freedom) of sins!

Verses 44-48 The Gift of the Holy Ghost and water baptism

- The Holy Ghost falls on them in the capacity of signs and wonders (a 1st century phenomenon), not to be confused with the New Birth, which is life from death (John 5:24-25, John 3:8).
- **Peter baptizes them, the first Gentile converts, into the church!**

Acts Chapter 11, Overview and Notes

Verses 1-18 The Church in Jerusalem reacts to Peter and the Gentile converts

- At first, the brethren were skeptical of Peter's 'eating with Gentiles'
- Peter recounts his vision of the sheet and also the Holy Ghost's manifestation with Cornelius' family and friends.
- Cornelius was to be saved by Peter's preaching.
 - Already regenerated, Cornelius was saved from spiritual ignorance and bondage to truth and liberty in Christ.
- The Jewish believers rejoiced!

Verses 19-21 Ministers in other areas begin preaching to Gentiles

- Unlike before when men spoke to Jews only, now the door to the Gentiles was opened.
- A great number of Gentiles believed!
 - Would not this same grace be awesome today, to the Glory of God? (v21)
 - Church growth is not a foreign concept. Our churches should grow!

Verses 22-26 Barnabas is dispatched to Antioch

- After hearing of the great Gentile in-gathering at Antioch, the Church of Jerusalem sent Barnabas.
 - Barnabas means 'son of consolation.' (Acts 4:36)
- Barnabas first seeks out Saul (Paul).
- For one solid year, Barnabas and Saul preach in Antioch.
 - Antioch is historically considered to be the 'hub' of the Gentile churches. Though all churches are equal in rank, Antioch seemed to be a central location among the Gentiles as Jerusalem was among the Jews.
- The term 'Christian' originated as a descriptive term for Christians at Antioch.
 - Later, the term implied suffering and persecution (1 Peter 4:16)

Verses 27-30 The Church of Antioch sends relief to the Church in Jerusalem

- One of the early gifts in the church was the gift to prophesy (to foretell secret things).
- A prophet, Agabus, foretold of a famine that would affect Judea.
- Antioch Church sends relief to brethren in Judea.
 - This shows the unity and oneness we have in Christ! Though formerly separated through cultural, ethnic, and religious differences, these folks of all different persuasions are one in Christ!

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 12

This chapter summarizes an increase in persecution, followed by God's deliverance and judgment of the chief tormentor of God's people. In this chapter, we learn the lengths to which Satan goes to stamp out the truth as well as the delivering power of God. Also, we learn an awesome lesson about the power of prayer and the final judgment that God has over His adversaries. In the end, when we are obedient, God's word always prevails.

Verses 1-19 Herod's persecution and God's deliverance.

- Acting on political pressure, Herod slays James the brother of John (whom we read much of in the four gospels).
 - Herod is a family name and title referring to several kings in that family line.
- Desiring to please the Jews, he incarcerates Peter, intending to kill him after 'Easter.'
 - Easter is a rendition of a pagan goddess' name, Ishtar or Eostre.
 - The word Easter is taken from the same Greek translated 'Passover.' Possibly, the reason 'Easter' is used here by the KJV translators is to denote Herod's observance of the Pagan celebrations that coincided with the Jews' Passover.
- The Church, throughout this, made intercession in prayer for Peter.
- Peter was delivered from jail by an angel of the Lord and journeyed to the home of Mary (mother of John Mark).
 - This teaches the POWER of effectual, fervent prayer.
 - John Mark was Peter's cousin who at times journeyed with Paul, was the source of a falling out between Paul and Barnabas, but later was received by Paul as useful. He also authored the Gospel of Mark found in our Bibles.
- Upon Peter's arrival, Rhoda answered the door and was accused of being mad by the brethren when she reported Peter's safe arrival.
- The keepers of Peter's cell were executed for his escape, as was common practice.

Verses 20-23 The death of Herod.

- While handling political responsibilities, Herod was worshiped as a God by those hearing his oration.
 - Immediately, he was smitten by an angel and later died of an infection of worms.
 - History reports he died of a gross infection of worms in his stomach.
 - There were several called Herod.
 - This particular Herod was Agrippa I.
 - ***Others*** include Herod the Great, who oversaw the rebuilding of the Temple and who ordered the execution of the Hebrew children (Matthew chapter 2); Herod the Tetrarch (Antipas) who ordered the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12), and Herod Agrippa II to whom Paul spoke later in Acts (the final king Herod).

Verses 24-25 The work goes on!

- God's Church continued to grow.
- Saul and Barnabas return to Antioch (See ch 13:1-2) from Jerusalem with John Mark.
 - **This was after they “fulfilled their ministry,” a reminder that preachers are soldiers stationed at posts by the Holy Ghost. We work until we “finish our course” in a location.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 13

Verses 1-3, Saul and Barnabas called of God to do a certain work.

- Of a group of ministers working together in Antioch of Syria, God called Saul and Barnabas out for a certain work.
 - Notice these preachers spent their time together in prayer and fasting, seeking God's will for their respective ministries.
 - Food for thought...
 - What would happen if this were the case today?
 - Can a preacher do this if he works 40 to 50 hours a week?

Verses 4-13, The travels of Paul and Barnabas

- Paul and Barnabas preached in Selucia, Cyprus, Paphos, Perga, and finally Antioch of Pisidia.
- This is the chapter where Saul's name is changed to Paul in the narrative. (verse 9)
 - Their strategy at this point was when entering a city, to preach in the local Synagogue.
 - While in Paphos, they were called by Sergius Paulus, a deputy, who desired to hear the word.
 - A false prophet named Barjesus, a sorcerer, withstood them, but Paul struck him with blindness.
 - Notice Paul's boldness – he certainly subscribed to a masculine ministry.
 - Notice also the reaction. Rather than offense, others who witnessed this believed.
 - (Sometimes we are too gun shy when proclaiming the truth).

Verses 14-43 Paul preaches in Antioch of Pisidia

- This Antioch is different from Antioch of Syria.
- When given an invitation to speak in a synagogue, Paul preaches Christ.
 - He begins with the choosing of Israel and ends at God's judgment against their nation for rejecting the promised Messiah, Christ Jesus.
 - In this sermon Paul quotes from Psalm 2, Psalm 16, Habakkuk 1:5
 - Hab 1:5 wasn't a direct prophesy, but rather a description of blindness.
 - Paul uses the two Psalms as prophesy of Christ's resurrection.
 - Notice this word is sent to Israelites and men who fear God - born again people. (V26)
 - Verse 39 gives the promise of justification to believers – for only a saved man can believe. Many Jews thought their righteous works made them just.
 - Paul was invited back by the GENTILES the next Sabbath to preach this same thing to them.

Verse 44-52 The next Sabbath Day

- In anticipation of Paul's message, nearly the whole city attended.
 - The Gentiles rejoiced which caused much jealousy among the Jews.
 - As many Gentiles as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Verse 48)
 - After the word continued to spread, Paul and Barnabas were ejected from this city.
 - Boldly, they shook the dust from their shoes against the city.
- **Despite persecution, the church continued to thrive and grow, by God's grace.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 14

The journey of Paul and Barnabas through Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

Verses 1-7 Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

- Arriving at Iconium in the end of chapter 13, Paul and Barnabas immediately preached in the local Synagogue, as was their custom.
 - After a lengthy, successful ministry, Jewish opponents of the truth rose up and stirred up some Gentiles against the gospel.
 - The city now divided, certain opponents attempted to stone Paul and Barnabas.
 - To escape, Paul and Barnabas departed for Lystra and Derbe, where they preached Christ.

Verses 8-18 A most interesting exchange between the preachers and pagans

- While in Lystra, Paul healed a man crippled from his mother's womb.
 - Paul perceived that this man had “faith to be healed.” Faith allows us to hear the gospel and in this century, receive special gifts of the Holy Ghost (See Gal. 3:2, Acts 19:2, “The hearing of faith...”)
 - Upon seeing this (but apparently ignoring the message preached) the people immediately assumed Paul and Barnabas were gods!
 - They called Paul Mercurius (Latin) or Hermes in Greek mythology – Known in mythology as a messenger of the gods and was associated with eloquence.¹
 - They called Barnabas Jupiter (Latin) or Zeus in Greek mythology – known in mythology as the king of the gods.²
 - At this point, the pagan priest attempted to make sacrifice unto Paul and Barnabas, causing Paul to “rend” his clothes and intervene.
 - The tearing of one's garment was a sign of mourning or disapproval in the first century.
 - Paul then preached the gospel to the city.

Verses 19-28 A tag-team of enemies against Paul; Further journeys of Paul and Barnabas

- Unbelieving Jews from Antioch (Pisidia, not Syria) and Iconium persuaded the people against Paul, whom they stoned and left for dead.
- Paul rose up, left the following day for Derbe with Barnabas.
- After preaching in Derbe, Paul returned to Lystra and Antioch (Pisidia).
 - Part of Paul's message was that we enter the kingdom with much tribulation. His intent was to “confirm”(reestablish, strengthen) the disciples in these cities who saw him persecuted.
 - Additionally, Paul and Barnabas labored long enough in each place to ordain elders in every established church.
- The remainder of the chapter highlights their journey eventually back to Antioch of Syria where they began in Acts 13.
 - This ministry included travels through Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia, and eventually to Antioch of Syria.
 - **In Antioch, the whole church gathered to hear of their journeys! This is much like in recent years among the Primitive Baptists.**

1 *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville TN 2003:Holman Bible Publishers), page 752

2 *Ibid*, page 968

Study Notes – Acts chapter 15

Grace or Works? An Early Doctrinal Controversy

Verses 1-5 A doctrinal crisis!

- Men came from Judea who taught the gentile Christians to be circumcised to be saved.
 - This seems to be the first occurrence of any form of works salvation in the church.
- Paul and Barnabas head to Jerusalem to gather with other preachers to discuss this issue.

Verses 6-12 A great debate over salvation ensues

- The preachers convene in one place to resolve this crisis.
 - After much debate, Peter arises and makes a definite statement as to the true doctrine of the Church. (Peter is later called Simeon or Simon)
 - The message of salvation is one of GRACE. Works salvation is an unbearable yoke!
- After the debate, Paul moves on to good news, the ingathering of gentiles.

Verses 13-35 James' advice to send a letter to Gentile believers

- James recommends they send a letter of counsel to gentile believers.
 - This is James the lesser, as James son of Zebedee had been executed prior in Acts 12.
 - He also observes that God, knowing all His works from the beginning of time, foretold the grafting in of the gentiles. (Quotes Amos 9:11)
- This letter would call on them to turn from the common gentile pollutions.
 - Barsabas (Judas) and Silas were chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas to deliver the letter.
 - Silas, introduced here, is found throughout the next chapters.
 - These things included: Idols, fornication, things strangled, blood.
 - In reference to things strangled and blood, more than likely this was to avoid offending Jewish believers who were still sensitive to the law, though freed from it.
 - See Acts 23, Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8
 - The entire Jewish culture was based on the law.
 - This actual letter is recorded in verses 23-29.

Verses 36-41 Paul and Barnabas part ways over John Mark

- Paul didn't want to take John Mark because he did not continue his ministry with Paul and Barnabas in chapter 13.
- Paul departed with Silas, Barnabas with John Mark.

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 16

The continuing journeys of Paul the Apostle

Verses 1-12 Paul and Silas travel through Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas, and finally Macedonia.

- After splitting up with Barnabas over John Mark, Paul takes Silas and returned to Lystra where he found a young believer named Timotheus.
 - This is the same Timotheus, or Timothy, who would be Paul's son in the ministry and the recipient of I Timothy and II Timothy.
 - Timothy's mother is mentioned in the narrative. Paul commends both his mother and grandmother in 2 Timothy 1:5.
 - For the sake of being received by the Jews, Timothy was circumcised (verse 3 – See Galatians 2:3, 1 Corinthians 9:20-22).
- As Paul traveled, he delivered the 'decrees' of the Apostles for Gentile churches (see 15:23).
- Church were 1) established in THE faith and 2) increased in number DAILY.
- In his travels, Paul attempts to go into Asia but was hindered of God, rather being instructed to go into Macedonia by way of a vision.
 - This teaches that even though we have some liberty in our service to God, the Holy Spirit should still be at the helm. God had other plans for Paul, though Paul's initial desires were completely honorable.
- Paul ends up in a Macedonian city, Philippi.
 - Philippi would later contain the church to whom Paul addressed the book of Philippians.

Verses 13-15 The conversion of Lydia to the faith.

- Targeting a place where it seemed there would be an open heart, a place of prayer, Paul preached the gospel.
- Lydia is converted to the truth – but notice God had ALREADY opened her heart by grace!
 - After receiving the gospel, Lydia and her household were baptized.

Verses 16-40 Paul and Silas imprisoned for casting out a spirit of divination.

- Annoyed that a woman followed them screaming of their identity, Paul casts the spirit of divination out of her.
 - The woman's masters, now financially impacted, cause a scene. Paul and Silas are beaten and arrested.
 - In prison, Paul and Silas sing praises rather than indulging in pity.
 - At midnight, God shakes the earth. Paul and Silas are free!
 - The jailor, fearing for his life, asks what is required to find deliverance (probably in reference to the penalty for the prisoners escaping – See ch 12:19).
 - How does Paul reply? Believe! (See 1 Cor 1:18 & 2:14, John 3:8, 3:16, & 5:24, Romans 1:16)
 - The Jailor and his family baptized, he takes Paul and Silas home to nurse wounds.
- The following day, the magistrates sent for Paul and Silas' release.
 - Paul, being a Roman, exercised his rights as a Roman and demanded to speak directly to those who ordered their abuse.
 - The magistrates, fearing Roman authority, ask Paul and Silas to leave.
- **The chapter ends with Paul and Silas together with the church in Lydia's house before leaving for Amphipolis.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 17

Verses 1-9 Paul travels to Thessalonica

- In Thessalonica, Paul went into the local Synagogue as was his manner.
 - Many in this town believed, including devout (worshipping) Greeks and Chief (in charge) women.
 - Jews stirred up opposition with lewd hucksters or petty traffickers against the Apostles.
 - Notice the accusation – they turned the world upside down!
 - Also, they hated the message that Jesus is King.
 - They drew out Jason, a disciple, for receiving Paul and Silas.
 - After keeping Jason sufficient time, they let him go. (“Taking security”)
 - Notice in 1 and 2 Thessalonians the number of times Paul mentioned persecutions. This is probably why he comforted them with the knowledge of the resurrection.

Verses 10-15 Paul's success in Berea

- Paul and Silas departed to Berea
 - In the local Synagogue, the Jews and worshipers were more noble than those in Thessalonica, searching the scriptures together about this matter (Christ).
 - Scriptures were available at the synagogue, meaning the format was similar to what we consider a Bible study.
 - Many Jews and Greeks believed!
 - Unbelievers from Thessalonica sent word to Berea and stirred up folks against Paul.
 - Paul departed for Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.
 - Paul sent for them as he arrived in Athens.

Verses 16-34 Paul's preaching in Athens

- As Paul waited, he was distressed at the gross idolatry of the residents of Athens.
 - Athens was laden with devotions to several gods. It was named after Athena.
 - He disputed with the Jews, pagans, and those shopping in the market place.
 - This drew the attention of the philosophers, the Epicureans and Stoicks.
 - Epicureans – Hedonistic, believed in no divine intervention of gods.
 - Stoicks – Pantheistic, believed in purging destructive emotions.
 - These philosophers took Paul to their court, Areopagus, for further inquiry.
 - They desired nothing else but to hear something new – all day, every day.
 - Paul capitalized on an altar made to 'THE UNKNOWN GOD' to share about the True and Living God, a God they did not know about.
 - Paul goes from creation to the cross, and then the resurrection calling on them to repent.
 - God is not to be ignorantly worshiped by idols made by the hands of men.
 - The word worshiped means “therapy.” There's not benefit to God from ignorant worship!
 - Most rejected his doctrine, laughing at him.
 - Paul departed, but a few from Mars Hill left with him as disciples.
 - **Dionysius (judge of Areopagus) and Damaris, among others.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 18

Verses 1-11 Paul's efforts in Corinth

- Leaving Athens (see Chapter 17), Paul journeyed to Corinth.
 - Corinth was a port city and home of the Isthmian games occurring every other year.
 - It's wealth and vice were proverbial.
 - Corinth was a home of the most lewd forms of paganism.
 - Contained shrines to: Venus, Apollo, Hermes, Hercules, Athena, and Poseidon.
 - Paul lived with Aquila and Priscilla, whose faith is spoken of in many Pauline Epistles.
 - Aquila, as Paul, was a tentmaker.
 - This is the first recollection of Paul working a 'secular' trade. Notice, he does so entering a city wherein no church has been established. Consider also 2 Corinthians 11:8, 12:13.
 - While following his pattern of visiting the Synagogue, the Jews were enraged causing Paul to turn to the Gentiles in Corinth as his target audience.
 - Justus and Crispus did believe, however.
 - God spoke to Paul in a vision... "I have much people in this city."
 - Paul stayed there 18 months.

Verses 12-17 Paul accused of the Jews

- The Jews brought Paul before the civil ruler Gallio, who refused to hear them on account of this being a Jewish issue.
 - This resulted in Greeks beating Sosthenes, the ruler of the Synagogue.

Verses 18-23 Further journeying of Paul

- Paul departed into Syria with Priscilla and Aquila, then Cenchrea, and finally Ephesus.
 - The cause of Paul shaving his head is puzzling, there being many different customs involving vows and head shaving. Scripture does not inform us as to the vow.
 - Aquila and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus.
- Paul went to Caesarea, Antioch, then to Phrygia.

Verses 24-28 Apollos introduced

- Another notable NT figure is introduced in this chapter, Apollos.
 - Born at Alexandria and named after a false god, Apollos was "mighty in the scriptures" and a very powerful speaker.
 - Eloquent means persuasive, not merely articulate.
 - Apollos knew only the baptism of John, meaning he was awaiting the Messiah but was ignorant of the work of Christ. More than likely, Apollos had continued John's work of baptizing people after John's death.
 - Apollos spoke boldly in the synagogue, possibly about the Messiah.
 - Aquila and Priscilla take him aside and inform him of Christ!
 - We need more like Aquila and Priscilla!!
 - Apollos immediately began to preach Christ, convincing many people.
 - **This same man would eventually preach the gospel at the church in Corinth.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 19

Verses 1-12 Paul travels into Ephesus

- Paul finds a group of twelve disciples in Ephesus.
 - These brethren were baptized “unto John's baptist,” likely indicating someone other than John baptized them in attempt to continue John's work.
 - They had not heard of the Holy Ghost, prompting Paul to ask what baptism they had?
 - “Receiving the Holy Ghost” does not refer to regeneration but miraculous gifts.
 - We baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
 - One possibility is that Apollos baptized them in John's name.
 - Paul baptized them and laid hands on them who were then filled with the Holy Ghost.
- Paul continues in Ephesus
 - First, Paul taught in a synagogue for three months, as his manner was.
 - Those in the synagogue rejected his words.
 - Then, Paul labored in the school of Tyrannus for two years.
 - All in Asia learned of the gospel due to Paul's efforts.
 - Ephesus was in Asia minor (where Paul had previously been hindered).
 - Some folks were healed merely by receiving a piece of Paul's clothing.

Verses 13-20 The exorcist Jews

- Mistaking Paul's power in Christ for superstition, 7 sons of Sceva cast out devils in Jesus' name.
 - The devils affirmed their submission to Jesus and Paul (through Jesus), but chased the men out after assaulting them.
 - This caused a great repentance in this region.
 - Sometimes to repent means to suffer financial loss! Cast idols into the fire!

Verses 21-41 Persecution over idols

- At this time, Paul reaffirms his desire to travel to Jerusalem and then Rome; he sends for Timothy and Erastus.
- Paul, waiting for them, began to be under attack by local silversmiths who had suffered financial harm due to many turning from idols to serve God.
 - Demetrius gathers like craftsmen and laments Paul's ministry two fold.
 - 1) Paul preached idols were not gods, harming their income.
 - 2) Diana's name would no longer be worshiped throughout Asia (competing worldviews).
 - Those who heard Demetrius began to spread dissent until the whole city was filled confusion and violence against Paul.
 - In turmoil, the citizens pulled Gaius and Aristarchus into the Theater to be devoured by beasts.
 - Paul desired to go there (presumably to preach and die!) but the disciples restrained him.
 - Many in the Theater didn't even know why they were gathered in such an uproar.
 - Alexander, presumably a believer, was sent into the Theater by the Jews to suffer and die by wild beasts.
 - This is possibly the same Alexander who did Paul much wrong. (2 Tim 4:14)
 - The Townclerk sought to calm them with affirmation and with fear of force, presumably from the Roman government who would hear of this riot.
 - **This man must had been a chief person of authority.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 20

Verses 1-12 Paul travels through Macedonia, Greece, Asia and Troas.

- After the uproar in Ephesus, Paul departed to continue his journeys in the ministry.
 - Before leaving Greece, the Jews attempted another attack.
- While in Troas, notice the disciples are meeting on the first day of the week (Sunday). See also 1 Corinthians 16:2.
 - The first day of the week is when Jesus was resurrected.
 - At this meeting, Paul preached until midnight where a young man, Eutychus, fell from the third loft and died.
 - “Preached” comes from a Greek word for dialogue/discuss. It wasn't a one way lecture.
 - Paul embraced him and the young man returned to life, to the comfort of the brethren.
 - At day, Paul departed.

Verses 13-16 Luke's travels distinguished from Paul's.

- As Paul traveled on foot, Luke (narrator) and the brethren met him at Assos.
- In Miletus, Paul continues his plan to return to Jerusalem.

Verses 17-35 Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus

- While in Miletus, Paul calls for the elders of the church in Ephesus, whom he addressed.
 - This address included:
 - His record among them.
 - His ministry to them.
 - Teaching publicly and from house to house
 - Preaching repentance and faith.
 - Declaring the whole counsel of God.
 - Holding back nothing profitable.
 - His plans to go to Jerusalem amidst persecution.
 - His farewell to them.
 - A warning of grievous wolves entering in to destroy the flock.
 - A final encouragement to press onward.

Verses 36-38 The elders pray and mourn Paul's words.

- The elders of Ephesus were moved to tears and sorrow at Paul's revelation to them that they would see him no more.
- They accompanied him to the ship in which he would set sail in chapter 21.

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 21

Verses 1-15 Paul's journey to Jerusalem

- After leaving the elders of Ephesus Paul traveled via Coos, Rhodes, and Patara.
- In Patara, Paul boarded another ship towards Phenicia. They sailed by Cyprus, into Syria, and then Tyre .
 - In Tyre, Paul stayed one week with the disciples.
 - These disciples begged Paul (through the Spirit) not to go to Jerusalem.
 - As Paul persisted, they prayed and Paul set sail.
- From Tyre, Paul arrived at Ptolemais where he found disciples.
- Then, Paul journeyed to Caesarea to the home of Philip the evangelist (Acts 6, 8).
 - Philip's four daughters prophesied (not as elders, but they did see future events – Joel 2).
 - While in Philips home, Agabus came from Jerusalem prophesying woe to Paul.
 - Again, the disciples begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.
 - Paul's reply: Why break my heart? I must go! I am even ready to die!
 - At Paul's reply, the disciples resigned themselves to God's will.
 - This sparks a question: Others signified *through the Spirit* for Paul not to go. Paul pressed on. Others resigned themselves to God's will. Was it God's will for Paul to go to Jerusalem? (We have no definitive answer to this question).
 - Regardless, God capitalized on Paul's locale. From soon after this point, Paul continued to travel but as a prisoner.
 - Paul travels via carriage to Jerusalem.

Verses 16-26 Paul's strange reception by James

- Paul, now in Jerusalem, meets with James and the elders, sharing his journeys.
 - They glorify God at this news.
- Oddly enough, James informs Paul that thousands of Jews believe but still keep the law. In order to not offend them, James asks Paul to keep the law while in Jerusalem.
 - Even though the Apostles instructed the Gentile believers not to keep the law.
 - This is possibly what led Paul to write Hebrews.
 - This is also one reason God grafted in the Gentiles, giving them the oracles of God throughout the Church Age.
- Paul honored James' request and purified himself, in effect observing a part of the law.

Verses 27-40 A riot ensues at Paul's presence in Jerusalem

- Jews from Asia (where Paul formerly ministers) drug Paul from the temple and closed the door!
 - Before they could kill him, the authorities stepped in. (They did beat him though).
 - As the chief captain asked what Paul had done wrong, there was so much screaming he could not discern their speech.
 - He removed Paul to the Castle (fortress) and mistook him for a false prophet from Egypt, recorded in history as attempting to destroy the city at command who employed mercenaries who often killed people in broad daylight.
 - **Paul, with the captains permission, begins his speech to the Jews.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 22

Capitalizing on his apprehension by local authorities in the presence of a Jewish mob, Paul preached the story of how Christ saved him and forever changed his life to the Jews.

Verses 1-21 Paul's Story, his defense to the Jews

- Paul, after asking the captain of the soldiers for leave to speak, spoke to the Jews in the Hebrew tongue.
 - His usage of Hebrew caused momentary silence.
- The order of Paul's message was:
 - His heritage, a Jew born in Tarsus who studied under Gamaliel, zealous of the law.
 - His persecution of the Church.
 - His regeneration – when Christ arrested him on the road to Damascus temporarily blinding him.
 - The receiving of his sight by Ananias and message by him from God.
 - A vision to leave Jerusalem and go unto Gentiles.
 - We can learn a lesson from this – to evangelize share what God has actually done WITH you.

Verses 22-30 Paul's near scourging

- The Jews, rather than being moved by Paul's preaching, cried for his death.
 - Can you see how Paul is sharing in Christ's suffering? Was Christ likewise treated? See 1 Peter 4:13, Matthew 27:23
- The Jews then threw a fit by removing clothes and throwing dirt!
 - Strange as it seems to us, folks still act in such a way in some cultures even today.
- At this point, the captain ordered them to scourge Paul and interrogate him.
 - A scourge was a whip with shards of rock, bone, or metal at the ends to slash skin.
- Paul interjects his Roman citizenship.
 - This brings up a side point – Paul thought it not wrong to utilize his rights according to the law of the land in his defense.
 - What are some rights we can utilize today?
 - Taxes, defense attorneys, lawsuits, criminal prosecution, etc.
 - The captain then feared on account of Paul's citizenship.
 - The captain “bought” his freedom with a great price, indicating he was a freed slave.
 - Paul was born free.
- This chapter ends with Paul being brought before the Sanhedrin.
 - **The Sanhedrin, or Council, was a group of 70 leading Jews with authority.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 23

Verses 1-10 Paul in front of the Sanhedrin/Council

- As Paul began speaking, the high priest had him punched in the face.
 - Paul initially rebuked him, but ceased when he found it was the high priest (Exodus 22:28).
- He then, very cunningly, started a debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees about the resurrection of the dead and angels.
 - A Sadducee was a member of a sect who denied the resurrection, angels, and spirits.
- The crowd began to riot, so the chief captain placed Paul back in the castle (fortress).

Verses 11-35 Paul sent to the Governor, Felix

- The night following the riot, Christ appeared to Paul informing him that he would not be killed here, but would be moved to Rome where he would preach.
 - God would keep Paul safe, but being a “*God of means*” He would do so by working through men.
 - God often uses others in His deliverance of people; ie, a Godsend.
- The Jews, at day, bound themselves under a curse to kill Paul, saying they would not eat until he was dead.
 - These men asked Paul to be brought to the Sanhedrin again.
 - Paul's nephew heard this and warned Paul, who sent this nephew to the chief captain.
 - The chief captain then prepared to send Paul away to Felix, the Governor.
- Paul was sent via armed guards to Felix with a letter (an epistle).
 - The letter highlighted the Jews attempted murder of Paul, Paul's innocence, their conspiracy to kill him, and the captain's plan to deliver Paul safely via an army to Felix for further trial.
 - The captain also informed the Jews of this. In essence, he appealed Paul's case to a higher court.
- Upon Paul's arrival, Felix agreed to hear the case.

Study Notes – Acts chapter 24

Paul in front of Felix

Verses 1-9 Paul accused by Tertullus, a Jew

- Tertullus accused Paul of...
 - Being a pestilent, seditious, ringleader of a heretical sect who profaned the temple and was judged accordingly.
- He then whines that Lysias (chief captain) interrupted them with violence.
- The Jews there agreed with Tertullus.

Verses 10-21 Paul's defense of himself

- Paul recounted his true experience at Jerusalem.
 - Being purified (so as to not defile) in the temple, he was alone causing no trouble when he was apprehended and beaten of the Jews.
 - The way he worships IS according to the Old Testament and his conscience is clear.
 - See Matthew 5:17 and John 5:39
- Paul then challenged the Jews to bring any true offense he had committed, which they could not.
- Paul confessed to teaching the resurrection to the offense of the Sadducees.

Verses 22-27 Felix defers to Lysias to return for more information

- Paul, kept by a centurion, had liberty from bonds or close confinement.
 - His friends were also allowed to minister unto his needs.
 - God had overruled the wicked intent of the Jews and allowed Paul liberty to preach and teach in Jesus' name.
- Felix visited Paul with his Jewish wife, Drusila.
 - He trembled at Paul's preaching, possibly of Judgment!
 - Drusila was daughter of Herod Agrippa (eaten with worms).
- Felix also hoped Paul would have bribed him with money to release him, obviously being a greedy person (perhaps this is ONE reason he trembled at Paul's preaching).
 - Therefore, he met with Paul often. Commune here does NOT mean the Lord's Supper.
- Paul was left bound by Felix to please the Jews.
- **Festus' arrival was two years after Paul's arrival in Caesarea.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 25

Verses 1-12 Paul Before Festus

- Festus replaces Felix as Procurator of Judea.
- While in Jerusalem, Festus is asked of the chief priest to send Paul there for trial by the Jews.
 - This is an attempt to place Paul in the open so they could attack and kill him.
 - Festus keeps Paul at Caesarea.
 - Rather, the accusers went with Festus to Caesarea.
- In verse 7, the Jews made many a false accusation against Paul.
 - Paul's reply was that he had not broken their laws, polluted the temple, nor even broken Caesar's laws.
 - Christians are not to be rebels. Civil disobedience is only acceptable when we must obey God rather than men (when man's law conflicts with God's laws).
- Festus, attempting to please the Jews, asked Paul to go be tried at Jerusalem.
 - Paul at this point appealed to Caesar, probably to go to Rome as God promised.
 - The Caesar, called Augustus, is actually Nero, a hideously cruel man.
 - The term Augustus (meaning *Reverend*) was given to Octavian in 27 BC.
 - Octavian was the adopted son of Julius Caesar.
 - This title passed on to subsequent Caesars, thus to Nero.
 - Nero probably murdered his brother Britannicus and his mother Agrippina (who is suspected to have had his stepfather Claudius murdered). He killed himself via stabbing in AD 68.
 - We should never feel bad for utilizing our legal rights!

Verses 13-27 Festus defers to Agrippa

- Agrippa, the last Herod, came to Caesarea.
 - He was accompanied by Bernice, his wife and sister.
 - Herod was the ruling family in Palestine.
 - King Agrippa was Agrippa II, son of Agrippa I, the Herod who had James beheaded earlier in Acts but died of God's judgment after being glorified as a god.
- Festus relayed Paul's case and appeal to Agrippa, who agrees to hear Paul.
 - The only odd thing to Festus, was a matter of “superstition” concerning a JESUS who was dead but Paul affirmed to be ALIVE.
- Agrippa comes with much pomp and is gathered with the politically powerful men of that region.
- The chapter ends with Festus making his introduction of the case in official trial to King Agrippa before Paul and his accusers.

Study Notes – Acts 26

Verses 1-23 Paul's defense before King Agrippa

- Paul, being granted permission to speak by Agrippa, gave his story.
 - First, his life prior to regeneration and conversion, as a tyrant against Christ.
 - Second, his new birth experience on the road to Damascus.
 - Which was a “Christ-Only” event. See: 1 Tim 1:16
 - Finally, his life after this and resulting persecution, including:
 - His preaching to the Gentiles.
 - His gospel being in accord with - not opposed to - the Old Testament.
- Concerning verse 18, God's purpose in sending Paul to the Gentiles is revealed, but is it problematic to the sovereign grace position?
 - Paul taught fundamental, grace theology including Spirit-only regeneration and predestination. See: Eph 1:4-5, 2:1, Rom 8:29-30
 - A clue at this text's meaning is it's application. Notice this applies broadly to types of people or nations.
 - Initially, the Jews (a nation) were offered a national forgiveness through Christ (the healing of their LAND) yet they rejected this. See: Mth 13:14-17, Isaiah 6:9
 - This national context of repentance and forgiveness is also contained in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and the Book of Jonah.
 - Since the Jews rejected the preaching of Christ, Paul turned unto the Gentiles, God grafting them into the olive tree of God's corporate blessings. See: Romans 11
 - This *inheritance* is the privilege of Kingdom life! According to Hebrews, part of what we inherit at the “*death of the Testator*” is this New Testament experience of worship and life. See: Hebrews 9
 - **Food for thought** – Gentiles (even entire cultures) who live in ignorance of God's word live under the power of Satan.

Verses 24-32 Paul's exchange with Festus and Agrippa

- At the hearing of this, Festus accuses Paul of going insane through much learning!
- Paul's reply was that he was not mad, but these things are true according to the prophets. He then boldly confronts Agrippa, “*I know that thou believest [the prophets].*”
 - Agrippa's response is puzzling. He replies to Paul, “*almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*”
 - There are two options with Agrippa – either he was sincere or being sarcastic. Both are possible but considering secular histories of him, the latter is probable.
- After Agrippa's reply, Paul reveals his heart – that ALL would believe like him. May we be so tenacious!
- Agrippa's conclusion was that had Paul not appealed unto Caesar, he would more than likely be set free.
 - **No dilemma, for Paul knew he must go to Rome to preach.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 27

Paul is sent by way of ship to Rome, where he will appear before Caesar

- Paul was delivered into the custody of Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.
- In journey, Julius had a great fondness of Paul and allowed his friends' to care for him.
- In verse 6, in Myra, the crew and prisoners swapped ships for one bound for Italy.
- This trip was rather adventurous.
 - First, it was slow. Then it became dangerous.
 - In verse, “after the fast” refers to the feast of Atonement. (Late September, early October).
 - A day of grief remembering the golden calf. (Jews read Lamentations, Jeremiah, etc).
 - This was not a good time to sail, due to weather.
- Paul admonished them to stop and winter now, but Master of the ship desired to reach Phenice, south of Crete.
 - Here they encounter, Euroclydon, a typhoon, and from here it is turmoil!
 - In verse 17, quicksand is Syrtes, a place of slimy sand off the African coast.
 - No stars for days according to verse 20, but remember that ancient sailors used the stars for directional purposes! They were lost at sea with no way to find home.
 - All hope of being saved lost...saved from this storm.
- Paul stands, after much silence throughout, and relays an angels message. We shall live, but the ship will be destroyed.
 - We'll point out how exhausting this whole ordeal was. ALL could have been avoided had they only listened to the preacher! (There's some hidden wisdom in this...)
- After much battle with the sea, the crew was about to abandon but Paul tells them the only way to survive was to remain in the ship.
 - Paul then took food, offered thanks, and they ate.
 - There were 276 people on board.
- The ship struck land and the rear was ripped to pieces.
 - The soldiers would have killed ALL the prisoners but for Paul.
 - **They all swam to shore and every one survived.**

Study Notes – Acts Chapter 28

Paul shipwrecked at Mileta

- The last chapter concluded with the crew and prisoners of the ship carrying Paul smashing ashore and being destroyed by the waves. Paul the the rest on board swam to shore.
- On the Island Melita, Paul encountered a barbarous people.
 - These folks were kind to Paul. Consider – you never know where you will find God’s grace.
 - Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake.
 - At first the barbarians thought ‘vengeance’ had struck Paul, but when he was not injured the pendulum swung the other direction and they assumed he was a god. Humans are creatures of extreme!
 - Publius, the governor, treated the kindly.
 - Paul healed Publius’ father of a ‘bloody flux’, believed to be an ulceration of the bowels.
 - This prompts many people to come to Paul for healing.
 - After being treated well, they departed in a ship headed to Alexandria.
 - Castor and Pollux – Greek Mythology – Twin sons of Zeus said to watch over sailors and protect truth. Represented by the astral sign Gemini.

Paul’s Completed Journey to Rome

- Paul sailed to various cities (Syracuse, Rhegiu, Puteoli)
 - Of course, meeting with brethren all along the way.
- Paul arrives at Rome in verse 16 and rather than being kept with the rest of the prisoners, had the blessing of being only with a soldier.
 - Paul meets with the chief Jews of Rome, men with authority in the Jewish faith.
 - First, he explains why he is there.
 - Second, he preached Christ from Moses (the first five books) and the Prophets (the books of prophesy). This lasted all day.
 - Their reaction was divided. Some believed but some did not.
- After the reaction from the chief Jews, Paul quoted from Isaiah 6, verses 9-10.

Conclusion

- The book ends with Paul, in a rented house, preaching God to all who would come unto him. This was probably around AD 60 +/-.
- History reports Paul was either acquitted or exiled by Nero (Augustus) around AD 63 where he may have preached in Spain (Romans ch15 v24).
- While in prison, Paul converted some of Caesar’s household (Phil ch4, v22).
- Paul was arrested a second time, received much more harsh imprisonment this time, and was executed by the decree of Nero circa AD 67.
 - Tradition has this execution occurring at the third milestone on the Ostian Way at Aquae Salviae but there is not way of knowing the accuracy of this tradition.