

New Testament Historical Book: Acts 10:1-43

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version[®] (ESV[®]), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Peter and Cornelius: 10:1-8: Coming to this point in history, keep in mind that God has been focusing on Abraham and his descendants, thus on the Jews; now, here in Acts 10, the focus turns to the Gentiles!

1. *Cornelius:*

- a. A Gentile and a centurion, so he commanded 100 soldiers.
- b. A *devout man*: **Although he was pious and generous, he did not yet know Jesus as his Savior from sin.** [Our Lutheran Confessions state that:] **“Cornelius, living among the Jews, had heard long before about the coming Messiah, through whom he was righteous before God (Acts 10:1–2). In such faith, his prayers and alms were acceptable to God (since Luke calls him devout and God-fearing)” (SA III VIII 8).**

2. *A vision:* God sent an angel, thus a messenger, about 3 PM; at first Cornelius was **“in terror”** – a common reaction for many who are visited by an angel. He was given very specific instructions about sending for Peter, as well as Peter’s precise location; *then he took immediate action!*

Peter’s Vision: 10:9-33: ¹⁰ ... [Peter] fell into a trance – An inspired dream (Cf 26:13; Ezk 1:1; Dn 7:1).

3. 9-16: *God’s Law:* Peter was being told to do something that went against a ceremonial / religious law (Lev. 11:3-23), so, being a God-fearing Jew, he was initially unwilling. Why is it now acceptable to break the ceremonial laws? They were “a shadow of Christ, their authority and force ceased when Christ had come.”¹ **NAS Colossians 2:16-17** “...let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day--things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” Therefore, now that the Christ has come and finished His work, *we focus on HIM!*

4. 17-23a: *Clarification:*

- a. God made things clear to Cornelius about sending for Peter; then, at Peter’s end, God made things clear to Peter that he was to go with the men. We might ask, how did the Spirit speak to Peter? Lenski said he did so “in the same way that Peter had often experienced” (406).
- b. According to Robert Morris, “God’s will consists of two realms. One is His general will for your life. The Bible is your infallible guide to God’s general will.” The other realm is “God’s specific will for you.... We come to know...the specific will of God by His voice.” **ESV John 16:13** “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” See the “Knowing God’s Will” handout for more information.

5. 23b-29: *Unlawful:*

- a. When Peter entered the home of Cornelius, where his relatives and close friends were gathered, Peter ²⁸ ...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.**
- b. *unlawful ... to associate.* Lenski noted: “The Mosaic law had no specific prohibition to this effect, but the entire law with all its regulations had such a prohibition as result” (414).

¹ Edward W. A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 56.

- c. This passage includes one specific reason for remaining separate: ^{ESV} **Deuteronomy 20:16-18** ...in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction...that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.
6. 30-33: *Sharing God's truth*: Cornelius told Peter about his inspired dream; then he said to Peter, ³³ "...we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." *What a great opportunity for Peter!* In response, let us study, learn, and grow so that we are ready to share God's saving truth with others!

Gentiles Hear the Good News: 10:34-43

7. 34-35: *God desires all to be saved*: Peter told Cornelius and the others who were gathered this very good news: ³⁴ "...Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."
- fears him*: To fear God is not to be afraid of Him, *but to trust in Him for forgiveness of sins and eternal life*; some trust Him for food, clothes, shelter, etc., such trust is good, *but such trust is not saving faith*. Christians should trust Him for everything, *but especially for forgiveness and heaven!*
 - does what is right*: Lenski made these comments: "The contrite [sorry] sinner does righteousness when he believes and accepts God's pardon in Christ Jesus... The believer does righteousness when by faith he runs the way of God's commandments..." (419).
8. 36-41: *Peter summarized the good news*: This the work done by God the Father:
- ³⁶ ...preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)... *Lord of both the Jews and the Gentiles!*
 - ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed... *You have heard about it, but let me tell you about it as an eyewitness, "I was there, I saw it!"*
 - ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power [when He was baptized]. *He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. So Jesus demonstrated His power over the consequences of sin (illness), and over Satan and demons (demon possession)!*
 - ³⁹ ...They [the Jews, along with the Romans] put him to death by hanging him on a tree... *He was crucified, died, and entombed!*
 - ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ ...to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses... *He is truly alive, thus the Victor over sin, death, and the devil!*
9. 42: *The judge*: Jesus ⁴² ...is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. Later, in Acts 17, Paul wrote that God "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" (v. 31 ESV).
10. 43: ⁴³ ...everyone who believes in [Jesus] receives forgiveness of sins through his name. ...that is, for His sake. *It is not for the sake of our merits, not for the sake of our contrition, attrition [us somehow wearing God down], love, worship, or works. Let us rejoice that our salvation depends on God, not us!*
11. 10:34-43 Peter affirms for devout Cornelius that Jesus is truly the Christ; the Spirit affirms for Peter that the Gospel applies to all people... The Holy Spirit unites one and all in the [one] Body of Christ.

New Testament Historical Book: Acts 10:44 – 11:30

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles: 10:44-48

12. *The Holy Spirit:*

- a. While Peter was speaking to Cornelius and the other Gentiles who were gathered, the Bible records that ⁴⁴ ...the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised [that is, among the Jews] who had come with Peter were amazed...
- b. And how was the Spirit's presence known? Those Gentiles were ⁴⁶ ...speaking in tongues and extolling God. Lenski noted these points (431):
 - i. "All those who heard Peter in the house of Cornelius had faith and were saved before the Spirit came and gave them the ability to speak with tongues."
 - ii. "...‘the gift of the Holy Spirit’ referred to at this point is the same gift that was bestowed at the time of Pentecost," thus the ability to speak in tongues, which "was never repeated in the congregation at Jerusalem. There were signs and miracles many but no speaking with tongues."
 - iii. With the speaking in tongues, God placed those Gentiles "on a par [as equals] with all believers from Judaism."

13. *Baptism:* For adults who are baptized, they renounce the devil, his works, and his ways; they also profess their faith in the Christ, using the Apostles' Creed; then they are baptized. In this case – with Cornelius and those who were with him – God made their faith obvious with their speaking in tongues, so they were ⁴⁸ ...baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

14. *The Gospel going forth:* "We have these three in a direct line: 2:2-13; 8:15-17; and now 10:44-46. The miracle is the same, a sudden speaking in languages the speakers had never learned, first by Jewish, secondly by Samaritan, and now thirdly by Gentle Christians" (Lenski, 432).

15. *Note:* "Baptism...admitted them directly from Gentilism and without first having to pass through Judaism (Lenski, 435) (compare Galatians 5:1-4, circumcision was not a necessary requirement).

Peter Reports to the Church: 11:1-18

1. *Some are disappointed; then Peter explains:* When believers heard ¹ ...that the Gentiles also had received the word of God... ² ...the circumcision party criticized [Peter] for going to them and eating with them, so Peter explained the whole situation: ♦His vision with the sheet and the animals, ♦the angel who appeared to Cornelius, ♦the men who asked him to come to Cornelius, ♦the Spirit telling him to go with those men, ♦the angel telling Cornelius he would tell him how to be saved, ♦the Holy Spirit falling on Cornelius and those with him as he preached, and ♦the decision to baptize them.
2. *The response:* ¹⁸ When they [the circumcision party] heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."
 - a. Let us not doubt, but believe that God desires all to be saved!
 - b. "...repentance that leads to life." Repentance includes sorrow and faith, which are worked by the Spirit through the Word – so let us share the Word and pray for those who hear!

The Church in Antioch: 11:19-30

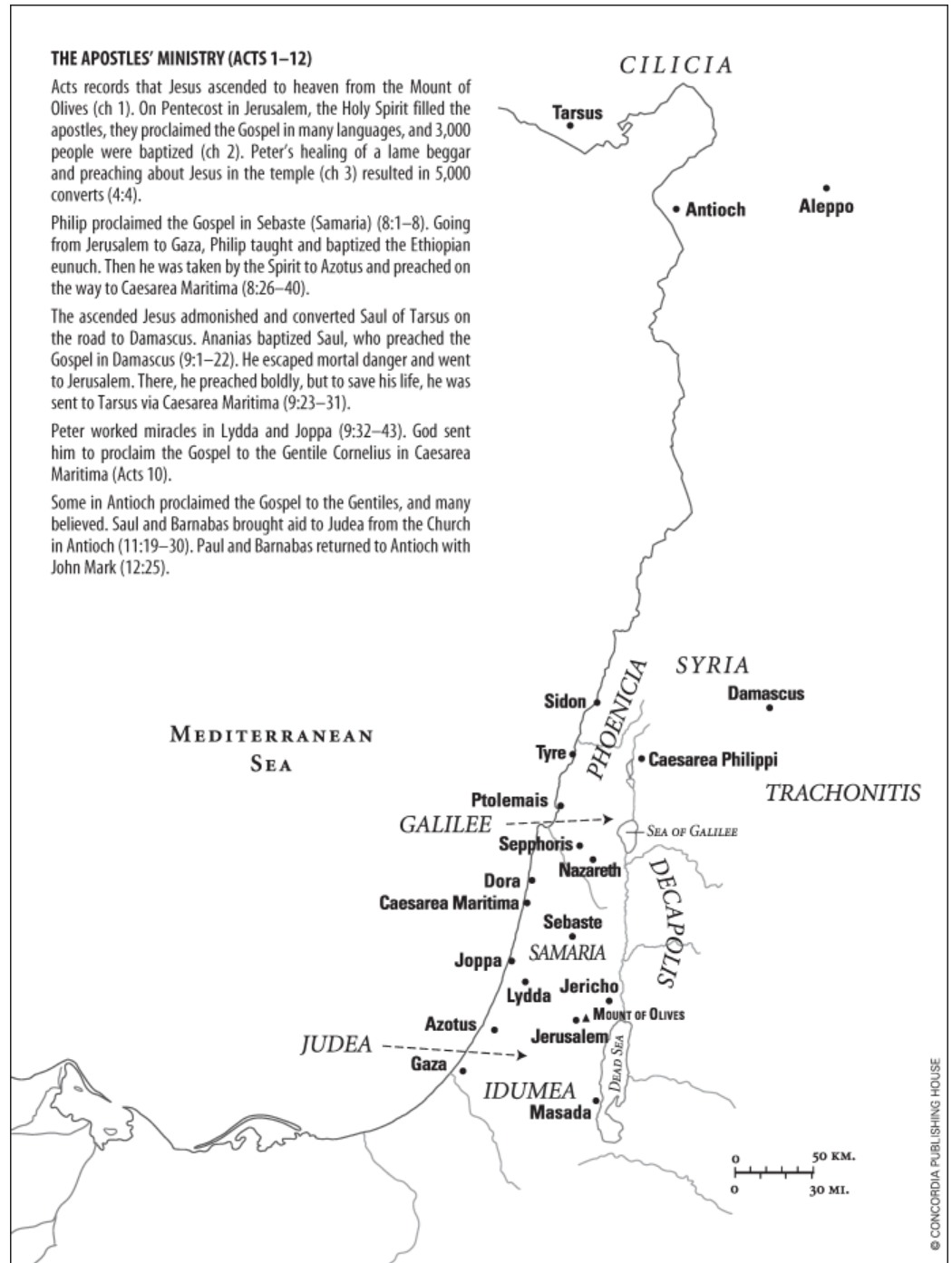
3. *The Word went forth:* ¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as **Phoenicia** and **Cyprus** [a Mediterranean Island] and **Antioch**, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of **Cyprus** and **Cyrene** [in northern Africa], who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

4. *The Spirit granted success:* ²¹ ...a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² ...the church in Jerusalem... sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ ...he exhorted [earnestly urged] them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose...

5. *Barnabas and Paul work together:* ²⁶ ...For a whole year they [Barnabas and Paul] met with the church and taught a great

many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. A title used by outsiders [by non-Christians], reflecting their attitude [which was negative].

6. *Famine is foretold:* ²⁸ ...Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). ²⁹ So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in **Judea**. ³⁰ And they did so...
- They believed the prophecy, so they took immediate action; let us believe and take action!
 - They realized people would be in need, so they gave what they could to help them!



New Testament Historical Book: Acts 12:1 – 13:3

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned: 12:1-5

1. **Herod:** ¹ About that time Herod the king [a grandson of Herod the Great, the one who ordered the killing of the babies in Bethlehem] laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. "...he courted the favor of the Jews, especially that of the bigoted Pharisees... he arrested some of the more prominent Christians, had them scourged and abused in other ways... These first victims escaped death..." (Lenski, 466-467).
2. **James:** ² He [Herod the king] killed James the brother of John with the sword... Thus James was beheaded, even as John the Baptist. Since so much was written about Stephen in chapters 6-7, why so little here about James? "...the death of Stephen led to the extension of the church in all directions, even to distant lands. The martyrdom of James had no comparable effect, hence the brevity of the record" (Lenski, 467).
3. **Peter:** He was also arrested and held in a most secure manner. ⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Who would win – Herod or God?

Peter Is Rescued: 12:6-19

4. **Seemingly impossible:** ⁶ ...Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. "God often lets a case become desperate and delays to the last in order that we may the more clearly recognize that the deliverance comes from him" (Lenski, 471).
5. **God is always able:** ⁷ ...an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. Take note: Peter

was sleeping, *not awake and worrying and being overwhelmed with fear!*

- a. When in a tough situation, do you tend to think in ways that are natural / supernatural?
 - b. What tends to influence your thoughts and actions?
 - c. As Spirit-powered children of God, what should influence our thoughts and actions?
6. **Convincing proofs:** ¹⁰ When they [the angel and Peter] had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord... Think about your life, can you identify some convincing proofs that God is at work in your life in supernatural ways? _____
 7. **Beyond belief, yet true:** Peter ¹² ...went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying [probably for Peter, his safety, his release]. ¹³ And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. ¹⁵ They said to her, "You are out of your mind."
 - a. So they prayed, but they also doubted; *they did not believe that God could set Peter free.*
 - b. Are your prayers similar? Why? Why not? _____
 - c. See James 1:5-7 for some *instruction and encouragement.*
 8. **Great disturbance:** Think about how securely Peter was being held, *and how the lives of the soldiers would be taken if Peter*

escaped: ¹⁸ Now when day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. So the dead-serious soldiers, the chains, and the prison, yet God easily set Peter free! *Let us always trust in Him!!*

The Death of Herod: 12:20-25

9. *Don't be proud:* ²¹ On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to [the people of Tyre and Sidon]. ²² And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" ²³ Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

- a. ^{ESV} **Luke 14:11** "...everyone who exalts [*promotes, elevates, praises*] himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."
- b. This is a good example from chapter 10:25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man" (ESV).
- c. Our part: Be _____; God's part: _____ us in *His way* and according to *His timing!*

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off: 13:1-3: Lenski calls chapters 13-28, "The Gospel Among the Gentiles in the Empire"; he also notes that the "time covered by the period extends from 45 to 62, from the first missionary journey to Paul's imprisonment in Rome.... We see the progress of the gospel first, with Paul at liberty (13 to 21:16); then, the progress with Paul in captivity (21:17 to 28:31)" (490).

1. *Time travel and teachers:* "Luke advances us from the summer or the fall of 44 to the year 49" (Lenski, 491), which is when **13 ...the church at Antioch [had these] prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called**

Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2. *The Holy Spirit:* He is oftentimes forgotten, but let us remember that He is the One who is teaching us God's Word, moving us to repent, pointing us to Jesus, empowering our Christian living, etc. ² ...the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Every believer has the Holy Spirit, *and the Spirit wants to bless each of us and work through each of us to be a blessing to others.* Consider the reference to "fruit" in Psalm 1:3.
3. *Fasting:* ³ Then after fasting and praying...
 - a. Some notes from Lenski on fasting (494):
 - i. "The law prescribed only one annual fast on the Day of Atonement." [Leviticus 16:29]
 - ii. "The Pharisaic fasting was self-imposed and was observed for the sake of acquiring merit. Yet pious Jews also fasted in all sincerity, and it was this custom that was followed by the Christian Church."
 - b. Today, fasting is not required, *but it can be a healthy way to cleanse the body of impurities.* It can also cause us to be thankful to God for His generous provision of food.
 - c. This is important when we fast, Jesus said: ^{ESV} Matthew 6:16 "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

New Testament Historical Book: Acts 13:4-52

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus: 13:4-12

4. *Traveling from Antioch:* ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they [Barnabas and Paul] went down to Seleucia [south west of Antioch, on the Mediterranean coast], and from there they sailed to Cyprus [a large island in the Mediterranean]. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis [a city and sea port on Cyprus, at the east end of the island], they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John [that is, John Mark, the writer of the second gospel] to assist them. See the first Power Point map!
5. *Opposition and a miracle:*
 - a. ⁶ When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos [a city and sea port, at the west end of the island], they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷ He was with the proconsul [the governor of that province], Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) [thus, Bar-Jesus] opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Since God wants all to be saved, it is the devil and his allies that seek to turn people from the faith.
 - b. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.” Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.
 - i. Saul or Paul: “Saul’s father gave the child a Roman and Latin name because he was a Roman citizen with all the rights in the Roman Empire... The child had both names from infancy. When his father called him he shouted, ‘Saul, Saul!’ but when the Greek boys with whom he played called they shouted, ‘Paul, Paul!’” (Lenski, 503).
 - ii. Even though some may conclude that Paul had the power to cause the blindness, such things are always done by the Triune God!
 - iii. “This blindness... is by no means all that he deserved, but in his grace God moderated it by not cutting off the opportunity for repentance” (Lenski, 506).

Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia: 13:13-52

6. *Travel and arrival:* ¹³ Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, ¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia [not the same as Antioch in Syria]. See the second Power Point map!
7. *A golden opportunity:* And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.” ¹⁶ So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said:

- a. "Men of Israel and you [Gentiles] who fear God, listen. Then Paul gave them an OT history lesson, similar to what Stephen did in Acts chapter 7; this is a summary:
 - i. God chose the people of Israel, and made them great in number when in Egypt.
 - ii. God showed His power with the ten plagues and led them to their freedom.
 - iii. God provided for them in the wilderness for 40 years, even though they sinned.
 - iv. ¹⁹ ...after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years [Egypt=400; wilderness=40; Canaan=10].
 - v. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.
 - vi. ²¹ Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul... for forty years.
 - vii. ²² And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king...
 - viii. ²³ Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. David > Solomon >>> Joseph; David > Nathan >>> Mary; both descendants of David.
 - ix. ²⁴ Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance...
 - b. Then Paul told them about Jesus; this is a summary:
 - i. ²⁷ ...those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets... fulfilled them by condemning him.
 - ii. ²⁸ ...they asked Pilate to have him executed [by crucifixion].
 - iii. ²⁹ ...they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.
 - iv. ³⁰ **But God** raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he appeared...
 - v. ³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God... fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷ but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.
 - c. Then Paul proclaimed the gospel: ³⁸ Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through **this man [Jesus] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you**, ³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.
 - i. The law of Moses was good, but shows our sin and the need for the Savior.
 - ii. So God sent His Son to live without sin and suffer our punishment to remove our sins.
8. *The response:* ⁴² As [Barnabas and Paul] went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. ⁴³ And... many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas...
9. *Jealous Jews; unto the Gentiles:*
- a. ⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy... ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "...Since you thrust [the gospel] aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. The first open break with the synagogue.
 - b. ⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed [arranged] to eternal life believed. See Romans 8:30.
 - c. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ ...they... went to **Iconium** [to the east of Antioch, see the map]. ⁵² And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Even though they were persecuted and driven out, they still had Joy because they did their part by proclaiming God's Word of Truth! Let us also know God truth, rejoice in God's salvation, and gladly share that good news with others!

New Testament Historical Book: Acts 14:1-28

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium: 14:1-7

1. *Success:* ¹ Now at Iconium [see Power Point map 2] they [Barnabas and Paul] entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.
 - a. Iconium was large and rich, so a good place to start a Church, *a body of believers*, who could spread God's truth to the surrounding area.
 - b. "Luke... certainly cannot mean that at Iconium the preaching was better than it had been at Antioch" (Lenski, 559). They always preached their best, but, *according to God's will and by the Spirit*, many in Iconium believed!
2. *Opposition:*
 - a. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. There will always be these struggles: Unbelievers want the believers to stop believing, while the believers want the unbelievers to believe.
 - b. ³ So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. The opposition was met with even greater boldness, *so they did NOT back down!* God the Father also took action through them *to confirm their teaching with miracles!*
 - c. ⁴ But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. No one remained neutral. See Matt. 12:30.

- d. ⁵ When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶ they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia... "Paul and Barnabas [were] not cowardly but prudent. When it was necessary, Paul risked his life, otherwise he did not" (Lenski, 568). Let us always live with godly courage, and entrust our lives to His care. See 2 Corinthians 1:9.

Paul and Barnabas at Lystra: 14:8-18

3. *An amazing miracle:* ⁸ Now at Lystra there was a man... crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹ ...Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰ said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. The man's situation seemed incurable – *it was from birth, so he had never walked*, yet God the Father made him well!
4. *A shocking reaction:* The crowd reasoned like this: Since no man could heal like that, *Barnabas and Paul must be gods*, so they began to worship them. Therefore, ¹⁴ ...Barnabas and Paul... tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ "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."
 - a. Lenski noted that Barnabas and Paul "rushed out from the place where they were into the crowd at the temple *in the most violent agitation*

and *at the top of their voices* stopped the proceedings then and there” (576).

b. See Isaiah 44:13-19.

5. *God’s witness through His creation:*

¹⁷ “...[God] 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.”

a. What is natural theology? It is knowledge of God based on observed facts and experience apart from divine revelation. See Romans 1:18-20.

b. “...natural theology leads to a correct knowledge of God... It contains no gospel yet is a step toward revealed theology with its gospel fullness” (Lenski, 580). See Romans 2:4.

Paul Stoned at Lystra: 14:19-23

6. *Enraged opponents:* ¹⁹ 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. That “was a combination of Jews from the two cities in which Paul had worked and from which he had been driven out. He had left many converts behind, and that circumstance kept the Jewish hatred alive” (Lenski, 581).

7. *Triple shock:* ²⁰ But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city... ²¹ When they had preached the gospel [in Derbe] and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples...

a. “The disciples had come to give Paul a decent burial...” (Lenski, 582), *but* he was ALIVE, not dead!

b. They ENTERED THE CITY, instead of running from the city!

c. They RETURNED to the three places where they were opposed to teach and strengthen the believers.

8. *Discipleship (helping another to become a dedicated follower of Jesus):*

a. “Beginners who have not been made firm as yet are in danger of falling away.... Conversion must pass on to preservation” (Lenski, 584).

b. Through what means does God the Holy Spirit work to keep people in Christ? _____

c. How is God keeping you in Christ?

d. How are you encouraging others in the same? _____

Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch in Syria [the place where their journey began]: 14:24-28

8. See map number 2: ²⁴ Then they passed through Pisidia [a region of ancient Asia Minor, which is the Asian part of modern Turkey] and came to Pamphylia [a former region in the south of Asia Minor, between Lycia and Cilicia]. ²⁵ And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, ²⁶ and from there they sailed to Antioch [in Syria]...

9. *All credit to God:* ²⁷ ...they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

a. Missionaries – “they are the instruments through whom God’s grace works” (Lenski, 589).

b. They told of God’s work, and gave Him all the credit. Jesus said, “...apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5 NAS).

c. Let us be OPEN to God’s use; then give Him all the glory!!! Eph. 3:20.

New Testament Historical Book: Acts 15:1-41

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

The Jerusalem Council: 15:1-21

1. *Circumcision – necessary or not:* When Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch in Syria,¹ ...some men came down from Judea [from south to north, but down from a higher elevation] and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question....⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church [believers] and the apostles [men who were called, then sent by Jesus] and the elders [pastors of the congregations]...⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.”
 - a. “The false apostles pushed circumcision (Acts 15:1) in order to establish their false doctrine that the works of the Law were necessary for righteousness and salvation [2 Corinthians 11:13] (FC SD X 12).
 - b. What do YOU think: Was Jesus’ sinless living and sacrificial dying enough for us to be saved? Y N
2. *Whose opinion matters most – yours, mine, God’s?*⁷ ...after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days [“more than ten years ago” (Lenski, 602)] God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe [when He sent me to the house of Cornelius].⁸ And God, who knows the heart [so He made no mistake],

bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

- a. Was Cornelius uncircumcised when he received the Holy Spirit? Y N
 - b. As God showed His acceptance of the uncircumcised, and did not require circumcision, should we do the same? Y N
 - c. What would be the *danger* of requiring circumcision, or Bible reading, or Divine Service attendance, etc.? _____
 - d. Lenski: “The one divine means of salvation is ‘the grace of the Lord Jesus’ and not our observance of the law. Even in the old covenant the saving means was the OT gospel and promise of the Messiah” (604-605).
3. *James and the prophets agree with God:*¹³ ...James replied, “Brothers, listen to me.¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree...¹⁷ “that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name...”
 - a. James quoted from Amos 9:12.
 - b. Do you think that some are offended when they hear that Jesus is the *only* way to heaven? Y N
 - c. Do you believe that Jesus’ sinless living and sacrificial dying have

made the way to heaven for everyone? Y N

4. *James proposes a decision:* ¹⁹ “...my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰ but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. Why did James make such a proposition? “He does not intend to compromise with the Judaizers...” (Lenski, 613). Good advice when making a decision: “The subjective certainty that the Spirit is directing us must always be supported by the objective fact that we are clinging to the Word and not to something we think is the Word” (Lenski, 626). More from Lenski on the decision (614-616):
- “...it was not a sin to eat such meat; but it was dangerous to do so for any who had a weak conscience...”
 - “...fornication... in the Gentile world... was not considered a sin...”
 - Regarding “strangled” and “blood”, “James mentions [those] two points because the Jewish Christians were especially sensitive regarding them.... The Gentile Christians were asked to respect this feeling and thus from motives of brotherly love, and from [those] alone, to refrain...”

The Council’s Letter to Gentile Believers: 15:22-35

7. *Sending the official decision:* ²² Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, ²³ with the following letter: This is a summary:
- Who it was from – the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem.
 - Who it was to – their Gentile brothers in Christ in the city of Antioch and the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

- Those who testified to its reliability – Judas and Silas, who were leading men among the Christians.
- Its contents –
 - Those who made trouble among you were not from us.
 - The four men who accompanied the letter were named in the letter.
 - The four things from which they are asked to abstain are spelled out.

8. *The delegation is received in Antioch:* They went, ³⁰ ...gathered the congregation together, [and] delivered the letter. ³¹ And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³² And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.

- Those in Antioch were left in a state of uncertainty about their salvation; were they saved through Jesus alone or did THEY need to do something, such as being circumcised? So, hearing the letter, **they rejoiced!**
- Judas and Silas were prophets: “...here the word signified men who are thoroughly versed in the Word and able authoritatively to set forth the Lord’s will from that Word” (Lenski, 630).

Paul and Barnabas Separate: 15:36-41

9. *Possibly a way to double the work:* ³⁶ ...after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” A great idea – *but the Spirit permitted a disagreement*, which ultimately led to two missionary teams: Barnabas and Mark, and Paul and Silas. We cannot always understand God’s ways, but He wants us to know that He is causing all things to work together for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

New Testament Historical Book: Acts 16:1-40

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Timothy Joins Paul and Silas: 16:1-5

1. *Timothy*: **16** Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra [see Paul's Missionary Journey's, map 2]. A disciple was there, named Timothy...
 - a. His mother was a Jew and a believer; his father was a Gentile.
 - b. Timothy was an uncircumcised believer.
 - c. Paul circumcised Timothy, *not because the law required it*; instead, Paul did not want the uncircumcised Timothy to be an offense to the *unbelieving Jews* whom they would encounter on their journey (see **1 Corinthians 9:20-22**).
2. *Unity*: Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled together and shared the decision of the church leaders in Jerusalem. **5** So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.
 - a. Lenski noted: "After the question about the old Levitical regulations had been settled effectively... more and more Gentiles flocked to the banner of the cross" (642). *Unity can attract others!*
 - b. In today's church there are many different teachings, *which bring disunity*. Let us rejoice in how we agree, and kindly discuss where we disagree – *on the basis of the Bible* – toward unity.

The Macedonian Call: 16:5-10

3. *Traveling*: **6** And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia [maps 3], having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia [map 2; the location of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2-3]. **7** And when they had come up to Mysia [map 3], they attempted to go into Bithynia [map 3], but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. **8** So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas [map 2].
 - a. "the Spirit of Jesus" – We confess that the Spirit proceeds from the

Father and the Son – *from the F to the S, and from the S to believers*.

- b. "...one of the plain cases in which the Spirit closes and opens doors for missionary work" (Lenski, 647).
4. *Luke was with them*: **10** ...when Paul had seen the vision, immediately **we** sought to go on into Macedonia... The use of "we" "is Luke's quiet... yet distinct testimony that he is the writer of Acts, that he was present with Paul and an eyewitness of the events recorded in these sections [16:10-17; 20:5 – 21:25; 27:2 – 28:16]" (Lenski, 650).

The Conversion of Lydia: 16:11-15

5. *Traveling*: **11** So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace [map 4], and the following day to Neapolis [map 2; on the south coast, just east of Philippi], **12** and from there to Philippi...
 - a. *Lydia*: **13** ...we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. **14** One who heard us was a woman named Lydia... The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. Lenski described the Lord's work like this: "The Lord opens the heart, but the hand with which he lifts the latch and draws the door is the Word which he makes us hear, and the door opens as we... keep holding our mind to what we hear. No man can open the door... nor can he help the Lord... The one thing [man] can do is to bolt the door" (658).

Paul and Silas in Prison: 16:16-24

7. *Demon cast out*: While in Philippi a demon-possessed girl **17** ...followed Paul and us [Silas, Timothy, and Luke], crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." **18** And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command

you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.

- a. She knew because the work of Paul and the others was well-known.
 - b. The purpose of her crying out was to annoy God’s servants and hinder the proclamation of the gospel.
8. **Arrested:** ¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone [due to the demon being gone], they seized Paul and Silas [why not also Timothy and Luke, we do not know] and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.
- a. Made-up charges: ²⁰ ...“These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.”
 - b. Severe punishment: ²² ...the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. “The Jews scourged with forty blows less one, a fixed number; the Romans did not count” (Lenski, 671).
 - c. Prison: “The Roman prison usually had three distinct parts... light and air... bars and locks... dungeon [and stocks]... Bleeding, bruised, sore, without anything to [ease] their wounds, Paul and Silas lay in the black dungeon in this painful position” (Lenski, 671-672).

The Philippian Jailer Converted: 16:25-40

9. **Living for Christ – no matter what:** ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them... Think of their misery, yet they were praying and singing hymns AND they had an audience! What do you do in tough situations? _____
10. **Divine intervention:** ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened. It’s obvious that God’s work

was an answer to their prayers – and the other prisoners made that connection!

11. **A huge responsibility:** ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. He had been ordered to “keep them safely” (23), “which means that he was held responsible with his own life” (Lenski, 672) (see Acts 12:19).
12. **Radical change:** ²⁸ ...Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” Even though they could have escaped, they all stayed! Maybe they knew the guard would have to pay with his life, and cared more for him than themselves.
13. **I want it too:** The suffering and singing, as well as the prisoners staying, caused the jailer to ask, ³⁰ ... “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Our rescue from hell has been accomplished by Jesus; now, by grace through faith, we receive the benefits of His finished work!
14. **Change and baptism:** The jailer ³³ ...washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Earlier he had confined them; now he cared for them!
15. **Release, with an apology:** ³⁵ ...when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, “Let those men go.” ... ³⁷ But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.” ... ³⁹ So they came and apologized...
 - a. Those in charge probably “discovered the real reason for the false accusations against Paul and Silas and therefore ordered them released” (Lenski, 685).
 - b. The public apology showed that the work of Paul and the others was legitimate and true. “...Paul and Silas left, Timothy and Luke remained behind” (Lenski, 689).