



# ACTS 10–15

REVELATION LEADS CHRISTIANITY TO EXPAND TO THE GENTILES

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## Introduction

Acts 10–15 is filled with stories demonstrating the challenges of early discipleship—including the new revelation to share Christ’s gospel with non-Israelites. The changes required to become a Christian were only the beginning. Continued meekness and humility to foster spiritual inspiration at every level were necessary. Church members grappled with difficult issues and with following mortal leaders. The Apostles’ mission to carry on Jesus’s work extended to missionary work, healings, miracles, ministering, and procedural changes. The text repeatedly describes the Apostles following the Spirit.

## Acts 10

*Cornelius is visited by an angel—Act 10:1–8*

**Act 10:1 (BSB).** “At Caesarea . . . a man named **Cornelius, a centurion . . . of the Italian Regiment.**” A centurion was a Roman military leader of a group of fifty to one hundred soldiers.<sup>1</sup> A

**Caesarea.** Caesarea lies on the Mediterranean coast thirty-three miles north of Joppa and sixty miles northwest of Jerusalem. From 22 to 9 BC, King Herod rebuilt and renamed the city. He added a magnificent port, aqueduct, hippodrome, and amphitheater. It became the home of Roman governors Pilate, Festus, and Felix as well as the capital of Palestine after Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. The population was half-Jewish, half-Gentile. At the time of the New Testament Epistles, it grew to be the largest city in Judea, with an estimated population of 125,000.

centurion's base pay was 3,750 denarii (one denarius was the daily minimum wage), which was fifteen times the pay of a private legionary. The New Testament mentions five centurions.<sup>2</sup> Cornelius belonged to the Italian regiment or cohort (meaning they were from Italy and probably Rome).<sup>3</sup>

**Act 10:1–2 (NIV).** “*Cornelius . . . and all his family were devout and God-fearing.*” In the first century BC, the phrase *God fearer* became a technical term for men who converted to Judaism but did not undergo adult circumcision (as it was a life-threatening proposition). By the time of the New Testament, thousands (if not millions) of these monotheists lived across the diaspora and were welcomed into Jewish synagogues.<sup>4</sup> One of those was Cornelius. His family, or “household,” included servants (the average middle-class family had eight servants or slaves; he probably had more).<sup>5</sup> Most households shared the patriarch's religious beliefs. Cornelius led regular household prayers and generously helped those in need.

**Act 10:3 (ESV).** “*the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision.*” The ninth hour, or 3:00 p.m., was the hour of prayer, when the priests lit the incense in the temple and offered the evening sacrifice (Act 3:1). Other angelic visitations also occurred at this hour (see Dan 9:21; Lk 1:10–11).

**Act 10:3 (NKJV).** “*he saw . . . an angel of God . . . saying to him, ‘Cornelius!’*” In the Bible when angels visit an individual, they call on his or her name. In the Gospels, angels come only at the birth and the death of the Lord. They are described as looking like shining men:

- “His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.” (Mt 28:3)
- “A young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment.” (Mk 16:5)
- “Two men stood by them in shining garments.” (Lk 24:4)

Modern revelation teaches more about what angels are, why they come, and what they look like.

What are angels?

- pre-existent spirits (Mose 5:6)
- translated beings (Morm 8:11)
- spirits of “just [humans] made perfect” (D&C 76:66–69; 129; Heb 12:22–24)

- resurrected personages (D&C 13; 110)
- righteous mortals (JST, Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18)

Why do they come? To . . .

- deliver messages (Lk 1:11–38)
- minister to mortals (Act 10:3–8)
- teach (Mosi 3:1–4)
- call to repentance (Moro 7:31)
- give priesthood keys (D&C 128:20–21)
- save someone (1 Ne 3:29–31; Dan 6:22)
- guide (Gen 24:7)
- gather the elect (Mt 13:41; 24:31; Mk 13:27)

What do they look like?

- personages standing in the air
- clothed in exquisite whiteness
- visible hands, arms, legs, and feet
- countenance like lightning
- glorious whole person (JS—H 1:30–32)

**Act 10:4–5. “he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? . . . call for one Simon . . . whose surname is Peter.”** Angelic scriptural accounts often record the recipients feeling fear. The ESV translation is “terror,” and the NASB gives “alarmed.” Despite his fear, Cornelius knew that this was a representative of God and asked for direction (similarly, in prayer asking what the Lord needs opens more revelation). The angel answered Cornelius by acknowledging his faithful service to God and gave him instructions that would further grow his faith. The angel instructed Cornelius to visit Peter without giving further details.

In hindsight, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “No wonder the angel told good old Cornelius that he must send for Peter to learn how to be saved: Peter could baptise [*sic*], and angels could not, so long as there were legal officers in the flesh holding the keys of the kingdom, or the authority of the priesthood.”<sup>6</sup>

**Act 10:7–8. “Cornelius . . . called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier . . . sent them to Joppa.”** Cornelius immediately obeyed the angel. The angel instructed him not to go himself but to send “men” from Caesarea to Joppa—a thirty-mile trip along the sea coast. We do not know whether these three men were Jewish, but if they were not, it would require more faith on Peter’s part to accept them.

*Peter's vision—Act 10:9–16*

**Act 10:9–10.** *“Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour . . . he fell into a trance.”* Peter’s delayed lunch became part of God’s plan. While hungrily waiting for his midday meal, Peter prayed and then received a vision of some sort. The Greek word for “trance,” *ekstasis*, is different from the words used for a “dream,” *enypnoios*, or “vision,” *horama*. *Trance* means “displacement, a throwing of the mind out of its normal state, bewilderment, ecstasy, distraction or disturbance of mind caused.” Luke uses the same word for Paul’s divine visitation in the temple (Act 22:17–21; compare Num 24).

**Act 10:11–13 (NASB).** *“saw the sky opened . . . all kinds of four-footed animals. . . . And a voice came to him, ‘Get up, Peter, kill and eat!’”* Peter was puzzled by his trance and struggled to understand the Lord’s enigmatic message. The animals he saw descending on a sheet included animals considered unclean under the law of Moses (Lev 11:1–47; Deu 14:1–2). The process of grappling with the message taught Peter line upon line. Soon after, he learned that the Lord’s message was not about food but people.

**Act 10:14 (NASB).** *“I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean.”* Since the time of their wanderings in the wilderness, Israelites did not eat anything defined as unclean. Israel’s dietary laws prohibit pork, shellfish, blood, and more. Through the next few hours, the Lord taught Peter to change the definition of what was unclean or common. Peter may have thought that he knew the Lord’s gospel, but the Lord had much more to teach him (as He does for all of us).

**Act 10:16 (ESV).** *“This happened three times.”* The Lord often does things in triplicate. Jesus allowed Peter to express his love for the Lord three times and called him to feed His sheep three times (Jn 21:15–17). The Lord called the Israelites to appear before Him three times a year (Ex 23:17). In 3 Ne 11:3–5, the same voice is heard three times before it is understood. The angel Moroni repeated his message three times in one night to the seventeen-year-old Joseph Smith (JS—H 1:30–47). God knows repetition is needed for our understanding and memory. The number three is also a sign of a sure witness.<sup>7</sup>

*Peter welcomed messengers from Cornelius—Act 10:17–23*

**Act 10:17 (BSB).** *“While Peter was puzzling over the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius . . . approached the gate.”* God’s timing is miraculous. Throughout the scriptures and in our lives, we find God’s timing carefully planned to facilitate learning and growth. A significant part of God’s teaching and miracles is the timing of the experience. Often our preparation facilitates His timing. When we have learned enough, we often see God’s hand. Peter knew to trust the timing of God’s omniscient plan.

**Act 10:19–20.** *“The Spirit said . . . go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.”* Peter puzzled over the meaning of the need to obey the Spirit’s prompting to follow Cornelius’s three messengers. In obeying, he received the spirit of discernment to assure him the men were trustworthy. Understanding divine revelation requires active learning, faith, and humility. When disciples are more invested in finding an answer, they value God’s advice more. God asks us to study out our questions so that we can recognize His promptings and have a greater determination to follow them (D&C 9:7–9).

*Peter visits and testifies to Cornelius's household—Act 10:23–43*

**Act 10:21–22 (BSB).** “*Here am I . . . Why have you come? . . . ‘A holy angel instructed him.’*”

Cornelius' servants relayed their message and were rewarded with Peter's willingness to travel with them. Still not fully understanding God's intent, Peter followed the three men with faith, hoping to understand over time. Peter's willingness became a witness to the three Caesareans that they were on the Lord's errand. The Lord's command to teach all nations was about to be understood in a new way (Mt 28:19).

**Act 10:23 (ESV).** “*he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went . . . and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.*” Peter shared his meal and a possibly sleeping space with the three guests. Peter invited other disciples to join the missionary trip, possibly as witnesses or missionaries or for safety.

**Act 10:24 (NIV).** “*The following day . . . Cornelius . . . had called together his relatives and close friends.*” Peter and his group made the return thirty-mile trip in one day. By the time they arrived that night, Cornelius had gathered other seekers of truth to hear Peter. The Lord chose and prepared the influential and meek Cornelius as the catalyst for this revelation to the early Church.

**Act 10:25–26 (NIV).** “*Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter . . . said, ‘I am only a man myself.’*” The eager convert offered a culturally respectful greeting, but Peter refused any hint of worshipping another human or promoting class distinction. Peter knew that Jesus had repeated the law of Moses, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Lk 4:8; Deu 6:13). Though, Cornelius may have been honoring the heavenly authority that sent Peter to him, not the man.

**Act 10:28 (NIV).** “*it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile.*” Peter referred to a Jewish tradition that was created after the Jews returned from Babylon. The oral laws claimed people became ritually unclean if they visited the house of a Gentile or came “into close contact with one.”<sup>8</sup>

**Act 10:28 (NIV).** “*But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.*” Peter connected his recent divine message of the unclean animals with this missionary opportunity to learn that God can change what was once unclean. This blessing of Christ's Atonement had implications beyond Peter's vision. The expansion of the gospel to all children of God actually restored the earlier plan given to Adam and Eve's posterity (Mose 6:3–6). Tearing down any exclusionary status quo had far-reaching implications. The Lord's elect are not those with a birthright, but those who are willing to follow Him. Christ's message and Atonement were now open to all humanity on both sides of the veil (1 Cor 15:29).

**Act 10:30 (BSB).** “*Four days ago I was in my house praying at . . . the ninth hour.*” Luke included a second account of Cornelius's story for emphasis. Even though the Greek text the KJV uses, *Textus Receptus*, reads “fasting,” most translations use other texts, which say Cornelius was praying.



**Act 10:33.** “*we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.*” As the angel directed two or three days before, Cornelius and his household put their trust in the Lord’s anointed. They were humble, eager, and ready to learn. Those present had exercised enough faith and repentance to feel the Spirit. They become our examples of how to prepare for our Church meetings.

**Act 10:34.** “*God is no respecter of persons.*” In Greek, the text states that God is no respecter of the “mask,” or outward appearance. This refers to masks used in dramatic plays to represent different people (D&C 1:35; 38:16).

**Act 10:35 (ESV).** “*in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*” The universality of Jesus’s Atonement is one of the most beautiful implications of this doctrine. When we add the restored doctrine of vicarious ordinances and teaching for those who did not have a chance to understand the gospel during their life, we can appreciate the even broader scope of God’s grace.

**Act 10:36 (BSB).** “*He has sent this message . . . proclaiming the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ.*” The gospel of peace is a beautiful title for Christ’s message of good news. In the Restoration the Lord identified the Spirit’s inspiration with peace: “Did I not speak peace to your mind . . . ? What greater witness can you have than from God?” (D&C 6:23). Peter emphasized that the Spirit works with those who spread and receive the gospel of peace. In the next sentence Peter mentions the baptism that John proclaimed (Act 10:37). John also prophesied of the Messiah’s baptism by fire or the Spirit (Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16). This connects the Messiah and the Spirit, who both emit peace.

**Act 10:38 (NASB).** “*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good.*” The word *anointed* has the same meaning as *christ* or *messiah* (Ps 45:7). Peter taught that the Father’s divine anointing of Jesus endowed Him with the power of the Spirit. Jesus received this anointing in full measure, which facilitated His many miracles and fostered His messages of truth. Anointings are connected to Christianity in Act 4:27 and Heb 1:9.

**Act 10:39.** “*we are witnesses.*” Peter was an eyewitness, and the plural may mean that some of his fellow disciples from Joppa were too. All who receive the Spirit’s witness can testify that Jesus is God’s Son.

**Act 10:39 (BSB).** “*they put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree.*” Hanging refers to an unclean death as the blood stayed in the body (Deu 21:22–23; see Act 5:30). It is significant that Jesus descended below all through Gethsemane and on the cross, the most painful Roman torture and the most humiliating death to the Jews.

**Act 10:41 (NIV).** “*us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.*” Peter’s testimony emphasized the physical nature of Jesus’s resurrected body—He was not just a spirit because he ate and drank. This was an important differentiation at that time because Greek philosophers taught that the spirit was purer than the body. They felt that it was better to leave the corporal body behind and become an eternal spirit again after death. Yet Jesus came back with a body. To some Greeks that did not

make sense. Why would one want to remain tethered to and punished with a physical body of flesh and bones? Paul will discuss them in his epistles (see, for example, 1 Cor 7–10).

**Act 10:42–43 (NIV).** “*He [Jesus] commanded us to preach . . . that he is the one whom God appointed as judge . . . [and] everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness.*” In addition to fulfilling all the Old Testament prophecies concerning the promised Messiah and the Suffering Servant, Jesus will become the Judge for the living and the dead to determine how well humanity believed and followed the prophets’ witness. Peter also added the qualifier that forgiveness comes from belief (*πιστεῦō*, “conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative”).<sup>9</sup>

### *God gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles—Act 10:44–48*

**Act 10:44.** “*While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all.*” The Spirit again acted as God’s agent to testify of truth. Peter’s group of Jewish disciples and Cornelius’s group of eager converts received an outpouring of the Spirit, witnessing that the Spirit of God had accepted the meek gentile disciples. Both groups had been praying to know God’s will, and both received God’s witness at that time.

**Act 10:46 (BSB).** “*speaking in tongues and exalting God.*” Peter’s colleagues were astounded to see an outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit on gentile converts. The original disciples had not received the Spirit until after years of working with the Lord and then witnessing His Resurrection. Finally, on the day of Pentecost, it came as they testified of Jesus at the temple (Act 2:3–4). Yet God gave the gift to Cornelius and his kin before their baptism! Observing this miracle broke down a segregating wall that had come from a misunderstanding of God, His people, and their neighbors. Jesus cut down all false traditions and thoughts throughout His mission and continues to help disciples do the same as we draw to Him. The gift of tongues was such a tangible gift that it could not be denied. The chief Apostle discerned that the gift was from God. In our dispensation, the young Prophet Joseph Smith also experienced gifts of the Spirit before his baptism (visions, healings, and prophecy), and he received the gift of tongues two years after baptism.<sup>10</sup>

**Act 10:48 (BSB).** “*So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*” Peter admitted that as God had blessed the gentile investigators with the Spirit, they could not be denied the first baptism by water. The experience was so beautiful that Cornelius invited Peter and his fellow disciples to stay in Caesarea for a few days. The disciples taught them Jesus’s higher laws and ordinances of the gospel.

### **Act 11—The Gospel Spreads to the Gentiles**

**Act 11:1.** “*Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.*” News traveled quickly, and the disciples in Jerusalem were shocked. Peter had moved forward with unhesitating faith in

**Oral laws.** The oral laws interpreted and micromanaged the Mosaic law and governed Jewish life at the time. Later Rabbis systemized 613 commandments in the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) and augmented them with precise applications. In the Gospels, Jesus refers to them as the traditions of the Jews. The term *oral laws* came from the rabbinic claim that Moses had taught these extra laws orally, even though they were not organized and recorded for centuries. Ten thousand laws developed to create a figurative fence, or buffer zone, around the law of Moses. They were to protect one from breaking the law. For example, the fourth commandment includes a prohibition against work on the Sabbath. This was itemized into thirty-nine definitions of work, which grew into hundreds of oral laws.

the divine manifestation, but his colleagues of the circumcision did not share his enthusiasm. They were appalled that Peter had eaten with uncircumcised men. This broke several of their oral laws.

**Act 11:3. “men uncircumcised.”** This referred to any non-Jewish male (*circumcised* often referred to the “covenant people”). By the time of the New Testament, Jews who followed the oral law would not eat with anyone “unclean,” which was interpreted as anyone uncircumcised.

The word *uncircumcised* also had a broader use for all other infractions of the Mosaic law. For example, if one did not wash properly before a meal, they were labeled “uncircumcised.” For Jews, eating a meal with someone was like making a covenant with them. This is in part because they didn’t have silverware and so their hands touched the same foods from the same serving dishes. Jewish table fellowship had been carefully crafted in their culture for centuries. Originally, Ex 12:48 commanded that no uncircumcised male eat the Passover. But the overzealous expanded its application into hundreds of oral laws by the time of the New Testament so that no one could eat with someone not of their faith.<sup>11</sup>

The implication of Cornelius’s household’s conversion was that gentile converts began to join the disciples for their weekly reenactment of the Lord’s Supper (which was then a meal). Unified table fellowship was especially difficult for some of the Jewish disciples because it breached their deeply ingrained laws of social, racial, and gender segregation. Similar problems with the oral and Mosaic laws grew into major concerns for early Jewish and Christian disciples. Eventually these problems were discussed by the Apostolic Church at the Jerusalem Council in Act 15, and Church policy was established.

**Act 11:4 (NIV).** “*Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story.*” Luke’s retelling, which repeats Peter’s vision account, signals that this is of pivotal importance. In chapter 10, the story is much shorter. Also, chapter 10 is in third person, and the retelling in chapter 11 is in first person.

**Act 11:16 (NIV).** “*I remembered what the Lord had said.*” Peter recalled that the Lord told the disciples in His forty-day ministry that they would be baptized with the Spirit (Act 1:5). Luke repeats it again as a second witness to testify that when Cornelius’s family and friends received a dramatic gift of the Spirit, it was God’s sign or witness that they were worthy of baptism.



**Act 11:17. “what was I, that I could withstand God?”** Peter could say this now after learning a very hard lesson at the Last Supper, when he did not believe Jesus would be killed nor that he would deny Him. But after both happened, his heart softened. Now as the chief Apostle, he responded to this prompting with complete faith, even without understanding how. He stood up to defend God’s witness and Cornelius.

**Act 11:18. “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God.”** What a great example of following prophetic counsel. As the Jews had centuries of feeling that they were the chosen people, it felt odd to think that God would grant repentance and eternal life to the Gentiles. Unfortunately, some of them did not remain submissive to God, as we read in Act 15–26.

### *The Church in Antioch—Act 11:19-30*

**Act 11:19 (BSB). “Meanwhile those scattered by the persecution . . . [spoke] the message only to Jews.”** The early persecution of the Jerusalem Saints that initially seemed like a devastating setback became a blessing in disguise. The Lord prepared the way for all those scattered disciples to spread the gospel to the Gentiles.

**Act 11:20 (BSB). “Some of them . . . went to Antioch . . . to the Greeks as well, proclaiming the good news.”** In Antioch, Jewish Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene opened missionary work to the Gentiles. Another translation for “Grecian” is “gentile.” Over the centuries, Israelites had been relocated by the Assyrians and Babylonians.<sup>12</sup> Most Israelites (all called Jews) in the diaspora incorporated somewhat into the Hellenized society yet attempted to remain a distinct people.

**Act 11:21–22. “a great number of people believed, and turned unto the Lord . . . the church . . . in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas. . . [to]Antioch.”** Proselytizing to the Gentiles prospered in Antioch because the “hand of the Lord” was with the people. As a result of the success there, the Church sent an Apostle. In the New Testament, not every apostle is a member of the Twelve. (Paul and Barnabas are not called apostles until Act 14:14, and 1 Thes 2:6.) Also, the word *apostle* in Greek means “one sent,” so here it could refer to someone with a mission call, someone with an apostolic calling, or one of the Twelve. In Act 4:36–37, Luke introduced the generous Levite Joseph Barnabas from

**Antioch, Syria**, at the time was the third largest metropolis of the Roman world. It was 350 miles north of Jerusalem and was the imperial capital of Syria, with a population of approximately eight hundred thousand people. The winding river plain near the city provided water and lots of trees. King Antiochus gave security to Jews who lived there. Herod the Great rewarded the people of Antioch for their kindness toward the Jews by paving two-and-a-half miles of street with white marble blocks (ca. 10 BC). Their wealth is seen by examining the Antioch Jewish donations for the Jerusalem temple. Josephus also records that one of the synagogues in Antioch was adorned with the spoils from Solomon’s temple.

Cyprus. His surname meant “son of exhortation,” a great missionary title. Being a native of Cyprus, he would have already been familiar with customs in the diaspora.

**Act 11:23 (NIV).** *“he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord.”* Barnabas found the gentile converts full of the Spirit. Luke reminds his audience that it is the Holy Spirit that directs the leaders of the Church through revelation, not the brethren initiating their own ideas. Barnabas’s advice applies to all disciples in every dispensation: “cleave unto the Lord” (KJV) or be “steadfast,” with “full purpose” (RSV) to build the kingdom.

**Act 11:25 (BSB).** *“Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul.”* Barnabas was the one who initially accepted Saul when other disciples were reticent to believe his sincerity as a past persecutor. Earlier Barnabas introduced Saul to the Apostles. Now Barnabas wanted Saul’s help in Antioch. It required Barnabas traveling about ninety miles to Tarsus to call Saul as a missionary companion or counselor.

**Act 11:26 (NIV).** *“for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people.”* The two missionaries served in Antioch for a year. This is the first time that believers were called Christians in the New Testament. The name developed from the Greek-speaking converts who used the Greek name Christ rather than the Hebrew or Aramaic Messiah. (In the Book of Mormon we find the name Christians used in Alm 46:13–16.)

**Act 11:27.** *“in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.”* The word *prophet* had a broader definition in the New Testament than in the Old Testament or in modern times. In the second half of the New Testament, John calls anyone a prophet who has a testimony of Jesus as the Messiah and Savior, and Luke calls one who has the gift of prophecy a prophet (1 Jn 4:2–3; Rev 10:19). The Greek word used for prophets such as Isaiah and Jonah means a “foreteller, an inspired speaker.”

**Act 11:28 (NIV).** *“Agabus . . . through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius).”* Agabus was a Jewish disciple from Jerusalem who will also prophesy of Paul’s imprisonment (Act 21:10). Josephus mentions this famine as happening in approximately AD 46–48, which coincided with Claudius Caesar’s reign, from AD 41 to 51, as Luke recorded.<sup>13</sup> Famines and droughts hit Jerusalem especially hard because it was landlocked. Food prices there soared three to six times higher than in the country. In this case, profiteers exploited the desperate situation.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the famine and shortages coincided with the political change from Roman rule to a Jewish kingdom. King Agrippa I ruled from AD 41 to 44 and began persecuting the Christians. (His son King Agrippa II speaks with Paul in Act 25:13–26:32.) This confirms that God was watching over His Church. The earlier persecution that chased many Saints out of Jerusalem ended up sparing them from this famine and future persecutions.

**Act 11:29–30 (NIV).** *“The disciples . . . provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea . . . by Barnabas and Saul.”* The generous Christians in Antioch gathered funds or perhaps supplies for the suffering Saints in Jerusalem. This sounds like humanitarian aid or fast offering programs. This extra welfare trip to Jerusalem cut Barnabas and Paul’s mission to only one year. The 350-mile

**Herod Agrippa I** was the grandson of King Herod the Great (the builder of the temple) through his Jewish wife Mariamne I. To avoid the sword that fell on most of King Herod's offspring, Agrippa's guardians sent him to Rome at age six, shortly before his grandfather's death. He was educated in Rome and grew up accustomed to luxury. He was constantly in debt and was known as a notorious spendthrift. In AD 37, one of his close friends, Caius, became Caesar Caligula. That relationship opened a way for Herod Agrippa I to receive a position in the Middle East. Four years later, in AD 41, Agrippa I was given charge over the same kingdom that his grandfather Herod the Great had ruled (37 BC–AD 1). Palestine had not been unified under a Herodian king in over forty years. Agrippa I was a pious Jew and an advocate of the law of Moses. Not surprisingly, the Pharisees praised this rule, but it also led to violent Christian persecution. He died in AD 44 and was replaced by his son.

journey back to Jerusalem probably took nearly three weeks. We call this Paul's first gentile mission, though he had already been serving in Tarsus among his family and local Jews.

## **Acts 12**

*James killed and Peter imprisoned—Act 12:1–5*

**Act 12:1 (BSB).** *“King Herod reached out to harm some who belonged to the church.”* King Herod Agrippa I ruled Palestine from AD 41 to 44. For the Jews in Jerusalem, it was a golden era. It was the first time in forty years that they did not have a Roman governor. However, it was not a golden era for Christians, who were harshly persecuted.

**Act 12:2.** *“he killed James the brother of John with the sword.”* The New Testament mentions four men named James:

1. James the Son of Zebedee and Salome, the brother of John the Beloved, and one of Jesus's original Twelve Apostles
2. James the son of Alphaeus, also a member of the original Twelve Apostles
3. James the son of Joseph and Mary, the half-brother of the Lord and author of the Epistle of James
4. James the son of Mary of Galilee, who traveled with the other women (Mt 27:56; Mk 16:1)

The first James, the son of Zebedee, became the second Christian martyr after Stephen. He was probably beheaded. We believe that as an endowed Apostle, he was not killed until his life's work was finished.

**Act 12:3.** *“because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.”* Peter was imprisoned a second time. It was a busy and crowded time in Jerusalem during the Feast of

Unleavened Bread or the week after the Passover. The timing must have been poignant since the Jews took Jesus at the same springtime holiday about a decade earlier. The young Church felt the renewed pain of the Lord's departure because of James's death and the fear that Peter may be killed as well.

**Act 12:4 (BSB).** *“guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out to the people after the Passover.”* Agrippa I must have heard about Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison the first time (Act 5:19) because he placed a heavy guard of sixteen men to watch Peter's cell. (A squad was four guards: one for each watch of the night). Usually one squad was sufficient—one watched while the other three slept—but apparently, they were worried about Peter escaping again. The name *Pascha*, or Passover, is translated in the KJV as “Easter,” but those celebrations did not begin for years to come.

**Act 12:5 (NIV).** *“Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying.”* There is extra power in unified prayer. We assume that the persecution associated with James's martyrdom affected all Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem that Passover. It appears Christians still came to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks as we read of Paul arranging his travel to return to Jerusalem for the Jewish feasts. But due to the heightened persecutions, many Christians may have stayed away that spring. Some Christians were still in Jerusalem, though, and we read they gathered together for prayer and possibly for safety (Act 12:12).

*Peter's second miraculous rescue from prison—Act 12:6–19*

**Act 12:6 (NIV).** *“Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.”* The night before Herod had hoped to bring Peter to trial, God sent another angel to change the course of history. No matter how tight the security, God's power can protect His servants.

**Act 12:7 (NIV).** *“an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. ‘Quick, get up!’”* Peter must have been extremely tired to sleep through the angelic light and physical jostling. He even thought he was dreaming. (For more on angels, see Act 10:3.)

**Act 12:10 (BSB).** *“They passed the first and second guards . . . the iron gate . . . opened for them by itself. When they . . . walked the length of one block, the angel suddenly left him.”* The Lord's intervention is interesting as it is often restricted to a minimum of what is needed. Once Peter was out of harm's way, the angel left and Peter was expected to walk on his own. Again, divine intervention fosters the most growth possible to learn from our own experience.

**Act 12:12.** *“he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.”* This Mary is the mother of John Mark (who is mentioned eight times in the New Testament). Her home was large enough to house a large group of Saints in Jerusalem. This was probably the house-church where the Saints met to reenact the Lord's Supper. John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10), the junior companion of Paul and Barnabas who went

home early from his mission and Peter's companion later (Act 13:5, 13; 1 Pet 5:13). Tradition holds that he scribed the Gospel of Mark for Peter.

**Act 12:13–16 (ESV).** *“he knocked at the door . . . Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter’s voice, . . . ran in and reported. . . . But Peter continued knocking.”* The group of praying Saints did not believe Rhoda's report of hearing Peter's voice. Perhaps because the group was sleep deprived or because the night was dark, it took them a while to think of going out to check the front gate. This story of Peter knocking for help and the maid forgetting to open the door is applicable to personal prayer—sometimes we do not listen long enough to open the door and get the full answer.

**Act 12:17 (BSB).** *“Peter motioned with his hand for silence, and he described.”* The group must have broken into a lively cheer. Peter motioned for them to be quiet so that he could explain what happened.

**Act 12:17 (NIV).** *“Tell James.”* Peter wanted James the brother of Jesus to be notified. The Acts and the Epistles imply that James was serving in a role similar to a district leader or bishop in Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> As a local authority, he had jurisdiction even then. Not all the Saints were gathered, but Peter wanted both the men and women of the Church to be informed of this saving miracle.

**Act 12:17 (NIV).** *“he left for another place.”* Peter was still wisely cautious about disturbing other Jewish captors, so after recounting the miracle and instructions, he left. The Saints communicated with each other and knew where the others lived. But we are not told where Peter went. Peter's call included traveling, but he is back in Jerusalem by Act 15.<sup>16</sup> This is the end of Luke's discussion of Peter and the missions in Judea and Samaria in the book of Acts.

**Act 12:18–19.** *“there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. . . . Herod had [them] put to death.”* As harsh as it sounds, executing guards who lost their prisoner was standard Roman protocol.<sup>17</sup> The guards were killed because of Peter's escape. This seems unfair; however, God's love has prepared a place for all to learn and continue progressing in the next world (D&C 138; Mose 1:39).

#### *Herod's death—Act 12:20–24*

**Act 12:19–20 (NIV).** *“Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon.”* Herod Agrippa I went to visit the beautiful coastal city of Tyre, where his grandfather had built a sumptuous palace. Luke illustrates the cantankerous nature of Agrippa I with this short account of his cruelty to Gentiles and Christians. According to Josephus, Agrippa I placed an embargo on goods from Egypt. Tyre needed to import their food, but Agrippa would not allow it. Josephus also described an envoy from Tyre being turned away.<sup>18</sup>

**Act 12:23 (NIV).** *“Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he . . . died.”* The ancients often labeled an event that precipitated one's death as causal.



This does not mean it happened that way. Agrippa's death also dates James's death and Peter's second imprisonment to AD 44.

### *Barnabas and Saul sent off—Act 12:24–25*

**Act 12:24.** *“the word of the Lord grew and multiplied.”* It is significant that even in times of persecution and tribulation, the Lord moves His work forward. Disciples trust God even during trials.

**Act 12:25.** *“Barnabas and Saul returned . . . and took . . . Mark.”* When Barnabas and Saul finished their report in Jerusalem, they returned the 350 miles back to Antioch. Luke's order suggests that Barnabas was the senior companion. Barnabas also brought a third companion from Jerusalem, his nephew John Mark, the son of the wealthy Jerusalem homeowner Mary. (Perhaps the land Barnabas donated to the Church in Act 4:36–37 included Mary's home.)

Luke's record suggests it was important for Saul and Barnabas to be in Jerusalem at the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter. Was the seven-hundred-mile round trip needed to visit their families or to help them relocate to Antioch? In addition to these potential reasons, this may have been the time when Barnabas and Saul were called to the apostleship. We do not know whether either were ever members of the Twelve (see Act 14:4).

From this point forward, the book of Acts moves ahead to Paul's next three missions to the Gentiles as an apostle, or “one sent,” to witness of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Acts 13–15—Barnabas and Paul's Mission**

### *Antioch in Syria*

**Act 13:1.** *“in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers.”* The list of teachers begins with Barnabas and ends with Saul for emphasis. None of these people were mentioned earlier with the prophets who came from Jerusalem (see notes on Act 11:27). They appear to act as local Church leaders and were well known to the writer: “Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch.”

**Act 13:2 (NIV).** *“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul.’”* The five prophets and teachers fasted for direction. When Jesus was on the earth, He told His disciples they did not need to fast while He was there (Mt 9:14). But now that He is gone, they do fast for further revelation—and Luke highlights it twice in two sentences. They received inspiration to send Barnabas and Saul (and John Mark; Act 13:5) to proselytize in Cyprus.

**Act 13:3.** *“they . . . prayed, and laid their hands on them, [and] sent them away.”* This is the second example in Acts of using the laying on of hands to set someone apart with authority to serve (Act 6:6).

## Cyprus

**Act 13:4.** *“they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed.”* Barnabas and Saul had to travel about sixteen miles to the coast and then sail one hundred miles to the eastern Cyprus port town of Seleucia. As Cyprus was Barnabas’s homeland, he knew the local language and customs. Cyprus was the home of many Jews, and Barnabas probably had contacts at their synagogue.

**Act 13:5.** *“they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.”* Luke uses the phrase *the word of God* twenty-six times in the New Testament. The phrase usually refers to God’s instructions but can also refer to God’s chosen spokesperson. Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark established a pattern as they arrived at each new town: they joined the Jews for their Sabbath worship in the local Jewish synagogue. They felt it was important to give the Jews the first chance to hear the gospel message in each town. This was in keeping with Jesus’s prophecy that the “first shall be last; and the last first” (Mk 10:31).

**Act 13:5.** *“and they had also John to their minister.”* This refers to John Mark, introduced in Act 12:12. John Mark came “to assist them” (ESV) or be a “helper” (NIV).

**Act 13:6 (NIV).** *“They traveled through the whole island . . . [and] met a Jewish sorcerer.”* The missionaries started at the largest city on the east side of the island and moved a hundred miles west to Cyprus’s Roman capital, Paphos. The sorcerer and “false prophet” is named Bar-jesus, meaning “son of Joshua,” or Elymas in Greek (Act 13:8).

**Act 13:7.** *“the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, . . . desired to hear the word of God.”* The Greek word rendered as “deputy” is also translated “proconsul” (RSV, NIV, JB, NAS) and “Governor” (NEB). Luke describes this government official as a seeking, prudent man who asked for the missionaries. Luke’s order of Barnabas’s and Saul’s names suggests Barnabas was still the senior companion.

**Act 13:8 (NIV).** *“the sorcerer . . . opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.”* Peter also encountered a sorcerer, Simon Magnus, in Act 8:9–20. Did Luke include this story to show that Paul is doing the same thing that Peter did? If so, then it may also pattern Jesus’s miracles of exorcism.<sup>19</sup> Luke’s structure opens up more meaning to his message. The repeating examples testify that the disciples are all working with God’s direction and power.

**Act 13:9.** *“Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost.”* Luke makes the change from referring to Saul by his Hebrew name to his Latin name, the transliteration Paul. The timing of this event in the text follows Saul’s efforts to proselytize a governor named Paul.

**Act 13:10 (BSB).** *“O child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness, you are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery.”* Whenever the Lord has an important work, Satan tries to counterfeit and confuse it. The sorcerer Elymas was a puppet for Satan to “pervert the right ways of the Lord” (Act 13:10).

**Act 13:11.** *“the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind . . . for a season.”* This punishment had personal significance for Paul (Act 9:9). Paul knew exactly what it felt like to be blind “for a season.” When he experienced this same proof of God’s hand, it had a powerful, changing effect on his heart. We are not told the effect it had on Elymas—only that he went to find “some to lead him.”

**Galatia** was a landlocked region of Asia Minor made up of cities with separate political governments. This became an advantage to the Apostles since they could escape from one jurisdiction to another. The Galatians' population migrated from three Gallic tribes in 278 BC. Other peoples joined them, including Israelites. In 25 BC, Caesar Augustus annexed the province into the Roman Empire.

**Antioch (Pisidia)** was a garrison town built on the Anthios River in central Asia Minor just north of Lake Limnai. It was also the hometown of Paul's Christian convert Sergius Paulus.

**Act 13:12.** “*the deputy . . . believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.*” The deputy or governor already believed (Act 11:7–8). He was not seeking a sign, but the miracle strengthened his faith.

*Paul and Barnabas leave Cyprus for Galatia—Act 13:13–14*

**Act 13:13 (BSB).** “*After setting sail from Paphos, Paul and his companions came to Perga.*” From now on Luke mentions Paul's name first in lists, as if Paul were the leader. None of the timing of this chapter is clearly attached to a historical event, so we estimate that these events occurred sometime between AD 44 and 48. Geographically, this verse covers a lot of space and so must have taken place over a lot of time (see the map on page 1). The group left the island of Cyprus and sailed north to modern Turkey.

**Act 13:13.** “*John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.*” The important message in this verse is that something happened to Barnabas's young cousin John Mark in Cyprus so that he needed to return home early from his mission. We do not know what caused his departure—illness, family needs, persecution. As a Jew raised in Jerusalem, preaching to the Gentiles may have been a struggle, too, and certainly required a complete paradigm shift. Whatever the cause was, the New Testament shows the young John Mark growing and becoming a beloved companion of Paul and Peter in the future.

**Act 13:14.** “*they came to Antioch in Pisidia.*” Paul remains in Galatia for the rest of his mission. In two short sentences Luke traces the dangerous 240-mile boat ride from Cyprus to Perga, a port in modern-day Turkey, and then the 180-mile journey inland due north to Galatia. The group stopped at a small town also named Antioch (not to be confused with the city of Antioch in Syria and the past mission headquarters).

The Roman organization and network of ports, harbors, roads, lodging, and food was integral for the missionaries' travel. Paul and Barnabas became familiar with the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. Sea travel was facilitated by seagoing cargo ships and an amazing waterproof cement for building ports. Yet all travel was still dangerous and costly.

Travelers were plagued by physical ailments—including hunger, thirst, dysentery, blisters, cracked calluses, lack of nutrition, sunburn, and diseases carried by bug bites, as well as long-term issues like dehydration, lameness, and cataracts. The New Testament rarely even mentions the cost, but we see a glimpse of the financial sacrifice that missionary work required from snippets like these: “These women were ministering to them out of their own means,” and “Because [Paul] was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked.”<sup>20</sup> Paul’s and Barnabas’s wealth was spent in the service of God.<sup>21</sup>

### *Antioch, Pisidia, Sabbath service—Acts 13:14–16*

**Act 13:14–15.** “*went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading.*” In Jewish weekly synagogue worship, people stood to read the weekly section of scripture (both from the Law and the Prophets) and then sat to discuss them. (Their seated position showed respect to the higher nature of the text compared to their own opinion.) We saw an example of this in Lk 4:16–21.

**Act 13:15 (NIV).** “*Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.*” Paul and Barnabas, as visitors, would have had a chance to speak or give their opinion on the scripture passages. Paul carefully addressed two groups in his audience, as we see in the next verse.

**Act 13:16.** “*Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.*” Paul referred to both native Jews and worshipping proselytes who were not circumcised. As mentioned earlier, at this time the title “God fearers” or “those who fear God” was a technical term for converts to Judaism. Paul addressed both groups carefully in the middle of his sermon as well (Act 13:26). The separation was crucial to the missionaries’ message—that all can share the same history, all are alike to God, and all can receive full blessings through Jesus’s Atonement.

### *Paul’s synagogue sermon—Act 13:17–41*

**Act 13:17.** “*The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers.*” This begins the longest synagogue speech of Acts (twenty-eight verses). Paul recounted the mighty and divine power that led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Luke incorporated examples of history in the sermons as they point to Jesus as the promised Messiah. Luke’s writing shows consistent doctrines and practices across the Apostolic Church.<sup>22</sup>

**Act 13:18 (BSB).** “*He endured their conduct for about forty years in the wilderness.*” This brief summary of Israel’s forty years in the wilderness emphasized Moses’s suffering as a type of Christ—he “bore with them” (RSV) and “endured their conduct” (NIV). In review, the number forty was a general statement in Hebrew of much time and was symbolic of a purification period.

**Act 13:20 (NIV).** “*God gave them judges until the time of Samuel.*” Paul tours 450 years of Israelite history, from the time they entered the promised land to Samuel’s call of King Saul. In Paul’s historical run-through, King David was not the usual stopping point but was only briefly referenced before introducing the promised son of David, our “Saviour, Jesus.”

**Act 13:24–25 (NIV).** “*John preached repentance and baptism . . . ‘there is one coming after me.’*” This reference to John the Baptist demonstrates how far his influence went—even a Jewish audience in Galatia knew him. It sounds as if a text of John the Baptist’s sayings was distributed by this time.

**Act 13:27–30.** “*they knew him not . . . yet desired . . . that he should be slain. . . . But God raised him from the dead.*” The Jewish leaders fulfilled many prophecies by condemning Jesus, including Isa 52–53.

**Act 13:31 (NIV).** “*for many days he was seen by . . . witnesses.*” During Jesus’s forty-day ministry following His Resurrection, He directed the disciples how build to His Church and hear Him through the Spirit.

**Act 13:33.** “*God hath fulfilled . . . as it is also written in.*” Paul cites Ps 2:7. As a strict Pharisee and student of Gamaliel, he would have known his scriptures well (Act 22:3). After his conversion, Paul learned the law of Moses was to prepare Israelites to receive their Messiah (Gal 3:24). He searched the scriptures for typology of Jesus and prophecies of Him (like Hos 12:10). Next, Paul cites Isa 55:3 in Act 13:34.

**Act 13:36–37 (NIV).** “*David . . . was buried. . . . But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.*” Paul went back to the beloved King David to remind the people that even their greatest king died and was buried (JB), but God restored Jesus to a perfect, incorruptible, resurrected body.

**Act 13:38 (BSB).** “*through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed.*” Some Jewish rabbis taught that the people’s exact obedience to the law brought their redemption; others held to the saving graces of their bloodline through Abraham. Yet the scriptures taught that salvation comes from an atoning sacrifice vicariously given by their God, which would provide outward and inward cleansing to the repentant.<sup>23</sup>

**Act 13:40 (ASV).** “*Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets.*” Paul ended with a warning about the destruction of those who reject their Redeemer.<sup>24</sup>

**Act 13:42.** “*the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.*” Paul’s sermon was especially appreciated by the God-fearing Gentiles who wanted to hear more. Those Jews who “followed Paul and Barnabas” afterward “urged them to continue in the grace of God” (Act 13:43 BSB).

**Act 13:44 (ESV).** “*The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.*” The missionaries had a church service full of investigators. Unfortunately, the large crowd triggered the local envious Jews to contradict Paul and Barnabas. Rather than meekly listening, the Jews became competitive. One sin seems to lead to a worse sin, and theirs moved from pride to envy to blasphemy.

**Act 13:46 (NIV).** “*Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.*” Paul and Barnabas left teaching the close-minded and focused on the open Gentiles.



**Act 13:48 (JST).** “*As many as believed were ordained to eternal life.*” Eternal life is another way of saying God’s life (D&C 132:24; Moro 7:41). Joseph Smith changed the order of two words, “believed” and “ordained,” to communicate a very different doctrine. The order of belief is fundamental to the Restoration. We believe that individuals have the innate power to believe and act. All can choose to receive Jesus’s atoning grace, whether in this life or in the next. The Savior’s cleansing power is available for all who choose to be among God’s chosen people. Yet many English translations maintain that God limits those who believe. They see faith as a byproduct of God’s decision alone: “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (KJV). Teachings from Augustine (387–430) and Calvin (1509–1564) filter into present Christianity—some still believe in an exclusionary God who predestines people to heaven or hell.<sup>25</sup>

**Act 13:49–50 (NIV).** “*The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited . . . persecution.*” The opposition works harder against important causes. This missionary work was of paramount importance to the history of the world and afterworld. We need not fear, however. God knows the end from the beginning, and He will always conquer. Satan and his devils will be bound by the righteousness of the Saints when Christ comes to reign.

**Act 13:51.** “*they shook off the dust of their feet against them.*” Paul and Barnabas were following Jesus’s instructions discussed previously in Mt 10:14; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; 10:11. This sign was used early in this dispensation but is discouraged now (D&C 24:15).

**Act 13:52.** “*the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*” God blessed the disciples with an internal penetrating witness of the Spirit despite their trials. The Spirit also fortifies those worthy.

#### *Paul and Barnabas at Iconium—Act 14:1–7*

**Act 14:1.** “*in Iconium . . . into the synagogue of the Jews . . . a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.*” Paul and Barnabas arrived at the beautiful oasis city of Iconium. Beginning at the local synagogue, they taught and converted Greeks (or “God fearers”) and Jews. They also taught Gentiles. Many in Iconium received the gospel of Jesus the Christ.

**Act 14:2 (BSB).** “*But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds.*” Repeatedly, Luke describes how the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles to anger and “made their minds evil” (KJV). Doubts, sin, and pride poison faith. As we look at the whole scripture canon, the worst enemies are those insiders (for example, Judas Iscariot, Absalom, and the Zormanites). Those who should be the most sympathetic become the most bitter enemies.

**Iconium** was a city built up around an oasis in the middle of eighty miles of grazing plains. Two main highways crossed near the water source.

**Act 14:3 (NIV).** “*Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord . . . perform[ing] signs and wonders.*” Luke summarizes Paul and Barnabas’s ministry to highlight the gifts of the Spirit. Their miracles confirm that the conversion and faith of the new Christians was sincere enough to enable the Spirit to work among them. The faith of both teachers and believers is needed.

**Act 14:3 (NIV).** “*the message of his grace.*” Paul and Barnabas specifically focus on the Savior’s grace, or *charisma*. Grace is an undeserved favor, yet it must be sought and received through repentance. It is a spiritual endowment of power to cleanse individuals and edify the Church. The Book of Mormon adds:

- “It is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.” (2 Ne 10:24)
- “Love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.” (Moro 10:32)

**Act 14:4 (BLB).** “*the city was divided, and indeed some were with the Jews, but some with the apostles.*” Offended Jews incited many against Paul and Barnabas. This is the first time Luke calls these two missionaries apostles, *apostolois*. The Greek *apostolos* means “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with order.” Yet in the New Testament, Christian Apostles have another call to witness of

- seeing the resurrected Lord,
- receiving His commission to testify of that witness, and
- receiving an ordination.

Paul and Barnabas were probably called during their recent trip to Jerusalem (see Act 11:30). Yet at that time, we know of only one vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve, from James the son of Zebedee’s martyrdom. Either another Apostle died or Barnabas and Paul were both commissioned as apostles with potentially neither or only one serving as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>26</sup> This may explain why Luke changed from this point on to listing Paul’s name first instead of Barnabas’s.

The New Testament may use the word *apostle* for more than members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Perhaps the same title was used for those who acted as Assistants to the Twelve. As the Church grew, more messengers, or *apostolois*, were needed. Paul’s and Barnabas’s apostleship is again mentioned in Act 14:14. Paul also refers to his apostolic authority in nine epistles.<sup>27</sup> A Christian definition of *apostle* is one who has seen the resurrected Lord and who has been commissioned to testify of that witness. After their mission, Paul and Barnabas reported their service to the apostles in Jerusalem.

**Act 14:5.** “*an assault made . . . to use them despitefully, and to stone them.*” Some citizens of Iconium designed a plot to stop the spread of Christianity by stoning Paul and Barnabas. The people either raised a mob to stone the Apostles or used the legal system to threaten stoning. In either case, their plans were intercepted and the Apostles fled to another town. As Luke never goes into detail about the

hardships, trauma, and discouragement of the missionaries and Saints, we assume he wrote after a period of time had healed the pain and given him the perspective to see God’s hand in history.

**Act 14:6–7. They . . . fled unto Lystra and Derbe. . . . And there they preached the gospel.**” When the Apostles were first called on missions, Jesus warned them that they would face persecution. He even instructed them, “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another” (Mt 10:23). Paul and Barnabas did just that as they went forty miles away to the district of Lystra, which was dominated by old pagan religions. Nevertheless, Paul and Barnabas found some people open-minded enough to receive the gospel.

*Paul and Barnabas in Lystra—Act 14:8–20*

**Act 14:8. “a cripple from his mother’s womb.”** The story of Paul calling on God’s healing power for the disabled man “who could not use his feet” (RSV) is similar to the earlier account with Peter. Luke includes parallel stories (and even phrases) to demonstrate through words and works that Paul was an Apostle like Peter and that both followed the example of their Master in calling on His powers to healing.

**Act 14:9–10 (BSB). “Paul . . . looked intently at him and saw that he had faith to be healed. . . . Paul called out, ‘Stand up on your feet!’ And the man jumped up.”** This

man had “faith to be healed.” He joyfully “leaped” or “sprang up,” as did Peter’s enthusiastic restored man (KJV, ESV). Jesus had commanded the Twelve and the Seventy on their first missions to heal the sick and cast out devils (Mt 10:7–8; Lk 10:9). Additionally, all four Gospels close with the Lord’s charge to preach and heal. Luke includes examples of the Apostles fulfilling these two mandates.

**Act 14:11 (ESV). “saying in Lycaonian, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’”** Even though most people in the diaspora spoke Greek, the locals spoke in their dialect, so the Apostles may not have understood or initially been aware of the crowd’s intent to worship them (Act 14:14).

**Act 14:12. “they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius.”** Most English translations use the Greek equivalents, Zeus and Hermes (BSB, NIV, ESV). Barnabas was larger, so he was Jupiter, or Zeus. From this verse stems the speculation that Paul was short and slight, which was even published

**Lystra.** After Lystra became part of the Roman province of Galatia, Romans built a nineteen-mile road south to connect it to Iconium. It was the hometown of Lois, Eunice, and Timothy (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15).

Table 2. Parallels between Peter and Paul

Peter	Paul
Act 3:1–8	Act 14:8–12
Act 5:14–15	Act 19:11–12
Act 8:18–23	Act 13:6–11
Act 9:36–40	Act 20:7–12
Act 12:6–7	Act 16:25–26

Table 1. References of Jesus, Peter, and Paul healing lame men

Jesus	Peter	Paul
Jn 15:1–18;	Act 3:1–8	Act 14:8–12
Mt 9:1–8; Mk 2:1–12		
Lk 15:17–26		

in Bible dictionaries in the nineteenth century. We do not know if this was the source of Joseph Smith's description of Paul: "Paul is about five feet high, [with] very dark hair, dark complexion, dark skin, large Roman nose, sharp face, small black eyes—penetrating as eternity, round shoulders, and a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembles the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator."<sup>28</sup>

**Act 14:13 (BLB).** *"the priest . . . being just outside the city, . . . brought oxen and wreaths to the gates . . . to sacrifice."* We find ancient mosaics of pagan priests decorating oxen with garlands and leading them to a city gate or temple, which suggests this was an entrenched ancient ritual or custom.

**Act 14:14.** *"when the apostles . . . heard . . . they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out."* It seems that the confused Apostles did not realize what the crowd was doing, but as soon as they saw the proposed idolatry, they tried to stop it. The locals who called the Apostles gods had not understood the source of their healing.

**Act 14:15 (NIV).** *"Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you."* The Apostles pleaded with the Lysterians to only worship the Creator and Lord God. The message was enough to restrain the people, but they were not converted enough to defend Paul and Barnabas from what happened next.

**Act 14:19 (NASB).** *"Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city."* Jewish opponents hounded the proselytizing Apostles.<sup>29</sup> The law of Moses authorized stoning, as discussed in my notes on Act 7:58. This stoning may have been mob violence or a punishment for blasphemy or a false prophet.<sup>30</sup> This became one of twelve major persecutions Paul endured as a missionary.<sup>31</sup> We do not know what happened to the larger Apostle.

Persecution followed not only Paul and Barnabas but most of the early Christians. Looking back through the scriptures we find most prophets enduring harassment for their beliefs—from Noah in the Bible, Lehi in the Book of Mormon, and Joseph Smith in the early Restoration. Our Savior set the stage for suffering, "to make perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings" (Heb 2:10 BLB).

**Act 14:19–20.** *"supposing he had been dead . . . the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city."* The text does not go into detail, but the phrase "stood round about" could refer to the disciples forming a prayer circle or giving Paul a blessing. Whatever happened, though Paul was assumed dead, the power of God healed him enough that he was able to walk back to town and then nearly sixty miles to Derbe over the next few days. The fact that Paul returned to the city suggests that the stoning was mob action not sanctioned by the legal system.

### *Paul and Barnabas preach at Derbe—Act 14:21–22*

**Act 14:21 (NIV).** *"They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples."* Luke summarizes the Apostles' success in Derbe with only one sentence, with no more references to persecution. Perhaps the angry Jews from the neighboring cities thought Paul had died from stoning.

**Derbe** lay sixty miles southeast of Iconium. Coins inscribed with the word *Claudioderbe* honored the emperor. Derbe is mentioned four times (in Act 14:6, 20; 16:1; and 20:45).

They returned to Derbe, the easternmost city on their Galatian mission. Even though Paul was only one hundred miles from his hometown of Tarsus, they felt inspired to retrace their steps to visit their new converts instead.

*The two Apostles return to revisit new converts and ordain leaders—Act 14:22–25*

**Act 14:21–22 (BSB).** *“Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith.”* This was a bold and courageous undertaking—to return to the very places where “certain Jews” were trying to kill them (Act 14:19). It speaks of how important the Apostles felt their visits were to strengthen the new converts (which Paul later wrote about in Eph 4:12). Their actions clarify that conversion alone is not the key to salvation; continuing faithful and enduring to the end are needed. The young flock needed leadership and teaching. Revisiting the newly baptized members became a crucial pattern that Paul repeated at the close of his other missions. The growth in the Saints was as critical as conversion.<sup>32</sup>

**Act 14:22 (BSB).** *“We must endure many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”* The early Saints may also have been persecuted because the Apostles’ first message to them was about enduring hardships for the kingdom of God. They spoke from firsthand experience about the value of learning to draw upon God through suffering for the kingdom.<sup>33</sup> The Apostles’ sacrifices for the Saints must have been a source of encouragement. God’s message to our first parents warned that life would be filled with pain, thistles, and sweat, but the blessing of a Redeemer would make it all worthwhile. The hope of salvation was the missionaries’ message. Enduring and sacrificing for God’s kingdom became a theme that Paul addressed in his epistles as well.<sup>34</sup>

**Act 14:23.** *“they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord.”* The “churches” often refers to the Saints gathering into house-churches.<sup>35</sup> The missionary procedure included organizing churches with local priesthood leadership. The Apostles’ first visits were filled with preaching, healing, and baptizing. Now on their return visits, they ordained elders with priesthood keys. We also learn in Paul’s epistles that women served as missionaries, teachers, healers, prophetesses, and ordinance workers.<sup>36</sup> Yet, despite the Apostles’ efforts, some converts were led astray by false teachers (Gal 1:6).

*Report to the Church at Antioch in Syria—Act 14:26–28*

**Act 14:27 (BSB).** *“they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.”* Paul and Barnabas



returned and “gave an account” (JB) of their mission to their church in the large city of Antioch in Syria, “where they had originally been commended” (NEB).

**Act 14:28.** *“they abode long time with the disciples.”* Luke summarizes without a time frame, suggesting that he was not present.

## **Acts 15 (~AD 49–50)**

*The dispute over circumcision—Act 15:1–4*

**Act 15:1 (NIV).** *“Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch.”* Luke records the Jewish vernacular that honored the sacredness of the temple on Mount Moriah by describing always coming down from the holy city Jerusalem no matter the elevation or direction. This group from Jerusalem were the Jewish Christians who wanted Christians to live the law of Moses as well as Jesus’s teachings of baptism and so forth. Paul and Josephus called these people “Judaizers.”<sup>37</sup> They have already been referenced in Acts and will continue to be a problem through the rest of the New Testament.

**Act 15:1 (NIV).** *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”* When Peter received the revelation to welcome Gentiles into the fold (Act 11), he learned that the Spirit cleansed them through their faith, without the need for circumcision. However, other Jewish converts fought this. Initially, the Church incorporated a few Gentiles into a largely Jewish-Christian community. But, when Barnabas and Paul (and other Apostles) began converting whole congregations of Gentiles, the problem was exacerbated.

As an outgrowth of the first mission to the Gentiles, the question of the need for circumcision came to the forefront. The Judaizers, or circumcision party, feared that Christianity would become separate from Judaism. This actually happened within a few centuries. Judaism also changed after AD 70 when Titus destroyed Jerusalem. Israelites had no temple for their worship and sacrificial redemptive focus. Rabbis instead relied on obedience to the law of Moses and their oral laws to save them.<sup>38</sup>

**Act 15:2.** *“Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them.”* The debate in Antioch of Syria was larger than just a local issue—it affected the whole Church. So the Apostles and Antioch representatives took their question 350 miles south to the Church authorities in Jerusalem. In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul says that he felt inspired to go (Gal 2:2). Furthermore, Gal 2:3 includes that one of Paul’s traveling companions was the gentile convert Titus. This decision had a great impact on male converts. Likely, some of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had not met many gentile converts yet. Paul and Barnabas hoped that feelings could be softened after the Jewish-Christians met a committed gentile convert.

**Act 15:4 (BSB).** *“On their arrival in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and apostles and elders, to whom they reported.”* En route, the Antioch contingency visited Saints in Phenicia and Samaria. Once in Jerusalem, they met privately with the Church leaders (Gal 2:2). Then a

general church council followed which became known as the Jerusalem Council. This was one of the most important meetings since the Lord's forty-day ministry. Their decisions allowed Christianity to move beyond Judaism and spread "to the ends of the earth" (Mk 13:27). We have two accounts of this meeting: Act 15:1–20 and Gal 2:1–10. It took place fourteen years after Paul's first visit with Peter, approximately AD 49 or 50 (Gal 2:1).

### *Jerusalem Conference or Council—Act 15:5–21*

**Act 15:5 (NASB 1995).** *"the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and . . . observe the Law of Moses.'"* Everyone at the conference was Christian, including those of the "sect of Pharisees." The debate between the two factions seems to have been heated. Originally, circumcision was the token of the covenant between God and Abraham. Jews at the time of the New Testament saw it as a badge of their faith. They failed to understand that circumcision was only the token, not the covenant. The covenant was still intact. The purpose of the law was to prepare them for their Messiah. Accepting Him was the goal, not the law of circumcision.

**Act 15:6 (NIV).** *"The apostles and elders met to consider this question."* The question was whether gentile converts to Christianity still needed to obey the law of circumcision and all its corollary laws.<sup>39</sup> Luke's detailed report opens the council room for readers to see revelation in action. We get a glimpse of how Church procedure unfolded.

**Act 15:7.** *"when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said . . ."* A lively discussion ensued, and we assume Paul played a part. Then the chief Apostle, Peter, returned to his thrice-repeated vision of the unclean animals, in which God taught him, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" (Act 10:15 NASB). The Lord's message was clear.

**Act 15:10.** *"why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"* Peter explained that Christ freed humankind from many Mosaic ordinances and their many detailed demands. Some modern interpretation of this issue may go to the other extreme that holds ordinances and baptism as purely symbolic—only an "outward sign of an inward grace."<sup>40</sup> The text points to God's approval of Cornelius by the Spirit falling upon him (and other Gentiles).

**Act 15:12.** *"the multitude kept silence . . . Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles."* Once Peter, their leader, spoke the discussion ended. Then Barnabas and Paul shared an account of miracles from their mission in Galatia. Luke places the missionary report between the important discussion by the Jerusalem leaders, Peter's retelling of his vision, and James's speech. (In Gal 2, Paul describes more of his own ideas at the Jerusalem Council).

*James's summary—Act 15:13–21*

**Act 15:13 (BLB).** “*after . . . James answered, saying, ‘Men, brothers, hear me.’*” This James is the half-brother of Jesus (not the Apostle James who was martyred in Act 12:2–20). Jesus’s sibling did not follow Him during His ministry but became a vibrant Church leader in Jerusalem after Jesus’s Resurrection.<sup>41</sup> The Epistle of James claims his authorship. Tradition purports that he became the bishop in Jerusalem. As such, he probably conducted the meeting and voiced, or read, the verdict of the Twelve to the council.

**Act 15:14. “Simeon hath declared.”** This refers to Simon Peter, the chief Apostle, who just spoke. The original is written as a command since James read an order for future policy. He also cited a prophecy fulfilled in this situation.<sup>42</sup>

**Act 15:19 (NIV).** “*It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles.*” We do not know whether James at this point was still reading what Simon Peter declared, reading the council’s verdict, or giving his concluding testimony. The sentence stated that Gentiles should obey only the moral laws and not eat blood. This applied only to the gentile converts; no decision was made about Jewish Christians living the law of Moses (but it will be discussed in Act 21:20).

**Act 15:20 (ESV).** “*write to them to abstain from . . .*” The challenge of applying this new protocol plagued the Church for the rest of the New Testament. The council had made a decision, but it was hard for some Jewish converts to internalize and accept it. From the thousands of rabbinic traditions, only four commandments from the Torah were retained. There were no longer kosher laws, segregation laws, micromanagement of the Sabbath, or circumcision. The council included abstaining from:

- idolatry
- sexual immorality
- eating blood (Lev 17:10–16)
- eating things strangled (which meant the blood was still in them)

This must have felt like a blow to the Judaizers. It required a paradigm shift from their previous philosophy, and not all were able to make that shift. Those who did not accept the council’s decision plagued Paul’s missionary work for the rest of his life. This issue reappears in most of his letters.

Two of the four specific items retained from the law of Moses were also taught by Jesus. Although not included in this account of the Jerusalem Council, converts to Christianity also needed to follow Jesus’s example, be baptized, and live the higher laws that He taught (Mt 5–7; Jn 13–17).

**Act 15:21 (CEV).** “*We must remember that the Law of Moses has been preached in city after city for many years.*” Sections of the Torah, or Pentateuch, were read every Sabbath in the synagogue and then discussed. Almost every city in the Roman Empire had at least one Jewish congregation, and they typically met in large homes or a synagogue. They read, debated, and memorized the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.<sup>43</sup>

*Sending a document from the Jerusalem Council—Act 15:22–23*

**Act 15:22.** *“Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church.”* The decision appeared to be accepted by all present. At least Luke’s account implies that “the whole church” in Jerusalem, or at least everyone at the council, was initially in agreement to move forward with the new procedure of not requiring Christians to live the law of circumcision. However, it took decades to incorporate.

**Act 15:22–23 (BSB).** *“They chose Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, two leaders . . . and sent them with this letter.”* The two leaders from Jerusalem (and possibly others) accompanied Paul and Barnabas and their group the 350 miles back to Antioch to deliver the verdict of the conference. The text implies that Judas Barsabbas and Silas were the voices of authority from Jerusalem (though the New Testament does not mention Judas Barsabbas again, Silas becomes well known as Paul’s next companion).<sup>44</sup> Having these two join the Antioch contingency is one of the reasons why we wonder whether Paul and Barnabas were not members of the Twelve. If they were the highest Church authorities, it seems odd that they needed two respectable elders to back up their story and read the Jerusalem Council verdict. Perhaps they were chosen for the Apostles’ protection or to make their journey easier.

**Act 15:23 (NIV).** *“To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings.”* The letter began with greetings to the local Saints in southeastern Asia Minor. In most English translations, this greeting is to the “brethren,” but the NIV consistently follows the Greek when it comes to gender-inclusive language. Usually the NIV translates “brethren” as “brothers and sisters,” or “believers.” Other times the NIV uses *brethren* to refer to Church leaders. The inclusion of women in worship was a significant cultural change with Christianity. The example of Jesus and the Apostolic Church offered a much larger role for women than their society did. Most religious ritual and service in the ancient world was restricted to men.<sup>45</sup> Yet Jesus and the Apostolic Church empowered women to worship. It is worth checking with the NIV or a Greek text to see how early Christianity empowered women.

*Reading the letter from the Jerusalem Council to the gentile converts—Act 15:24–29*

**Act 15:24.** *“we have heard, that certain . . . [men] have troubled you . . . saying, Ye must be circumcised.”* Luke may have had a copy of the letter for the churches abroad and thus may quote it directly here. It brought a message of peace. Historical information suggests that the majority of the members in the Christian churches in Syria and Antioch were probably Jewish Christians at this stage.<sup>46</sup> This is why the Judaizers who misrepresented Peter and Paul’s message were a problem for years.

**Act 15:25 (NASB).** *“having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul.”* The letter introduced its purpose and the two representatives from Jerusalem, honoring Paul and Barnabas as “beloved.” It also reaffirmed that those at the Jerusalem Council unanimously decided to not require the Mosaic laws, including circumcision.

**Act 15:28 (ESV).** *“it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.”* The leaders wanted to make sure everyone knew that their decision had been made through revelation. This ruling had powerful im-

plications for the Twelve. The Apostles and other council members felt inspired to go beyond their scriptures to reverse Moses's lesser law in favor of Christ's higher law. In Richard Lloyd Anderson's words, "not past scripture but new revelation was the foundation of the Church of Christ . . . past scriptures are a guide to truth, but living prophets give new scripture."<sup>47</sup>

**Act 15:29.** "*That ye abstain from . . . fornication.*" Luke again repeats a second witness of the same four impurities that Christians should continue to avoid (Act 15:20). The Greek word translated in the KJV as "fornication" is *pornea*, the root for *pornography*. It included all forms of sexual immorality. The letter concludes with the encouraging words that if the Saints will keep these four moral and dietary laws, "ye shall do well. Fare ye well."

### *The believers at Antioch rejoice—Act 15:30–35*

**Act 15:31 (BSB).** "*When the people read it, they rejoiced at its encouraging message.*" Luke mentions only the positive reception of the news from the Church leaders here, but over time, the opposition party became more vocal.

**Act 15:32 (NIV).** "*Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.*" This is another example of how the word *prophets* is used differently in the New Testament. Across the Bible we find people with a range of gifts described as prophets and prophetesses, including those who testify, predict the future, speak for the Lord, give moral and ethical direction, and lead. Jesus was also seen as a prophet. Prophecy was one of the gifts of the Spirit and became a part of worship. The Prophet Joseph taught that anyone who testifies of Jesus as the Christ has the gift of prophecy.<sup>48</sup> In the last phrase of this verse, the KJV uses the word "confirmed" while other translators communicate the Greek as "strengthen, reestablish, support further."

**Act 15:33–35.** "*after they had tarried . . . they [left] in peace. . . . Notwithstanding . . . Silas . . . Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch.*" When it was time for the Jerusalem contingency to make their return trip back to Jerusalem, Silas chose to remain in Antioch to build the kingdom of God with Paul. This section on Silas is not found in many Greek texts.

### *Paul's second mission as an Apostle—Act 15:36–41*

**Act 15:36 (NIV).** "*Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached.*" This is a chapter break in some Bibles as it begins the planning for Paul's next missionary expeditions. I presume Paul and Barnabas wanted to share the news from the Jerusalem Council with their converts and minister to the new branches as they could.

**Act 15:37 (CSB).** "*Barnabas wanted to take along John Mark.*" Barnabas wanted to bring his relative John Mark again with them as a junior companion. But Paul disagreed strongly. Luke records Paul's viewpoint, which leaves the readers with only one side of the story. Luke writes the story to show the end result; it helped the missionaries to cover more territory and further the work.



**Act 15:39–40 (BSB).** “*Their disagreement was so sharp that they parted company.*”

The result of the contention was that the companionship divided in two. Barnabas took John Mark to his hometown of Cyprus to strengthen the Church there, while Paul took Silas to Paul’s homeland in Cilicia to strengthen the new members in Galatia.

**Act 15:41 (ESV).** “*he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*” This is the beginning of Paul’s next gentile mission as an apostle. Some scholars feel that it is an extension of his first mission, and others deem it a third or even fourth mission. We will refer to it as his second apostolic mission to the Gentiles.

## Notes

1 In the Roman army, a century (fifty to one hundred soldiers) made up one-sixtieth of a legion. A cohort or regiment was made up ten centuries, having the potential of six hundred soldiers, or one-tenth of a legion. A legion was ten cohorts, with the potential of six thousand soldiers.

2 Mt 8:5, 8, 13; 27:54; Mk 15:39, 44, 45; Lk 7:6; 23:47.

3 Michael P. Speidel, “The Roman Army in Judaea under the Procurators: The Italian and the Augustan Cohort in the Acts of the Apostles,” *Ancient Society* 13/14 (1982/1983): 233–240. “From the reign of Herod the Great to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 the garrison of Judaea comprised one cavalry regiment of Sebasteni . . . and five cohorts of infantry, among them at least one cohort of Sebasteni. . . . It was Roman recruiting practice from the beginning of the empire to enroll local recruits in auxiliary regiments no matter where the unit had been raised originally.” The author has evidence for gravestones that the Italian cohort at Caesarea included Roman citizens. From AD 59 the military was mainly Caesareans and Sebasteni. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 19.176. After the death of Agrippa I in AD 44, Palestine became annexed to Syria. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.

4 Act 2:5; A. T. Kraabel, “The Disappearance of the ‘God-Fearers,’” *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 28, no. 2 (1981): 113–114.

5 Heshey Zelcer, *A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud* (Irvine, CA: Universal Publishers, 2002), 92. “The middle class citizens often owned eight slaves, the rich from five hundred to a thousand, and an emperor as many as twenty thousand.” I choose to use the phrase *servant or slave* since the two were the same word and in the Jewish and Roman world, servitude was not for life (Jews were released after seven years, and Romans were released at age thirty or thirty-five).

6 “Times and Seasons, 1 September 1842,” p. 905, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-1-september-1842/11>.

7 Deu 17:6; 19:15; 1 Cor 13:1.

8 Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 461.

9 “*Pisteuo*,” The KJV New Testament Greek Lexicon, Bible Study Tools, <https://biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/pisteuo.html>.

10 Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2000), 669–670.

11 Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1971), 118. “In the east even today, to invite a man to a meal was an honour. It was an offer of peace, trust, brotherhood and forgiveness.”

12 For example, the prophetess Anna in Lk 2:36 was from the tribe of Asher, and Saul was from Benjamin (Phlp 3:50).

13 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.15–49. “Claudius Caesar . . . Around this time lived queen Helena of Adiabene . . . her arrival was of great help to the masses in Jerusalem; for there was a famine in the land, that overtook them, and many people died of starvation.” Evidence of a multiyear famine continues in the same account.

14 Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem at the time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), 121–122.

15 Gal 1:19; 2:9, 12; Act 15:13; 21:18. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.200, refers to him as “James, the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ.”

16 Act 10:23–24; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 2:11.

17 Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), Act 2:19.

18 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 19. 343.

19 Lk 4:31–37; 8:26–39; 11:14–23.

20 Lk 8:3; also Mt 27:55; Act 4:35; 18:13.

21 John W. Welch, *Charting the New Testament*, (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002) 15.5.

22 Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2007), 45–46.

23 See, for example, Lev 16:30; Ps 51:2; Jer 33:8; Ezk 36:25.

24 Isa 29:14; Ezk 33:9; Hab 1:5; Mal 3:1; 4:1.

25 *Westminster Confession*, 12.2: “This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is all together passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.” See Hans J. Hillerbrand, *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, 4 vols. (London, UK: Routledge, 2004), 1:337: “One of Calvinism’s central convictions is that God is the initiator of all things and that humans respond. . . . Humans receive the gift of faith through the Holy Spirit and respond in gratitude, trust, and love to God’s gracious initiative. Thus, election or predestination means that salvation occurs purely by God’s grace.”

26 Historical accounts record the martyrdoms of each of the original ten Apostles, but only James fits into this time period (Judas Iscariot hung himself, and John the Beloved has not died). Peter was crucified upside-down in Rome, ca. AD 64; James son of Zebedee was beheaded, ca. AD 44; Andrew was crucified; Philip was crucified, ca. AD 54; Bartholomew was crucified; Matthew died by halberd, ca. AD 60; Thomas died by spear; James son of Alphaeus was beaten by club then crucified and stoned; Jude was crucified; Simon the Zealot was crucified.

27 Paul refers to his apostleship in Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 9:1–2; 15:7–9; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 2:2; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titu 1:1.

28 Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Orem, UT: Grandin Book, 1991), 59. Spelling updated by Kent P. Jackson, *Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2006), 149.

29 Act 9:23–25; 13:50; 17:13; 21:27–30.

30 Deu 13:1–10; 17:2–7; 18:20–22.

31 Paul recorded his persecutions in 2 Cor 11:23–27: five times whipped with thirty-nine lashes, three beatings with a rod, often imprisoned, once stoned, three shipwrecks, left in the ocean all night and day, plus perils “in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” There were more—Paul did not mention being bitten by a poisonous snake (Act 28:3–5).

32 Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 55.

33 Neal A. Maxwell, “Consecrate Thy Performance,” April 2002 general conference, online at churchofjesus-christ.org.

34 See, for example, Rom 12:1, 12; 1 Cor 4:12; 13:3.

35 Everett Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2013), 546. We read of examples of house churches in 1 Cor 16:19: “Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” Also see Act 1:13–14; 2:46; 12:12; 16:14, 40; 20:7–12, 20; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 1:11; and Phlp 1:3–7; 4:1.

36 Phlp 4:3; 1 Cor 11:2, 5, 11, 12; Titu 2:3; Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ's Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: Good Sound Publishing, 2015), chapters 2–4. In the KJV it is difficult to see how many times women are encouraged to teach, preach, pray, and serve in the Church, as *man* often refers to both genders. Over twenty New Testament verses encourage female service, teaching, and using the gifts of the Spirit to build the kingdom.

37 Gal 2:14 BLB; Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 18.2.

38 Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 306–308.

39 Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 51.

40 Robert L. Millet, *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 6, *Acts to Revelation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Desert Book, 1987), 112.

41 See Jn 7:5; Act 12:17; 21:18; Gal 1:19; and possibly 1 Cor 15:7.

42 Amo 9:11–12; similar to Deu 28:10; Isa 43:7; 45:21.

43 The Old Testament canon was not closed yet, so the Jews referred to basic sections of their scriptures. The Law is the Five Books of Moses, or the Torah or Pentateuch; the Prophets are writings of prophets from both

the northern and southern tribes between the time of Joshua to Malachi; the Writings include the historical records, the Proverbs, and the Psalms.

44 Silas is also known as Silvanus in 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1; 1 Pe 5:12. Judas Barsabbas may also be the person mentioned in Act 1:23.

45 In a few exceptions, some rituals did include women. Examples include the six women chosen as Vestal Virgins and those women needed to act as prostitutes for fertility rituals.

46 Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 309.

47 Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 53. His quote continues, “What guided the apostles was not the New Testament, for their acts created it. The Bible does not make the true church, but the true church made the Bible.”

48 “History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843],” p. 1433, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/76>; spelling and punctuation modernized: “If any person should ask me if I were a prophet, I should not deny it, as that would give me the lie; for, according to John, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; therefore if I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy, and that constitutes a prophet.”