

TEACHER'S EDITION

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GOD'S GREAT COVENANT

A Bible Course
for Children

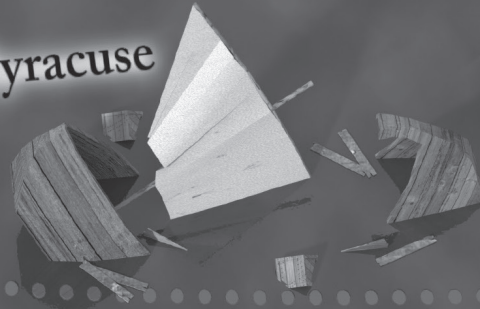
New Testament 2
Acts

MALTA

Rhegium

Syracuse

Claire A. Larsen



αυτῶ ἰωαννῆς οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ, οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχομένον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος οὐκ ᾔδει αὐτόν, ἢ ἵνα ἰσχυρῶς μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ' ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχομένον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ ὁ κόσμος οὐκ ᾔδει αὐτόν.

λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διακόνου λέγει ὑμῖν ποιήσατε, ἦσαν δὲ ὑδρίαὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν καθαρισμῶν τετακταισιν, χωροῦσαι ἀνα μέτρας ἑκατὸν τετακταισιν. λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ ἰησοῦς, γεμίσατε ὑδάτος, καὶ ἐγεμίσαν αὐτὰς εὐαγγελίου λέγει αὐτοῖς.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my husband, David Larsen, who faithfully read every chapter, corrected my mistakes, and taught me more than I ever needed to know about the history of the first-century world. Thank you for your love and patience as I wrote this and all the earlier books.



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Introduction

Everyone loves a story. You clutch the book tighter, and your eyes speed across the page as the plot thickens. The villain is creeping closer, and with danger all around him, there seems to be no escape for the hapless hero. There's nothing you can do to stop the inevitable peril awaiting him, but you read on and on, knowing something good must happen. You, of course, took a peek at the last page of the book, so you know how the book ends and that the hero escapes from the clutches of the evil villain.

What could be better than delving deep into an exciting adventure story? Here's what's better: being part of an exciting adventure story and knowing that what you do makes a difference in the outcome.


God tells us His story in the Bible. The Bible isn't just a history book detailing everything that has happened since the world began, or an almanac listing all the facts about everything, or a theology book explaining in a systematic way who God is and what He has done. In part, the Bible is all those things—historical events, important facts, and theological ideas—but it's much, much more.¹ The Bible is a very personal story that God has written to the people He loves in a very intimate way.

Though God has always existed, the story He shares with us begins with His creation of the world and everything in it. God's story took a sad turn when His beautiful world became spoiled by sin. But God wasn't surprised; He had planned that part of the story, too. He's sovereign and nothing happens by accident!

The holy God is a covenant keeper. His entire story wraps around His promise to send a Savior who would bring His sinful people back to Him. As part of His covenant, God promised to dwell with, protect, and show mercy to those He loved. And God was faithful to His promise, generation after generation. Sadly, His wayward people were not so faithful.

The holy God is the King over all the earth.² Even when His people had a human king to rule them, God made it clear that He was the Great King, the only One deserving of worship and complete devotion. Good kings ruled, doing so under the authority of the Almighty God.

1. See Exodus 6:7.
2. See Isaiah 37:16.

 **Bible Basics**
What Is the Covenant?
The **covenant** is God's solemn promise to His people, saying, "I will be your God and you will be My people." With this promise God commits to dwell with, protect, and show love and mercy to His people.

Notes for Teachers and Parents:

1 The Bible is primarily a narrative in which the LORD God relates His story of covenant love for His people. Within this covenant story, many genres of writing are represented. Good exegesis of scripture is interpreting each passage of scripture in the context of the genre in which it is written. Just as in any other written material, the genre determines the literary rules whereby you seek to understand the text. See Appendix D: How to Read and Understand the Bible, for a brief description of good hermeneutical principles. (Hermeneutics is the study of learning how to read and interpret the Bible accurately. An example of a hermeneutic principle is to not take a verse out of its context but to interpret a verse of scripture in the context of the passage, the entire book, and the interpretation of the whole Bible.)

2 As discussed throughout the God's Great Covenant series, God is completely sovereign. No actions by mankind, angels, or demons take Him by surprise. The entire plan of redemption was planned in detail before the world was created (Ephesians 1:1-9). Genesis 3:15 is the first mention in scripture of the promise of a Savior.

3 “Messiah” is the Hebrew word for “the anointed one” and “Christ” is the Greek word for “the anointed one.”

3

Bad kings ruled, doing just as they pleased. They led the people away from God. All this was in preparation for God Himself to come as King in the person of Jesus Christ, the Messiah!

Jesus Christ was different from all other kings. He didn't wear a kingly robe or sit on a throne or command a mighty army. This king looked like an ordinary man, and His followers were a bunch of ragtag fishermen, farmers, and tax collectors. He healed people, chased away demons, and obeyed God perfectly. This perfect King then died a horrible death so that the people He loved wouldn't have to die for their sin. He took away their guilt and gave them His righteousness.

Just before He went back to heaven, He said these words to His disciples: “As the Father has sent Me, so I send you into the world. Tell people about Me, make disciples for Me, and finish the work that I started on this earth.”³

The story that began in Genesis and was fulfilled through Jesus' life as recorded in the Gospels continued in the book of Acts through the work of the apostles and those who came to believe in Jesus through them.

It is through the covenant and Jesus' Great Commission that you, too, become part of God's story. God's story is a living, continuing story. When you believe in Jesus, God weaves your story into the greater story of the gospel. You and I are related to Father Abraham and are blessed because of God's covenant promises to bless the world through him. You and I are in the line of the apostles. The apostles told people about Jesus, who told people who told people who told people, and many centuries later you were also told about Jesus. The adventures of Peter and Paul are like the adventures of people today who take the gospel to their neighbors nearby and to strangers at the ends of the earth.

And what happens when you and I and people in the farthest parts of the earth believe in Jesus Christ? Amazingly, we all become children of God.⁴ All around the globe we have spiritual brothers and sisters of all races and nationalities, and together we form the family of God.

It's not always easy being a child of God. Some people will dislike us simply because we love Jesus, but as we experience difficult things because of our faith, we are sharing in the suffering that Jesus suffered for us. The Bible says that all God's children are heirs of His glorious kingdom, and as we suffer because of the name of Jesus, we will someday share in Christ's glory.⁵

God's written story ended with the last page of Revelation, but God has a continuing story. He's putting together a family and is building a kingdom, and you and I are part of that family and that kingdom. The gospel adventure lives on today through you and me.

3. See John 20:21 and Matthew 28:19-20.

4. See John 1:12-13.

5. See Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7.

Apologetics and the Truth Detectives

Questions, questions, questions. Have you ever had questions about God or the Bible? Have you ever wondered if God exists or if what the Bible says is true? If so, be assured you're not the only one to have such questions. Through the ages, biblical scholars, church leaders, ordinary people, and even atheists have asked questions and sought answers about God and the Bible.

Faith is a strange thing. By faith you believe that God exists and that He created everything in heaven and on earth. By faith you believe that the Bible is true and that Jesus Christ is both God and man. By faith you believe that Jesus died for your sins and that by believing in Him, you can have your sins forgiven.

What makes faith so strange is that you believe these things even though you've never seen them with your own eyes.¹ You weren't alive when God created the heavens and the earth, and you didn't live in ancient Palestine when Jesus walked upon the earth, healing people and teaching about the kingdom of God. How can you believe these things to be true if you weren't there to see them?

No one can prove that God is real or that He created the world. On the other hand, no one can prove that He's not real. What a person believes about the existence of God and who God is, he or she believes by faith.

How Do You Have Faith?

1

Without God's help, no one can have faith in Him. Human hearts are stubborn and don't want to believe in God. Faith in God starts when the Holy Spirit takes a hard, unbelieving heart and makes it soft and able to believe in Him. The Holy Spirit changes sinful hearts and opens blind spiritual eyes so that a person can believe the truth about God as it is explained in the Bible. With the help of the Holy Spirit, you and I can have faith in things we haven't seen. God gives His people the gift of faith.²

With new spiritual eyes, you are able to live by faith. Yet walking by faith isn't easy, and sometimes you might have doubts or questions. Asking questions isn't wrong. In fact, it's helpful to ask questions because asking good questions and working hard to find the answers makes your faith stronger.

1. See John 20:29; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:8.
2. See Ephesians 2:8-9.



Greek Speaks Apologetics

The word "apologetics" comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means "defense." Christian apologetics is the practice of gathering information in a logical, reasonable way to defend Christian beliefs.

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 See Romans 3:10-18. In these verses, the Apostle Paul explains how no one fears God or seeks after Him. Everyone is a sinner and no one is righteous.

How Do You Find the Answers to Your Questions?

One way to find answers to your spiritual questions is to employ Christian apologetics. Christian apologetics is the practice of gathering information in a logical, reasonable way to defend Christian beliefs. A person who defends the Christian faith to critics and unbelievers who do not believe the Bible is called an apologist. Did you know that every believer is an apologist? While there are some learned scholars who spend a lot of time making logical arguments about Christianity and defending the Bible, everyone who believes in Jesus should understand what he or she believes and should be able to defend his or her beliefs.

One thing that you need to understand is that even when you pursue answers using apologetics, not all questions, particularly some “why” questions, can be answered. Questions about things like why God seems so far away and why bad things happen when we’re trying to do what’s right aren’t easy to answer. Sometimes you have to shrug your shoulders and say, “God is bigger and wiser than I am. He has all the answers, but He hasn’t given *me* the answer to *that* question.” God’s thoughts and ways are higher than man’s ways, and when He doesn’t give an answer to a question, all His children still must believe that He is good and that He knows what He is doing.⁶

Facts about Apologetics

1. Every believer should know how to defend his faith.³
2. Knowing how to defend your faith takes time, diligence, and study.⁴
3. When defending your faith, you should remember that the Holy Spirit will give you the right words to speak when you need them.⁵
4. Developing good apologetics will help you strengthen your faith, resist temptation, and tell others about Jesus.

Do you remember Job? He had many “why” questions. However, instead of answering Job’s questions, God asked questions of Job. God asked these questions to show Job how big, great, and powerful He is.⁷ When God stopped asking questions, Job humbly said, “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.”⁸

Even though no one can answer all the “why” questions, the Bible gives you all the information you need to know about who God is, what He expects of you, and what it means to trust in Him.⁹ It is possible, through clear thinking and good research, to build logical arguments that show that the Bible is true, that there are no contradictions in the Bible, and that an intelligent, reasonable person can accept the Bible as truth.

So, we’ve established that asking questions is *good*, but how do you ask *good* questions?

3. See 1 Peter 3:15.

4. See 2 Timothy 3:14-16.

5. See Matthew 10:19-20.

6. See Isaiah 55:9-11; Romans 11:33-36.

7. See Job 38-42.

8. Job 42:3.

9. See 2 Peter 1:3-4.

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 This question sets the structure for the study of the book of Acts. We are all on a gospel adventure, entrusted with the precious message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Spreading this message throughout the world in which we live is our mission, too, just as it was for the early apostles. So, the *mission* is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. The *map* that guides us as we pursue the mission is God's Word. We must never attempt to do the Lord's work apart from the truth found in His inspired Scripture. The *guide* in accomplishing our mission is the Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit that spiritually dead hearts are made alive, spiritually alive hearts understand ideas that are spiritually discerned, scoffers are transformed into those who embrace the godly instructions God has given, churches are built, and societies value God's moral standards. We face *enemies* on our adventure. From the beginning Satan has desired to thwart God's good plan, and as we follow the Lord, Satan is our enemy, too. We must be wary and keep alert in order to detect his lies and not succumb to his temptations. Our sinful hearts are our enemies, too. Though we love the Lord, the temptation to disobey Him is strong. Our *travel gear* on this gospel adventure is the full armor of God (see Ephesians 6:11-17). Dressed in this complete armor, we can withstand our enemies and finish our mission. What awesome expectations we have as we continue the work begun by Jesus, continued by the apostles and early Church, and actively moving forward into new places today.

2 Of course, the apostles and early believers could only *start* the spread of the gospel into the world. The task would be given to each succeeding generation to move into new unreached regions of the world. The early believers were obedient, however, to spread the gospel to the world as they knew it. We know Paul took the gospel as far as Rome.

UNIT I

The Gospel Adventure . . . The Mission

THEME: Our mission is to proclaim God's gospel to the world.

UNIT KEY VERSE:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

We're going on an adventure together that begins on the cobbled streets of Jerusalem in the shadows of the great temple walls and moves up and down the Roman highways all the way to the imperial city of Rome. This adventure has a purpose, a mission so to speak, and all the men and women we will learn about had a strong determination to accomplish this mission despite many difficulties and obstacles along their way. So, what is a mission? A mission is a task that a person or group of people are charged to accomplish.

1 What does an adventurer need for his mission?¹To complete his mission, an adventurer needs a good map and an experienced guide. He must wear the proper clothes and have adequate protection from the dangers along the way. He must have the skills and knowledge to survive in a perilous and often unpredictable environment. Along the way the adventurer may encounter enemies who try to prevent him from accomplishing his task, so the journey requires endurance and perseverance until the adventurer reaches the final destination.

2 Our study of Acts will be a gospel adventure as we follow the story of Jesus' continuing ministry through His apostles. Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples a mission, saying, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."¹ Then, before the eyes of the disciples, Jesus rose up from the Mount of Olives into the sky. A cloud hid Jesus from their sight, and He was gone!² Jesus entrusted these faithful believers with the mission of spreading the gospel to the whole world!

Before we begin the story of the gospel's journey, we will examine the people involved in the story of Acts and the world which God had especially prepared to receive the message. Three men played key roles in this completion of God's story begun in Genesis. Luke, the doctor and historian, wrote the book of Acts. Peter, the impulsive fisherman turned bold apos-

1. Acts 1:8.
2. See Acts 1:9.

Tradition suggests that the twelve disciples did indeed cover faraway areas of the world. Some say that Andrew preached in Greece and Russia. Philip may have lived and served the Lord in Scythia (present-day Ukraine). It is likely that Thomas traveled as far as India, because Christians today in the western portion of southern India identify themselves with the early Indian Church founded by Thomas. Honest, faithful Bartholomew (also called Nathaniel) served the Lord in Armenia and died there in a horrific manner as a martyr of Jesus Christ. (Rose Publishing, *Rose Book of Bible Charts*, 92-95.)

Chapter **1**

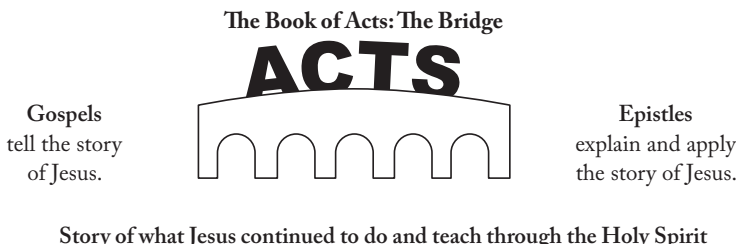
The Book of Acts and Its Author

WHO IS GOD? The God who communicates His gospel

LESSON THEME: God used Luke to write an orderly account of Jesus’ continuing ministry through the apostles.

MEMORY PASSAGE: Acts 1:8

KEY FACTS:



OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

Where	Passage
The gospel adventure . . . in Jerusalem	Acts 1–7
The gospel adventure . . . in Judea and all Samaria	Acts 8–12
The gospel adventure . . . to the ends of the earth	Acts 13–20
The gospel adventure . . . back to Jerusalem and on to Rome	Acts 21–28

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALED:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

1

In the Garden of Eden, where sin began, the LORD God promised a Savior. In the Gospels, the LORD God fulfilled His promise—Jesus Christ died on the cross for His people’s sin. In Acts the LORD God, through the apostles and the new believers, took the good news of a Savior into the world.

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 Some theologians call Genesis 3:15 the *protoevangelium*, meaning “the first glimmer of the gospel.” In this verse the LORD God, the covenant God, promises salvation to His people. The verse tells us that there will be enmity between Satan (the serpent) and Jesus continually, and there will be enmity between the offspring of Satan and the offspring of the LORD. The end of this struggle culminates at the crucifixion. At this event Satan strikes the heel of Jesus because He dies on the cross, but Jesus crushes the head of Satan when He rises from the dead and conquers death in one huge, crushing blow.

The Book of Acts and Its Author

Did you ever play the “what if” game? What if it snows tomorrow and there’s no school? “Great,” you say, “I won’t have to take my history test.” What if the snow is two feet deep, and everyone is snowbound for days? “Oh no,” you exclaim, “my birthday party will be cancelled!”

Of course, there are bigger “what if” questions than these. What if your mother and father hadn’t married each other? What if you were an only child instead of being part of a big, noisy family? There are many “what if” questions, but one thing is certain: God is in control of the world and nothing happens by accident. **2**

Greek Speaks

The Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (*euangelion*) means “good news.” The word “gospel” comes from the Greek word *euangelion* and means “good message.” The New Testament writers used the word “gospel” to mean “the good news of Jesus’ salvation.” Jesus’ good news is that He died to take the punishment for your sin. By God’s grace you can be forgiven of your sin, and by that same grace you can live each day in a way that pleases Jesus.¹

Here’s a “what if” question: What if Luke hadn’t written the book of Acts? Without Acts we’d have many unanswered questions. We’d wonder what happened to the eleven disciples after Jesus went back to heaven. We’d scratch our heads and ask, “How could a few Jewish believers in Jerusalem take the gospel to Gentiles throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and all the way to Rome?”

The book of Acts is a bridge that connects the gospel story in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to the letters, or **epistles**, written by Paul and the other apostles. Without Acts the gospel story would stop abruptly at Jesus’ resurrection. Without Acts we would have the wisdom of the epistles but know little about the men who wrote them and the people who received them. **3**

At the beginning of Acts, Luke wrote to the “most excellent” Theophilus, saying: “In my former book [the Gospel of Luke], Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to

heaven.”² In other words, Luke tells the story of Jesus’ three years of ministry on earth in his Gospel, and then in Acts, Luke tells the story of all Jesus *continued* to do and teach through His faithful believers. **4**

During His lifetime, Jesus preached the gospel throughout Palestine with these words: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”³ In Acts the apostles and new disciples preached the gospel everywhere they went. Jews and Gentiles, slaves and kings, men and women—the apostles and disciples spoke to all who

1. See Ephesians 2:1-10.

2. Acts 1:1-2.

3. Mark 1:15 (NKJV).

2 Teaching tip: Spend some time with your students imagining other kinds of “what if” questions. In doing so, you can point out the many ways in which God’s sovereignty has shown itself in each student’s life. Although we have many “what if” questions, there are no “what if” questions in God’s mind. He has a plan and nothing disrupts or diverts Him from it (see Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 14:24, 46:11; Lamentations 2:17).

3 The word “epistle” comes from the Greek word *epistole*, which means “written letter.” Chapter 23 of this book defines the word “epistle” more fully and describes in greater detail the styles of written letters in the first century. In summary, five men (Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and the writer of Hebrews) wrote epistles that have been included in the New Testament as part of God’s scripture. The apostle Paul wrote thirteen epistles, John wrote three epistles, Peter wrote two epistles, and the other two authors each wrote one epistle. They were written either to an individual person or to a church congregation. The epistles, though personal, were designed to be shared with other churches. In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the writers tell us the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. The gospels also include the spoken words of Jesus. These books give us historical facts but don’t provide much in the way of explanation as to what these events mean and how we are to understand Jesus’ words. Explaining and applying the story of Jesus is the primary purpose of the New Testament epistles. The epistles have several important functions: 1) they define and apply important biblical words such as “justification” and “sanctification”; 2) they explain in detail what it means to be a believer and disciple of Jesus Christ; 3) they explain in greater depth the concepts that Jesus spoke about in His discourses and parables; 4) they show how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the life of Jesus and how Jesus was the complete fulfillment of the Old Testament ceremonial system; and

5) they teach us how to live lives as believers that please the Lord and as ambassadors that spread the gospel of His salvation into the world.

4 The word “epistle” derives from the Greek word *epistole* and means “letter.” This word signifies a written letter and can refer to personal correspondence from one person to another or to a more formal treatise on important subjects. The New Testament contains examples of both kinds of epistles. (Comfort and Carpenter, *Holman Treasury*, 274.)

5 Dennis E. Johnson summarizes the purpose of the book of Acts with these words: “Luke’s story, from beginning to end, is the story of the acts and teachings of Jesus. This is the first thing Luke wants us to know about the church: *Jesus is still at work, here and now.*” (Johnson and Johnson, *Message of Acts*, 18.) Luke’s use of the words “began to do and teach” in Acts 1 indicates that Luke realized that his gospel story was only the beginning of Jesus’ work in the world. Though only a very few actually saw Jesus or heard His voice in the story of Acts, the events as they are recorded make it plain that Jesus was at work performing miracles, bringing about conversions, protecting His disciples, and building His Church.

6 What is the gospel or “good news” that Jesus preached? The gospel is the good news that sinful men who are separated from God because of their sin can be forgiven and once again be close to their Creator (see Isaiah 59:2, 64:6-7; 1 John 2:1-2). The gospel tells us

would listen. As the gospel message went forth, the gospel messengers had many adventures: shipwrecks, miraculous escapes from prison, encounters with sorcerers—all this and more happened and is written about in the book of Acts.

Jesus Christ, the God-Man, fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies. Then, by His death and resurrection, He purchased salvation for all God's people and ushered in the new covenant. Acts further explains the new covenant and completes God's covenant story, which began in Genesis 3:15!

Before we begin the story of Acts, we must answer some important questions. In this chapter we'll answer two questions: 1) Who was Luke? and 2) Why did he write the book of Acts to Theophilus?

Who Was Luke?

Most authorities, both ancient and present, agree that Luke wrote the book of Acts. Luke, the only Gentile writer of the New Testament, wrote more than 25 percent of the New Testament. Not only did he write more pages than any other writer, but he is the only writer who begins with Jesus' birth in his Gospel and continues the story all the way to Paul's imprisonment in Rome as recorded in Acts 28. So who was Luke and by what authority did he write these two books?

Luke, a Greek, was born in Antioch in Syria about the same time as Jesus and Paul. His name, "Luke," is a shorter form of the Latin name "Lucius." He was a highly educated man, well-schooled in both the Greek language and culture and the Hebrew scriptures. He had a large vocabulary, using Greek words no other biblical writer used. Luke was also an elegant writer, writing in classical Greek, while being able to switch when necessary to a simpler style of writing. He received a medical education, possibly at the University of Tarsus!

Luke was a historian. His Gospel is an orderly account of Jesus' life, with all the events in chronological order. He interviewed eyewitnesses to be certain of his facts, and he personally investigated the events. It's safe to assume that Luke wrote Acts with the same historical carefulness with which he wrote his Gospel.

Luke must have been a great traveler. Whether it was sailing on the sea as he did with Paul in Acts 27 or trekking through Asia Minor and Macedonia on Paul's missionary journeys, he knew the geography of the Roman world well.

Luke cared deeply about people. He had a pastor's heart and wanted people to know Jesus! As a doctor, he had compassion on the sick and handicapped. In his Gospel, Luke wrote about the



(Acts 7:42-43, 49-50), and Paul (Acts 13:32-35, 41), but their sermons recount the historical events and the covenantal promises of the Old Testament. Their sermons also point out Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament. The recurrent themes of the Old Testament (persecution of the prophets, God's judgment, the work of God's Spirit, etc.) appear repeatedly in Acts. (See Acts 2:16-21, 29-36; 3:17-26; 5:29-32; 8:30-33; 13:26-31, 32-35; 16:22-23.)

Ancient scholars as early as AD 170 are unanimous in crediting the authorship of Acts to Luke. The most obvious reason is the reference in both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to Theophilus, the recipient of the books. Acts 1:1 refers to a first book so this internal evidence connects these two books of scripture to the same author. There are other reasons to attribute the writing of Acts to Luke: a) the similar writing styles of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, b) the prominent place of women in both books, c) the use of the personal pronoun "we" in various parts of Acts indicating that the author is on the journey with Paul (Luke is the most likely companion to have written this book), d) the language and writing style indicating that the author is a man with a high level of education in the Greek language, and e) the interest in medical situations. (Jensen, *Survey of the New Testament*, 203; Sproul and Matthison, *Reformation Study Bible*, 1556.)

In addition to his Latin name, several factors indicate that Luke was a Gentile. In Colossians 4:10-15, Paul mentions that there are only three Jewish men (Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus) whom he counts as fellow workers. Then he mentions Luke and calls him a dear friend (4:14). Luke is not mentioned as one of the three Jewish men. Another indication of Luke's Gentile background is that when he quotes from the Old Testament, he quotes from the Greek Septuagint instead of the Hebrew scripture. Early Church tradition claims that Luke came from Antioch in Syria, one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire. (Stott, *Story of the New Testament*, 45.)

that Jesus, who was God and who never sinned, died to pay the debt incurred by sin so that His people could be forgiven by the grace of God (see John 1:1-4, 3:13-21; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:9, 4:15). The gospel is this: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near" (see Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9-10, 21:31). Repentance is possible, and all who do repent become part of the glorious kingdom of God (see Acts 3:19, 5:29-32, 17:30).

7 You may want to prompt students with the following: Do you remember what the new covenant is? The new covenant is not "new" in that it is completely different from and replaces the Old Testament covenant. No way! God's covenant in the Bible is one covenant that begins in Genesis and continues unbroken to the end of Revelation. The new covenant, rather, is the extension and completion of the old covenant. In the new covenant, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises and provides salvation through His death for all His people. In the new covenant, God extends the covenant of grace to all the nations so that both Jews and Gentiles can come to faith in Jesus. For a more in-depth review, see the introduction to *God's Great Covenant, New Testament 2*, particularly pages 7-8.

8 The book of Acts has a strong connection to the Old Testament. Not only is the Old Testament quoted in the various sermons of Peter (Acts 2:16-21, 25-28; 4:11), Stephen

11 All the New Testament writers wrote their books in Greek. Of all the authors, Luke used the most cultured and educated form of Greek.

12 Greek scholars say that Luke used approximately 800 Greek words that no other New Testament writer, even the educated Apostle Paul, ever used. He was flexible in his writing, moving about easily from a high-classical form of prose to a simpler use of grammar and vocabulary that the ordinary person would speak. Everything about his writing shows an artistry and accuracy that indicates that Luke was a highly intelligent and well-educated scholar. (Stott, *Story of the New Testament*, 46.)

13 Hendrickson, *New Testament Commentary: Luke*, 9–11.

14 Wong, *Opening up Acts*, 13.

15 Paul refers to Luke, his traveling companion, as “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14, NKJV).

16 Stott, *Story of the New Testament*, 47–56.

17 Luke used a small Greek word that could be translated “it is necessary” in many passages (in the New International Version, this word is often translated as “must”). By using this word, Luke was indicating that he knew that the events that occurred were not random, but were in fact foreordained to come to pass exactly as they did because God is sovereign and nothing happens in a haphazard manner. Examples of verses that have this Greek word include Acts 3:21; 9:6, 16; 14:22; 19:21. (Stott, *Story of the New Testament*, 54.)

18 Zondervan, *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible*, 1639.

19 Brand, England, and Draper, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, 1587.

20 In his gospel, Luke used the words “most excellent” to describe Theophilus (Luke 1:3). These words, as explained in the student text, were used when speaking with a person of high rank. Paul used these same words when addressing Governor Felix (see Acts 23:26 [NKJV], 24:3) and Governor Festus (Acts 26:25).

healings Jesus performed, and in Acts he wrote about those that Peter and Paul performed. In a culture in which women were unimportant, Luke included their stories in his books, writing more about women than any other New Testament writer. In Acts we read about Dorcas, Lydia, and Priscilla.⁴ Even the slave girl in Philippi had an important place in his writing.⁵

No one knows when Luke became a believer in Jesus, but possibly he believed after listening to Paul preach in Antioch. He was one of Paul’s closest friends and at times Paul’s companion on his missionary trips. His medical training was a huge help to Paul when they traveled together.¹

In Acts, Luke emphasized three things: the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the sovereign plan of God. He wanted everyone to know that it was the Holy Spirit who guided and gave power to the Church. He believed that a true church prayed because dependence upon God is necessary for a church to grow. In all his writing, Luke firmly believed that all events are part of God’s redemptive plan! As you study Acts, look for passages that mention these three things.

Who Was Theophilus and Why Did Luke Write to Him?

Luke wrote his Gospel so that Theophilus might have “an orderly account” of Jesus’ ministry and that he might “know the certainty of the things [he had] been taught.”⁶ Although Luke never saw Jesus in person, the Holy Spirit helped him write an accurate and orderly account of Jesus’ life because he talked to eyewitnesses who had spent time with Jesus. Luke wrote his second book to Theophilus because he knew the gospel story wouldn’t be complete without an account of Jesus’ continuing ministry through His disciples.

The name “Theophilus” comes from two Greek words that mean “lover of God” or “friend of God.”⁷ The title “most excellent” was given to men of high rank! So, who was Theophilus? No one knows for sure. Theophilus might have been a government official in the Roman imperial court. If this is true, Luke might have used the name to protect Theophilus’s identity. Theophilus might have been a Gentile God-fearer who believed in Israel’s God and had received this name after his baptism. The name “Theophilus” was a name used by both Jews and Gentiles, and it could have been his given name.¹

Luke wrote his books so that Theophilus would know for certain that Jesus Christ was the Savior promised in the Jewish scriptures. He wanted Theophilus to know that his faith was rooted in historical truth.¹

4. See Acts 9:32-42; 16:11-15; 18:18-28.
5. See Acts 16:16-19.
6. See Luke 1:1-4.



21 Burge, Cohick, and Green, *New Testament in Antiquity*, 196. Theophilus was a man of good economic means. He may have been a patron who sponsored Luke’s writings both for himself and for others.

22 Johnson, *Let’s Study Acts*, xviii; Brand, England, and Draper, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, 1587.

Review Worksheets

KEY FACTS:

■ What Is the Story of Acts?

Remember: The book of Acts is a *bridge* between the Gospels and the epistles. Fill in the blanks to complete the following sentences.

1. The *Gospels* tell the story of Jesus.
2. The *epistles* explain and apply the story of Jesus.
3. The book of Acts is divided into four sections. Draw a line to connect each section of the book to its theme.

The Gospel Adventure

- Acts 1–7 ——— The gospel goes to the ends of the earth.
Acts 8–12 ——— The gospel begins in Jerusalem.
Acts 13–20 ——— The gospel is spread to Judea and Samaria.
Acts 21–28 ——— Paul goes back to Jerusalem and on to Rome.

STORY FACTS:

■ Who Was Luke and What Did He Do?

In the following sentences, cross out the incorrect words (or numbers).

1. Luke wrote more than (25 / ~~40~~) percent of all the New Testament, which is (more / ~~less~~) than all the other New Testament writers.
2. Luke was born in (~~Tarsus~~ / Antioch) and was (well-educated / ~~un-schooled~~) in the Greek language and Hebrew scriptures.
3. Luke had university training in (~~law~~ / medicine).
4. Luke wrote more about (~~children~~ / women) than any other New Testament writer.
5. Luke wrote his books using a (chronological / ~~topical~~) style.



■ Luke's Emphasis

What three things did Luke emphasize in the book of Acts? Fill in the blanks.

1. _____ **prayer** _____
2. _____ **Holy Spirit** _____
3. _____ **sovereign plan of God** _____

■ Can You Decode These Words?

Decode the following words and use them to fill in the blanks.

Code: To decode the words, exchange each letter with the letter that comes before it in the alphabet. For example, A = Z, B = A . . . Z = Y)

G O S P E L **T R A V E L E R** **A C C U R A T E**
 H P T Q F M U S B W F M F S B D D V S B U F

T H E O P H I L U S **H I S T O R I A N** **G E N E S I S**
 U I F P Q I J M V T I J T U P S J B O H F O F T J T

D O C T O R **O R D E R L Y**
 E P D U P S P S E F S M Z

1. The English word that means "good news" is **gospel**.
2. Luke was well known as these three things: **doctor**, **historian**, and **traveler**.
3. The name that means "lover of God" or "friend of God" is **Theophilus**.
4. In his Gospel, Luke wrote an **accurate** and **orderly** account of Jesus' ministry.
5. Acts completes the covenant story first mentioned in the book of **Genesis**.

■ What Is the Gospel?

To discover the definition of the word "gospel," put the words in the box in order. Write the definition of "gospel" on the line provided.

grace By you God's forgiven because death Jesus'
 of on can the be cross

_____ **By God's grace you can be forgiven** _____
 _____ **because of Jesus' death on the cross.** _____

UNPACK IT FURTHER: The Meaning of Covenant

God's covenant can be explained in a few words: "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Exodus 6:7). God promised to be the God of His people. A covenant is like a promise. A covenant, though, is stronger than a promise, because a covenant brings death to the covenant breaker. God has been and always will be faithful to keep His covenant. However, we are not faithful to God, and because of that, we deserve death. God, the Covenant Keeper, died in our place so that we could be part of God's people.

Look up the following Bible verses and, on the lines provided, answer the questions.

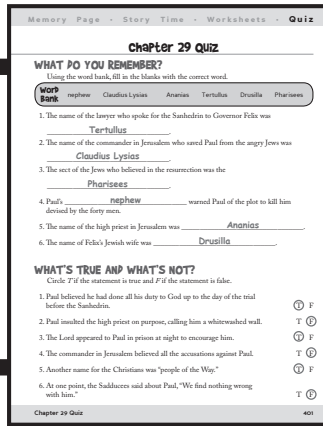
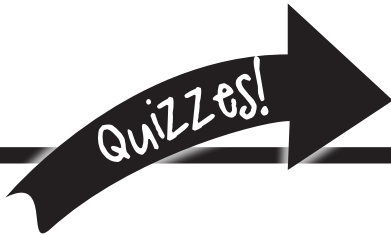
1. What does Psalm 145:13 tell us about God?

"The LORD is faithful to all His promises and loving toward all He has made."

2. According to Galatians 4:4-5, what did God, the Covenant Keeper, do for us, the covenant breakers?

"God sent His son . . . to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Download the quizzes for each chapter at ClassicalAcademicPress.com under the Resources tab of this book's product page.



Notes:

Chapter 2

Discovering the Message of Acts

WHO IS GOD? Jesus, the fulfillment of the covenant

LESSON THEME: Jesus Christ, the Savior, fulfilled God’s promise of salvation.

MEMORY PASSAGE: Romans 10:9

KEY FACTS:

LUKE’S WRITING TECHNIQUES

Summary Phrases	Passages	
“added to their number”	Acts 2:41	Acts 5:14
	Acts 2:47	Acts 6:7
Repeated Stories	Passages	
Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost (“you will be baptized with water”)	Acts 1:5	Acts 11:16
	Acts 2:1-41	Acts 15:8
Conversion of Cornelius (“the Gentiles hear from my lips”)	Acts 10:1-48	Acts 15:6-11
	Acts 11:4-17	
Conversion of Saul (Paul)	Acts 9:1-30	Acts 26:2-18
	Acts 22:1-16	

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALED:

And everyone who calls
on the name of the LORD will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the LORD has said,
among the survivors whom the LORD calls. (Joel 2:32)

The prophet Joel encourages people to call upon “the LORD [Yahweh],” the covenant God of Israel. When the Apostle Paul quotes the prophet Joel (see Romans 10:13) and pleads for us to call upon the name of the Lord, he is referring to Jesus Christ. In making this connection, Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is God, the same God who made the covenant with Israel and who is the one and only true God.¹

1. See Jeremiah 10:10; John 1:14, 18; 1 Timothy 1:17.

Discovering the Message of Acts

It's six o'clock in the evening. If I listen closely I'll hear the chimes of the Methodist church two blocks down the street playing a familiar hymn. Every morning at eight and every evening at six, the chimes ring out crisp and clear. If I continue down the street a few blocks, I can see the bell tower of a gray stone church that stretches skyward as the huge building guards the corner of Derry and Brookfield Streets.

Throughout the city in majestic cathedrals, modest brick chapels, and inconspicuous storefront churches with hand-painted signs, believers gather to worship. Whether the church has a handful of gray-haired faithfuls or a full auditorium of young, energetic worshippers, we ask the same question: Does the book of Acts have anything to say to churches today or is it just a story?

The book of Acts is more than just the story of what the early Church did. It speaks to the Christian Church today. The narrative in the book of Acts explains what the gospel is,² who is part of the Christian Church,³ and how to present the gospel to unbelievers.⁴ It gives principles about how God wants the gospel to go into the world and how the Church is to be in the world.

At the same time we must be careful not to assume that even though God's nature never changes, the ways that He works in history are always the same. One example of how God works differently at different times in history is how He uses miracles. Jesus performed many miracles to show His authority as the Son of God. The apostles performed miracles to show their authority and to start the Church. Throughout the story of the Bible, God worked amazing miracles whenever He gave new revelation to His people and did something important in His plan of redemption. God did miracles at the Exodus, at the birth of Jesus, throughout Jesus' ministry, and at Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. God also did frequent miracles through the apostles during the founding of the Church and the writing of the New Testament.⁵ There are no apostles today, the Church has been established in the world, and scripture is complete so that even though God still does perform miracles today, He doesn't usually do the same kind of miracles as we read about in Acts.¹

Another way we need to be careful as we read the book of Acts is to not assume that everything the early Church did is something that all Christians today should do. One example of this is that in the beginning of Acts, the believers in Jerusalem sold their possessions and had everything in common.⁶ Although there are times when Christians may consider doing this, the fact that the early Christians lived this way does not mean that Christians today should sell everything they own and live together in one place.

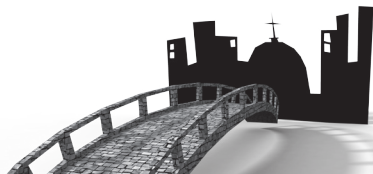
2. See Acts 4:12; 16:31.

3. See Acts 8:14-17, 36-38; 10:44-48.

4. See Acts 13:16-48; 17:22-31.

5. See, for example, Acts 2:3-12; 3:1-10; 5:12-16; and so on.

6. See Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37.



period, the Lord God performed miracles during the days of Jesus' life and the early Church in order to produce an immediate, large response to the gospel and to establish the visible Christian Church and His invisible spiritual kingdom. The Lord God always has a redemptive purpose when He does miracles, and that purpose is rooted in establishing His covenant on the earth and in protecting His people from idolatrous influences that threaten the survival of God's kingdom on earth. (For a more in-depth explanation, see *God's Great Covenant, Old Testament 2 Teacher's Edition*, p. 160, note 2.)

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 Most of God's miracles occurred during four periods of biblical history, and in each period the LORD God had a specific reason for the miracles. The first period occurred during the time recorded in Exodus and Numbers. During this time God used miracles to demonstrate who He was to the Hebrew people as He was establishing the nation of Israel and renewing His covenant with His people. During the days of Elijah and Elisha, the second period of concentrated miracles, God was demonstrating that He was the true God. He used miracles to protect His covenant people from falling into the practice of Baal worship (see 1 and 2 Kings). These two prophets spoke to the northern kingdom of Israel. Their words and miracles were a desperate call for the kings and the people to repent and turn back to the LORD God. As you may remember from studying *God's Great Covenant, Old Testament 2*, not one of the kings of the northern kingdom were godly men. It was tragic that the kings did not heed the warnings brought by Elijah and Elisha, because in 722 BC God's judgment finally came upon Israel. The Assyrian army conquered Israel, and the nation of Israel was never restored. The third period of concentrated miracles was at the time of the Exile. During the life of Daniel and his three friends, the LORD God once again protected His people, this time from the pagan influence of Babylon, through many miraculous signs and events. Finally, in the fourth

In order to understand the message of Acts for the Church today, we have to consider how the book of Acts fits into Luke’s purpose for writing it and how it fits into the rest of scripture.

What Was Luke’s Purpose in Writing Acts?

Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to a particular person for a particular purpose. He wanted the “most excellent Theophilus”⁷ to have an accurate, orderly account of the ministry of Jesus Christ so that Theophilus would “know the certainty of the things [he had] been taught.”⁸

The book of Acts is not a how-to book on how to run a church. So what is it? It’s the true story of the *continuing* work of Jesus Christ in the world, accomplished through His apostles and disciples. Acts completes the redemptive story begun in Genesis and tells us how God’s covenant promises given to Abraham are fulfilled at an actual time in history. Acts teaches us what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, it tells us why the Church is important, and it reminds us that God is with us as we take the gospel to the whole world. It’s the end of the story while at the same time it’s the beginning of the story.

How Does Acts Fit with the Old Testament?

Peter, Stephen, and Paul were always preaching long sermons, and Luke included some of their sermons in the book of Acts. In these sermons they quoted the ancient prophets and the psalms, retold stories from the Pentateuch, and reminded their listeners of the unfaithfulness of their forefathers.⁹ They showed how Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, and they didn’t forget to emphasize how faithful the LORD God had been to His people. God’s sovereign plan of redemption wove in and out of their speeches, tying the pieces together in a perfect, unified story.

These sermons teach us that the Old Testament and New Testament are not two different stories. There are not two different ways that God has worked throughout history. There are not two different paths of salvation. There are not two different ways that God related to His people. No, the story of the Bible is one story, and the two testaments boldly declare that there’s only one covenant and only one God, who never changes.

How Does Acts Fit with the New Testament?

As mentioned in chapter 1, Acts is the bridge between the Gospels, which tell the story of Jesus’ ministry while He was on earth, and the epistles, which explain and apply Jesus’ story. Acts tells us what happened to Peter and some of the other original disciples. It introduces us to Paul, who wrote

7. Luke 1:3.

8. Luke 1:4.

9. Remember, you first learned about the Pentateuch in *God’s Great Covenant, Old Testament 1*. It includes five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which are also known as the Books of the Law.

thirteen of the epistles. Acts provides us with the historical background we need to understand the epistles. While a narrative such as the book of Acts can mention theological truths, it does so only in elementary ways. The letters of Paul, Peter, and other New Testament writers are necessary so that we can understand our Christian beliefs and know how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

What Should You Look for as You Read the Book of Acts?

Luke was well-educated in the Greek language and had great skill as a writer. In the book of Acts he uses three important techniques to tell the story.

1. **Summary phrases:** Luke often paused his stories to insert a summary phrase such as “the Lord added to their number daily”¹⁰ or “so the word of God spread.”¹¹ These words are flashing lights that exclaim, “God is working in so many wonderful ways that I just can’t write about them all!”¹² You, as the reader, soon begin to look for these phrases, and each time you read one you’re reminded that the Lord has not stopped working in the hearts of people.

2. **Repeated stories:** Luke writes about three events—the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Cornelius’s conversion, and Paul’s conversion—several times. As you encounter one of these stories for a second time, you might think to yourself, “I already heard that story,” but these events are so significant that Luke wants to make sure you remember them. Each time Luke wrote the story, he was writing it to a different audience and for a different purpose. Each retelling of the story gives us pieces of information not found in the other versions—significant facts God wanted us to know—and each retelling reminds us that the Holy Spirit is building His Church.

3. **Recorded sermons:** Luke wrote that “the word of God spread,”¹² and one of the ways it spread was through sermons. Luke spent more verses recording sermons than he did describing miracles. Luke believed that hearing the Word of God was vital for a person to repent of his sin and turn in faith to the Savior. Through these sermons to high-ranking Jewish officials, kings, governors, and ordinary people we learn all we need to know to put our faith in Jesus Christ.

5

The book of Acts opens with Jesus’ command, “Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,”¹³ and ends with the declaration, “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”¹⁴

Throughout the entire book of Acts, one theme is repeated: Jesus Christ who died, was buried, and rose again brings the good news of salvation by grace through faith. This gospel proclaimed in the first century still changes lives today, and the adventure that began at Pentecost still continues to this day.

10. See Acts 2:47.
11. See Acts 6:7.
12. See Acts 6:7.
13. Acts 1:8.
14. Acts 28:28.

5 For example, Luke tells the story of Pentecost in Act 2 in thirteen verses but Peter’s sermon in the same chapter that explains what happened at Pentecost takes twenty-three verses. (Johnson, *Message of Acts*, 11.)

2

3

4

2 These three points summarized in my own words are explained in greater detail in *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* by Dennis E. Johnson (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1997), pp. 9–12.

3 The summary statements noted are two of the many such summary statements found in the book of Acts. Others can be found in Acts 4:32, 5:12, 9:31, and 16:5 as well as throughout the rest of the book of Acts. As you read through Acts, take note of all the instances in which Luke summarizes what’s happening. We can only imagine what miraculous stories Luke could have told and how many pages it would have taken to record all of them.

4 The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is significant because it is at that point that God initiated the new Church age. The Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles to equip them to speak the gospel message, and the Spirit works among the hearers to enlighten their souls to the truth of who Jesus Christ is. Peter’s vision and subsequent visit to the centurion Cornelius marked the official taking of the gospel to the Gentiles. Finally, the conversion of Saul who became Paul demonstrates the powerful grace of God in transforming a self-righteous zealot and enemy of the Lord Jesus into a humble servant who recognizes the depth of his sinful heart and who becomes faithful to the Lord he once despised.

Review Worksheets

KEY FACTS:

■ The Writing of Acts

On the lines provided, write the answers to the following questions.

1. What are two summary phrases that Luke used in the writing of Acts?

a. “added to their number”

b. “the word of God spread”

2. What are three stories that Luke repeated throughout the book of Acts?

a. the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost

b. the conversion of Cornelius and his family

c. the conversion of Paul

■ Acts: The New Testament Bridge

Fill in the blanks.

Gospels

tell the
story
of Jesus.



Epistles

explain and
apply
the story of Jesus.

■ Luke the Writer

As we know from the book of Acts, Luke was an excellent writer. Unscramble the words and write them in the blanks provided to finish the paragraph and find out what techniques Luke used in his writing.

Luke used three techniques in writing Acts. He often used SUMMARY
MASYURM

phrases such as the Lord “ADDED
DEDAD to their number

DAILY
LIYDA” and “so the word of God SPREAD
DERSPA.”

Luke also repeated STORIES
OTRESSI or parts of the events to remind

his readers that the Holy Spirit was building his CHURCH
HURCCH. Luke

recorded the SERMONS
ONMERSS of PETER
ETPRE, Paul, and

STEPHEN
HETSPNE because he believed that the word of God was important for

a person to REPENT
TREEENP and to have FAITH
HAFTI in Jesus

Christ.

■ **The Old Testament and the New Testament**

List three ways in which the Old Testament and New Testament are *not* different.

1. They are not two different ways that God worked throughout history.
2. They are not two different paths of salvation.
3. They are not two different ways that God related to His people.

WHYS & WHEREFORES:

■ **What’s True and What’s Not?**

Circle *T* if the statement is true and *F* if it is false.

1. The book of Acts is a how-to on how to run a church. T F
2. The Old Testament and the New Testament show us two different ways that God has worked in history and two different paths to salvation. T F
3. Peter and Paul often quoted from the prophets in their sermons. T F

- 4. The book of Acts tells the story of the continuing work of Jesus Christ. T F
- 5. The epistles help us understand our Christian beliefs and how to live as disciples. T F
- 6. Luke was well-educated and had great skill in the Greek language. T F
- 7. Luke believed that hearing God's Word was vital for repentance and faith. T F
- 8. Luke wrote about each event in Acts only one time. T F
- 9. The purpose of the summary phrases Luke used is to remind us that God is working in the hearts of people. T F
- 10. There are more verses in Acts about miracles than about sermons. T F

UNPACK IT FURTHER: The Meaning of the Word of God

The Bible is called the "Word of God" because God used written words to tell us the story of redemption and His covenant love for us. The Bible tells us how God wrote the Bible and what the purpose of God's Word is.

1. How did God write the Old Testament and the New Testament (see 2 Peter 1:21)?

"Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

2. What is the purpose of the Word of God (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17)?

It "is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

CHAPTER 3

TWO MEN AND THE GOSPEL: PETER AND PAUL

WHO IS GOD? The God who transforms hearts

LESSON THEME: God picked two unlikely men to change the world.

MEMORY PASSAGE: Romans 10:10-11

KEY FACTS:

SIMILARITIES IN PETER'S AND PAUL'S STORIES

Peter	Paul
Content of sermon in Jerusalem (2:22-26)	Content of sermon in Pisidian Antioch (13:26-41)
Lame man healed (3:1-10)	Lame man healed (14:8-11)
Filled with the Spirit (4:8)	Filled with the Spirit (13:9)
Extraordinary healings (5:15)	Extraordinary healings (19:12)
Laying on hands to receive the Spirit (8:17)	Laying on hands to receive the Spirit (19:6)
Conflict with magician (8:18-24)	Conflict with magician (13:6-11)
Tabitha (Dorcas) raised from the dead (9:36-41)	Eutychus raised from the dead (20:9-12)
Miraculous release from jail (12:6-11)	Miraculous release from jail (16:25-41)

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALED:

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;
 I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;
 and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:2-3)

The LORD God made a covenant with Abraham to bless him, and then through him to bless the whole world. The covenant was fulfilled first when Jesus came into the world to save His people and then when the message of the gospel spread forth out of Jerusalem to Samaria and to the far reaches of the whole world. The LORD God faithfully kept His promise and continues to keep it today.

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 This chart is taken from Burge, Cohick, and Green, *New Testament in Antiquity*, 232.

Two Men and the Gospel: Peter and Paul

The kids are bunched together, looking expectantly at you. Who will you choose to be on your team? You know that Matt has a powerful foot and is the fastest runner in the class. You also know that when Jake goes to kick the ball he misses it every time, and he never knows in what direction he should dribble the ball. What do you do? Do you pick the strongest, most athletic player or the one who doesn't know what he's doing?

When God has a mission to accomplish, He usually doesn't choose the person who seems to be the strongest or the wisest.¹ God chooses a person with flaws and weaknesses, and then, through a divine work of grace, the Holy Spirit changes that person's heart and gives him all the wisdom and strength he needs to do the job.

In Acts God used two men, Peter and Paul, to spread the gospel into the world. Peter had only a simple Jewish education and Paul was not particularly strong, but God changed their hearts and used them mightily to spread His good news. In the first twelve chapters of Acts, Peter, an impulsive fisherman, boldly proclaimed the gospel in Jerusalem and then in the regions of Judea and Samaria. In the last half of Acts God changed an arrogant, murder-seeking Jewish Pharisee into a humble, persecuted missionary. God chose these two men, and they became faithful servants of Jesus Christ.

The Man Called Peter

Peter, one of the best known of Jesus' twelve disciples, was a man of strong opinions who often blurted out words without thinking. He and his brother, Andrew, came from the town of Bethsaida on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, where they had a fishing business with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.²

Peter's given name was Simon, a Hebrew name derived from the name "Simeon." (Simeon was one of the twelve sons of the Hebrew patriarch Jacob.) After Simon obeyed Jesus' call to be a "fisher of men,"³ Jesus gave him the name "Peter," a Greek word meaning "little rock."⁴ The Apostle Paul often called Peter by the name "Cephas," the Hebrew word for "rock."⁵

Like other Galilean Jews who were looking for the promised Messiah, Peter was intrigued when John the Baptist appeared out of nowhere, preaching in the Judean wilderness.⁶ He became a disciple of John the Baptist, and then after meeting Jesus and listening to Him for

1. See 1 Corinthians 1:20-31.

2. See Luke 5:1-10; John 1:44.

3. See Matthew 4:18-22.

4. See Matthew 16:13-20.

5. See, for example, 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5 and so on.

6. See Matthew 3:1-2; Mark 1:1-8.

a time, Peter left John the Baptist to follow Jesus.⁷ Peter's mother-in-law was one of the first people that Jesus healed.⁸

Throughout all four Gospels Peter appears over and over again. It was Peter who walked on the water to meet Jesus.⁹ It was Peter who made the confession, "You are the Christ" in front of all the other disciples, and not long afterward he saw Jesus standing on a high mountain in all His splendid glory.¹⁰ And it was Peter who denied Jesus three times. During Jesus' trial, when asked by a servant girl if he knew Jesus, bold Peter was not so bold, fearing that his life would be in danger if anyone thought he was a disciple of Jesus.¹¹ Peter later repented, and on an early morning after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee and reassured Peter of His love for him and asked Peter to "feed my sheep."¹²

Peter was changed by his encounter with Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee after Christ's resurrection. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter preached to the crowds in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost,¹³ healed a beggar in the temple,¹⁴ and spoke fearlessly to the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews.¹⁵ He was even imprisoned because he refused to obey the Jewish leaders' demand to stop talking about Jesus.¹⁶

In Acts 1–12, the first part of Jesus' Great Commission takes place. In these chapters the story centers primarily around Peter as he preaches the gospel in Jerusalem and the surrounding area of Judea.¹⁷ Every day new converts believed as Peter and the other apostles preached the gospel to great crowds.¹⁷ Soon persecution scattered the believers, and Peter, along with John, was sent to Samaria to encourage believers and lay hands on them.¹⁸ Peter also had the privilege of being the first apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles when he brought the gospel to the Roman centurion Cornelius.¹⁹

Peter served God for many years in Judea, but in Acts 12 the story shifts north to Antioch, where the Apostle Paul, servant of the Lord, began spreading the gospel to the Gentiles. However, the books of Acts is not the last time we hear of Peter. Toward the end of his life, Peter wrote two letters (1 Peter and 2 Peter) to the believers scattered throughout the Mediterranean Sea region.

The Man Called Paul

How like God to choose a legalistic Pharisee intent on destroying Jesus' believers to be the man to take the gospel throughout the Roman Empire! The apostle Paul was this man, saved by grace and equipped by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's servant and messenger to the Gentiles.

7. See John 1:35–44.

14. See Acts 3:1–10.

8. See Mark 1:29–31.

15. See Acts 4:5–22.

9. See Matthew 14:22–36.

16. See Acts 4:1–4; 5:17–42.

10. See Matthew 16:13–20, 17:1–2.

17. See Acts 6:7.

11. See Matthew 26:69–75.

18. See Acts 8:1, 14–25.

12. See John 21:15–23.

19. See Acts 10:9–48.

13. See Acts 2:1–41.

what Peter's next job would be, maybe Jesus wanted Peter to remember His words from John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd." Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and as His disciples, Peter and all those who love the Lord are undershepherds of God's flock. Jesus ended His conversation with Peter the same way it had begun three years earlier, with the words, "Follow me" (21:19).

2

3

4 In Galatians 2:8 the apostle Paul called Peter "an apostle to the Jews" and himself "an apostle to the Gentiles." The first twelve chapters of Acts focus on Peter's preaching of the gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea.

2 You'll note that earlier in John 21, before Jesus reinstates Peter, the chapter talks about the miraculous catch of fish "by the Sea of Tiberias" (John 21:1). That's another name for the Sea of Galilee. In fact, the Sea of Galilee has several names in the Bible. In Old Testament days it was called the Sea of Chinnereth. Luke called it the Lake of Gennesaret (see Luke 5:1), and John called it the Sea of Tiberias (see John 6:1). King Herod Antipas built the city of Tiberias along the western edge of the Sea of Galilee in AD 18–22. The city was named after the Roman Emperor Tiberias and as a result, some people began to call the Sea of Galilee by the name "Sea of Tiberias."

3 This passage in John 21:15–23 is a beautiful picture of restoration. Peter had denied His Lord and was truly repentant of that sin. In this early-morning encounter, Jesus called Peter "Simon son of John" (21:15), the name Peter had been known by before he became Jesus' disciple. It was as though Jesus was going back to the beginning and saying, "Simon, let's start over." During this exchange, Jesus showed His love for Peter in two ways. First, Jesus accepted Peter's repentance and showed it by desiring to be reconciled to Peter. Second, Jesus demonstrated that Peter had been brought to full restoration by giving Peter an important ministry. Jesus told Peter to feed His lambs and take care of His sheep (see 21:15, 17). Jesus was entrusting Peter with a kingdom task that could only be given to someone who was forgiven and restored to fellowship with the Lord. In giving Peter this picture of

5 In his writings, Paul quoted from the Greek poets Aratus (see Acts 17:28) and Epimenides (see Titus 1:12). He understood the Greek culture well, having grown up in Tarsus, so he was equipped to face the obstacles that preaching the gospel to the Gentiles would bring. (Stott, *Story of the New Testament*, 86.)

6 Gamaliel was a great master of Pharisaism. He was the grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel, who was the founder of the Pharisee sect. (See Acts 22:3; Stott, *Story of the New Testament*, 86.)

7 Paul describes his passion for Judaism in his letter to the Galatians: “I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers” (Galatians 1:14).

Paul was a unique mixture of Greek culture and Jewish tradition. He was a Jew born in Tarsus, the principle city in the province of Cilicia in Asia Minor. In Paul’s words Tarsus was “no ordinary city.”²⁰ It was a large commercial city with a well-renowned university.

5
6 Even though Paul understood the Greek culture well and spoke and wrote the Greek language fluently, he was thoroughly Jewish as well, and had been taught in Jerusalem under the great rabbi Gamaliel.¹ Under Gamaliel’s teaching, Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, learned and accepted the strict teachings of the Pharisees. He memorized scripture and studied all the oral traditions such that he was “thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers,”²¹ and was zealous to preserve these teachings as truth that came directly from God. As a Pharisee, he actually believed that he had kept the law so perfectly that he was “faultless.”²² **7**

Paul had the privilege of being a Roman citizen. It is likely that his father or grandfather had earned the status of Roman citizenship through some type of service to the government, and this important distinction was passed on to Paul when he was born. Later it would be significant that Paul was a Roman citizen, not by purchasing citizenship, but by being born as a citizen.²³

In a way, Paul lived in two worlds. When he was in Jerusalem and was part of the Jewish world, he was called by his Hebrew name, Saul. It was under the name “Saul” that he persecuted the believers in Jesus and acted as a zealous Pharisee. Later, when he was traveling throughout Asia Minor and the Greek peninsula as a missionary to the Gentiles, Paul went by his Roman name “Paul.”

In the very early days of the Church in Jerusalem, the Pharisee Saul had an intense hatred for those who believed in Jesus. It was his belief that saying Jesus was the Messiah was blasphemous and destructive to the Jewish faith. He was so passionate about his belief that he delighted in the deaths of those who believed in Jesus Christ, and, with the approval of the Sanhedrin, he set out to kill them. He was present at the stoning of Stephen and was sitting nearby and watching approvingly as Stephen breathed his last breath.²⁴

Eventually Saul went to Damascus carrying letters from the Sanhedrin to the local synagogue rulers. These letters gave him authority to capture more believers and take them to Jerusalem as prisoners. Along the road to Damascus, Jesus appeared to Saul. In a dazzling light from heaven Jesus confronted Saul with the words, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Saul was blinded by the light and had to be led by his companions into the city. After three days Saul met with Ananias, who prayed with him so that Saul would be healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. Saul’s eyes, physical and spiritual, were opened, and he got up and was baptized.²⁵

After his conversion, Paul turned his life in an entirely different direction. Instead of persecuting believers, Paul became an apostle to the Gentiles. He traveled throughout the Ro-

20. Acts 21:39.

21. Acts 22:3.

22. See Philippians 3:6.

23. See Acts 22:26-29.

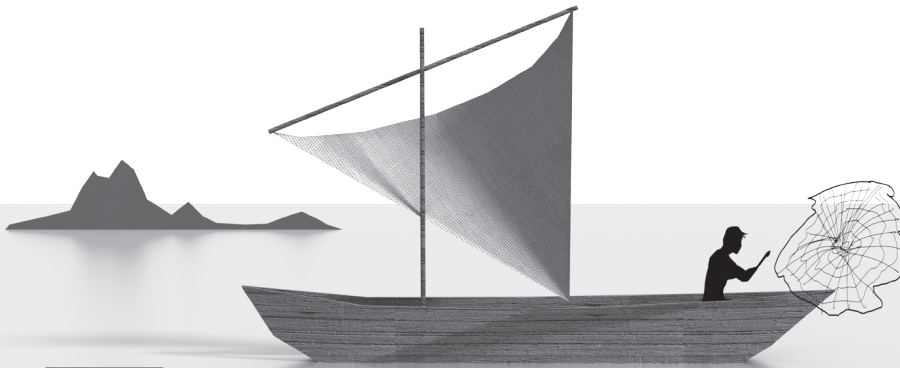
24. See Acts 8:1.

25. See Acts 9:1-20.

man Empire, preaching Christ and building churches. Instead of seeing himself as perfect in keeping the law, he called himself “the worst of sinners.”²⁶ And finally, instead of thinking that salvation came by obeying God’s commands, Paul proclaimed boldly that “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith . . . not by works, so that no one can boast.”²⁷

8 In Acts, Luke wrote the account of Paul’s three recorded missionary journeys and of his trip to Rome for trial. In the rest of the New Testament we have thirteen letters that Paul wrote to churches or to individuals.¹ In those letters he explained important doctrines of the Christian faith, and he detailed the manner in which we as Christ’s servants and the children of God should live to the glory of God our Father. All of us today can learn from Paul’s letters.

The book of Acts could be called the story of the Holy Spirit working through Peter and Paul, and this is the story we will be studying.



26. 1 Timothy 1:16.
27. Ephesians 2:8-9.

8 The apostle Paul wrote thirteen letters—nine letters to a church or group of churches and four letters to individuals. The letters to churches include Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and 2 Thessalonians. The letters to individuals include 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Review Worksheets

STORY FACTS:

■ What Goes with What?

Match each word with its description by writing the correct number on the blank provided.

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|--|
| <u>4</u> | Cephas | 1. Well-known rabbi who taught Paul |
| <u>5</u> | Peter | 2. Man who prayed with Paul and healed his blindness |
| <u>1</u> | Gamaliel | 3. Hometown of Peter |
| <u>7</u> | Tarsus | 4. Hebrew name meaning “rock” |
| <u>6</u> | Damascus | 5. Greek name meaning “little rock” |
| <u>8</u> | Saul | 6. Town where Saul went to arrest believers |
| <u>3</u> | Bethsaida | 7. City where Paul was born |
| <u>2</u> | Ananias | 8. Hebrew name of the Apostle Paul |

■ Peter or Paul: Who Are You?

If the phrase describes Peter write “Peter” in the blank. If the phrase describes Paul write “Paul.”

- | | | | |
|--------------|--|--------------|---|
| <u>Paul</u> | A Roman citizen | <u>Paul</u> | Jewish scholar |
| <u>Peter</u> | Bold and impulsive | <u>Paul</u> | Pharisee |
| <u>Paul</u> | Present at Stephen’s stoning | <u>Peter</u> | Denied Jesus three times |
| <u>Paul</u> | Persecuted believers | <u>Paul</u> | Greek scholar |
| <u>Peter</u> | One of the twelve disciples | <u>Peter</u> | Brother of Andrew |
| <u>Peter</u> | Preached in Jerusalem | <u>Peter</u> | Fisherman |
| <u>Paul</u> | Jesus said to him, “I am the one you are persecuting.” | <u>Peter</u> | Jesus said to him, “I will make you a fisher of men.” |
| <u>Peter</u> | Took the gospel to Judea and Samaria | <u>Paul</u> | Took the gospel to the far reaches of the Roman Empire |
| <u>Paul</u> | Wrote thirteen letters to churches | <u>Peter</u> | Wrote two letters to believers scattered throughout Asia Minor |
| <u>Paul</u> | Said that he was the “worst of sinners” | <u>Peter</u> | Confessed of Jesus “You are the Christ” before Jesus’ disciples |

■ Name Two

Fill in the blanks with the correct answers.

- 1. Name two things from the Gospels that show that Peter had faith in Jesus.
 - a. Peter walked on the water to meet Jesus on the Sea of Galilee.
 - b. Peter confessed before Jesus and the other disciples, "You are the Christ."

- 2. Name two things recorded in the book of Acts that show Peter was a changed man after his encounter with the resurrected Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.
 - a. Answers will vary, but students should supply two of the following: Peter preached boldly in Jerusalem even when the Sanhedrin told him to be quiet; Peter did miracles in Jerusalem; Peter took the gospel into Judea and Samaria; Peter was the first apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles.
 - b. in Jerusalem; Peter took the gospel into Judea and Samaria; Peter was the first apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

- 3. Name two things from Paul's life that prepared him well to serve Jesus.
 - a. Answers will vary, but students should supply two of the following: Paul had a thorough education in the Jewish scriptures and traditions; Paul knew the Greek language and culture well; Paul was a Roman citizen by birth.
 - b. Paul was a Roman citizen by birth.

- 4. Name two ways in which Paul served Jesus.
 - a. He established churches in cities throughout the Mediterranean area.
 - b. He wrote letters to churches or individuals to encourage and teach them.

- 5. Name two ways in which Peter and Paul are similar in how they served Jesus Christ.
 - a. Answers will vary, but should include two of the following facts taken from the Key Facts chart at the beginning of the chapter: They both preached in prominent cities, they both healed a lame man, they were

9 All through the Bible we have examples of how the LORD God chose what would seem to be the most unlikely people to do His work. The LORD's words spoken to the prophet Samuel help us understand God's purposes. He said, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). God is more interested in the condition of a person's heart toward Him than with any outward characteristic. With God's help, a humble person who depends upon Him can do incredible things. Paul explains this in greater depth in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. Paul emphasizes that God's ways are different than ours because He "chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1:27). When God has a task to accomplish, He chooses someone who will depend upon Him to do the task and then give God the glory when the task is finished. Paul ends this chapter of 1 Corinthians with a quote from Jeremiah 9:24: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." This should be our boast as well. Instead of being arrogant or prideful, we should have a humble spirit and should boast of how God works through us to do amazing things.

Memory Page • Story Time • Worksheets

b. both filled with the Holy Spirit, they both performed extraordinary
healings, they laid their hands on people so they would receive the
Spirit, they both had a conflict with a magician, they both raised
someone from the dead, and they were both miraculously released from jail.

UNPACK IT FURTHER: God's Choosing of Those Who Serve Him

All through the Bible we have examples of God choosing people who think they are not able to do what He asks them to do. Read the following Bible passages to see some examples of these people and write their names in the blanks provided.

1. **Moses** Exodus 3:5-12; 4:10-13

2. **Gideon** Judges 6:11-15

3. **Jeremiah** Jeremiah 1:4-8

4. **Barak** Judges 4:1-10

Sometimes those whom God called were obedient and sometimes they were reluctant. All of these people thought they were too weak to do what God was asking. How is God asking you to serve Him? How do you feel ill-equipped to do what He wants you to do? Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-31 and think about what kind of people God chooses to serve Him.

9

38 Unit I: The Gospel Adventure . . . The Mission

Chapter 4

The Religious/Social World of the First-century Church

WHO IS GOD? The personal God

LESSON THEME: God is the God who understands ordinary people and frees them from sin.

MEMORY PASSAGE: Romans 10:12-13

KEY FACTS:

IMPORTANT WORDS TO REMEMBER

1

Word	Meaning
patrician	wealthy Roman citizen of high social standing
plebeian	Roman citizen who was an ordinary person
insula	an apartment-like dwelling with workshops and shops on the lower level and living space on the second floor
doma	wealthier person's dwelling which consisted of a rectangular, walled structure with rooms along the inside walls and a courtyard or two in the center
popina	shop in an insula where a person could buy hot food and beverages
apparitores	middle-class people who worked as scribes, heralds, or messengers for local government officials
Augustales	middle-class people who used to be slaves and now worked for wealthy manufacturing or shipping companies
tablinum	an office in the doma of a craftsman or wealthy person

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALED:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
 because the LORD has anointed me
 to preach good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
 to proclaim freedom for the captives
 and release from darkness for the prisoners. (Isaiah 61:1)

The verses from Isaiah 61 describe the people of the New Testament world. Many people lived in poverty, many were slaves, many were brokenhearted because of their harsh lives. All were captives of sin. The message of the gospel is that the Savior came to these people, bringing the good news of forgiveness of sin and fulfilling the words that the prophet had spoken so many years earlier.

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 Information taken from Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 34, 40–42, 95, 151–152.

The Religious/Social World of the First-century Church

2 The definition of Hellenistic Jews applies to all Jews who were living outside of Palestine, having been relocated by the dispersion many years earlier. The term “Hellenistic Jews” is an all-inclusive term for all Jews living in Asia Minor or the Greek peninsula or other parts of the Roman world outside Judea and Galilee.

3 Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 11.

4 In the first century, the city of Rome had close to a million people dwelling in it. Not until London met the one-millionth population mark in the late eighteenth century was there any city as large as Rome. Other cities, such as Athens, Alexandria, Corinth, Ephesus, Pergamum, Sardis, and Antioch, had populations between 50,000 to 200,000. The cities were where the power was, but it was also the location of great poverty, with masses of people crammed together in small dwellings facing narrow streets. (Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 14–16.)

Imagine that you're a Christian living in one of the provincial cities of the Roman Empire. Maybe you came from a Greek family in Ephesus who became believers after hearing Paul preach about Jesus. Or maybe you're a Hellenistic Jew living in Corinth after having been banished from Rome by Emperor Claudius. (A Hellenistic Jew was a Jewish person who was born a Jew but lived outside Palestine and spoke Greek instead of Aramaic.)¹ You had listened to Paul and were persuaded that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah prophesied about by the Old Testament prophets. Or maybe you're a slave working in the household of a wealthy Roman senator. You're fascinated to hear about being free in Christ because every day you have no choices. You have to do what your owner tells you to do.

The Christian Church of the first century was a peculiar assortment of merchants and craftsmen, Jews and Gentiles, free people and slaves, the educated and the unschooled. How was it possible for such different people to get along with each other in one church? How could Jews who had been taught the Old Testament Scriptures be friends with Greeks who had once worshipped pagan gods such as Zeus and Artemis? It only makes sense when we remember that the Holy Spirit was working in the believers' hearts.

In this chapter you will learn a little about what the religious world was like in the first century. This information is helpful because when you can imagine what the world of the early Church was like, you can understand the book of Acts better.

Who Was in the Church?

3 The people in the New Testament Church were mostly city people. Most of Paul's ministry took place in cities, even though only a fifth of the Roman Empire's population lived in cities. At the time of the early Church, Rome was the largest city that the world had ever known. There were other large cities, such as Ephesus, Corinth, Antioch, and Alexandria, though they were not as huge as Rome.

4 In the world of the Roman Empire everyone had his or her own place in society, and the first thing to consider in knowing your place was whether you were a slave or a free person. One out of every five people was a slave (that's about 20 percent of the population), and for those who lived in Italy and Greece, the number was as high as 30 percent. Imagine you're standing in line at the grocery store. There's a person in front of you and a person behind. If you lived in Rome during the first century, one of the three of you likely would have been a slave.

Slaves couldn't own property, get married, or have children. Slaves had no rights and were the property of their owners. Slaves on the farms had harsh lives, while the lot of the city slaves, depend-

1. See Acts 18:2.

ing on who owned them and what skills they had, was sometimes a little easier. Punishment for disobedience was severe, including instant death, but in some households a hardworking, obedient slave could buy his or her freedom. In the church congregations there were many who were slaves.

If you were a free person, you were either a Roman citizen or not a Roman citizen. This was a huge distinction. A Roman citizen had certain privileges and legal rights that a non-citizen did not have. A Roman citizen had the right to vote, run for public office, and make legal contracts. When accused of a crime, a Roman citizen had the right of a fair trial, and if found guilty, he could appeal his case to a higher court, all the way up to the emperor.² Punishment for a Roman citizen could not include being whipped or tortured, and unless accused of treason, no Roman citizen could be given the death penalty or could be sentenced to die on a cross.³ Only a Roman citizen could serve as a Roman legionnaire, but a non-citizen could serve as an auxiliary soldier. After successfully serving his military time, an auxiliary soldier could become a Roman citizen. Being born as a Roman citizen had a greater status than earning citizenship later in life.⁴ If you were a Roman citizen, you were either a patrician (those who had high social standing and were wealthy) or a plebeian (ordinary people).

So, in the empire there was a small group of wealthy, powerful Roman citizens and a large part of the population that was very poor, working for a penny a day for the food they ate and sleeping either in makeshift shacks leaning against the side of a building or huddled outside on the narrow streets.

In between the very wealthy and the very poor were the middle class, which was made up of three types of people and which included approximately one-third of the population. First, there were the craftsmen (potters, carpenters, metalworkers, tentmakers, etc.) and the merchants. Usually these men and their families lived in an *insula*. An *insula* was an apartment-like dwelling with workshops and shops on the lower level and living space on the second floor.

A successful craftsman might have several rooms for his family to live in, but poorer families often all crowded into one room. Furnishings could be as few as a couple of bedrolls, a lamp or two to lessen the darkness, an earthen jar for storage, and a flat plate for each person. Because house fires were so common, people didn't cook inside the *insula*. Instead they walked to a nearby *popina* to buy hot food and drink for dinner!

The *insula* buildings were built of mud bricks, stucco, or wood with mud or brick floors. They had a central courtyard with a community well in the center and a common latrine (that's a type of toilet). Life in the *insulae* was crowded, noisy, and smelly.

A more successful craftsman or merchant might have lived in a *doma*, a rectangular, walled structure with rooms along the inside walls and a courtyard or two in the center. His workshop

2. See Acts 25:8-12.

3. See Acts 16:35-40; 22:22-29.

4. See Acts 22:22-29.

had great wealth and influence), the equestrian class (those who had wealth and were entitled to one horse from public funds), and the *decurians*. *Decurians* were the elite in the various provinces. They were often wealthy landowners or officials in local political positions. (Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 100–103.)

8 Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 40–42.

5

6

7

8

5 Slaves in the country who worked on farms had a hard life. They worked long hours chained together in the fields and slept at night in buildings not any better than prison cells. The life of the city slaves varied greatly depending upon the household in which they lived and the skills they possessed. If a slave was literate and had good writing skills, he or she could have the job of teacher, clerk, or accountant. A slave could have a responsible position in the households or businesses of those who owned them. Regardless of what the slave's tasks were, the living conditions of city slaves were usually better than that of country slaves and, unlike the country slaves, they were not treated as prisoners. (Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 67–70, 99–100.)

6 Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 67–70, 99–100.

7 In the city of Rome most people were Roman citizens, but in the provinces few people had that privilege. Being born as a free person resulted in that person having a higher social status than someone who purchased his or her freedom through money or military service. The Apostle Paul had the status of being born as a Roman citizen based upon something his father or grandfather would have done to gain this status (see Acts 22:27). The patrician class of citizens was the group of people who had long-standing claim to citizenship and had wealth, influence, and power. The patricians included senators (who

9 Information taken from Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 151–152. Those who used their physical strength to earn a living made up one other large portion of the working class of Roman society. Rome and the cities in the provinces were having a building boom in the first century, and construction sites needed many hands. Emperor Claudius had one building project that employed 30,000 men as diggers for a span of eleven years. All but the richest women had to work, but generally women did their work in their homes. Occupations for women included weaving and garment making, cleaning, cooking, midwifery, wet-nursing, and personal assistance. Some women worked as dancers, singers, or bar workers, but these jobs usually brought the stigma of being low-status jobs, and people associated those jobs with providing sexual favors with or without payment. In Roman society, there were possibilities for women to gain status by their own vocational efforts, either working alongside their husbands or having their own businesses. Lydia of Philippi (originally from Thyatira) was an example of a successful businesswoman. (See Acts 16:11–15; Jones, *World of the Early Church*, 59–62.)

SPQR Latin Lives On

Have you noticed that sometimes the word *insula* is spelled with an *a* and other times it is spelled with an *ae*? The word *insula* is a Latin word, and when it's singular, which means we're talking about just one apartment-like dwelling, the word ends in an *a*. When the word is plural, which means we're talking about more than one apartment-like dwelling, it ends in an *ae*. The same rule applies to the Latin words *doma* and *popina*.

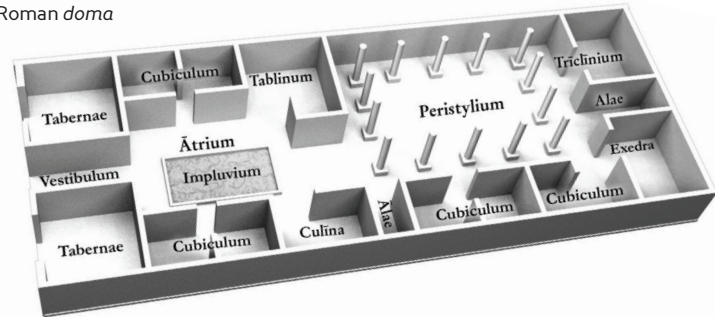
would have been attached to the side of the house. Inside the wall at the front of the *doma* was the *tablinum* (office), where business took place. The *domae* were decorated with colorful murals, wall hangings, and curtains. Rooms would be furnished with beds, tables, and basic necessities.

The second type of middle-class men were the *apparitores*, a Latin word meaning “servant.” These were men who could read and write and thus were able to work as scribes, heralds, or messengers for the civil magistrates of local government. Though these men would never be wealthy, they could advance in their positions and were financially well off.

The third type of middle-class men were the *Augustales*, former slaves who had been freed by their masters. These freedmen enjoyed the support of wealthy families for whom they had been slaves and had responsible jobs in shipping and manufacturing businesses owned by the families. The *Augustales* also could be part of a group of former trusted slaves called the *collegium*. Serving on the *collegium* was a one-year public-service position in which the members organized religious community events and planned the annual birthday celebration for the Caesar. It was through this connection with the imperial cult of the caesar that these freed men received their name. The *Augustales* could become quite wealthy, but their social status prevented them from ever serving as a local magistrate or from having much influence in society.

9

Floor plan of a Roman *doma*



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Key: | Impluvium: basin for collecting rainwater | Peristylum: a court surrounded by columns |
| Tabernae: shop | Tablinum: record room, archives | Alae: storage space (literally, “wing”) |
| Vestibulum: court | Culina: kitchen | Triclinium: dining room |
| Cubiculum: bedroom | | Exedra: conversation room |
| Atrium: hall, atrium | | |

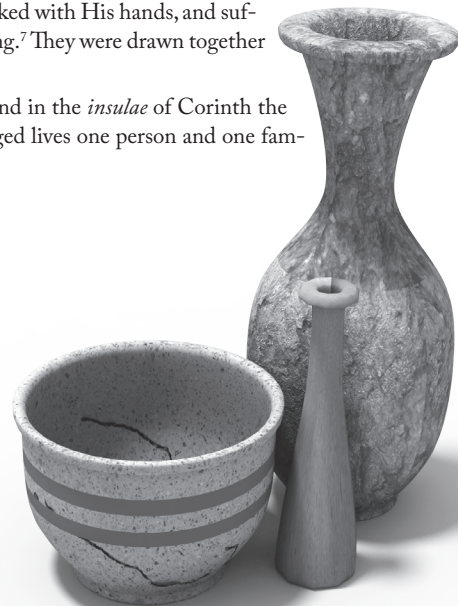
This was the culture in which the Christian believers lived. Not participating in the community’s religious celebrations, not eating meat offered to idols,⁵ refusing to worship the emperor, and removing household gods from their homes—these were some of the choices that Christians had to make. These choices often resulted in losing customers at their workshops, being investigated by local authorities, and being persecuted by fearful and suspicious neighbors. **14**

How Did They Worship?

In the crowded cities, as people met at workshops to conduct business or at the *popinae* to eat a meal, Christians talked about Jesus. At this time, Christians didn’t have church buildings where they could meet. Instead, they gathered in homes—small groups meeting in an upper room in an *insula*, or a larger group meeting in a *domus* owned by a wealthier church member. When they met, they shared a simple meal, sang hymns of praise, and listened as men such as Paul, Timothy, or Apollos instructed them in the way of the Lord.

The message of the gospel was attractive to the ordinary person. Christianity spoke about a personal God who loves people and gives grace.⁶ It was a religion of freedom from sin’s bondage because of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God. They liked the fact that Jesus Christ was a real person who had lived an ordinary life, worked with His hands, and suffered in all the ways that they were suffering.⁷ They were drawn together by the love of the people who loved Jesus.

So from the backstreets of Ephesus and in the *insulae* of Corinth the young Church grew, and the gospel changed lives one person and one family at a time.



5. See Acts 15:29.
6. See John 1:1-14; Ephesians 1:4-8; 2:6-7; Philippians 2:5-8.
7. See Matthew 13:53-55; Mark 6:1-3; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9.

Review Worksheets

KEY FACTS & STORY FACTS:

■ Who Am I?

Using the words from the word bank, identify what kind of person is speaking and put the correct word in the blank.

Word Bank

Augustale *Isis* *apparitore* *plebeian* *Hellenistic Jew* *patrician*

I am a Roman citizen who is just an ordinary person.

plebeian

I am a middle-class free person who works for the owner of a shipping company.

Augustale

I am a Jew who speaks Greek and lives outside of Palestine.

Hellenistic Jew

I am a wealthy and prominent Roman citizen.

patrician

I can read and write and work as a scribe for a local official.

apparitore

I am an Egyptian goddess that many people in the Roman provinces worshipped.

Isis

■ What's the Correct Answer?

Circle the correct word(s).

1. The largest city in the Roman Empire was (Corinth / Rome).
2. At the time of the Roman Empire, (30 percent / 20 percent) of people in Italy and Greece were slaves.
3. The apartment-like house in which middle-class people lived was a(n) (doma / insula).
4. People in the New Testament Church were mostly (city / country) people.
5. People who lived in the *insula* bought hot food from the (popina / *tablinum*).

6. Most of the people in the first-century churches were (wealthy / middle class).
 7. Whether or not a person was a Roman citizen was a (small / huge) distinction.

■ **What Was It Like to Be a Slave?**

Put an X in the blank next to the phrases that describe what it was like to be a slave in the Roman Empire.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <u> X </u> Couldn't get married | <u> X </u> Couldn't have children |
| <u> </u> Easy life in the city | <u> X </u> Could buy his freedom |
| <u> X </u> Severe punishment for disobedience, even death | <u> </u> Could own property |
| <u> X </u> Could be a member of a Christian church | |

WHYS & WHEREFORES:

■ **What's the Reason?**

Circle the correct answer.

- Most people didn't cook in their rooms in the *insula* because _____.
 a. people were afraid of fires from cooking food
 b. food at the *popina* was cheaper
- Christians in the empire were persecuted by suspicious neighbors because _____.
 a. they didn't participate in the community-wide religious festivals
 b. they talked to people on the street corners
- The message of the gospel was attractive to ordinary people because _____.
 a. Christianity spoke about a personal God who loved people and showed grace
 b. Christianity promised that God would bless them by making them wealthier

UNPACK IT FURTHER: The Meaning of Freedom in Jesus Christ

What does the Bible say about freedom? Read Romans 6:16-18 and 1 Peter 2:16-17 and then fill in the following blanks.

- Before Jesus Christ we all were slaves to sin.
- After Jesus Christ we all are slaves to righteousness.
- How are we supposed to live as free people in Jesus Christ?
We are to live as free men, but should not use our freedom as a cover-up for sin. We are to live as servants of God and show respect to everyone.

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALED CONT.

The prophecy of Micah, written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, was fulfilled when a pagan emperor decreed that a census be taken of everyone in the empire (see Luke 2:1-7). It was that census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in Judea, where Jesus the Messiah was born, thus fulfilling Micah's prophesy. Even the actions of rulers who have no desire to worship the true God are governed by the sovereign plan of Almighty God.

The Political World of the First-Century Church (Part I)

In the first century AD, the Pax Romana covered the Mediterranean world like a warm blanket. Emperor Caesar Augustus and his Roman armies had conquered the Mediterranean world, and now that all the nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea were under one government, an odd kind of peace settled upon the land.

What Was the Pax Romana and Why Is It Important?

The Pax Romana was a time of unity and peace in the Roman Empire. After centuries of wars and conflicts, borders between provinces were safe to cross, people traveled freely, and nations were busy trading with each other. Though the conquered nations could never forget that ultimate power over the entire Mediterranean Sea area rested with the Roman emperor, and though they knew that any political restlessness would be quickly squashed, all benefitted from how the Pax Romana changed the world.

A traveler moving throughout the Roman world would encounter many different cultures, but the Greek language and the good roads pulled the empire together. Greek was the commercial language, so everyone conducting business or writing important letters understood each other. Also, most common people were able to speak Greek, even if it wasn't their native language. The Romans had built a network of paved roads connecting all parts of the empire together. While the paved roads did make travel easier in some ways, it was still difficult and dangerous. Not only was travel hard, but the inns had bad food and cheap wine. Whenever possible, people stayed in the homes of family and friends.

SPQR Latin Lives On
Pax Romana means the "peace of Rome." Pax is the Latin word meaning "peace." The Pax Romana was the period of peace during the reign of the Roman Empire when warring was essentially over and a general peace within the empire settled over the land.

1

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 Burge, Cohick, and Green, *New Testament in Antiquity*, 84-85.

Blank lines for notes.

2 Burge, Cohick, and Green, *New Testament in Antiquity*, 85.

3 The Greek language played a big part in the spread of the gospel in the first century. New Testament authors quoted from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, in their letters to the churches. The New Testament epistles were written in Greek and so could be read and understood by Jewish and Gentile believers alike. In addition, the early Church used some Greek concepts (such as the use of the word *logos* to refer to Jesus, as in John 1:1, and the distinction between the earthly and heavenly temples in Hebrews 9:1-14) to explain Christian doctrines in terms that those influenced by Greek thought could understand. (Brand, England, and Draper, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, 746-747.)

4 Because the Hellenistic Christians grew up and lived in a Greek culture, they were familiar with Greek thought. Understanding this, Paul presented the gospel to them in a way that they would understand and which stood in contrast to the pagan worldview around them. Of course, many of the Hellenistic Christians had been Jews prior to their conversion to Christianity. For that reason, Paul also quoted scripture from the Old Testament in his sermons and letters. When Paul quoted scripture, however, he quoted from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. That's why some of the New Testament quotes read slightly differently than what our Old Testament says: the English versions of the Old Testament are translated from the Hebrew. (Brand, England, and Draper, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, 746-748.)

5 At one time during the Roman Republic and early Roman Empire, the Senate had as many as 900 members. Over a period of time after Caesar Augustus came to power, he narrowed the Senate down to 600 senators and it stayed around that number from that time on. During the time of the Roman emperors,

2

The Mediterranean Sea, also called "our sea" by the Romans who ruled it, sat in the middle of the empire, with nations forming a large circle around it. When the winds were strong, journeying by sea was quicker than traveling by road, but no less dangerous. Violent winds and raiding pirates made traveling 10-15 miles a day on foot preferable to sailing as a passenger on a heavily laden cargo ship.

The Roman highway system and the Greek language, benefits of the *Pax Romana*, made it possible for the gospel to spread easily from Jerusalem into Judea and throughout the known world. It was just the right time in history. The sovereign God had planned it perfectly.

+i Additional Information
See appendix E for some additional information about Roman roads.

In the world of Roman political rule, the influence of Greek philosophy, culture, religion, and language was strong. This influence was called Hellenism. These Greek beliefs explained how the universe came about and claimed that man could gain favor with, and possibly salvation from, the gods through his own reason and efforts.

3

Obviously, these Greek beliefs didn't agree with the Jewish scriptures. The Jewish people of Palestine and later the early Christian Church tried hard to keep their beliefs pure from the parts of Hellenism that were destructive to the Christian faith. Sometimes conflicts arose between believers with a Greek background (called Hellenists) and believers who came from a Hebrew background. One good effect of Hellenism, however, was that sometimes New Testament writers used Greek ideas to explain difficult Christian doctrines, and this made understanding the gospel easier for those with a Greek background. Another important benefit was that the New Testament writers wrote their books in the Greek language. Since most first-century people could speak Greek and most literate people could read Greek, writing the books in Greek made it possible for people of different backgrounds, Jew and Gentile, to read and understand what the New Testament writers wrote.

4

Who Was Ruling in the Roman Empire?

5

The highest ruler of the Roman Empire was the emperor. Although there was a political body called the Senate, by the time of Emperor Caesar Augustus's rule, the emperor held all the real power over the empire. During the time of the New Testament, five different Roman emperors ruled the empire.

Caesar Augustus (27 BC-AD 14): Emperor Caesar Augustus was emperor when Jesus was born. It was his decree ordering that a census be taken of everyone in the empire that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and fulfilled the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in the small town of Bethlehem of Judea.¹

1. See Micah 5:2.

the Senate had little power. Men sought inclusion in the Senate more for prestige and social standing than for actual legislative or ruling authority. Appointments to important governmental positions such as governorships of large provinces were made from members of the Senate. Under Caesar Augustus's reign, a Senator had to be a free citizen and own considerable property. (Wikipedia, s.v. "Senate of the Roman Empire," last modified October 23, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senate_of_the_Roman_Empire>.)

Tiberius (AD 14–37): The ministry of Jesus took place while Tiberius was emperor. Tiberius came to power at a time of peace. Although he was reluctant to become emperor, he was a capable ruler. He spent money wisely, though some Romans thought he was too stingy, and he made sure that the borders of the empire were safe from enemies.

The Roman Senate and the people didn't like Tiberius. As time went by, he began to avoid people. Eventually he left Rome to live alone on the island of Capri and ruled the empire from a distance. When he died in AD 37, many Romans cheered!

6

Gaius Caligula (AD 37–41): Gaius, a grandson of Tiberius, was nicknamed “Caligula” (meaning “little boot”). Though Gaius was his first name, he was more popularly known as Emperor Caligula. He became emperor at the age of twenty-five and, even though he only ruled for four years, he was one of the most ruthless emperors that ever ruled the Roman Empire. This mentally unstable ruler believed he was the Roman god Jupiter and accepted sacrifices as though he was a god. When a few Greeks erected an altar to Caligula at Jamnia in Judea, the Jews protested to the emperor. Angered by the Jews’ protest, Caligula decided to put a statue of himself in the temple at Jerusalem. Both Agrippa I, the king of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, and Petronius, the Roman governor of Syria, knew this was a bad idea and tried to stop Caligula. They knew that the Jews would react and might revolt. If the Jews rioted over the statue, something worse, such as an all-out war between the Jews and Rome, could start. These reasonable rulers tried to change Caligula’s mind, but they were unsuccessful in doing so. Interestingly, before Caligula could build his statue, he was assassinated by a group of senators and praetorian guards (the soldiers who acted as the personal bodyguards of the emperor).

8

The Apostle Paul began his ministry while Caligula was emperor.

Claudius (AD 41–54): Claudius, the uncle of Caligula, was a most unlikely choice to be emperor. He wasn't attractive, walked with a limp, and stuttered, but he was intelligent and was an excellent ruler. He expanded the empire to include Britain, gave King Agrippa I a



A Bit of History

What Is Hellenism?

1. The word “Hellenism” comes from the Greek name for the nation of Greece, *Hellas*.
2. It describes the Greek culture, which was heavily influenced by Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle, and many others.
3. It proposed that salvation came through human reason.
4. It proposed that the human body was evil and temporary, and the human soul was good and eternal.

Who Were the Hellenistic Christians?

The Hellenistic Christians were a group of Christians whose language and culture was Greek rather than Hebrew. When Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, preached or wrote letters to the Hellenistic Christians, he used ideas familiar to them to present the gospel!

7

6 Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, 207.

7 Brand, England, and Draper, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, 746.

8 Brand, England, and Draper, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, 236.

9 The disturbance in Rome began after some claimed that the *Christos* (Jewish Messiah) had come to earth. The word “Christ” comes from the Greek word *Christos*. *Christos* and the Hebrew word for “Messiah” both mean “the anointed one.” When a Jew heard someone refer to Jesus as “Jesus Christ,” he immediately thought of all the Old Testament prophecies relating to the Messiah. So, the Jews in Rome who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah would naturally react to anyone claiming that the Messiah had come. The disturbance was serious enough that the Emperor Claudius banned all Jews from Rome to prevent any further trouble. Aquila and Priscilla were caught in this situation, and after leaving Rome, they settled in Corinth, where they eventually met Paul (see Acts 18:1-2).

10 Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, 236.

11 Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas*, 236–237.

greater territory to rule in Palestine, and increased trade to the outer regions of the empire.

9 The Apostle Paul made his first two missionary journeys during Claudius’s reign. When the Jews in Rome created a disturbance, Claudius banished all Jews from Rome. Paul’s friends, Aquila and Priscilla, left Rome at that time and moved to Corinth. Claudius was eventually poisoned by his wife Agrippina because she wanted her son Nero to be the emperor.

10 **Nero (AD 54–68):** At first Nero ruled well. Then in AD 59 he murdered his mother and soon became a tyrant who caused terror in the empire. Like Caligula before him, he believed he was a god. Though the Senate opposed him, the ordinary people loved him because he provided great entertainments for them.

11 In AD 64 a huge fire burned down much of Rome. Afterward, Nero built a luxurious palace and many new buildings throughout Rome. When people became suspicious that Nero had set the fire on purpose, he blamed the Christians for the fire. That started a terrible persecution during which time Christians were burned alive and mauled by wild animals. Then Rome had a financial crisis, and rebellions broke out throughout the empire. Nero fled from Rome and killed himself before he could be executed by the Senate, which had condemned him to death. The Apostle Paul made his third missionary journey, wrote his many epistles, and was put to death in Rome during the reign of Nero.

Does it seem strange to call this period of history the *Pax Romana* when so many people lived under the control of a government that had absolute control and was often cruel in the way it treated people? If you were not a Roman citizen and lived under Roman rule, life could be difficult for you. Yet during the centuries of Roman rule, the people of the Mediterranean world were protected from the threat of war from outside nations. People could travel freely from place to place, and the common Greek language made it possible for people from one end of the empire to the other to understand each other. The sovereign God had planned it all perfectly. It was the right time and the right place with the right people chosen by God Himself to take His gospel message away from Jerusalem to faraway places.

SPQR Latin Lives On

The word “Senate” comes from the Latin word *senex* meaning “old man.” Generally speaking, the members of the Roman Senate were older aristocratic men who had political power and wealth.



Review Worksheets

KEY FACTS & STORY FACTS:

■ Who Was Ruling Rome?

Using the word bank, write the name of the emperor in the blank before the description.
(Hint: You'll use each name more than once.)

Word Bank

Tiberius Caesar Augustus Claudius Nero Caligula

1. Caligula He was assassinated by senators and praetorian guards.
2. Tiberius He was a capable ruler but the Roman people didn't like him.
3. Claudius He banned all Jews from the city of Rome.
4. Caligula His name means "little boot."
5. Caesar Augustus He ordered the census that fulfilled Micah's prophecy.
6. Caesar Augustus He ruled during the years of Jesus' earthly ministry.
7. Claudius He was unattractive, stuttered, and walked with a limp.
8. Claudius He ruled during Paul's first two missionary journeys.
9. Nero He blamed the Christians for the great fire in Rome.
10. Nero He murdered his own mother.

STORY FACTS:

■ What Are the Facts?

1. Using the word bank, fill in the blanks with the correct answers.

Word Bank

statue senex our sea roads census
emperor Greek Capri peace

- a. peace meaning of the word *pax*
- b. statue what Caligula wanted to put in the temple
- c. senex Latin word meaning "old man"
- d. Greek commercial language of the Roman Empire
- e. our sea Romans sometimes called the Mediterranean Sea this
- f. emperor who had all the power in the Roman Empire

- g. Capri island where Tiberius died all alone
- h. census Caesar Augustus decreed this
- i. roads connected all parts of the Roman Empire

2. What two things during the *Pax Romana* enabled the gospel to go into the world?

- a. good road system
- b. Greek language

WHYS & WHEREFORES:

■ **What's the Reason?**

Circle the correct answers.

1. The world was different during the *Pax Romana* because _____.
 - a. nations were free from tyranny and could rule themselves
 - b. there were no wars and people could travel freely and trade with each other**
2. One good effect of Hellenism on the spread of the gospel was _____.
 - a. New Testament writers could use Greek ideas to explain Christian doctrines**
 - b. Hellenism and Christianity had similar views on how to gain salvation
3. King Agrippa I and Petronius tried to stop Caligula from erecting a statue in the temple in Jerusalem because _____.
 - a. they were afraid that the Jews would react and revolt**
 - b. it was so costly to build that the Roman people might get angry and riot
4. Emperor Nero killed himself because he _____.
 - a. knew the Senate had condemned him and was planning to execute him**
 - b. regretted blaming the Christians for the fire in Rome and persecuting them
5. Claudius's wife Agrippina poisoned him because _____.
 - a. she was angry that he had banished the Jews from Rome
 - b. she wanted her son Nero to be the emperor**

UNPACK IT FURTHER: The Meaning of God's Sovereignty

God's sovereignty means that God has absolute power and control over all the nations of the world. Though the kings of earth think they rule supreme, everything they do and everything that happens to them comes from the hand of Almighty God.

Read the following verses and then in the blanks write the name of the nation (or people group) over which God



Chapters 6 & 7 skipped in sample.

UNIT 1

Memory Passage Worksheet

The Gospel Adventure . . . The Mission

Part 1: Acts 1:8

Fill in the blanks with the correct answer.

1. In Acts 1:8, what did Jesus say would happen when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples?

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.”

2. According to Acts 1:8, where will the gospel go?

It will go from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and eventually to the ends of the earth.

Part 2: Romans 10:9-15

■ Romans 10:9-10: How We Are Saved

Unscramble the following words and write them in the blanks provided. Then in the passage that follows, fill in the blanks with the correct unscrambled words. (Hint: Words can be used more than one time.)

RAISED

DAISRE

HEART

ERHAT

JUSTIFIED

DIJESFUTI

LORD

DORL

MOUTH

HOTMU

CONFESS

FONSECS

DEAD

EADD

SAVED

EVADS

BELIEVE

VEELIBE

JESUS

SEJUS

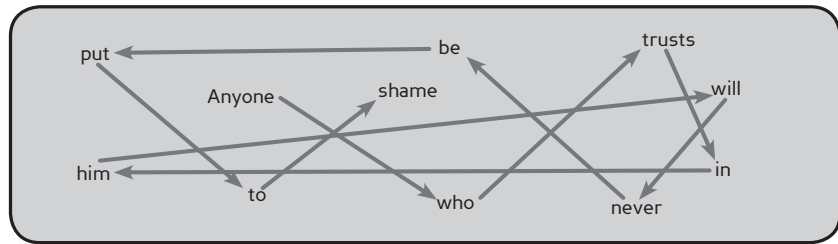
Notes:

“If you CONFESS with your MOUTH,
 ‘JESUS is LORD,’ and
BELIEVE in your HEART that God
RAISED him from the DEAD, you
 will be saved. For it is with your heart that you BELIEVE
 and are JUSTIFIED, and it is with your mouth that you
CONFESS and are SAVED.”

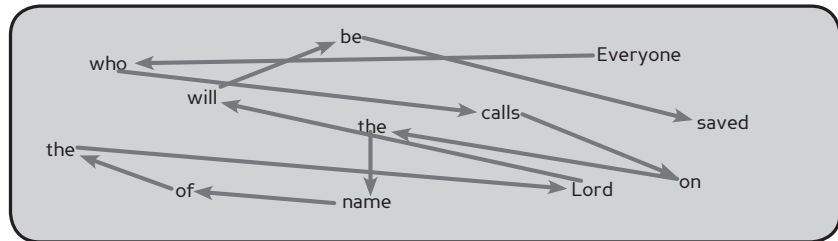
■ **Verses 11-13: What Scripture Says**

1. Verses 11 and 13 are quotes from the Old Testament. Draw arrows to connect the words in the correct order.

Verse 11



Verse 13



2. Verse 12 says that there are two ways that Jews and Gentiles are alike. What are they?

- a. "The same Lord is Lord of all."
- b. The Lord "richly blesses all who call on him."

■ **Verses 14-15: Four Important Questions**

1. In Romans 10:14-15 four important questions are asked. These questions tell us that five things must happen for a person to be saved. Put the following verbs (action words) in the correct order (1-5).

 4 Preach

 1 Call

 2 Believe

 5 Be sent

 3 Hear

2. The Lord thinks well of those who take the gospel to people who have never heard about Jesus. What does God say about them? Decode the message to find out.

Code: A = Z, B = A, C = B, D = C . . . Z = Y

HOW IPX	BEAUTIFUL CFBVUJGVM	ARE BSF
THE UIF	FEET GFFU	OF PG
THOSE UIPTF	WHO XIP	BRING CSJOH
GOOD HPPE	NEWS OFXT	!

trust Him in your new situation, too (see Hebrews 13:8). Psalm 139:1-15 says that God knows everything you do, and He is always right beside you to help you. Romans 8:28 says that God works all things, even things that you don't like, to be somehow for your good.

2. What are some ways that God would show His faithfulness to you in a situation like this?

Answers will vary. If students struggle with answering this question, feel free to prompt them with some or all of the following: God is faithful when you are afraid (see Psalm 56:3; Isaiah 43:1-2). He encourages you to be strong and have courage when you are facing new situations (see Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:6-9). God is faithful to answer your prayers when you delight in Him and ask for things that please Him (see Psalm 37:4-5). When you are in situations that make you cry and ask God for his help, God will show you the way to go (see Isaiah 30:20-21). When you are in new situations or there are big changes in your life, you can sin by being irritable, unkind, disobedient to your parents, or complaining. When you sin, God is faithful to you and will forgive you (see 1 John 1:9). His grace is sufficient to forgive all our sin, and we cannot lose His love by sinning (see Psalm 100:5).

■ **Pray about It**

If you were in this situation, what might you say to the Lord in your prayers? Write a short two- or three-sentence prayer as an example of how you would pray.

Prayers will vary.

STORY 2:

Taylor has been your best friend for as long as you can remember. The two of you have been in the same classes in school, have explored every inch of the woods behind your house together, groaned over difficult math problems, and shared secrets that no one else knows. This summer a new family moved into the neighborhood with a child the same age as you and Taylor. This girl wants only one best friend, and that friend is Taylor. Now Taylor spends every afternoon at the new girl's house, swimming in her backyard pool and doing math problems together with her. You are angry, resentful, and lonely.

■ Ponder It

Read Psalm 55:12-14, 16-17, 22; Psalm 3; 145:13-14; Hebrews 13:5-6; and 1 Peter 5:7 and use them to answer the following questions.

1. What does the Bible say about the faithfulness of people?

Answers will vary. If students struggle with answering this question, feel free to prompt them with some or all of the following: Sometimes even our best friends will insult us and hurt our feelings (see Psalm 55:12-14), but God is always available to hear us when we are crying. He listens to all our concerns and will keep us safe (see Psalm 55:16-17, 22). God lifts up our heads and encourages us when we feel depressed because people whom we thought were our friends have become our enemies (see Psalm 3; 145:13-14). We can take our cares to God because He cares for us. He is always faithful, and He never changes (see Psalm 145:13; Hebrews 13:8; 1 Peter 5:7).

2. What does the Bible say about God's faithfulness to us?

Answers will vary. If students struggle with answering this question, feel free to prompt them with some or all of the following: God is faithful to all His promises (see Psalm 145:13). God's compassions are new every morning and His faithfulness is great (see Lamentations 3:22-23). God is faithful in everything He does (see Psalm 33:11). God's

faithfulness is so immense that it reaches all the way up to the sky (see Psalm 36:5). God's faithfulness lasts forever (see Psalm 117:2) and endures through all generations of people (see Psalm 119:90).

■ **Pray about It**

Friends may desert us, but the Lord never leaves us. He is always with us. Write a short prayer thanking the Lord for His constant presence and loving-kindness.

Prayers will vary.

Bonus Activity

Write a short story of a time that was difficult for you, but during which time the Lord showed Himself to be faithful.

Stories will vary.

GRAMPY: That's right, Chloe. Being a Believer is more than believing that Jesus was a good man. A true Believer believes that Jesus was both man and God and that He died on the cross and rose again so that sinful people like you and me could be forgiven of our sin. Being a Believer means that we've asked Jesus to forgive us and now we're trying to obey Him because we love Him.

OLIVER: It's like we're part of His family.

GRAMPY: Exactly.

CHLOE: Doesn't the Bible say that we're called Christians?

GRAMPY: Yes, that's another one of our names. The origin of that word is very interesting. When you look at the word "Christians," you see that it's made up of two parts: *Christ* and *-ians*. That *-ians* on the end there is called a suffix, which just means it's something added to the end of a word. The Greek suffix *-ianos*, which is where we get the *-ians* from, originally applied to slaves. So the name "Christian" means "slave of Christ."¹

CHLOE: Oh, I don't know if I want to be a slave!

GRAMPY: Well, I know what you mean, but if I were to be a slave to anyone, I would certainly want it to be to Jesus. Did you know that the Apostle Paul often called himself a slave or servant of Christ and the Church?¹

CHLOE: Well, I guess you're right. But what does it mean to be a servant or slave of Christ?

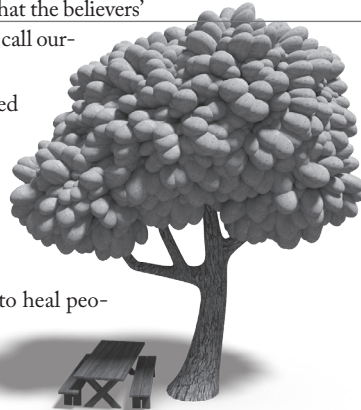
GRAMPY: We're Jesus' slaves because He redeemed us from the slavery of sin to become His servants—servants of righteousness. The Greek *-ianos* ending on words means not only "slave" but also "one who accepts a person's teaching and follows him." As Christians, we accept Jesus' teachings, and we follow Him. Believers were first called Christians in the Gentile city of Antioch because the people in that city recognized that the believers' behavior, speech, and beliefs were like Christ's. If we call ourselves Christians, we should live like Jesus lived.

OLIVER: But I thought the followers of Jesus were called "disciples."

GRAMPY: That's a third name for believers in Jesus. We are His disciples.

CHLOE: I thought Jesus had only twelve disciples.

OLIVER: No, Jesus had many disciples. Don't you remember how Jesus sent out seventy-two disciples to heal people and preach the gospel?²



1. See Romans 1:1; 6:15-18; Colossians 1:24-25.
2. See Luke 10:1-4.

Notes to Teachers and Parents:

1 Brand, England, and Draper, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, 288.

2 The word "Christian" is used three times in the New Testament. Believers were first called Christians in the city of Antioch (see Acts 11:26) because their lives and behavior were so much like that of Jesus, the One whom they followed. King Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" (Acts 26:28). The third occurrence of the word "Christian" appears in 1 Peter 4:16 where it says, "However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name."

GRAMPY: You're both right. Jesus picked twelve men to be His closest followers. They traveled with Him for three years, watching him do miracles and listening to Him teach. The Bible calls these men the twelve disciples or the Twelve.³ But He had other disciples, too. Can you name any of them?

OLIVER: Mary Magdalene was His disciple, and there were other women who were His disciples, too.

GRAMPY: That's right. Jesus had many disciples. In Acts 1 there were 120 disciples who were waiting and praying before the day of Pentecost. The idea of being a disciple is an ancient one. Famous philosophers, especially the Greeks, had disciples. The word "disciple" comes from the Greek word *mathetes* or the Latin word *discipulus*, both of which mean "student" or "learner." A teacher and his disciple had a close relationship. They spent much time together, and after a while the disciple would begin to think and act like his teacher.

CHLOE: I see. If we are Jesus' disciples, then we don't just believe in Him, but we learn to think and act like Him.

GRAMPY: Yes. Jesus says that His words are to remain in us.⁴ That's how we begin to look like Him. But it's not easy to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus warned people to think seriously before deciding to follow Him.⁵

OLIVER: Pastor Bob says that being Jesus' disciple means that we might have to suffer like Jesus did. Some Christians are killed because they follow Jesus.

GRAMPY: Yes, they are. Sadly, in many countries, Christian churches are burned to the ground, pastors are put in prison, and Christians are killed. It's not easy to be a Christian there. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."⁶ When we are Jesus' disciples, we must do what He wants us to do, not what we want to do. That's "denying yourself."

OLIVER: Well, I guess we have a lot of names: Believer, Christian, and Disciple. Did we forget any?

GRAMPY: One other name is very important. Sometimes a Christian will say he is a "Berean." Do you know what that name means?

CHLOE: That's a strange name!

GRAMPY: Let me explain. When the Apostle Paul preached in the town of Berea, many people believed in Jesus, and they took their faith seriously. After Paul preached, they would open up the scriptures and examine them carefully. They asked questions like, "Was Paul correct in what he said?" and "Was Jesus really the Messiah about whom the prophets had prophesied?"

3. See Matthew 10:1; 11:1; 20:17; Mark 10:32; and so on.

4. See John 15:7-8.

5. See Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-35.

6. Matthew 16:24.

They felt they had to check it out. Only after they concluded that Paul's words agreed with the rest of scripture did they accept Paul's words.⁷ So, people today who examine scripture thoroughly to check out what they hear or read may say they are acting like the Bereans did.

OLIVER: It's a good thing to check out what you hear at church to make sure it agrees with the Bible, don't you think, Grampy?

CHLOE: But it takes so much time.

GRAMPY: Yes, it takes time, but we must guard our hearts and minds from error, and knowing what God says in the Bible is the only way to do that.

CHLOE: I guess you're right.

GRAMPY: It doesn't have to be such hard work, though. It can be a game—a detective's game.

CHLOE: That's a great idea! If studying the Bible were like solving a mystery, it wouldn't seem so hard to do.

OLIVER: But how's the Bible a mystery?

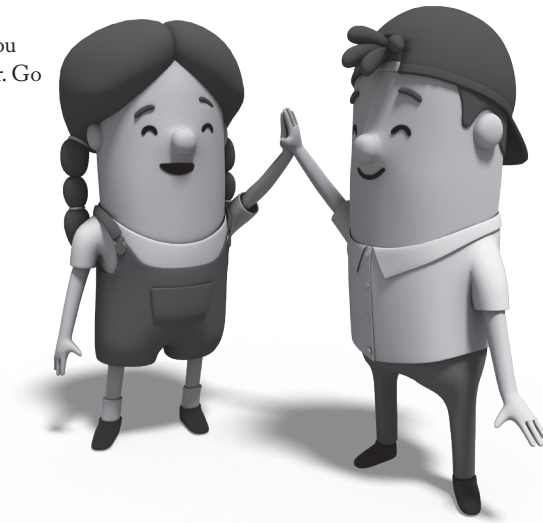
CHLOE: Here's a mystery question: Why is Jesus the only way to heaven?

GRAMPY: Good question! Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life."⁸ Why don't you research this question and see what you learn?

OLIVER: We can call ourselves the Truth Detectives. We're looking for God's truth in God's Word.

CHLOE: Right. Let's do it!

GRAMPY: OK, Truth Detectives, you have a week to find the answer. Go for it!



7. See Acts 17:10-12.

8. John 14:6.
