

**STUDY
GUIDE FOR
THE BOOK
OF ACTS**

**BY HAL HAYS
ENCOURAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL, INC.
COPYWRITE 2008**

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THE BOOK OF ACTS

1

The Book of Acts was **written by Luke** (Luke's Gospel is addressed to Theophilus – Luke 1:3 – and Acts 1:1 alludes to being a continuation of that writing to Theophilus). This is confirmed by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius and Jerome who were early church Fathers). The book was probably written between AD 60 and 62 while Paul was imprisoned in Rome and covers early church history beginning with the Ascension of Jesus into heaven (AD 30).

The **key verse** of Acts is Chapter 1 verse 8 which gives the game plan for evangelizing – first in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria and finally the utmost parts of the world. The book can be outlined according to this verse:

AREA	JERUSALEM	JUDEA/SAMARIA	THE WORLD
CHAPTERS	1-8:4	8:5-12:25	13:1-28:31
KEY SPEAKERS	PETER STEPHEN	PHILLIP PETER	PAUL
FOCUS GROUP	JEWS	JEWS SAMARITANS GENTILES	GENTILES
TIME	AD 30-33	AD 33-46	AD 46-61

2

BACKGROUND SUMMARY ACTS 1:1-2:13

The resurrected Jesus appeared off and on to various people over a period of forty days (1:3) who told His followers to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (cp John 14:16-18; 15:26, 27; 16:7-15). His teaching during this period was about the coming Kingdom of God – a kingdom that Jesus taught would be temporarily reside within men (Luke 17:21) but would in the future be established on the earth (cp. the Hebrew prophets and the Book of Revelation). Upper most in the minds of the disciples was understanding when the Kingdom will be established (1:6). Jesus denies identifying the time and redirects their focus to God's evangelistic plan (1:8).

Jesus then ascends into heaven (1:9-11) and the disciples wait as directed in the upper room (1:12-14). It was during this waiting period that they selected Matthias to replace Judas as the twelfth disciple (1:15-26).

Ten days after the Ascension on the Jewish feast of **Pentecost**, the promised Holy Spirit makes a dramatic appearance in the 12 disciples! Every Jewish male from around the world was required to come to Jerusalem to celebrate three feasts during the year – Passover, **Pentecost** and Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-17). The commotion made by the coming of the Holy Spirit attracted a huge crowd in the house where they had been staying. The commotion in Jerusalem was created by a violent blowing wind and each disciple speaking in 'tongues'. This enabled the crowd to understand a message from the Holy Spirit to those in attendance. It also caused the crowd to seek an explanation for what was taking place.

DISCUSSION: What were these 'tongues'?

The Greek word (glossa) means 'tongue' or 'language'. Are there any clues in the context that would help us understand its use in 2:4?

Question: From where were the Jews coming to celebrate Pentecost? (cp 2:5) _____

Question: Why were they able to understand the message from the Holy Spirit? (cp 2:6) _____

Question: Were the languages spoken by the disciples worldly or other worldly? (cp 2: 7-11) _____

PENTECOSTAL EVANGELISM

Peter used the opportunity created by the dramatic coming of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel to an interested, **JEWISH** crowd. His outline is simple: an explanation of the commotion (2:15-21), and an encouragement to seek God's salvation (2:22-36). It was an effective sermon because under the influence of God's Spirit and God's Word, three thousand souls were brought into the Kingdom of God (2:37, 41).

THINKING JEWISH

The Jews were looking for a descendant of David to rule God's kingdom (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 7:11). They thought Jesus might be the promised King (Messiah) when they sang the Messianic greeting (cp Psalm 118:26; Mt 21:9) as He entered Jerusalem riding a donkey (cp Zech 9:9; Lk 20:38-44) on the exact day prophesied by Daniel (9:25).

Why was Peter successful? He was able to explain and tie together the events (i.e. the death & resurrection of Jesus with the Pentecostal experience) in biblical terms. The texts used from the Hebrew Scriptures were:

Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:17-21)

Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28)

Psalm 132: 11 (Acts 2:30)

Psalm 16:10 (Acts 2:31)

Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34, 35)

How were these Scriptures used by Peter to share the Gospel?**THE PROPHET JOEL EXPLAINS THE PRESENT PHENOMENA (ACTS 2:17-21)**

Joel 2:28-32 explains the present phenomena. In the **LAST DAYS** there will be:

Manifestations by God in _____ (Acts 2:17, 18; Joel 2:28, 29), and

Manifestations by God in the _____ (Acts 2:19, 20; Joel 2: 30, 31).

It also has a call to _____ (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32).

Was Joel 2 fulfilled at Pentecost?

What remains to be fulfilled?

Does the NT indicate when Joel 2:30, 31 might be fulfilled?

Verse 21 is a transition point. It mentions calling on God for salvation. Verses 22-36 explain how to call on God.

HOW TO CALL ON GOD (Recognize that Jesus is the Messiah - Acts 2: 22-36)

PROVING JESUS IS MESSIAH

1) LOOK AT HIS LIFE (2:22) - God identified Jesus as Messiah through:

- _____ (Lk 7:20-23)
- _____ (Lk 23:44-46; Mt 27:51-54)
- _____ (Lk 11:29-32)

2) LOOK AT HIS DEATH (2:23)

Who is responsible for the death of Jesus:

- Act 2:22 _____
- Matt 27: 22-25 _____
- Mark 15:16-20 _____

3) LOOK AT HIS RESURRECTION (2:24)

- What is the implication of rising from the dead?
1 Cor 15:17 _____

4) LOOK AT HIS ASCENSION (2:25-35)

- 2:25-28 - David, the author of Psalm 16, expected the Messiah to rise again and ascend to sit at God's right hand: Psa 16:8-11
- 2:29 – David is not the Messiah because:
He _____
He was _____
His _____ is still in our presence
- 2:30,31 – David was a prophet:
He knew one of his _____ would sit on the throne of the kingdom (Psa 132:11 cp 1 Chr 7:11)
He knew Messiah would be _____ (Psa 16:10)
- 2:32 We, the miracle speakers, witnessed Jesus' resurrection
- 2:33 We also witnessed His ascension, _____ by God in our miraculous speech
- 2:34, 35 That was not _____ we saw ascending (Psa 110:1)

2:36 CONCLUSION: JESUS is _____ & _____

The consciences of the Jews were wounded by the **6** implication of their involvement in Messiah's death. They sought the Apostle's advice on how to call upon God as Joel had directed (2:37). The answer was easy:

Repent

Be baptized

in order to have God respond (2:38, 39) and 3,000 souls entered into the spiritual kingdom of God.

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

The Greek word means to change your mind after understanding the facts. As it relates to the Gospel, it refers to changing your mind about Jesus after you have heard the facts about who He is and what He has done.

Who is He?

Son of _____ Mat 26:2

Son of _____ Jn 5:18

What did He do?

Remove the consequence of _____ Jn 1:29

How are we included in His work?

_____ Acts 8:37

_____ and _____ Rom 10:9

While the FOUNDATION of repentance is changing your mind about the Person and work of Jesus, and embracing His Person and work by faith, the true penitent of Jesus will demonstrate the FRUIT of his/her repentance with a changed lifestyle (Acts 26:20). Jesus illustrated how true repentance is expressed in John 15:1-11.

Who is the vine? Jn 15:1 _____

Who are the branches? Jn 15:5 _____

What is the activity of a 'branch'? Jn 15:4 _____

THE MEANING OF ABIDE

To 'abide' means to remain, to continue, to endure, to tarry. In the John 15 illustration, a branch does not have a separate identity from the vine – it is an extension of the vine. It draws its life from the vine because it has no life in itself.

For a branch to abide or remain in the vine means for the follower of Christ to continue finding his life and identity in the Person and work of Christ.

What is the result of abiding?

Jn 15:5 _____

What does bearing fruit prove?

Jn 15:8 _____

What happens when you begin to bear fruit?

Jn 15:2 _____

What is the responsibility of abiding?

Jn 15:9 _____

How is abiding in God's love demonstrated?

Jn 15:10 _____

What is the destiny of those who are not remaining confident in the Person and the Work of Christ?

Jn 15:6 _____

Was this person ever confident in the Person and the Work of Christ?

Can a 'branch' separate himself from the vine?

Rom 8:31-39 _____

What protection does every 'branch' have?

Jn 10:28 _____

Jn 10:29 _____

LESSONS FOR EVANGELISM FROM ACTS 2: 14-36

1. Know and use scripture
 2. Know facts about Jesus:
 - Son of Man
 - Son of God
 - Died
 - Resurrected
 - Ascended
 - As prophesied in Scripture
 3. Give a Close:
 - Call for repentance – a change of mind about the Person and Work of Jesus
 - Call for Fruit of repentance
- Expressed by:
- Abiding in Christ's word (Jn 15:7)
 - Confidence in His Person and Work
 - Learning and keeping God's commandments as expressions of appreciation for His work on the cross

TRANSITION TO PETER'S 2ND SERMON

After the conversion of 3,000 souls, Luke records the daily activities of the early church: devoted to the Apostle's teaching, having Christian fellowship, celebrating the Lord's Supper, and praying (2:42). It was a joyous group who shared with each other and was encouraged by the Apostle's signs and wonders (2:43, 44). They met in the Temple and in homes and they had good relations with non-believers (2:45-47).

However, one day on the way to Temple fellowship, Peter and John entered the Beautiful Gate around 3PM (a time of prayer for the Jews). They came across a man lame from birth who we find out in 4:22 was about 40 years old. He

was begging and requested aid from Peter and John. Rather than giving the man alms, they looked at him and healed him in the name of Jesus (3:3-8). This created another commotion at the gate entering the Temple, and the commotion moved into the Temple, specifically to the Portico of Solomon (3:10,11).

Peter seized the moment (carpe diem) and preached another evangelistic message (3:12-26).

PETER'S MESSAGE

SHIFTS FOCUS

1. **We are NOT the subject 3:12**
God is the subject 3:13
 - **God glorified Jesus 3:13a**
 - **You dishonored Jesus 3:13b**
 - **You delivered Him to be executed 3:14**
 - **You demanded He be executed 3:15**
 - **Lame man healed in the Name of Jesus 3:16**
2. **Your past ignorance is excusable 3:17**
 - **The present time is a repentance op 3:18-19a**
 - **The prophets announced Jesus work in the past 3:18a**
 - **The prophets announcement has been fulfilled 3:18b**
 - **Therefore, REPENT! 3:19**
3. **Repentance results:**
 - **Sins forgotten 3:19**
 - **Refreshment coming 3:19**
 - **Messiah returning 3:20**
 - **Messiah waiting in heaven to return 3:21**
4. **Moses told you to listen to Messiah 3:22**
 - **Consequence for failing to listen to this message 3:23**
 - **Consistent message since then from Samuel on 3:24**
 - **All this was promised primarily to you thru Abe & the prophets 3:25, 26**

EVALUATING PETER'S 2nd SERMON

1. **Who did the people focus upon? _____**
 2. **To whom did Peter redirect their focus? _____**
 3. **On whom should we focus our presentation? _____**
 4. **Peter redirected their focus again. On whom did he shift the focus in 3:13? _____**
 5. **How aggressive was Peter in developing their guilt? 3:13-15 _____**
 6. **How did Peter redirect their focus back to Jesus? 3:16 _____**
-
1. **How did Peter relieve a part of their guilt? 3:17 _____**
 2. **How did Peter prepare them to make a decision? 3:18 _____**
 3. **How strong was Peter in his appeal? 3:19 _____**
 4. **What benefits did he promise? 3:19b _____
3:19c _____
3:20 _____**
-
1. **Upon what did Peter base his final appeal? 3:21 _____**
 2. **Specifically, what passage? 3:22 _____**
 3. **What human authority was Peter appealing to? _____**
 4. **What is the consequence for not heeding the written prophet? 3:23 _____**
 5. **How did Peter boost the authority of this consequence? 3:24 _____**
 6. **How did Peter appeal for them to affirm his message? 3:25, 26 _____**

RESULTS TO PETER'S PREACHING 4:1-4

There was both a positive and negative response to Peter's preaching. On the negative side, he aroused anger among the priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees (4:1,2). The result was that Peter and John were arrested and put in jail (4:3).

On the positive side, the people benefited... 5,000 believed their message and were added to the Kingdom of God (4:4).

BEING PRACTICAL

What are the negative consequences of being bold in the Name of the Lord?

4:2 _____

4:3 _____

What are the positive results for being bold in the Name of the Lord?

4:4 _____

Is it worth it to you to suffer consequences for being bold in the Name of the Lord? _____

Will you be bold in the Name of the Lord? _____

PETER AND JOHN'S TRIAL

After spending the night in jail, Peter and John were brought before the Jewish rulers, elders and scribes under the leadership of Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others like them of priestly descent (4:5-7). Peter, under the influence of the Holy Spirit (and evidently remembering the words of Jesus before His death – Matt 10:19), began

preaching **boldly but respectfully** to a hostile audience (4:8). He stated the obvious and explained how it was done – he healed a lame man in the Name of Jesus! Then he launched into a message about the Person and Work of Jesus!

OUTLINE:

- **Respectful intro 4:8**
- **Assumption for the trial (Healing a lame man) 4:9**
- **Explaining the miracle (done in the Name of Jesus) 4:10a**
- **Displaying Jesus (4:10b)**
 1. You (Jewish leaders) crucified Him
 2. God raised Him
 3. He fulfills Scripture (4:11)
 4. He is the **ONLY** way to God (4:12)

What should our attitude be when we represent Jesus in the midst of a hostile audience?

4:8 _____

4:13 _____

Matt 10:19 _____

What was the highlight of Peter's message before the Jewish leaders?

4:12 _____

What call was missing in Peter's address to the Council?

Did Peter preach the Full Gospel?

THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE 4:13-22

13

The Council was baffled at the bold and confident presentation made by Peter and John. They also marveled at their eloquence (4:13). On top of this, the 'miracle' man was standing in front of them as living proof of the power exhibited in the Name of Jesus! (4:14) So the Council excused Peter and John to confer among themselves about an appropriate response (4:15-17) and then recalled them to issue a restrictive command – stop speaking and teaching about Jesus! (4:18) Boldly Peter and John proclaimed they were more willing to defy the Council rather than defy God (4:19, 20). The Council gave them a final warning and released them (4:21).

Why were Peter and John so bold in a hostile environment?

How can you be as bold as Peter and John in the midst of a hostile environment?

Have you ever been in a hostile environment for the sake of the Gospel? How did you handle it?

Were Peter & John confused by Proverbs 24:21? How did they handle this challenge?

Pro 1:7

Pro 14:26

A BRIEF INTERLUDE 4:23-5:11

Once released, Peter and John returned to the church and gave their report. There was great rejoicing regarding God's protective care, and pray for greater boldness in the midst of adversity – a prayer honored by God (4:23-31).

14

The Jerusalem church demonstrated love for one another by sharing with each other (4:32-37). However, the church was severely challenged internally when two of its members acted dishonestly. God dealt strictly with the dishonest but it promoted godly fear both inside and outside the church (5:1-11).

The church continued to meet publicly in the Temple and grow. Not only were people in Jerusalem becoming part of the Body of Christ, but people in the area around Jerusalem were so impacted by the reputation of those in the church that they entered into fellowship as well (5:12-16).

However, the church was becoming so attractive to those in the Jerusalem area that the Jewish leaders once again let jealousy motivate their actions. This time rather than going for only Peter and John, they arrested all of the Apostles! However, God miraculously intervened by sending an angel in the middle of the night to release them and gave them instructions to continue their bold proclamation of the Gospel on the Temple premises! (5:17-20)

The Jewish leaders were surprised the next day to find the jail cells empty, and even more surprised to find the Apostles in the Temple boldly proclaiming the Gospel! So they re-arrested the Apostles and confronted their blatant disregard of the Council's previous instructions (see 4:18, 21). Once again Peter repeated their intent to obey God rather than men (5:29) and then boldly blamed the Jewish leadership for the suffering of their Messiah (5:30-32). This so infuriated the Jewish leadership that the Apostles were almost killed and they would have been when an unlikely ally named Gamaliel came to their rescue offering wise advice (5:33-39). The Jewish leadership listened to Gamaliel

although they did whip the Apostles and give them one **15** more warning not to preach the Gospel before sending them on their way (5:40, 41). However, the Apostles ignored the warning and continued to proclaim Jesus as Messiah both publicly in the Temple and privately in homes (5:42).

RESPONDING TO INTENSE ADVERSITY

Ephesians 6:15 refers to the Gospel as the Gospel of peace. With whom does the Gospel make peace? _____
Should we expect it to produce peace among men? In what way?

As the Gospel has been more frequently proclaimed in the Book of Acts, has peace or hostility increased between 'the sect' and the Jews? _____

Are you experiencing hostility? _____ Why? _____

Up until this point, the Church has been experiencing external conflict – that is, conflict arising from sources outside the Church. Now the Church will experience some internal conflict. A complaint arose among the widows related to their care by the church. While Jewish Messianic widows were receiving aid from the church, Hellenistic Messianic widows were not. Something had to be done so the Hellenist widows asked the Apostles to intervene. They refused to do so citing their obligations to care for the flock of God by praying, studying and teaching scripture. Instead, they commissioned the widows to appoint wise men to solve the problem and they chose seven men for the first church office – that of deacon! It is interesting to note that the names indicate they were all Hellenists or non-Jews! (6:1-8)

Problem identified, problem solved. And peace continued within the Church.

INTERLUDE – STEPHEN'S PREACHING AND MARTYDOM

One of the reasons for the preceding story was the opportunity to introduce Stephen as a notable leader in the early church. Besides being a wise man and deacon, he was a good preacher. God used him to perform signs and wonders in order to evangelize (6:8). His ministry also attracted enemies who could no longer tolerate the humiliation of losing public debates with him. So, they made up some lies and had him brought before the Council of Jewish leadership (6:9-15). This proved to be Stephen's finest moment. Luke records his evangelistic message for us to examine and gives us a picture of how we should conduct ourselves as representatives of the King of kings (7:1-60). Peter has been the primary evangelistic speaker up to this time, but now Stephen has a moment.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF STEPHEN'S SERMON

Stephen reviews Israel's History 7:2-34

- 1. God makes a covenant with the family of Abram 7:2-19**
- 2. God delivers the covenant people from adversity 7:20-36 Moses, the prophet, promised another deliverer 7:37-38**
- 3. Israel does not listen to God 7:39-43**
- 4. Israel does not worship God properly 7:44-50**
- 5. Summary of Israel's faults:**
 - **You resist God in your hearts 7:51**
 - **You resist and kill God's prophets 7:52**
 - **You resist obeying God 7:53**

Stephen preached a strongly bold message to the Jews. The more he recounted their history with God, the bolder he became in condemning them for their resistance to God. His final thoughts were very condemnatory, calling them stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart. And he received a strong response – they were furious. The severity of their anger manifested itself with the gnashing together of their teeth (7:54). But Stephen kept his focus on glorifying God (7:55) and was rewarded with a vision of the Father and Son standing together cheering him on. But when he reported what he was seeing to the Jews, their response was to drive him outside the city of Jerusalem and stone him to death (7:56-60).

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW SCRIPTURE?

**In Stephen's brief sermon recorded in 51 verses, he made 16 direct quotes and 14 allusions to scripture. He made 15 quotes or allusions from the Book of Genesis, 20 quotes or allusions from the Book of Exodus, 1 allusion from Numbers, 1 allusion to Joshua, 1 quote from 2 Samuel, 1 allusion from 1 Kings and 1 quote from Isaiah. Can you reconstruct an evangelistic message from:
The OT? The Book of Genesis? The Book of Isaiah?**

**Here are the quotes and allusions Stephen used:
Quotes from Genesis – 11:31; 12:7; 13:15 in 7:3, 5, 6
Allusions from Genesis – Chapters 17; 37; 41:37f; 41:53; 42; 43-45:15; 45:16-24; 45:25-28; 46; 47; 49:33-50; 15:13**

**Quotes from Exodus – 1:8; 2:14, 15; Ch 3; Ch 4; 3-5-7; 32:1
Allusion from Exodus – Chapters 1; 2; 3; 4; 7-12; 13; 14; 31; 32**

**Other Quotes – Deut 18:15, Isa 66:1, 2
Other allusions – Josh 3:14; 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Kgs 6:1-38**

ASSIGNMENT:

Compose a Gospel tract using one of the following sources:

**Genesis
Exodus
Isaiah
Daniel
Zechariah
The Entire Hebrew Scriptures**

TRANSITION – THE GOSPEL GOES TO SAMARITANS ACTS 8: 1-25

The death of Stephen provides an opportunity for Luke to introduce the character that will dominate not only the last half of the Book of Acts, but the character who will shape Christian thinking and evangelism. Saul, who later was renamed Paul, was present at the stoning of Stephen and felt no remorse at the time over his cruel death (8:1). The martyrdom of Stephen opened the door for the persecution of the church (8:2). However, the persecution forced a complacent church out of its comfort zone and into compliance with God's plan for permeating the world with the Gospel (cp Acts 1:8). The persecution forced the church (except the Apostles) out of Jerusalem into Judea and then into Samaria.

WHO ARE THE SAMARITANS?

A Samaritan was one who had part Jewish blood and part non-Jewish blood. How did this happen?

The first three kings of Israel (Saul, David and Solomon) ruled a united kingdom of all 12 twelve tribes. However, after the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam, would have continued ruling a united kingdom if he had not made a youthful decision at the beginning of his reign. His foolish arrogance caused a rebellion led by Jeroboam who became an alternate King ruling over ten of the 12 tribes. This 'substitute' Kingdom was known as Israel but later was called Samaria and was north of the 'real' Kingdom that became known as Judah. See 1 Kings 12. This split occurred in 931 BC.

The Northern Kingdom was idolatrous from the beginning (1 Kings 12:25-33). The longer they were in existence the more idolatrous they became. God sent several prophets urging them to repent – most notably Hosea and Amos – but they refused. So, God followed through on His promise to punish them for their idolatry by removing His protective hand from the Samaritans and allowed the Assyrians to conquer them in 722 BC (cp 2 Kgs 18:9-12).

Archeology tells us that the Assyrians had an interesting way of controlling the peoples they conquered. They deported them from the country in which they were living and scattered them around their voluminous Empire. They also forbid marriages between two people of the same race. Therefore, a Jew was forbidden to marry another Jew. However, the marriages imposed upon the Jews by the Assyrians were against Jewish law. God, by making this law, was concerned that the non-Jew would introduce idolatry into the marriage which would then permeate the society. When those who had Jewish heritage were allowed to return to their homeland, they returned as half-breeds and were

WHO ARE THE SAMARITANS (cont)

despised by those who were full blooded Jews. Thus, Samaritans were considered comprised Jews who were outside the blessing of God.

Phillip, another of the deacons mentioned in Chapter 6, was the chief spokesman of the Gospel to the Samaritans. This must have been a challenge initially to his way of thinking but he was faithful to the assignment and God performed many signs and miracles through him (8: 5-8). The Gospel received a great reception under Phillip's preaching and many became believers (8:12, 13). When the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaritans were receiving the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to verify the results of Phillip's ministry (8:14). God used Peter and John to verify the conversion of the Samaritans by initially sending the Holy Spirit after Peter and John laid hands on the first believers (8: 15-17). Peter, John and Phillip then returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in every village of Samaria they passed through (8:25).

**TRANSITION – THE GOSPEL GOES TO GENTILES
ACTS 8:26-40
FIRST TO A JEWISH PROSELYTE**

So far, Peter has been the chief Gospel spokesman before the Jews and Phillip has been the chief Gospel spokesman before the Samaritans (although Peter and John were called upon to verify Phillip's work). Now Phillip will be the chief spokesman before a Gentile Jewish Proselyte – the Ethiopian Eunuch.

After returning to Jerusalem with Peter and John, the Spirit of God compelled Phillip to take a walk on the southern road from Jerusalem. (8:26). While on this walk he was passed by an Ethiopian official in a chariot on his return to Ethiopia. Although obviously a Gentile, it is most likely that he had converted to Judaism and had come to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the feasts required by every Jewish male (8:27). He was reading aloud from the scroll of Isaiah, and Phillip, compelled again by the Spirit of God, ran next to the chariot asking the man if he understood what he was reading (8:28-30). The Ethiopian replied "no" and asked Phillip for help (8:31)

THE NEED FOR ILLUMINATION

The Ethiopian official is a good example of the need for illumination or enlightenment in order to understand God's Word. He was reading an important piece of Scripture, but in his own words, he did not understand what he was reading. Phillip offered to explain the passage he was reading and the man readily accepted the offer. Other important passages on illumination are:

Psalm 119:18
Ephesians 1: 17, 18
Matthew 16:13-17

As a result of these passages, what important silent activity should be taking place whenever the Gospel is shared?

The Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah 53:8 and asked the most important question that could be asked: "Who is this passage referring to?" What an opening to share the Gospel!

ANALYZING PHILLIP'S SERMON TO THE ETHIOPIAN

What Scripture did Phillip use to explain the identity of the prophet? See Acts 8:35

What did Phillip emphasize in his message? 8:35

How did Phillip follow the outline of Isaiah 53?

What kind of picture is painted by Isaiah of the Messiah?

53:2 _____

53:3 _____

53:4 _____

53:5 _____

53:6 _____

53:7 _____

53:8 _____

53:9 _____

53:10 _____

53:11 _____

53:12 _____

The end result of the Ethiopian enlightenment was Ethiopian conversion and baptism (8:36). The oldest manuscripts do not have verse 37 (it does not appear until the 5th century in manuscripts) but is none the less a true representation of God's Gospel. But once Phillip completed baptizing the Ethiopian, the Spirit of the Lord took him instantaneously to another ministry assignment about 50 km away in Azotus where is continued ministering among Samaritans. The Ethiopian, however, returned to his country rejoicing and undoubtedly became the first Ethiopian missionary (8:39, 40).

INTERLUDE – THE CONVERSION OF SAUL ACTS 9: 1-31

23

Acts 9 is a continuation of Acts 8:4. The subject returns to the pre-conversion Saul and we see him at his worst. Saul witnessed with approval the stoning of Stephen, and was so convinced that followers of Jesus should be treated this way that he asked the High Priest for permission to go looking for disciples of Jesus so they could be brought back to Jerusalem for persecution (8:1, 2).

But God had other plans for Saul and as he was about to enter the city of Damascus, God confronted him with great light (9:3) which put him on the ground and blinded him (9:8, 9). He also had a conversation with God in which he was instructed to enter Damascus and wait for one of God's representatives to deliver a message from God (9:4-7).

Saul waited for three days before God's representative (Ananias) arrived (9:9). No doubt God was convincing Ananias he would be safe because he dialogued with God about his safety before such a scary man as Saul (9:13, 14). But it was also a time for Saul's heart to be softened to receive the Gospel. Once Ananias arrived and preached the Gospel, Saul believed and was immediately baptized (9:17-19), although if you look carefully at the text, 1) Ananias laid hands and announced that Saul would regain his sight, 2) Saul was then filled with the Holy Spirit, 3) Saul regained his sight and 4) was baptized.

Luke closes the preliminary discussion of Paul by giving an itinerary of Saul's early travels. He stayed in Damascus for several days proclaiming the Gospel in the synagogues (9:19-20), continued gaining insight about the Gospel (9:21-22) and then had to flee Damascus because of a Jewish plot

against his life (9:23-25). Saul's bold proclamation was having an effect!

He then traveled to Jerusalem. There Saul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians kept the Christians from associating with him until Barnabus befriended him (9:26-28). But once again Saul's bold proclamation got him into trouble and he had to flee Jerusalem for his life (9:29). Eventually Saul made his way to Caesarea before settling in his hometown of Tarsus (9:30).

Once Saul left Jerusalem, the church enjoyed peace not only there but in Judea and Samaria. They lived in the **fear** of the Lord and the **comfort** of the Holy Spirit (9:31).

TWO INTERESTING TERMS

Acts 9:31 describes the church as living in the fear and comfort of the Lord. If not properly translated, this could give a confusing picture of early church life.

The Greek word for fear is *phobos* and has a double meaning. It means to be afraid and to have reverential awe. It is not one or the other, but the two combined together. How can these two concepts be combined together? This undoubtedly was confusing to Old as well as New Testament believers.

Solomon tells us that life is useless unless it is lived in the fear of the Lord (Eccl 12:13). The Hebrew word used has the same meaning as *phobos*. Being afraid of God was the early but incomplete mindset of truthful God followers. But a careful study of the OT coupled with an understanding of the Gospel provides a more complete picture. 1 John 4:18 tells us that perfect love casts out all fear. Does this mean that we should not be afraid of God? Not if we believe in literal interpretation of Scripture. Words have meaning and those meanings should be honored rather than changed to

TWO INTERESTING TERMS (cont)

accommodate our need to understand. Being afraid of God can drive a person to seek God. When the Gospel in the pursuit of God is understood and embraced, the love of God is appreciated for what it is – the initiation by God of the only plan that will restore Man into a relationship with God. That appreciation of God is the reverential awe that completes our understanding of fobos!

The other interesting word used in the verse is comfort. This word in the Greek means to be called to one's side or alongside another. It can also be translated as encouragement. More importantly, this word is used in 1 John 2:1 to describe Jesus Christ as our Advocate or one called alongside to represent us legally before our Father in heaven. In Acts 9:31 it is used to describe the Holy Spirit, and so the picture being painted by Luke and John is that Jesus and the Holy Spirit provide comfort and encouragement by being alongside believers.

**CLOSING OUT THE TRANSITION OF THE GOSPEL
FROM JERUSALEM TO JUDEA THEN SAMARIA
ACTS 9:32-12:25**

The narrative has gone from focusing on Peter to Stephen and then to Saul. Now the focus is shifting back to Peter where it began. The transitions are abrupt rather than smoothly gliding from one person to another. Peter is re-introduced by healing Aeneas in Lydda (9:32-35) and then raising Dorcas from the dead in Joppa (9:36-43). Miracles are still alive and well and Peter is at the center.

But then there is another abrupt change. The scene shifts from the miracle ministry of Peter to the preaching ministry of Peter. This time the Gospel will benefit another Gentile – a Roman who was a centurion. Peter introduced the Gospel to Semites, Phillip to Africans and now once again Peter is the focus to a European.

ROMAN ARMY ORGANIZATION

1 LEGION = 4,800 SOLDIERS
1 CHILIARCH COMMANDS A LEGION
1 LEGION = 10 COHORTS
1 COHORT = 6 CENTURIES
1 CENTURY = 80 SOLDIERS
1 CENTURION COMMANDS A CENTURY

Peter is ministering in Joppa, about 50 km south of Caesarea as we begin Acts 10 when we are introduced to Cornelius, a centurion in the Roman Army (10:1). He was positively impacted by his exposure to Judaism and had a positive effect upon his family and those under his command (10:2). In his search to honor God he had a vision instructing him on how to find the answers to his quest for God (10:3, 4). It is interesting that God did not directly respond to Cornelius as He did to Saul. This is probably because an already established believer (i.e. Peter) would be necessary for credibility before both Jews and Christians who had a low view of Gentiles, especially Roman soldiers. Nevertheless, God was very clear to Cornelius about where Peter, who could answer all his questions, could be found (10:5). So Cornelius dispatched two of his servants and a loyal soldier to Joppa for Peter (10:8).

Meanwhile, God had one day to prepare Peter to be willing to boldly proclaim the Gospel to a Gentile. So He took one of

the travel days by emissaries of Cornelius' to prepare Peter for the task (10:9-22). Just before lunchtime on the arrival day of Cornelius' emissaries, Peter had a vision. In this vision he saw a 'picnic' basket descending from the sky filled with animals that were forbidden in Levitical Law for Jews to eat accompanied by a voice commanding Peter to "Arise, kill and eat". As a devote follower of God, Peter (in his vision) interacted by firmly disobeying. The vision was repeated three times and then Peter awoke.....with many questions.

As Peter was pondering the vision, Cornelius' emissaries arrived asking for Peter. After introductions and stating the nature of their business with Peter, they were invited to spend the night where undoubtedly Peter learned more about Cornelius and his devotion to God and his vision (10:23a). This gave Peter time to reflect upon his strange vision earlier that day.

The next morning, Peter along with some of the Joppa Christians (10:23b), traveled to Caesarea for the meeting with Cornelius. After spending a night on the road (10:24) they arrived in Caesarea and met with Cornelius who had assembled a large crowd of family, friends and professionals he interacted with regularly (10:24). Evidently Cornelius was well respected in the community. After introductory remarks by Peter (10:28, 29) and then Cornelius (10:30 – 33) explaining why they were gathered together, Peter launched into his evangelistic message (10:34 – 43). While he was speaking, the Holy Spirit interrupted the message by falling on Cornelius and the rest of the assembled causing them to speak in tongues (10:44-46). This had to be a shock to Peter and the other Joppa Christians who were witnessing this event. But Peter taking charge of the situation ordered those associated with Cornelius to be baptized (10:47-48) and he lingered a few days in all probability strengthening the new

believers in their knowledge of Scripture and their new faith. Now the Gospel has been officially delivered to Gentiles and a temporary transference of God's messengers from Jews to Gentiles is taking place.

PETER'S MESSAGE TO CORNELIUS, HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS

What did Peter say that demonstrated his understanding of 'the vision' a few days earlier and the present circumstance? (10:34, 35) _____

What conditions does Peter identify as proof that a person is a seeker of God? (10:35) _____

What alternative is offered as the true solution to having a restored relationship with God? (10:36) _____

What components from the life of Jesus were important to Peter to communicate for the sake of the Gospel?

10:37 _____

10:38 _____

How did Peter verify the reality of Jesus' Person and work?

10:39 _____

10:40 _____

10:41 _____

What did Jesus order to be preached?

10:42 _____

What do all the prophets say about Jesus?

10:43 _____

What is different about the conversion of Cornelius and those around him as compared to previous conversions?

FINAL FOCUS ON JEWISH EVANGELISM 29 ACTS 11/12

The transition from a Jewish focus to a Gentile focus is almost complete and the final phase of God's plan for evangelism detailed in Acts 1:8 is about to take place. Peter returns to Jerusalem and defends what God asked him to do before the Jewish Brethren of the first church (11:1-17). He ends his explanation and defense by saying "How can I stand in the way of God?". Such a defense was satisfactory to those in the Jerusalem church (11:18). This encouraged the Christians of Jewish heritage to expand their outreach outside Israel (11:19) and we find churches being planted in Phoenicia, Cyprus and most notably Antioch (11:19, 20).

Antioch is the focus of 11:19-30. There was a phenomenal response to the Gospel and when a request for a Jerusalem 'shepherd' is made by the Antiochians, the Jerusalem leadership sent Barnabus to be the pastor (11:22). But soon after arriving and assessing the situation, Barnabus determined that he would need an associate. The first person to come to his mind was Saul who was now living in Tarsus, a mere 110 km by boat. So he left for Tarsus (11:25) and encouraged Saul to join him in ministry (11:26).

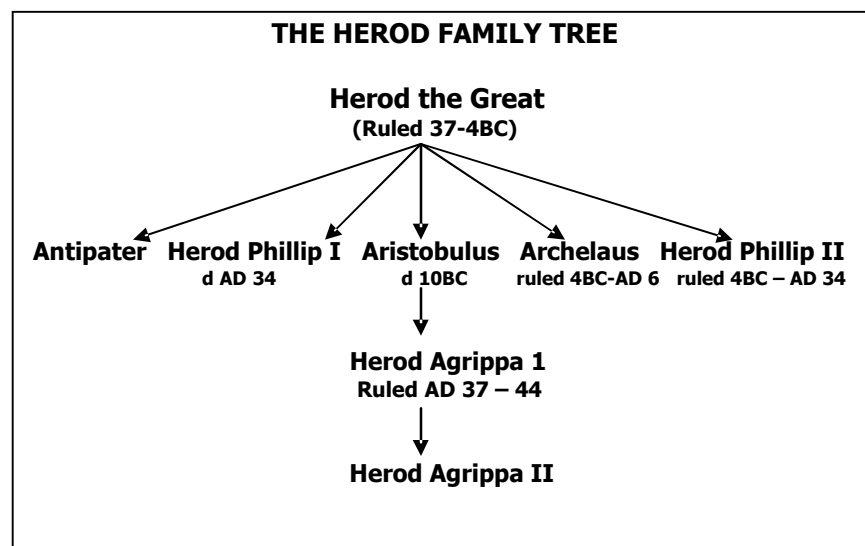
The final focus closes with three events:

1. A prophesied famine in Jerusalem (around AD 43) that Barnabus and Saul encourage the Antioch church to provide relief (11:27-28). This Barnabus and Saul do and it is Saul's first return to Jerusalem since having to flee for his life around AD 38.
2. James, the brother of John, is killed and Peter is re-arrested (around AD 44). After a miraculous

deliverance from prison, Peter leaves Jerusalem and expands his ministry to Caesarea (11:19).

3. Herod is punished by God for his pride and arrogance (11:20-23)

The section ends on a positive note. The Gospel is continuing to be received by the Jews (11:24) and Barnabus and Saul return to a thriving ministry in Antioch (11:25).



TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THE UTMOST PARTS OF THE WORLD ACTS 13-28

The first half of the Book of Acts shows God's plan of evangelism passing from the Jews to the Samaritans according to the plan revealed in Acts 1:8. There are also numerous opportunities to evaluate the Gospel presentation of the Apostles.

The last part of the Book of Acts is devoted to the expansion of the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the then civilized world (i.e. the Roman Empire). This was accomplished by the Apostle Paul.

SAUL/PAUL – What is going on?

The greatest theologian/evangelist of the church was Saul, a Pharisee who converted to Christianity after a dramatic Damascus road experience. Before Acts 13 he is known exclusively as Saul but after Acts 13:9, he is referred exclusively as Paul.

What other well known biblical characters experienced a name change?

Why?

What clue in Acts 13: 1-14 is there for Saul's name being changed to Paul?

WHAT IS AN APOSTLE AND WHY IS PAUL CALLED ONE?

Was Paul a self appointed Apostle?

Rom 1:1 _____

1 Cor 1:1 _____

2 Co 1:1 _____

Gal 1:1 _____

Eph 1:1 _____

Col 1:1 _____

1 Tim 1:1 _____

1 Tim 2:7 _____

2 Tim 1:1 _____

2 Tim 1: 11 _____

How was Paul's Apostleship distinct from the twelve?

Rom 1:13 _____

WHAT IS AN APOSTLE (CONT)

What distinguished the Apostles from other Christians?

Acts 10:41 _____

1 Cor 9:1 _____

2 Cor 12:12 _____

Paul took the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire on three missionary journeys and ended up in a Roman prison for his efforts. The first missionary journey began around AD 46 when the Holy Spirit set aside Barnabus and Saul for a bold and adventurous activity that lasted until AD 48 (Acts 13 – 14). This section is notable in that Paul's method of evangelism was established (he always went to the local synagogue and preached to the Jews until they no longer desired to listen), Paul was not the leader and it contains two of Paul's evangelistic messages (13:16-41).

CHURCHES PLANTED ON THE 1ST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

13:5 _____

13:6-12 _____

13:14 _____

14: 1 _____

14:6 _____

14:20 _____

14:21 _____

14:23 _____

ANALYZING THE FIRST RECORDED EVANGELISTIC MESSAGE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

Who was his audience? 13: 14, 15 _____
13:16 _____

With what time period did Paul begin his message?
13:17 _____

What events does he highlight?

13:17 _____

13:18 _____

13:19 _____

What leaders does he highlight?

13:20 _____

13:21 _____

13:22 _____

Why does he highlight these events and people?

13:23, 26 _____

Paul shifts from reviewing history to making accusations. What kind of accusations did he make?

13:27 _____

13:28 _____

13:29 _____

Paul relieves the tension by exalting God! How?

13:30, 31 _____

13:32 _____

Where is Paul's authority?

13:33 _____

Specifically, what reference? _____

Other Scripture used:

13:34 (Isa 55:3) 13:35 (Psa 16:10)

Who is Jesus contrasted with? 13:36-37 _____

Paul closed with an appeal and a warning. What are they?

13:38-39 _____

13:40-41 _____ **(Hab 1:5)**

After two years on the road, they returned to Antioch and gave a missionary report to the church (14:26-28). But while they were on furlough, some men came to the Church in Antioch from Jerusalem claiming authority and condemning the Gospel message of Paul (15:1). This created an internal conflict within the church and after much discussion the Antiochian leadership decided to send Paul and Barnabus (along with a few others) to Jerusalem for Apostolic confirmation of the Gospel (15:2). On the way to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabus described the Gentiles conversions from the 1st missionary journey to the churches on their way (15:3) and when they arrived in Jerusalem they were well received by the Jerusalem Church, the Apostles and the elders and explained to them what God had done among the Gentiles (15:4). The believing Pharisees in the church were alarmed at Gentile membership in the church and demanded that Gentile converts be circumcised and directed to obey the Mosaic Law (15:5). This created a huge church debate (15:6) followed by Peter (15:7-11) and James (the half brother of Jesus) confirming that God saves by His grace not by man's obedience to God's Law (15:13-21). The debate ended with the Apostles, the elders and the whole church affirming Paul's Gospel message and writing a letter to that effect to be read in the Church at Antioch (15:22-29). This letter was a great comfort to the believers in Antioch (15:30-35).

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY AD 50-52

The 2nd Missionary journey did not start strong. Barnabus, the leader of the 1st Missionary journey, and Paul, the chief spokesman on the 1st Missionary Journey, began with a fight that resulted in a division between the two former friends. The issue was John Mark. John had begun the 1st Missionary

Journey with them (13:5) but had returned to Jerusalem **35** early in the trip (13:13). Barnabus wanted to take John Mark. Paul, offended that John Mark had deserted them on the first trip (15:38), wanted to leave him behind. The disagreement was so strong that the dynamic team was split in two. Barnabus left with John Mark to follow the original plan of the 2nd Missionary Journey which was to revisit the churches that were established the first time around (15:39). Paul chose Silas (who returned with him after the Jerusalem council - 15:22) with the intention of revisiting the same churches but by first going to the churches that were established last rather than returning to the churches that were established first as Barnabus was doing. Barnabus went by boat (15:39), Paul went by land (15:41).

After stopping in Derbe and picking up Timothy (16:1), Paul received a vision calling his team to Macedonia (16:6-10). Their travels took them to Philippi where Lydia and the jailer were converted (16:11-34). The Philippians church was the first European church to be established. From there they went to Thessalonica (17:1) where they stayed for about three weeks (17:2) but after creating a disturbance over the Gospel, they departed and came to Berea establishing a church there as well. After a short stay in Berea, some Thessalonian Jews came to Berea and agitated the people in Berea forcing Paul and his team to leave (17:13-15). They next found themselves in Athens where he preached on Mars Hill (17:16-34) – the pinnacle of oration in his day!

ANALYZING THE 2ND RECORDED EVANGELISTIC MESSAGE OF PAUL

What prompted Paul to speak? 17:16 _____

Where did Paul begin preaching? 17:17 _____

Who was he reasoning with? 17:18 _____

How did he connect with the crowd?

17:22 _____

17:23 _____

What attributes of God was He emphasizing?

17:24 _____

17:25 _____

17:26 _____

17:27 _____

17:28 _____

17:29 _____

What does he call upon men to do? 17:30 _____

What is the basis for his appeal?

17:31a _____

17:31b _____

17:31c _____

Did anyone repent? 17:34 _____

How did this message differ from the other evangelistic messages of Acts?

CLOSING OUT THE BOOK OF ACTS

Not long after preaching on Mars Hill, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth (18:1) – not only the leading political and commercial city in Greece but the most debauched city of his day. Corinth had a temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. It was served by 1,000 temple priestesses who were ritual prostitutes who came into the city each evening to practice their trade. Because Corinth was so morally corrupt by even Greek standards, the city of Corinth became synonymous with moral depravity. To ‘corinthianize’ meant to be involved in gross immorality and drunken debauchery. Yet Paul did not pass up the opportunity to evangelize. He was found every Sabbath in the synagogue attempting to persuade both Jews and Greeks for the Gospel (18:4). He stayed for a year and ½ teaching the Word of God (18:11). Once again, Paul’s teaching aroused anger against him from the Jews (18:12) and although he was not forced to leave, he eventually left by his own design. After a brief stay in Ephesus where he established Aquila and Priscilla in ministry, he returned to Antioch around AD 52 (18:18-22).

The ministry of Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus is notable for their work with Apollos. A Hellenized Jew both by name and description (18:24), he was a disciple of John the Baptist but not acquainted with the work of Jesus (18:25). But Aquila and Priscilla better explained the teaching of the Baptist, ending with his becoming a follower of Jesus as Messiah. The Ephesian believers then commissioned Apollos for work in Achaia and finally Corinth (18:27; 19:1).

After a brief furlough, Paul departed once again on his 3rd missionary journey around AD 53 (18:23). And when he arrived in Ephesus he found followers of the pre-converted

Apollos (19:2). After explaining the fullness of the Gospel, there were 12 men who became followers of Jesus (19:7). This resulted in Paul’s longest stay in one place for ministry purposes – almost three years! (19:10) After performing many miracles (19:11-18) and causing a revival (19:19, 20) Paul once again was the center of controversy (19:21-41) and began moving around the Mediterranean world.

PAUL’S STOPS ON THE 3RD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Ephesus 19:1-41

Philippi 20:1-5

Troas 20:6-12

Assos, Chios, Samos, Mitylene, Miletus 20: 7-38

Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Cyprus, Tyre 21: 1- 6

Ptolemais 21:7

Caesarea 21:8-14

Jerusalem 21:15 – 23:33

Once in Jerusalem, Paul caused an uproar. At the request of the Jerusalem leadership, Paul agreed to appease the Jews by participating in a Jewish rite of purification (21:17-26). There is debate about the wisdom of Paul’s decision – some say he was wrong to participate, others that he was right to do so. The text neither condones nor condemns but it does show the results – Paul was almost killed! In his attempt to patronize the Jews he was falsely accused by some Asian Jews visiting Jerusalem (21:27, 28). After attempting to personally calm the agitated crowd (21:40-22:21), the Romans took him into their custody (22:22-29). He attempted to explain himself before the Jewish authorities one more time but was not able to keep them focused (23:30-24:11). For his own protection, Paul was kept in a prison in Jerusalem under Roman guard before being moved to Caesarea where his life could better be preserved (24:12-35).

While in Caesarea, Paul had three opportunities to share the Gospel before three different rulers over a two year period. First there was Felix (24:1-26). He was succeeded two years later by Festus who, after listening to Paul, agreed to send him to Caesar for a final verdict (24:6-12). While awaiting a ship for Rome, Festus was visited by King Agrippa who desired to hear the great Paul in person and before he sailed Paul had yet another opportunity to preach before kings (25:13-26:32). What is interesting about Paul's sharing of the Gospel is that in contrast to all other evangelistic sermons delivered in the Book of Acts, the messages given by Paul to Felix, Festus and Agrippa were not centered on the law, the prophecies or other scriptures. Rather they were centered on the personal experience of Paul!

PAUL BEFORE FELIX 24:10 – 21

24:10 Platitudes _____

24:11-19 States the Facts

24:11
Length of time in Israel: _____
Purpose: _____

24:12, 13
Denial: _____

24:14-16 Affirmations:
24:14 _____
24:15 _____
24:16 _____

24:17 Purpose restated _____
24:18 Activity identified _____
24:19,20 The real instigators _____
24:21 _____

24:25 What scared Felix _____

24:26 Why did Felix keep Paul in jail? _____

COMPARING PAUL'S CONVERSION STORY IN ACTS			
	9:1-9	22:3-15	26:9-18
Xtn persecutor	v1	v4	v9-11
Destination	v2	v5	v12
Light	v3	v6	v13
Time		v6	v13
Statement	v4	v7	v14-18
Conversation	v5, 6	v8	
Witnesses hear	v7	v9	
Witnesses see		v9	
Witnesses understand			
Blinded	v8	v11	
Waiting period	v9		

The Book of Acts closes by detailing the travel adventures of Paul to Rome (27:1- 28:31). They are filled with danger, with examples of Paul's leadership even though he was a prisoner, performing miracles but most importantly, the expression of Paul's faith through his continuous bold proclamation of the Gospel.