**Acts of the Apostles**

**Chapters 15-21**

**Summary: Acts 15:13-35 – The Jerusalem Council: The Verdict of James**

The council in Jerusalem – including the apostles- is debating whether men have to be circumcised in order to be saved and considered followers of Jesus.

In 6-11, Peter addresses the group concluding: **Acts 15:11**  On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

Paul and Barnabas tell stories of their work among the Gentiles and then James addresses the group with the concluding decision. **Acts 15:19-20**  19 Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, 20 but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood.

The council then sends Paul, Barnabas, Silas & Cilicia to Antioch to teach the new believers who were there and deliver a letter detailing the decision of the council.

***What were the defining marks of the community according to the council?***

***Why might they need to send this message to Antioch?***

**Read: Acts 15:36-16:10 – Paul Beyond Roman Asia**

***Why did disagreement occur?***

***Who does Paul take with him? Why?***

***Why is Timothy circumcised if this was not necessary?***

**Summary: Acts 16:11-40 – Paul’s Mission to the Philippians**

The missionary journey continues. They set sail from Troas and end up in Philippi which was a large wealthy Roman city in the region of Macedonia. Lydia and her household are baptized and she becomes a significant supporter of the church. Paul casts a demon out of a slave girl and her owners (seeing their slave lost her powers) lead a revolt and have Paul and Silas flogged and imprisoned.

Paul and Silas are praying and signing in prison, when an earthquake strikes and all the prisoners are set free. Rather than escape Paul and Silas share the good news with the Jailer.

**Acts 16:30-31**  30 Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

The whole household is also baptized that night and there is a celebratory party. In the morning, the magistrates allow Paul and Silas to go free but Paul wants (and ultimately receives) a formal apology since they are Roman Citizens and were beaten without a trial. They retreat to Lydia’s home to recover.

**Summary: Acts 17:1-15 – Conflict and Conversion among Diaspora Jews**

Paul and Silas journey to Thessalonica where they debate in the synagogue for 3 days. A crowd becomes upset and attacked Jason (their host) because: **Acts 17:7**  They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus."

Paul and Silas are sent away to Beroea that night. A few days later people learn where Paul is and stir up the crowd in Beroea. Paul is sent to the coast and goes as far as Athens but Silas and Timothy remain in Beroea for a while.

**Acts 17:16-34 – Paul’s Athenian Mission**

***Listen to Craig Koester of Luther Seminary teach this passage. What new things do you learn?***

**Read Acts 18:1-11 – Paul’s Corinthian Mission**

***What is Paul’s trade?***

***Paul insists he is going to the Gentiles, how far does he make it?***

***How long does Paul stay in Corinth?***

**Summary: Acts 18:24-19:23 – Paul Returns to Ephesus**

**Acts 18:24-25**  Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Paul and Apollos switch cities and Paul instructs the believers in Ephesus and they are baptized in the name of Jesus, receive the Holy Spirit and prophesy in tongues.

**1 Corinthians 3:5-6**  What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

Paul continues to teach in the synagogue and Jews and Greeks are converted. The Greeks who convert make a public showing of renouncing their former life by burning the magic books they once believed in.

**Acts 17:16-34 – Conflict in Ephesus**

***Listen to Craig Koester of Luther Seminary teach this passage. What new things do you learn?***

**Read Acts 20:5-12 – Paul’s Pilgrimage to Jerusalem**

***Why the urgency of teaching?***

***What is the longest sermon you have ever heard?***

**Summary: Acts 20:13-38 – Paul’s Speech of Succession**

Paul and companions continue on their way to Jerusalem. As they pass Ephesus, Paul sends a message and the Elders come to meet with him. Paul shares that he will not see them again and commissions them to take over his ministry. Concluding with these words:

**Acts 20:35**  35 In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**Summary: Acts 21:1-16, - Paul’s Journey to Jerusalem**

Paul and companions continue toward Jerusalem. Along the way the Spirit tells Paul not to go to Jerusalem (v4). When they arrive at Caesarea they stayed with Phillip the Evangelist, and a prophet there tells Paul he will be taken captive in Jerusalem. The people urge Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

**Acts 21:14**  14 Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say, "The Lord's will be done."