

Learn to Read Acts Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 12

Session 12

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Session 12 - Paul before Festus and Agrippa

Acts 25 and 26

Paul's journey to Rome

Acts 27 and 28

Review of Acts

Introduction

We left Paul a prisoner at the end of Session 11. In this session we see Paul before the new Roman governor of Judea, Festus, and then before King Agrippa. In his speech to Agrippa in Acts 26, Paul mentions the main elements of the message of salvation that we have previously seen both Peter and Paul preach.

It will help if you read Acts 25 and 26 before looking at the notes.

Summary of Acts 25 and 26

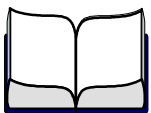
The church spreads through the Roman Empire

Paul witnesses to the rulers

Paul before Festus and his appeal to Caesar 25 v 1 to 12

Paul before Agrippa 25 v 13 to 26 v 32

Acts 25 v 1 to 12 - Paul before Festus and his appeal to Caesar



Read Acts 25 v 1 to 12

Verses 1 and 2 tell us that Festus came to Jerusalem. While he was there the Jews approached him in their underhand way.

Acts 25 v 3 asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

This was a repeat of the tactics that we saw in chapter 23 v 12 to 15.

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Maybe Festus was aware of the previous plot and was suspicious. In verses 4 to 7 he requested that the Jews accuse Paul before him in Caesarea. We see that the Jews complied with Festus' request but could not bring any real evidence against Paul.

In verse 9 Festus offered Paul a trial at Jerusalem.

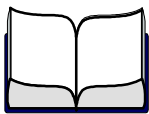


*Head of Nero,
the Caesar to
whom Paul appealed*

In verses 10 to 12 Paul declined this offer. He probably knew that there was no way of receiving a fair trial in Jerusalem so he appealed for a trial before Caesar in Rome. All Roman citizens had this right. Perhaps he had in mind the message of Jesus in Chapter 23 v 11 which had told him that he had to witness in Rome.

Acts 25 v 13 to 26 v 32 - Paul before Agrippa

Agrippa, or Herod Agrippa II, was the king ruling over territory to the north of Palestine at the time. He was the son of the Herod whose sudden death is recorded in Acts 12 v 23.



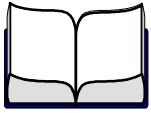
Read Acts 25 v 13 to 27

This section tells us that Festus explained the background of Paul's case to Agrippa. As a result Agrippa expressed an interest in hearing Paul.

Acts 25 v 23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

Agrippa came with Bernice. She was in fact Agrippa's sister, but was having an incestuous relationship with him. This was typical of her life, during which she had relationships with five men.

Festus explained to Agrippa that as far as he was concerned Paul had done nothing worthy of death. Since, however, Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus needed to send Paul to Caesar with some charge written against him.



Read Acts 26 v 1 to 32

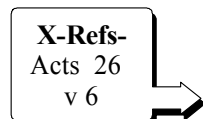
Agrippa invited Paul to make his defence in verse 1. In verses 2 and 3, Paul seemed happy to do so because Agrippa was familiar with what had gone on recently and Paul seemed to know that he was also familiar with what the Jews believed.

Verses 4 to 23 contain Paul's speech to Agrippa. Paul mentions several of the key elements of the messages that both he and Peter preached in earlier chapters of Acts. Using the cross-references these verses form a useful final reminder of God's plan of salvation. The table on page 16 compares Paul's message in this chapter with the other speeches we have previously looked at.

In verses 4 and 5 Paul opened in a way we have seen him use before - by finding common ground with his hearers. He informed Agrippa that he grew up a devout Jew, and was well known as such to all Jews in Jerusalem.

Acts 26 v 6 "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers."

Paul said that all that he now stood for was based on "the promise made by God to our fathers". We have looked at these promises before, but the cross-references serve as a useful reminder:



Genesis 12 v 2 and 3; Deuteronomy 18 v 15; 2 Samuel 7 v 12 and 13; Psalm 2 v 6 to 12; Isaiah 11 v 1 to 5; 53 v 10 to 12.

These cross-references remind us of some of the important promises made by God to "the fathers" of the Jewish race. These promises form the basis of His dealings with mankind.

- The Jews will be a great nation. God will bless all nations through Abraham
- Moses was told that God would raise up a special prophet from among the Jews
- One of David's descendants will have an everlasting kingdom
- God's king will reign from Zion (Jerusalem) and eventually subdue all other nations
- God's king will be a just, fair ruler
- God will send someone who will deal with the problem of sin

There are many more references to look at in the *Cross-references* booklet. They all remind us of different aspects of God's promises to us.

Acts 26 v 7 "To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews."

Paul reminded Agrippa that it was the hope of all the twelve tribes of Israel to be involved in this promise. It is interesting to note that Paul referred to "our twelve tribes", which means that all twelve must have been around in Paul's time.

The cross-references from this verse lead us to some interesting verses:

X-Refs-
Acts 26
v 7

→ Luke 22 v 29 and 30; James 1 v 1.

- Jesus promised that his disciples would be ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel
- James addressed his letter to the twelve scattered tribes, therefore agreeing with Paul that they all still existed

Acts 26 v 8 "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"

Paul here came to the very heart of his message. He was asking Agrippa why he found the idea of resurrection from the dead so difficult. There are several clear allusions to the resurrection in the Old and New Testaments:

Echoes -
Resurrection

→ Job 19 v 25 to 27; Psalm 49 v 14 and 15; Isaiah 26 v 19; Daniel 12 v 2;
Hosea 13 v 14; John 11 v 24.

- Job and the Psalmist had a clear hope of life after death
- Isaiah believed that his dead body would arise
- Daniel and Hosea both wrote of the resurrection
- Martha clearly believed in the resurrection

We have already seen that the resurrection was taught by Peter and Paul. The cross-references remind us of some of these passages:

X-Refs-
Acts 26
v 8

→ Acts 4 v 2; 13 v 30 and 31; 17 v 31 and 32; 25 v 19.

In verses 9 to 17 Paul told of his own initial opposition to the message he was now preaching and of his conversion when Jesus spoke to him on the Damascus road and gave him his instructions about his future preaching work.

Acts 26 v 18 "to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."

This verse summarises what Paul was sent by Jesus to do. Again it forms a useful summary of what we have seen all through Acts. The cross-references expand what Paul was saying:

X-Refs-
To open
their eyes → Psalm 119 v 18; Ephesians 1 v 18.

- The Psalmist wanted God to open his spiritual eyes so that he could understand His message
- Paul wanted the eyes of our understanding to be opened to the hope of the gospel message

Paul's priority was to make people realise the value of God's message to them personally.

X-Refs-
To turn them
from darkness
to light → Isaiah 49 v 6; 60 v 1 to 3; Malachi 4 v 2; John 3 v 19; 8 v 12.

- Isaiah told us that God's servant (Jesus) would be a light to the Gentiles and would offer salvation to all
- Isaiah predicted that the spiritual darkness of the world would be dispelled by God
- Malachi talked of Jesus as the "Sun of righteousness" who would "arise with healing in his wings"
- John told us that Jesus spoke of himself as the light and of man's ways as darkness

Paul wanted to change our way of thinking from our own natural way to God's way.

X-Refs-
From the
power of satan
to God

Isaiah 53 v 10 to 12; Colossians 1 v 13; 1 Peter 2 v 9.

- God's "righteous servant" Jesus was to justify many (make them right with God) and remove the effect of our sin against God
- God, through His plan of salvation, can deliver men and women from their normal hopeless condition into His kingdom
- Those who accept God's offer of salvation are part of a special group of people who are enlightened by God's message

Through the work of Jesus the effect of our sin can be removed and we can be delivered from our normal hopeless condition and have a place in God's kingdom.

X-Refs-
Receive
forgiveness
of sins

Luke 1 v 77; 24 v 47; Romans 4 v 6 to 9; Ephesians 1 v 7;
1 John 1 v 9.

- Our salvation is possible by God forgiving our sins
- Forgiveness of sins was to be preached to all nations
- Forgiveness of sin is possible through our faith and trust in God and His plan
- The shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross was also involved in our salvation
- If we confess our sins, God will forgive us and make us clean

We can have our sins forgiven if we put our faith and trust in God's plan involving the shedding of Jesus' blood.

X-Refs-
An
inheritance

Hebrews 9 v 15; James 2 v 5.

- Christ's death has brought in a new agreement or covenant to remove the effect of transgression against God, so that we can be involved in God's kingdom
- People who are rich in faith will be part of God's kingdom

We can be part of God's kingdom because Christ's death has removed the effect of sin.

In Acts 26 v 19 to 22 Paul told Agrippa that he had spent his time trying to obey the commission given him by Jesus. He repeated a theme, which we have seen many times in Acts, that his message was based firmly on what Moses and the prophets had said.

Acts 26 v 23 "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

This verse reminds us of another key element in Paul's teaching - that Jesus was the one prophesied about so frequently in the Old Testament. The cross-references again serve as a reminder of this key idea:

X-Refs-
Acts 26
v 23

→ Luke 18 v 31 to 33; John 11 v 25; 1 Corinthians 15 v 20 to 23.

- Jesus taught his disciples that the Old Testament prophets predicted his suffering, death and resurrection
- If we believe and trust in Jesus' work, we too can rise from the dead
- Christ was the first to rise to immortality; those who have died and are Christ's will be raised at his coming back to the earth

As we have seen, this was what changed people who had previously followed the Jewish faith into followers of Christ. Many Jews rejected the idea that Jesus was the one prophesied in the Old Testament because Jesus did not conform to their thoughts of what the Messiah should do. The references also remind us that Paul's message contains implications for us.

From verses 24 to 32 we see Festus accusing Paul of madness and Paul challenging Agrippa.

But in verse 25 Paul assured Festus before Agrippa that he was speaking "words of truth and reason".

In verse 26 he asserted that Agrippa was aware of all that had happened recently.

In verse 27 he stated his belief that Agrippa believed the prophets and implied that Agrippa accepted that Jesus fulfilled what they said.

In verse 28 Agrippa confessed that the argument was convincing, but he was not prepared to commit himself.

Acts 26 v 29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

This verse is the climax of Paul's argument. He shows his overwhelming desire that all of his hearers should be converted.

Agrippa, Bernice and the governor decided to get back to the matter in hand and agreed that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

Reading and understanding the message of Acts puts us in a similar position to Agrippa. We have to make up our minds on the vital question:



Is Jesus the Messiah promised in the Old Testament?

Acts 27 and 28 - Paul's journey to Rome

Introduction

Having appealed to Caesar Paul then had an eventful journey to Rome. The Acts record closes with Paul preaching God's plan of salvation in the city at the heart of the Roman Empire.

You will find it helpful to read Acts 27 and 28 before looking at the notes.

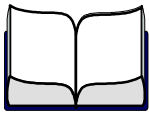
Summary of Acts 27 and 28

The church spreads through the Roman Empire

Paul's journey to Rome

Paul's journey as far as Malta	27 v 1 to 44
Paul's journey from Malta to Rome	28 v 1 to 16
Paul preaches in Rome	28 v 17 to 31

Acts 27 v 1 to 44 - Paul's journey as far as Malta



Read Acts 27 v 1 to 44

Acts 27 v 2 So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.

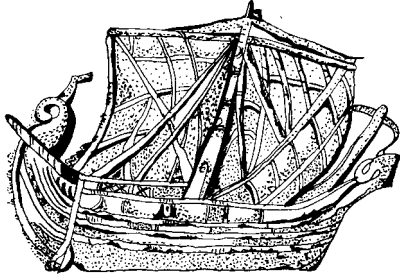
This verse marks the start of Paul's journey. We notice that Luke uses the words "we" and "us", indicating that Luke was with the group. Cross-references from this verse lead us to the other occasions in Acts where Luke indicates that he was with Paul:

X-Refs-
Acts
27 v 2

Acts 16 v 10 to 17; 20 v 5; 21 v 5 to 17; 28 v 2, 10 to 16.

- We are aware of Luke being with Paul in Acts 16 v 10 at Troas, and he disappears from the record after Acts 16 v 17 at Philippi
- Luke next appears in Acts 20 v 5 at Philippi as Paul journeys to Jerusalem
- Luke is still with Paul in Acts 21 v 5 when they land at Tyre, and he continues to accompany Paul to Jerusalem (v 17)
- He next appears in the record in Acts 27 and 28 accompanying Paul from Caesarea to Rome

Have a look at Map 7 on page 4 of the *Additional Notes* and you will see that Paul's journey from Caesarea to Rome was nearly two thousand miles - a long journey even by modern standards! On the map you can follow the journey which is outlined in verses 1 to 8 of Acts 27. You will see that Paul was nearly halfway to Rome when he was at Fair Havens on Crete.



An ancient merchant ship

Verses 9 to 12 record that Paul advised that the ship should stay at Fair Havens because the bad weather season was rapidly approaching. Paul was maybe speaking from experience. 2 Corinthians 11 v 25 tells us that he suffered three shipwrecks and so was probably an experienced sea traveller. But we can understand that the centurion would take more notice of the owner and helmsman than of a prisoner.

Verses 13 to 20 record details of the tempestuous wind that hit the ship soon after they had sailed from Fair Havens.

Verses 15 to 20 give a graphic picture of the events.

Acts 27 v 15 So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.

16 And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

17 When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.

18 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

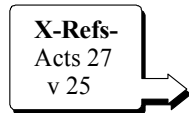
19 On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

20 Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

Verses 21 to 26 tell of Paul's assurance to the rest of the passengers and crew that they would all reach land safely. This assurance was based on a message which Paul had received during the night from an angel.

Acts 27 v 25 "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me."

Here we see Paul's faith in action. They had been in a terrible storm for several days and he was confident that God would keep His promise that they would all reach land safely. The cross-references lead us to other passages reminding us of this principle:



Numbers 23 v 19; 2 Chronicles 20 v 20; Luke 1 v 45; Romans 4 v 18 to 21.

- Balaam was sure that, what God had said, He would do
- King Jehoshaphat encouraged the people to trust what God's prophets had said
- Elizabeth acknowledged that Mary the mother of Jesus would be blessed because she believed God's word
- Abraham believed that Sarah would have his child even though, humanly speaking, it was impossible

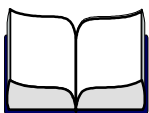
This shows us a practical application of what we saw earlier, that God will forgive us our sins if we put our faith in him. One part of this faith is putting our trust in Him in difficult times.

Verses 27 to 32 tell us how the ship was driven by the wind until the sailors sensed that they were getting near to land.

In verses 33 to 36 Paul showed his trust in God by suggesting that everyone have a meal. He gave thanks to God for the food and everyone was encouraged to eat.

Verses 37 to 44 record how they all escaped safely to land. The map shows that they had travelled over 500 miles in the storm.

Acts 28 v 1 to 16 - Paul's journey from Malta to Rome



Read Acts 28 v 1 to 16

After landing, they found out from the inhabitants that they were on Malta, and verses 1 to 10 tell us about the three months Paul and his fellow travellers spent there.

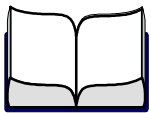
There is no mention of any preaching work done by Paul, but there was abundant evidence shown that Paul was no ordinary man:

- v 3 and 4 Paul was unaffected by a bite from a viper
- v 8 Paul healed the father of Publius
- v 9 Paul healed other sick people on Malta

We are not told whether or not Paul tried to preach to these people. Perhaps as Paul was under the guard of the centurion and his soldiers he was not permitted to preach.

Verses 11 to 16 record the rest of his journey to Rome. Notice from verses 14 and 15 how the other believers went out of their way to help Paul. Once in Rome, Paul was permitted to live by himself, but guarded by a soldier - a sort of house arrest.

Acts 28 v 17 to 31 - Paul preaches in Rome



Read Acts 28 v 17 to 31

Acts 28 v 17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans"

Paul again spoke first to the leaders of the Jews and explained to them how he came to be there. This was a courageous thing to do considering it was the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who were responsible for putting Paul into his present position. In verse 20 he explained his reason for calling them together. He summarised all that he believed and taught in the phrase "the hope of Israel". This was a very accurate description of Paul's teaching. It was based on the Old Testament promises to Israel which were fulfilled in Jesus.

The leaders had not heard from those in Jerusalem, so they expressed their willingness to hear what Paul had to say.

Acts 28 v 23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

Yet again we see that Paul was teaching the same message about the coming kingdom of God as predicted in the Old Testament. But, as we have seen many times before, some of the Jews did not accept his message, as we are told in verse 24. Paul then quoted a passage from Isaiah 6 v 9 and 10 which predicted that the Jews would refuse to hear.

Verses 28 to 31 are the climax to the book of Acts.

Acts 28 v 28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

Acts 28 v 30 Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,

31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Paul told the Jews that God's plan of salvation would be spread to the Gentiles, who would accept it.

This was summarised by Paul's preaching of:

- The coming kingdom of God as predicted in the Old Testament
- The things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ which enable men and women to be part of that kingdom

Paul was then preaching for two years in Rome - the centre of the mighty Roman Empire, which had a vast network of roads that all converged on Rome. That message spread far and wide through the Roman Empire, no doubt helped by those roads, and has reached us living here nearly 2,000 years later.

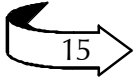
The message of the book of Acts now challenges us:



- Do you believe the message about the coming kingdom of God as predicted in the Old Testament?
- Do you believe that you can be part of that kingdom as a result of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The letter to the Romans

Like the letter to the Ephesians, the letter to the Romans does not appear to have been written to correct doctrinal errors. The book is the most comprehensive and logical presentation of the gospel message. It explains the vital idea that God will regard us as right in His sight if we have faith in Him and regard everything He has said and done as right - the principle known as justification by faith. Have a look at the letter to the Romans section in the *Additional Notes* booklet. Maybe Paul wrote this summary of the whole gospel message to the Romans hoping that it would spread these vital principles all round the Roman Empire via the excellent network of roads.



Summary of Session 12

We have looked at Paul's speeches before Festus and Agrippa, which form a useful summary of his aims and hopes.

As we review them, we are again challenged:

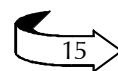


We must now ask, "Do we have a similar hope in our lives?"

- A hope based on the promises made by the God of Israel
- These promises involve:
 - * The establishment of a world-wide, just and fair kingdom ruled by a special descendant of King David. That special descendant is Jesus
 - * The opportunity for both Jews and Gentiles to be part of this kingdom as a result of the work of Jesus

We have followed Paul on his eventful journey to Rome and seen his trust in God on a ship which the crew were convinced could not remain afloat for much longer.

We finally see Paul in Rome continuing to preach the same message that we have seen all through the Acts.



The letter to the Romans

Questions

1. How did Paul summarise his hope?
2. What does this hope consist of?
3. How can we be part of it?

Summary of the messages in Acts 2, 3, 10, 13, 17 and 26

Peter's Message to the Jews Acts 2 & 3	Peter's Message to Cornelius Acts 10	Paul's Message at Antioch Acts 13	Paul's Message at Athens Acts 17	Paul's Message to Agrippa Acts 26
			God created all things (v 24)	
Jesus was a man having our nature (2 v 22 and 30)		Jesus was a descendant of David (v 23)	Jesus was a man (v 31)	
The miracles Jesus did were evidence that he was sent by God (2 v 22)	The disciples witnessed that Jesus performed miracles (v 38 and 39)		Our lives are evidence of God's existence (v 28)	
It was part of God's plan that Jesus should die as a sacrifice for our sins (2 v 23; 3 v 14, 15 & 18)	Jesus was killed (v 39)	The rulers, fulfilled the prophets' words when they condemned Jesus to death (v 27 to 29)	God has a plan and timetable for our world (v 26)	The prophets and Moses foretold that Christ would suffer (v 22 and 23)
God raised him to life again (2 v 24, 31 and 32; 3 v 15)	God raised him on the third day - he was seen by the disciples (v 40 and 41)	God raised him to life again (v 30 to 37)	God raised Jesus as evidence of His plan (v 31)	The prophets also said that Christ would rise from the dead (v 22 and 23)
The Holy Spirit was given as a witness (2 v 33 and 38)	The disciples witnessed that Jesus had the Holy Spirit (v 38 and 39)			
God promised David a special descendant (2 v 30)		God promised a saviour for Israel from David's descendants (v 23)		Paul put his hope in the promises made to the fathers (v 6 and 7)
God promised Abraham a special descendant who would bring blessings on all nations (3 v 25)	Anyone who fears God is accepted by Him (v 34 and 35)	Anyone who believes in Jesus can now be justified - or made right with God (v 39)	God wants all men to repent (v 30)	Christ was a light to both Jews and Gentiles (v 23)
The special descendant was Jesus Christ (2 v 30 and 36; 3 v 26)	Jesus Christ is Lord (v 36)	The special descendant was Jesus Christ (v 23)	Jesus was appointed by God (v 31)	
We can have our sins forgiven through Jesus (2 v 38; 3 v 19 and 26)	The prophets foretold forgiveness of our sins through Jesus (v 43)	We can now have our sins forgiven through Jesus (v 38)		Paul was sent to Jews and Gentiles so that they could have forgiveness of sins (v 18)
To be part of God's plan we must repent (2 v 38; 3 v 19)	God accepts those who work righteousness (v 35)	John first preached the baptism of repentance (v 24)	God wants us to repent (v 30)	Paul was sent to tell both Jews and Gentiles that they must repent (v 20)
We must then be baptised (2 v 38)	Baptism commanded (v 47 and 48)			
God has glorified Jesus and we must have faith in the name of Jesus the Prince of life (3 v 13 to 16)	God sent His message of peace to us through the work of Jesus Christ (v 36 and 37)	Those who believe in Jesus are justified (made right) in respect of things which the law of Moses could not do (v 39)		The promises made to the fathers are inherited by faith in Jesus (v 18)
All the present problems will be solved when God has "refreshed" the earth (3 v 19)	God's message to Israel included peace (v 36)		God will send Jesus to judge our world in a just way (v 31)	God promises an inheritance to those who have faith in Jesus (v 18)
Jesus will return to the earth and establish his endless kingdom (3 v 20 and 21)				
	Jesus will be judge of all (v 42)		Jesus will judge the world (v 31)	

Review of Acts

As we have now reached the end of this course, we will review the main points we have learned. This will serve as a reminder and enable you to look back at points you wish to go over again. For each session we will review the main events and then summarise the main message and lessons for us.

Session 1 - Acts 1 and 2

Main events

- Jesus appeared to his disciples during the forty days after his resurrection
- Jesus ascended into heaven
- The eleven apostles selected a replacement for Judas Iscariot
- The Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost
- Peter's address resulted in about 3,000 baptisms

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ When Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples were assured that he would come back
- ◆ The gift of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in other languages so that all present could understand their message

Session 2 - Acts 3

Main events

- Peter healed a man whom everyone knew to be unable to walk
- He then spoke about God's plan

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ Peter summarised God's plan:
 - * God promised Abraham a special descendant who would bring blessings on all nations
 - * The special descendant was the Lord Jesus Christ
 - * Christ died so that our sins may be forgiven
 - * God raised Jesus from the dead and promised that he will be king of an endless kingdom to refresh our world, to be set up when Jesus returns

Session 3 - Acts 4 and 5

Main events

- Peter was preaching that Jesus was the promised Messiah
- The religious leaders of the day saw Peter's message as a threat
- Ananias and Sapphira caused problems to the early church
- The apostles were imprisoned and released but refused to stop preaching

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ We should put our trust in God's message
- ◆ The message the apostles gave was backed up by evidence that it was God-given and that God can carry out His promises
- ◆ God's plan cannot be hindered despite opposition
- ◆ God will answer faithful prayer and grant requests that are "in tune" with His plan and purpose
- ◆ We cannot hide anything from God

Session 4 - Acts 6 and 7

Main events

- The church dealt with accusations of unfair welfare distribution
- Stephen spoke to the council and was stoned to death

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ Problems are solved by talking with those involved in the problems with a view to finding solutions
- ◆ God can be worshipped anywhere
- ◆ God respects those who respect His Word
- ◆ We should be able to forgive those who persecute us
- ◆ We should be able to face death as a sleep from which we shall be raised
- ◆ We must not resist the message that God has given us

Session 5 - Acts 8 and 9

Main events

- Because of persecution the believers left Jerusalem taking their message with them
- Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch
- Saul was converted and began to preach
- The early church increased in numbers as a result of the miracles done by Peter

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ Saul's conversion shows that, whatever our sins are, we can be forgiven
- ◆ Confession of belief that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament was followed by baptism
- ◆ In addition to preaching, the first-century church looked after the physical needs of the believers

Session 6 - Acts 10 to 12

Main events

- The message that Jesus was the promised Messiah was taken to non-Jews, and Cornelius was converted
- Herod persecuted the church and imprisoned Peter

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ We should follow the example of Cornelius and try to:
 - * Be God-fearing
 - * Help others
 - * Pray to God
- ◆ We should remember that God's hand is at work, often in unseen ways
- ◆ God wants us to both trust His message and be guided in our actions by that message

Session 7 - Acts 13 and 14

Main events

- The same message was taken to Cyprus and Galatia by Paul on his first missionary journey

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ We have seen:
 - * Paul preaching to the non-Jews the same message that Peter had given earlier
 - * How our beliefs make us right with God
- ◆ We must be prepared to suffer for our beliefs
- ◆ We must not move away from the gospel message preached by the apostles

Session 8 - Acts 15 and 16

Main events

- The Jerusalem conference was called to resolve the conflict over keeping the law of Moses
- Paul preached in Philippi in Macedonia on his second missionary journey

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ We have seen how the first-century church dealt with differences of opinion:
 - * They were willing to talk about a problem with a desire to find a solution
 - * They used Scripture as the authority
 - * They allowed differences of opinion that did not conflict with Scripture
- ◆ We should try to imitate the faith of Paul and Silas and praise God in times of difficulty
- ◆ Belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is followed by baptism

Session 9 - Acts 17 and 18

Main events

- Paul preached at Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ God wants us to recognise His existence from the evidence of His Creation
- ◆ God raised Jesus from the dead as evidence that He has a plan for our world
- ◆ There is a repeated progression in the Acts:
 - * Hearing God's message
 - * Believing God's message
 - * Being baptised

Session 10 - Acts 19 and 20

Main events

- Paul preaching at Ephesus caused a riot
- Paul preached in Greece and then started his return trip to Jerusalem

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ Paul predicted a time in the church when people would believe what they wanted rather than hold correct beliefs
- ◆ We should be aware of the threat that false ideas pose to the teachings we have from the first-century apostles
- ◆ We should not hold any beliefs that were not clearly taught by the first-century apostles

Session 11 - Acts 21 to 24

Main events

- Paul continued his journey to Jerusalem and was arrested
- He addressed the Jewish crowd and the Jewish rulers
- Following Jewish plots Paul was taken to Caesarea

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ We must submit to God's will
- ◆ We should think about our lives in relation to the judgement to come.

Session 12 - Acts 25 to 28

Main events

- Paul appeared before Festus and King Agrippa
- Paul journeyed to Rome and preached there for two years

Message and lessons for us

- ◆ Our hope should be based on the promises made by the God of Israel
- ◆ These promises involve:
 - * The establishment of a world-wide, just and fair kingdom ruled by a special descendant of King David. That special descendant is Jesus
 - * The opportunity for both Jews and Gentiles to be part of this kingdom as a result of the work of Jesus

Conclusion

We hope that you have enjoyed and benefited from this course. Our aim has been to help and encourage *you* to open the Bible and read it *yourself*.

We hope that you now know more about the first-century church and its beliefs. We also hope that you will seriously consider the challenges we have been given and act on them.

We hope, God willing, to produce other Distance Learning Courses in the future, and any feedback you may like to give us on the one you have just completed would be very much appreciated.

Your tutor will always be pleased to hear from you and discuss anything relating either to this course or to any other Bible-related topic. Please also let your tutor know if there is any topic you would like to study. Your tutor will also be able to give you details of further Distance Learning Courses on other Bible subjects that are being prepared.

Finally, please remember that the Bible contains God's plan for us. The hope of a life after this one is to be found in the Bible, and we have attempted in some small way to help you towards obtaining it. We have looked at the many challenges that the book of Acts gives. We hope and pray that you will consider the evidence and learn to believe the message given by Peter and Paul and become part of the plan of the God of Israel, summarised by Paul as the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ.

THE CHRISTADELPHIANS

Notes

Notes

Learn to
Read
Acts
Effectively
