

Acts of the
in **Messengers**
the **Early Church**

Frank Ball

...and, ... man of the priests ...
... Elijah ... Zechariah and his ...
... Bethell, a ... of ...

Chapter 1

Wait in Jerusalem

¹ Dear Lover of God, in my first book, I wrote about all that Jesus said and did. ² In the power of the Holy Spirit, he taught his chosen messengers until he ascended into Heaven.

³ After his death, Jesus showed himself alive by many undeniable proofs. For forty days, he talked to them about the Kingdom of God. ⁴ When they came together, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the promise from my Father that I told you about. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ On the last day when the apostles were with Jesus, they asked, “Sir, will you now restore the Kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ Jesus said, “You are not allowed to know the timing of events that are under my Father’s authority, ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the most distant places on earth.”

⁹ After saying this, he was lifted up and disappeared into the clouds.

¹⁰ While they gazed at the sky, two men appeared, dressed in white. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” the men said, “why do you stare at the sky? This same Jesus who is taken into heaven will return in the same way you saw him leave.”

¹² They left the Mount of Olives and returned to Jerusalem, about half a mile away. ¹³ The eleven disciples went to the upper room where they were staying—Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, James the

son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and the brother of James, Judas Thaddaeus. ¹⁴ With single purpose, they continued in Temple prayer, with Jesus' brothers, mother, and other women joining them.

¹⁵ One day, Peter stood in the midst of about 120 of Jesus' followers and said, ¹⁶ "My friends, Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke through David concerning Judas who helped the Temple leaders arrest Jesus. ¹⁷ Judas was one of us, sharing in this ministry. ¹⁸ With the money he received from his treachery, the field where he fell to his death was purchased, where his body split open and his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹ Everyone living in Jerusalem has heard about this, which is why the field is named in the Greek, *Aceldama*, meaning 'field of blood.'

²⁰ "As it says in our psalms, *May his settlement be empty, no one living in his tent. Let his life be short, someone else taking his job.* ²¹ Therefore, of those who have been with us from the beginning of Jesus' ministry ²² —with us from the days John was baptizing in the Jordan until Jesus ascended into Heaven—we must appoint one of these men to become a witness with us, testifying of Jesus' resurrection."

²³ So they appointed two candidates: Matthias and Joseph, son of Sabas, known as Justus. ²⁴ And the group prayed, saying, "Lord, you know the hearts of these men. Show us which one you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place of Judas, who by his transgression vacated his position for his own place."

²⁶ In casting lots, the choice fell on Mathias and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Chapter 2

Pentecostal Outpouring

¹ At midmorning on the day of Pentecost, the followers of Jesus were gathered in the Temple with a single passion for prayer. ² Suddenly, a sound came from above, like a violent wind, filling the area where they were sitting. ³ Fiery tongues appeared and settled upon each of them, ⁴ and the entire group was filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in unknown languages as the Spirit gave them the words.

⁵ At the same time, devout Jews were staying in Jerusalem, people from every nation of the world. ⁶ When the multitude heard the voices, they gathered around the many speakers, mystified because what they were hearing was in their native languages. ⁷ They couldn't believe their ears, saying to one another, "Aren't these people Galilean?" ⁸ How are they speaking the language from where we were born? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, and Elamites. People who live in Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, as well as Judea. From Pontus and Asia. ¹⁰ Phrygians, Pamphylans, and Egyptians. Residents of Cyrene in Libya and pilgrims from Rome, both natural Jews and converts, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabians. We are all hearing of God's wonderful, mighty works in our languages."

¹² Amazed and seeking an explanation, they said to one another, "What in the world does this mean?"

¹³ But others made fun of the situation, saying, "These people have drunk too much wine."

¹⁴ Peter stood among the messengers and shouted, "You men of Jerusalem and Jews from afar, give ear to my words because I have an answer. ¹⁵ This early in the day, you should know these

people haven't been drinking. It's only nine o'clock. ¹⁶ What you've seen here is the fulfillment of what the prophet Joel said would come. ¹⁷ Speaking of what would come to pass in the last days, God said, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. Your children will prophesy, your elders will have revelations in dreams, and your youth will see visions.* ¹⁸ *Even upon slaves and servants, I will pour out my Spirit in that day, and they will prophesy too.* ¹⁹ *I will do wonders in the sky above and the earth below.* ²⁰ *Blood, fire, and columns of smoke will darken the sun and redden the moon in that great and fearful day of the Lord.* ²¹ *Those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.*

²² "Listen to me, Israelites. You know about Jesus of Nazareth, who proved his divine authority by many powerful miracles and signs. ²³ To fulfill God's plan, he was taken by evil men and put to death on the cross, ²⁴ but God raised him alive from the grave because death had no power over him. ²⁵ David spoke concerning him: *The presence of the Lord is always on my mind. With him leading the way, I will not slip up,* ²⁶ *so I rejoice with my whole being, my hope resting in him.* ²⁷ *You will not abandon me in death nor will you allow your Holy One's body to decay.* ²⁸ *Lord, you will show me how to live. In your presence, I experience overflowing joy. Walking with you, I enjoy pleasures that last forever.*

²⁹ "Friends, permit me to state the obvious: We know our forefather David is dead and buried. His tomb is in plain sight. ³⁰ But David could predict the future because he knew that God's promise must be fulfilled. God would anoint one of his descendants to sit upon his throne forever. ³¹ Because he knew this would happen, he anticipated the resurrection of God's Anointed, that he would not be abandoned in death nor allow his body to decay.

³² "We are all eyewitnesses of what David said would come, for we have seen God raise Jesus from the dead. ³³ Lifted to the place of supreme authority with the Father, Jesus has sent the promised Holy Spirit, which is what you have been seeing and hearing. ³⁴ David wasn't talking about himself when said, 'God

told my Master, “Sit here at my right hand ³⁵ until I’ve put your enemies under your control.”

³⁶ “Everyone in Israel needs to know beyond the slightest doubt that God has made this Jesus, the one you crucified, both Master and Messiah.”

³⁷ After hearing these words, the people were deeply troubled. To Peter and the rest of the messengers, they said, “Friends, what shall we do?”

³⁸ “Repent,” Peter said, “and be baptized. By the authority of Jesus Christ, your sins will be forgiven and you will receive this gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ God’s promise was for you and your children, even for those in the most distant places on Earth, to everyone who will hear his invitation.”

⁴⁰ With many more words, Peter admonished and encouraged the people, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt culture.”

⁴¹ Those who believed the message were baptized—adding some three thousand people to the group of Jesus’ disciples.

⁴² And they continued to learn from the apostles, sharing meals together and meeting in the Temple for prayer. ⁴³ Great respect for God came upon them, and many miracles and other proofs of God’s power were worked through the apostles.

⁴⁴ The believers entrusted themselves to one another, sharing ownership of all they had. ⁴⁵ They often sold their lands and other valuable possessions, giving all the proceeds for distribution according to each person’s need. ⁴⁶ Every day, they were meeting for prayer in the Temple, sharing meals in their houses, unified in their desire to help others, ⁴⁷ giving God the glory. The people received their expressions of love, and the gatherings of believers kept growing.

Chapter 3

Alms for a Cripple

¹ At the customary hour of prayer, about three o'clock, Peter and John were going to the Temple.

² A man who was lame from birth had to be carried to the gate called Beautiful so he could ask alms of those entering the Temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John, he asked for a gift.

⁴ They turned toward him, and Peter said, "Look, ⁵ you expect to receive money from us, ⁶ but we have no silver or gold. I'll give you what I do have. By the authority and power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

⁷ Peter grabbed the man's right hand and lifted him up.

Immediately the man's feet and ankles were strengthened.

⁸ Standing, walking, and then leaping, he entered the Temple with them, shouting glory to God.

⁹ Everyone in the Temple court saw the lame beggar walking and praising God. ¹⁰ They recognized him as the beggar they had passed daily at Gate Beautiful and were astonished. How was this possible?

¹¹ While the man was hugging Peter and then John, all the people crowded around them at Solomon's porch, greatly amazed.

¹² When Peter saw they had gathered, he said, "People of Israel, why do you marvel at the miracle, staring at us like we caused the man to walk by our own power and righteousness?

¹³ The God of our forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has glorified his son Jesus, the one you handed over to Pilate and rejected when he wanted to release him. ¹⁴ You demanded the

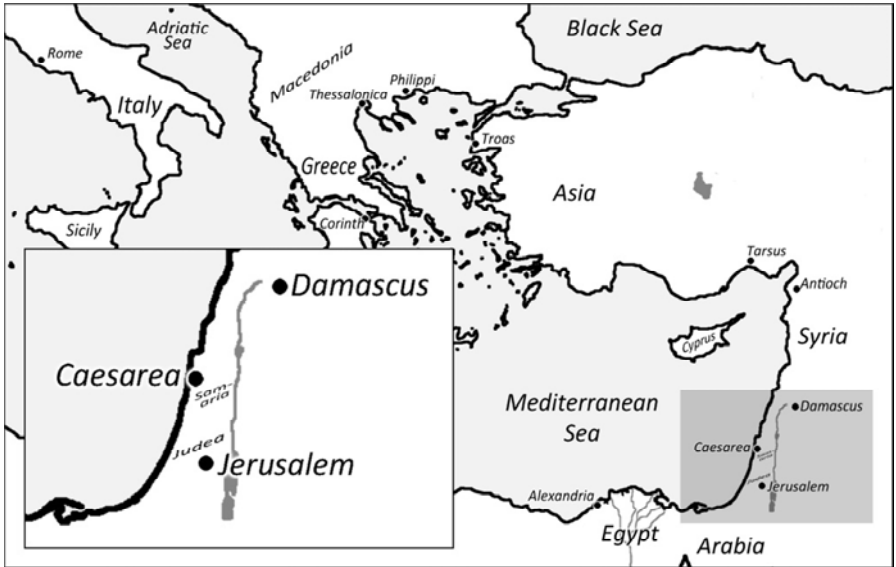
release of a murderer rather than receive the one who is wholly good and righteous. ¹⁵ After you killed the giver of life, God raised him from the dead, which we know is true because we have seen him. ¹⁶ In trusting his authority, this man you know so well has been healed. Yes, our trust in Jesus has made this man whole before you all.

¹⁷ “Friends, I know what you and your leaders did was in ignorance. ¹⁸ God was fulfilling what the prophets said, that his Anointed must suffer. ¹⁹ Repent now, turning to God, and your transgressions will be forgiven. His presence will bring you life ²⁰ in Jesus, the Anointed One sent from God. ²¹ He ascended into Heaven until the day all things will be restored, as God has said through his holy prophets from the beginning.

²² Moses said, “*From among your own people, the Lord your God will raise up a prophet like himself. You must listen to him.* ²³ *Anyone who ignores the words of that prophet who speaks under my direction and authority will have no part in the Kingdom of God.*

²⁴ “Indeed, ever since the days of Samuel, God’s prophets have predicted the events that have just happened. ²⁵ As children of those prophets, you are heirs of the covenant promises that God gave to your forefathers, saying to Abraham, *Through your offspring everyone on Earth will be blessed.* ²⁶ You are the first to benefit from God sending his Son Jesus to bless you, to turn you away from evil desires.

Discussion Questions



Chapter 1

Wait in Jerusalem

1. In ancient Greek writing, all the letters were capitals, making it impossible to distinguish THEOPHILUS (meaning “lover of God”), in which Luke would be addressing all individuals who had a love for God, versus THEOPHILUS as the name of a person. Do you think Luke is addressing any lover of God or a certain person (1:1)? Why?
2. The original Greek text has no chapter breaks, numbered verses, or paragraphs. There weren’t even spaces between the words. How might this make our interpretation of Scripture difficult?
3. For forty days after the resurrection, Jesus gave many undeniable proofs that he was alive. In what ways did he do that (1:3)?

4. Prior to his death, Jesus said, “There are many things I’d like to tell you, but you can’t handle it right now. What new things might he have told them after the resurrection (John 16:12; Acts 1:4)?
5. When Jesus talked to his disciples about the “Kingdom of God,” how might they have misunderstood what he was describing?
6. Jesus told his followers to wait in Jerusalem for the promise from his Father (1:4). In what ways could their expectations differ from what actually happened?
7. What do you see as similarities between John’s baptism in water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
8. Jesus said the promise would come “in a few days” (1:5). How do you think that indefinite promise affected their expectation?
9. Prior to his death, Jesus said, “Some of you standing here will not die before they see the Kingdom of God come with power” (Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). How might that revelation have affected their question about when that promise would be fulfilled (1:6)? How do you think they felt about his answer (1:7–8)?
10. In total, how many people saw Jesus after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5–6)?
11. Without power, engines won’t run and their purpose cannot be fulfilled. In what ways do you think the power of the Holy Spirit was important for the witnesses (1:8)?
12. What do you think was going through the minds of the disciples as they watched Jesus ascend into the sky?

13. How would you describe the appearance of the two men dressed in white (1:10). What do you think their tone of voice was like?
14. Luke lists eleven disciples who went to the upper room in Jerusalem, where Jesus presumably had earlier appeared to them and where they observed the last supper together. Where might others from Galilee have been staying?
15. Christian tradition makes the Upper Room a place for prayer, but in the first century, Jewish tradition put the place for prayer in the Temple outer court (Matthew 21:13). How many others might have joined them at different times (1:14)?
16. Scripture tells us that Jesus' brothers were not believers (John 7:5). What do you think happened to cause his brother James to believe and become a leader of the Jerusalem church?
17. How many days prior to the day of Pentecost might the 120 in the Temple have been assembled when a replacement for Judas was chosen (1:15; 2:1)?
18. What prediction did King David make concerning Judas (Psalm 41:9; 109:8)?
19. We see Judas's remorse in his returning to the Temple his thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 27:3). How do you think his remorse differed from Peter's repentance after denying the Lord three times (Matthew 26:75).
20. Luke says Judas fell to his death (1:18). Matthew says he hanged himself (Matthew 27:5). How might both of those statements be true?
21. What were the qualifications for the men being considered to replace Judas (1:21–22)?

22. In making a choice between Justus and Matthias, what method was used (1:24–26)? Do you think that was a good approach? Why?



Chapter 2

Pentecostal Outpouring

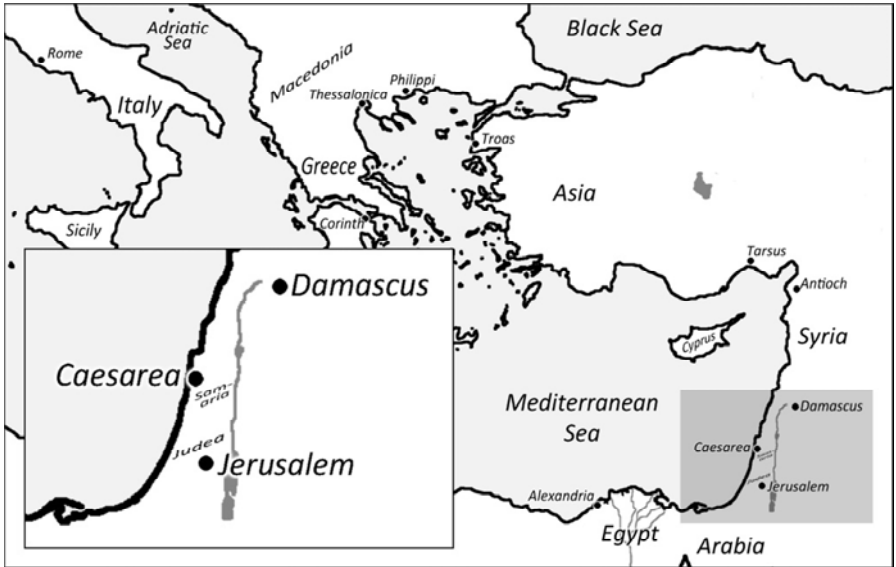
1. On a previous day when a replacement for Judas was made, 120 people were gathered. Five hundred saw Jesus at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). The Bible doesn't say how many were gathered in the Temple on the day of Pentecost. How many followers of Jesus do you think were there? Why?
2. For many, prayer is asking God to give them what they want. Jesus says we don't have to worry about God meeting our needs (Matthew 6:28–30) and the apostle Paul says God will be extravagant in providing for us (Philippians 4:19). If the people in prayer were not asking God for stuff, what might they have been saying?
3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was visible (tongues of fire) and audible (sound of violent wind). For uninvolved visitors present, what do you think the reaction might be to what they first saw and heard (2:2–3)?

4. The Holy Spirit miraculously produced words in languages that the followers of Jesus didn't know. Since this had never happened before, they could not have anticipated this happening. What do you think might have been going through their minds at this time?
5. Jewish pilgrims from many foreign nations were amazed to hear local people speaking a language other than Aramaic (2:5–11). Why was this amazing?
6. At least a dozen areas with different languages are identified. There may have been many more. To what extent might the speakers have moved toward different nationalities so one language would be distinguished above the others?
7. When the seemingly impossible happens, we are mystified and want to know how this is possible (2:12). Drinking vodka doesn't help people speak Russian (2:13)? Why do you think drinking wine was offered as a plausible explanation for speaking a foreign language?
8. Peter said it was too early in the day for anyone to be drinking. Does presenting the truth become easier after ruling out incorrect assumptions? Why?
9. How do you think Peter was able to connect this event with the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Act 2:16)?
10. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit marks the end of the "former days" and the beginning of the "last days" (2:17). The "last day" hasn't come after more than two thousand years, suggesting a high probability that we won't see it in our lifetime. Why might it be dangerous to think that way (Matthew 24:37–39, 42)?
11. The Old Testament records many individuals giving prophecy, having revelations, and describing visions. The prophet Joel had predicted the last days a spiritual

outpouring upon “all flesh.” How was this different from what had been happening before?

12. Before the “last day,” we’ll see numerous wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and storms, eclipses and blood moons (Matthew 24:6; Acts 2:20). What do you think it means to “call upon the name of the Lord” to be saved?
13. Many among the crowd had come from other nations (2:9), yet Peter said they knew about Jesus (2:22). How do you suppose they knew?
14. To support the reality of Jesus’ resurrection, Peter quoted from one of David’s songs (Psalm 16:8–11; Acts 2:25–28). Why was that important for this audience?
15. What is the value of having many eyewitnesses (2:32)?
16. How did Peter know that Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit (John 16:7; Acts 2:33)?
17. In our culture, some people have little respect for our leaders. In what ways did this differ from people in the first century who served their lords and kings?
18. What percentage of the audience do you think had any direct involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus?
19. The people were in Jerusalem and had come to the Temple for worship and prayer, seeing themselves as obedient followers of God. After seeing the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and hearing Peter, what was their motivation in asking Peter what they should do (2:37).
20. What did Peter say would come after people repented and were baptized (2:38)?
21. For whose benefit had God’s promises been made (2:39)?

22. Peter admonished the Jews to forsake their corrupt culture (2:40). In what ways might they have regarded their culture as corrupt?
23. The only bodies of water in the area were the public Bethesda and Siloam pools. What do you think the social impact was, when the community saw three thousand people being baptized there?
24. Peter said those who were baptized would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38). How might that experience have resembled or been different from what took place in the Temple?
25. What did the new followers of Jesus do after they were baptized (2:42).
26. The Greek apostolos can refer to anyone sent with a message. Jesus said that miraculous signs would follow those who believed and were baptized (Mark 16:16–18). Do you think the miracles were worked only through the twelve, or other messengers as well? Why?
27. What changes were seen in the behavior of these new followers of Jesus (2:44–47)?
28. Selling assets and giving it all to help others became a common, if not expected, practice among the believers. How great do you think their sacrifices were, and for what reward did they give it (Matthew 6:1–5)?



Chapter 3

Alms for a Cripple

1. At the hour for prayer, how might the outpouring on the day of Pentecost have affected what Peter and John anticipated for this visit to the Temple (3:1)?
2. Every day, the lame man sat at the Temple gate and asked for money. Jesus and his disciples must have passed the man many times. If so, why might the man have received money and not have been healed?
3. When the man saw Peter and John, what did he expect to receive from them (3:3)? What words or mannerisms might he have used?
4. For what reasons might Peter and John have had no money?
5. In asking the man to look at him, how did Peter know what God was about to do (3:4)?

6. Neither repentance nor faith are listed as requirements for the man to receive healing. Even so, how might his trust in God have been affected by hearing about what took place in the Temple on the day of Pentecost?
7. As Peter took him by the hand, the man's feet and ankles received strength. Having never walked before, how did the man skip the repeated falling that is necessary before any toddler learns to walk (3:7–8)?
8. Society judged the afflicted as sinners cursed by God, excluded from Temple worship and prayer. Beyond the physical change, how might his walk through the Temple gate for the first time have affected the man's emotional and spiritual wellbeing?
9. To what extent do you think the Holy Spirit, who gave the man ability to walk, might have helped him with words to express God's glory?
10. If the man was leaping, waving his hands, and shouting praises to God, would such behavior be unusual in the Temple? Perhaps that explains why everyone saw him (3:9). In what different ways might people have viewed his conduct (2 Samuel 6:16)?
11. How did people react when they saw the beggar from outside the gate, now walking and leaping inside the Temple (3:10)?
12. What feelings do you think drove the man to hug Peter and John as people crowded around them at Solomon's porch (3:11)?
13. What wrong assumption did people make about the source of the miracle-working power (3:12)?
14. Why was it important for Peter to tell them about Jesus (3:17)? What did they not know?

15. For what reasons was it necessary for Jesus to suffer (Isaiah 53:5; Acts 3:18)?
16. What action did Peter say must be taken before people can experience life in Jesus (3:19–20)?
17. What will take place when Jesus returns to Earth (3:21)? When will this happen (Matthew 24:36, 25:13)?
18. What is the consequence of not heeding the words of Jesus (3:23)?
19. The coming of the Messiah had been predicted from the days of Samuel more than a thousand years earlier (3:24). When so many generations had passed with no fulfillment of the promise, John the baptizer came to bring anticipation of Jesus' coming. Even so, how difficult do you think it would be for people to overcome their skepticism.
20. If Jesus was a “son of Abraham” (3:25), how can he also be the “son of God” (3:26)?
21. The Law revealed people's guilt but lacked the power to force obedience (Romans 8:3). Jesus came to change our desires so doing what was right fulfilled a higher standard than what was required by the Law (Matthew 5:21–22, 27–28; Acts 3:26). How does knowing and following Jesus change our desires?

Timeline

Verses	Yr	Location	Description
1:1-11	30	Mount of Olives near Jerusalem	The ascension of Jesus and promised return
1:12-26	30	Jerusalem	Matthias chosen to replace Judas.
2:1-41	30	Jerusalem	The Holy Spirit outpouring at Pentecost
2:42-47	30	Jerusalem	Birth of the church fellowship of believers
3:1–11	31	Temple at Jerusalem	Healing the lame beggar at the Temple gate
3:12–26	31	Temple at Jerusalem	Peter speaks to the Temple crowd
4:1-4	31	Jerusalem	Peter and John arrested
4:5-23	31	Jerusalem	Peter, John, and formerly lame man brought before the Sanhedrin
4:24–31	31	Jerusalem	News of the prisoners' release leads to praise and another spiritual outpouring
4:32–36	32	Jerusalem	Believers share their abundance with those who lack
5:1–11	32	Jerusalem	Ananias and Sapphira are judged for their deception

Verses	Yr	Location	Description
5:12–33	32	Jerusalem	The apostles are arrested for their preaching
5:34–41	32	Jerusalem	Gamaliel speaks in defense of the apostles
6:1–7	33	Jerusalem	Seven men chosen to handle church needs
6:8–11	34	Jerusalem	Stephen debates Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, Asia
6:12–15	34	Jerusalem	Stephen brought before the Sanhedrin
7:1–53	34	Jerusalem	Stephen speaks to the Jewish leaders
7:54–59	34	Jerusalem	Stephen is stoned
8:1–4	34	Jerusalem	Saul persecutes the church in Jerusalem
8:5–25	34	Samaria	Philip preaches in Samaria
8:26–39	34	Road from Jerusalem to Gaza	Philip meets the Ethiopian treasurer
8:40	34	Cities from Azotus to Caesarea	Philip spreads the good news
9:1–9	35	Road to Damascus	Jesus appears to Saul
9:10–17	35	Damascus	Ananias goes to see Saul
9:18–19	35	House of Judas in Damascus	Saul is healed, baptized, and filled with the Spirit

Verses	Yr	Location	Description
9:20–23	35	Damascus	Saul preaches Christ in the synagogues
9:24–25	35	Damascus to Arabia	Saul escapes and goes to Arabia (Galatians 1:17)
	36	Damascus	Saul returns to preach in Damascus (Galatians 1:17)
	37	Damascus	Saul is in Damascus
	37	Rome	Caligula is emperor
9:26–27	38	Jerusalem	Apostles accept Saul's ministry
	38	Jerusalem	Saul stays with Peter fifteen days (Gal. 1:18-19)
9:26–29	38	Judea	Saul ministers in and out of Jerusalem
9:30	38	Saul escapes to Tarsus	Apostles accept Saul's ministry
	39	Cilicia and Syria	For five years, Saul preaches in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21)
9:31	39	Israel	Persecution diminishes and the church grows
9:32–35	39	Lydda	Peter heals the paralytic Aeneas
9:36–43	39	Joppa	Tabitha is raised from the dead
10:1–7	40	Caesarea	Cornelius sends for Peter
10:8–23	40	Joppa	Peter's vision leads to acceptance of Cornelius's invitation