

## Lesson #4 - Acts 18-28 2019

Before starting this lesson, read **Acts 18:23 thru chapter 28**.

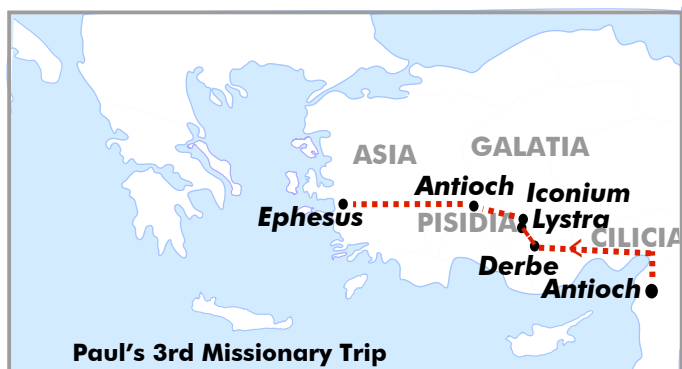
In the last lesson, Paul made 2 missionary trips. They lasted some 7 years from c. 46 to 53 AD.

The first was with Barnabas and John Mark to the island of Cyprus and the interior of Asia Minor.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> was with Silas, Timothy and Luke - returning to the interior of Asia Minor and then into Europe to northern and southern Greece. Between these 2 areas is the province of **ASIA**. This is where Paul wants to go next.



So after spending time with the church that sent him out, Paul leaves on a 3<sup>rd</sup> trip. It will last over 3 years, beginning in the fall of 53 AD.



It appears he starts out by himself, traveling overland, first north and then west thru the province of **CILICIA** to the interior of Asia Minor.

This is the province of **GALATIA**, where Paul had established churches in the towns of **DERBE**, **LYSTRA**, **ICONIUM** and **ANTIOCH** of Pisidia. The name **PISIDIA** refers to a local region.

This is now the 3<sup>rd</sup> time Paul is with the believers to encourage them and give them further instruction. When he is ready to leave, Timothy, who is from Lystra, and Gaius, a man from Derbe, join him in the work.

They continue west thru the province of **ASIA**, to the coastal, capital city of **EPHESUS**. As usual, Paul first goes to the synagogue. According to Acts 19:8, the Jews are willing to let him teach for 3 months. But then the majority reject his message and he goes to a nearby lecture hall. He starts a Bible school and teaches every day for the next 2 years.

Verse 10 tells us that *all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia, heard the word of the Lord*.

Luke never mentions Paul leaving the city. Yet we know there were local churches in the small towns of Colosse and Hierapolis. John tells about the 7 churches of Asia province. This means people come to Ephesus, hear Paul's message, believe, study under him and then return home to start a church in their city. In this way, everyone hears either thru Paul or one of his converts. It does not mean everyone believes, but everyone has the opportunity to make a choice about Jesus.

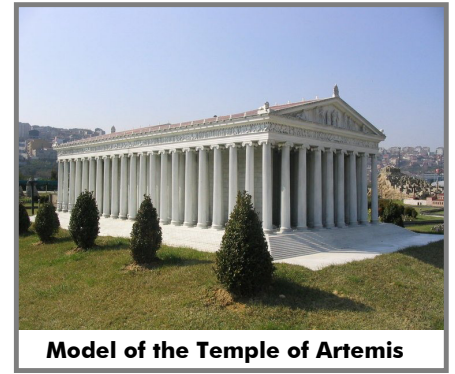
While Paul is in Ephesus, the church at Corinth writes Paul for advice. Paul answers them with a letter - our book of **1 CORINTHIANS**.

Ephesus is known as the center of sorcery and the occult.

People can buy scrolls with incantations and formulas for casting spells. People learn how to get power from the spirit world. As Paul continues to teach, people put their faith in Jesus. Now that the **Holy** Spirit lives within them, they want nothing to do with the power of evil spirits. So according to Acts 19:19, *A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to 50,000 drachmas or pieces of silver. 1 drachma is a day's wage. The value of these scrolls, by today's standards, was worth 4 million dollars. Certainly this shows the power of God to change lives.*

Ephesus is not only known as the center of sorcery; it is also known for its local deity - a fertility goddess named Artemis.

According to their legend, in 550 BC an image of Artemis fell from heaven and so a temple had been built to honor her. About 200 years later it was destroyed in a fire. In 323 BC, it was rebuilt, using pure white marble. There were 127 columns, each 60 feet high. It was so magnificent, it became one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. The image of Artemis was kept inside the temple. This fertility goddess is not the same as the Greek god Artemis which the Romans called Diana. She was the goddess of the hunters.



Ephesus had been a thriving port city. But when the channel began filling with silt, the city had to find a new source of income. They decided to focus on tourism and get people to come and see their famous temple. Food, lodging and the sale of temple and goddess replicas now provide the local economy. Some replicas are made from pottery, but the majority are silver.

During Paul's years in Ephesus, he never speaks against the temple or the goddess Artemis by name. Instead, according to Acts 19:26, he teaches that hand-made images cannot be gods. Paul's logic is that if you, a person, create a statue, it is your creation. How can it be a god and greater than you, when you created it? You should be the god over it.

The people understand this logic. As a result, the sale of temple and goddess souvenirs has declined. The silversmiths are afraid they will soon be out of work. So they go to the center of town and denounce Paul publically. Because Paul is Jewish, the Gentile silversmiths think all Jews in the city are against them. This includes many of the Jewish businessmen. A riot breaks out - Gentiles against Jews. For 2 hours all Ephesian Gentiles are shouting, *Great is Artemis of the Ephesians*.

During this riot, the Jewish men realize this might be the end of their business in Ephesus. It is going to ruin their reputation and their lives may even be in danger. In their minds, it is Paul that has caused this problem. Some of them decide that one day they will get even with him and ruin his reputation. Remember this for later in this lesson - Jewish businessmen from Ephesus want to get even with Paul because of this riot.

Paul has not planned to leave Ephesus at this time, but with the whole city against him, he and his team leave either the day of the riot or the following day.

Heading north, they stop at **TROAS** and then go west to the area of northern Greece called **MACEDONIA**. They spend time with the local churches in **PHILIPPI**, **THESSALONICA** and **BEREA** to give encouragement and instruction. While there, Paul gets more information about the problems in the Corinthian church. So before leaving the area, he writes them a second letter - our book of **2 CORINTHIANS**.

After a time, he and his team head south to visit the church members in **CORINTH**. For the next 3 months, he instructs, corrects and encourages the believers. During this time he writes a letter to the churches in Galatia to encourage and warn them - our book of **GALATIANS**. He also writes the believers in Rome, saying he wants to visit them - our book of **ROMANS**. Since he has now given the gospel message from Syria to Greece, he wants to establish a base in Rome and from there teach thruout Italy and Spain. But first he has to deliver a love offering from the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church. They are thanking the Jews for spreading the gospel message to them.



After 3 months in Corinth, Paul, his team and a delegation from the churches take the offering and head north thru **MACEDONIA**. Acts 20:6 says, *we sailed from PHILIPPI*. This means Luke joins the group. He has been in Philippi over the last 6 years, serving as pastor in the local church. The entire group now travels by boat to **TROAS**, the **ISLANDS** along the coast of Asia Minor and then east to **CAESAREA** in the land of Israel. From there, Paul and his companions go to **JERUSALEM**. They give the offering from the Gentile believers to the Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church.

Acts 20:16 says Paul is in Jerusalem during the Jewish holy days of Pentecost which lasted 7 days. Many of the Diaspora or Jews from outside of Israel were there. Near the beginning of the celebration Paul walks down the streets of Jerusalem with a Gentile believer from Ephesus. Many of the Jews see them. Later in the week Paul goes by himself to worship in the Temple courtyard.

In front of the temple itself are the courts where the Jews worship. They are surrounded by a wall and gate. Six steps down and in another open area is the Gentile court. Gentile converts to Judaism can only worship in the Gentile courtyard. Large signs are posted on the wall saying any Gentile entering the Jewish court will be put to death.

While Paul is worshipping in the Jewish court, some Jews see him and start shouting, *That man has brought Gentiles into our sacred Jewish area.*

Paul has **not** done this. The Jews have jumped to the conclusion if Paul had the nerve to walk down the streets of Jerusalem with a Gentile on the previous days, he no doubt has the nerve to bring him into the temple courtyard as well.

Acts 21:27 tells us exactly who are making this accusation.

*When the seven days of Pentecost were nearly over, **some Jews from the province of Asia** saw Paul at the temple. **They** stirred up the whole crowd and seized him.*

The capital of Asia province is Ephesus. Jewish businessmen in Ephesus had blamed Paul for the riot when he had been in Ephesus. These businessmen have now come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. When they see Paul on the Temple grounds, they see their opportunity to get even by starting a riot in Jerusalem. This will ruin Paul's reputation and might even get him killed.

In the riot, the Jewish crowd drags Paul out of the Jewish court and down to the Gentile court. They have every intention of killing him. Roman soldiers who are stationed next to the temple courts immediately come and rescue Paul by taking him prisoner.

Paul thinks if he can explain, the riot can be stopped. So he asks permission to address the crowd. Speaking in Aramaic he gives the story of his conversion. Since these Jews think he has desecrated the temple grounds, he emphasizes his dedication to God, his dedication to Jewish beliefs and to the Old Testament.

They listen to his conversion story in complete silence until he mentions one word.

*Then the Lord said to me, Go, I will send you far away to the **Gentiles*** Acts 22:21

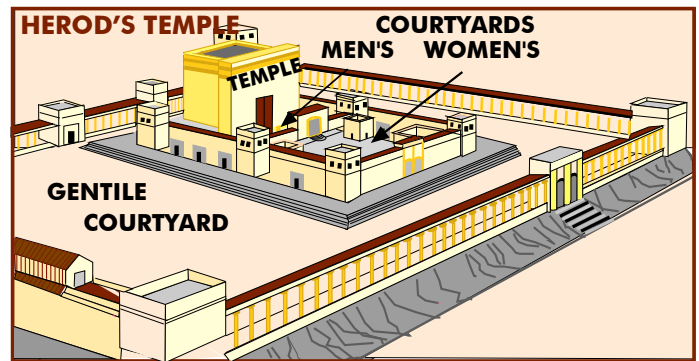
The moment he says the word *Gentiles*, the Jews begin shouting that he should die. Jews in Jerusalem are known for their intense hatred of Gentiles. Because everything has been in the Aramaic language, the Roman commander has no idea what is going on. All he knows is the Jews are out of control; he is responsible to get control and Paul is at the center of the problem. He decides a beating will force Paul to confess what he has done to upset the Jews.

Notice that Paul does not meekly submit, saying, *It must be God's will for me to be beaten.* Paul uses his legal rights as a Roman citizen to protect himself. The Bible is very consistent. When God gives people legal rights, He wants them to use them. It is only when they have **no** legal rights they are to accept the situation, but only until God provides an answer.

In Paul's case, he protects himself from the beating, but he accepts the fact he is now a prisoner of Rome. The Jews ask that Paul be tried in their Sanhedrin court, since it has to do with Jewish law. Their real goal however, is to ambush and kill him on the way to the trial. Paul's nephew hears of this plot and reports it to the Roman commander.

Because Paul is a Roman citizen, the commander has to protect him. If Paul is killed, the commander will be killed. This is why he decides to send Paul out of town that very night. He sends him 65 miles north to the Roman governor in Caesarea where there is also a Roman prison.

Chapter 23:23 says the army commander sends 470 Roman soldiers to surround Paul and accompany him on this 65 mile trip.



With this kind of security, Paul arrives safely. Because Paul is a Roman citizen, the Roman governor hears his case within 5 days. The governor's name is **FELIX**. After listening to Paul, he knows Paul is innocent. But to please the Jews, he delays making any decision.

## **FELIX**

Roman governor of Judea 52-58 AD

A few days later, Felix, with his wife Drusilla send for Paul to talk with them privately. To appreciate what Paul says and **their** response, we need to know more about them.

Felix and his brother had been born into a family of slaves who worked in the palace in Rome. They grew up with a little boy in the royal family named Claudius. When Felix and his brother were teenagers, the mother of Claudius gave them their freedom from slavery. Years and years go by. Eventually Claudius becomes Claudius Caesar over the whole Roman empire. He brings the older brother - his boyhood friend, to the palace and gives him a political position.

The older brother then gets a job for his brother Felix. Felix is first sent to Caesarea as assistant governor in northern Judea. Now he is governor over all Judea.



Felix, in his **political life**, is ruthless, greedy, unfair and has no self-control.

Just recently he has killed hundreds of Jews, just south of Caesarea. Tacitus, a famous Roman historian of that day says about Felix, *He was a master of cruelty and lust, who exercised the powers of a king with the mind of a slave.*

These characteristics - ruthless, greedy, unjust and no self-control are also in his **personal life**.

He had married one princess but later got rid of her. He married a 2<sup>nd</sup> princess, but got tired of her. Then he meets a 16-year-old Jewish girl. But she is already married to a king. Deciding he wants her, he uses flattery and the power of a magician to get her to leave her husband. She becomes his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife. Her name is Drusilla - the one we now read about.

It is this couple that asks Paul to talk with them. According to Acts 24:24, Paul speaks about faith in Christ Jesus.

Because Paul knows about their lives, he does not tell them to *believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved*.

Since they have not repented, they would see no need or reason to believe.

Paul does not say, *God wants to show you His love and mercy*.

Instead, *Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come*. Acts 24:25 This is exactly what Felix and Drusilla need to hear because they see nothing wrong with what they doing and how they are living.

According to verse 25, the reaction of Felix is fear. A more accurate translation is *he becomes terrified* of what God requires. With this, the conversation ends. Felix and Paul talk many times over the next months. But Felix never responds.

Verse 26 tells us that Felix leaves Paul in prison in Caesarea because he is hoping for a bribe. He knows Paul is innocent. He understands Paul's message. Yet he chooses to ignore it.

He continues with his life of greed and injustice for the next 2 years. During this time he also continues with his political cruelty and killing. Then at the end of these 2 years, he is called back to Rome, removed from office and all his goods and money are confiscated.

## **FESTUS**

Roman governor 58 - 61

When Felix is removed, Rome puts in a new governor, a man named **FESTUS**. This is his **first** job in the Roman government. He knows it had been the Jews who got Felix recalled. So if he wants to stay in office, he will have to keep on the good side of the Jews.

Just 3 days after he arrives in Caesarea, the Jews press charges against Paul. After listening to Paul's defense, he knows - Paul is innocent.

Festus is a good man - very different from Felix - but now he is in a terrible dilemma. If he does the right thing and sets Paul free, the Jews will turn against him and it will *end* his career. If he listens to the Jews and keeps Paul in prison, he will be guilty of injustice and it will *dishonor* his career.

Stall tactics are the only answer. He suggests that Paul go to Jerusalem for a trial with the Sanhedrin.. But Paul knows the Sanhedrin would never give him a fair trial. So as a Roman citizen in a Roman court, he appeals to the Roman supreme court. He appeals to Nero Caesar in Rome. (54-68 AD) What irony. Paul knows he will get more justice from Nero than from the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Festus is delighted with Paul's request. He will not have to make any decision and his career is saved. But there is still a problem. When he sends Paul to the supreme court, he has to explain what Roman law Paul has broken. Since Paul is innocent, he has no idea what charges to file against him.

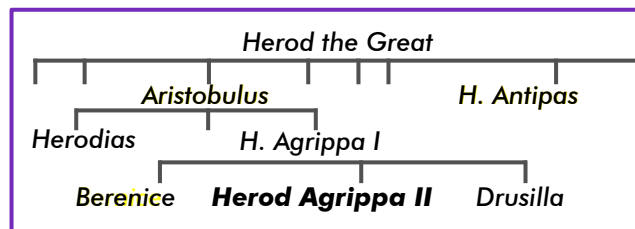
A few days later, Festus gets some help. A man named king **AGRIPPA** comes to Caesarea to visit. Because he is an expert in Jewish laws and beliefs, he can listen to Paul and suggest what charges to bring.

### **KING AGRIPPA**

Roman governor of north and east Israel

Altho Agrippa has the title of king, his actual position is governor of northern and eastern Israel. However the title "king" has been in his family for several generations, so he has been allowed to keep it. Because he is part Jewish, Rome has also given him authority in Jerusalem. He is in charge of the temple and chooses the Jewish high priest. Since the Jews abused the freedom Rome gave them, Rome has taken more and more control. Because Agrippa has studied the Old Testament, the Jews consider him knowledgeable and sympathetic to their cause.

His full name is **Herod Agrippa II**, the last of a long line of Herods.



His great grandfather was **Herod the Great** - (an Edomite). He killed the babies in Bethlehem.

His great grandmother was a daughter of the Maccabean Jewish high priest.

His half great uncle, **Herod Antipas**, had killed John the Baptist.

Aunt **Herodias** is the one who demanded the head of John the Baptist.

His father, **Herod Agrippa I**, had killed the apostle James and arrested Peter.

Now we have **Herod Agrippa II**

Right at this time he is living with his sister Berenice, as his wife. She already had 2 husbands. Her 2<sup>nd</sup> who was her uncle, had died, so now she is living with her brother. **Agrippa** and **Berenice** - brother and sister. They also have a younger sister - **Drusilla**, the wife of Felix, the former governor. History shows that to keep power within the family of Herods, there was constant incest and intermarriage.

Paul, knowing all this background, has to give his defense before them - Agrippa, Berenice and Festus, the governor of Judea. Paul defends himself by giving his own story. He explains why **he** has chosen to follow Jesus.

Part way thru, Festus interrupts him by saying, *you are out of your mind, Paul.*

Remember, this is the first government job for Festus. His whole career is in front of him. As he listens to Paul, he realizes Paul could have been the most successful rabbi in Jewish history. He could have surpassed his teacher Gamaliel. Festus is saying, *Paul, with your ability, you could have gone all the way to the top. But with your faith in Jesus, you have thrown away your opportunity - your position - your whole career. Paul, you are out of your mind to follow Jesus.*

Paul turns to Agrippa and says, *But you know I am not crazy.* Then he asks him a question to make him think.

*King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.* Acts 26:27



This is true. Agrippa believes the prophets to some extent because he is Jewish, because of his studies and his responsibilities at the Temple. So Paul is reminding him, if he believes the prophets even a little, then he *has* to consider Jesus, the One the prophets wrote about.

Agrippa's answer has a slight bit of sarcasm mixed with a simple question.

*Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?* Acts 26:28 Paul replies - *Whether it takes a short time or a long time, I only wish that you and all the others here would put their faith in Jesus.*

With this comment, the hearing ends. Agrippa and Festus get up and leave, admitting that Paul is innocent.

Rome has a law that protects prisoners who are Roman citizens. If no charge can be proven against them after 2 years, they have to be released. Paul is in his mid or late 50's and has been a prisoner in Caesarea for over 2 years. So by law, he should be set free. But Festus needs the support of the Jews to continue his career. So he rationalizes that because Paul has appealed to Rome, he **has** to send him to Rome. He cannot set Paul free. But then he files the charge that the **Jewish** leaders claim Paul is against the Roman government. This means if the **Jewish** leaders do not travel to Rome to press charges, after 2 years, Paul will automatically be set free.

In Acts 27:1 once again there is that little word "**we**". *When it was decided that we would sail for Italy....* During these last 2 years Luke has been in Caesarea with Paul. He has used the time to travel thruout Israel interviewing all the people who had seen and heard Jesus. He was collecting the material in order to write his gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Now as Paul is taken to Rome as prisoner, Luke goes with him as his medical doctor.

Leaving Caesarea, the small boat sails north-west along the coast of Asia Minor. At Myra, Paul and the other prisoners are put on a grain ship which is heading for Italy. The plan is to go due west between Crete and Greece, go to the east of Sicily and then north to Rome.

However, because it is late in the year, the winds shift and carry them to the south of Crete. They try to make it to a port on the island where they can spend the winter. But the wind gets a hold of the ship and forces them even further south, away from Crete. This frightens them, for they know a constant north wind will drive them onto the sand bars along the north African coast.



For 2 weeks the storm drives them. Without sun or stars, they have no idea where they are or where they are going. Finally at the end of 14 days, they find themselves near the island of Malta, just south of Sicily. The ship runs aground with the boat and cargo destroyed. However all the people are able to make it to shore. They spend the next 3 months on the island.

At the end of this time, the worst of the weather is past. Another grain boat that harbored at the island, is ready to leave for Italy. So Paul and the prisoners are placed on board. Landing on the coast of Italy, they go the rest of the way on the road.

According to Acts 28:16, *when we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.*

This means one end of a chain is fastened to his wrist; the other end of the chain is fastened to the wrist of a Roman soldier. There is 6 feet of chain in between.

As soon as Paul is settled, he sends for the Jewish synagogue leaders in Rome and teaches them about Jesus. As usual, there is a mixed reaction. Some are convinced, but the majority reject the message. Paul lets them know if they do not want to hear about Jesus, he will gladly spend his time teaching the Gentiles, because they want to hear.

Luke ends his book explaining that Paul spends 2 years in a rented house and is able to preach openly and without hindrance. Because he is under house arrest, he cannot leave the premises, but everyone can come to him. During this time, 59 - 60 AD, Paul writes the books of **EPHESIANS, COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON** and **PHILIPPIANS**, in that order.

None of the Jews from Jerusalem come to press charges against him. So after 2 years, following Roman law, Paul is set free.

From Paul's letters, we know that with his freedom, he first goes to Philippi and then Colosse.

It is believed he spends more than a year giving the gospel message in Spain.

He then returns to spend time in Macedonia where he writes a letter to **TIMOTHY** and another one to **TITUS**.

He goes to Ephesus, Corinth and even works on the island of Crete. This period of freedom and ministry lasts about 7 years.



Then c. 67 AD, Paul is taken prisoner. We do not know where this happens. But he is sent to Rome and this time, instead of a rented house, he is put in a Roman dungeon. Just before his death, he writes a final letter to **TIMOTHY**. Paul is in his late 60's and is beheaded in Rome about 68 AD.

Paul suffered because he would not compromise his message about Jesus - either for the government or for the religious leaders of his day. In our day, the battle continues. Government and religious leaders still want to compromise the message about Jesus.

Some are distorting what Jesus did in the past. Some are denying what He is going to do in the future. Others are raising the question - *has God really said this or that is wrong?* And then there are some who believe Jesus is not even relevant in our society.

Paul said, *everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus, will be persecuted* 2 Tim. 3:12

We as believers in Jesus have to decide in these days...

Are we going to change what we believe for the sake of tolerance?

Are we going to compromise for the sake of acceptance?

Are we going to agree with the majority for the sake of unity?

Or are we committed to the truths of Scripture and the commands of God. It is not going to be easy. Things are changing very quickly in our nation. But guaranteed, God will give us His wisdom, His power and His grace to remain faithful.

**See the next page for more information.**

## **EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE**

### **Felix and Drusilla – follow-up on their lives**

When he was removed from office and recalled to Rome, he was almost killed. But then his brother interceded and Nero, the new Caesar spared his life. Felix, Drusilla and their son settled down 135 miles south of Rome, in the city of Pompeii. 20 years later, the volcano Vesuvius erupted. Since we hear nothing more about Felix or his family in history, we can assume they died along with everyone else. Their bodies are probably still in the ruins of Pompeii, buried under the volcanic ash.

### **Berenice – follow-up on her life**

She continued to live with her brother as his wife. However, when it created too much scandal, she married another man. But then she left him and returned to her brother. Some 12 years after this, she became mistress to Titus, the Roman general who in 70 AD, burned the temple, destroyed Jerusalem and killed 1 million Jews.

### **Saul's conversion story**

It is repeated 3 times in the book, but each one is different in its details – why?

Chapter 9 is written for Theophilus, his Christian friend.

Chapter 22 – Paul is speaking to Jews who want to kill him

Chapter 26 – Paul is speaking to Gentiles who are not believers, but are mildly interested.

Luke wants to show how Paul presents only the parts of his story that are important to the people who are listening at that particular time.

### **The Pattern that Luke follows for both of his books – Luke and Acts**

I am indebted to David Pawson from Guildford, England for these ideas.

In the first chapter of both Luke and Acts, Mary the mother of Jesus is mentioned.

This is followed by the anointing or descent of the Holy Spirit.

In Luke when Jesus is baptized; in Acts, on the day of Pentecost.

In both books, the major content describes preaching, miracles of healing and growing opposition of the Jews.

In both Luke and Acts, there is a journey to Jerusalem,

Jesus sets His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem, even tho He knew He would be crucified.

Even tho Paul is told that he will be taken a prisoner in Jerusalem, he insists that he **must** go.

Both Jesus and Paul are arrested while in Jerusalem

Both are tried before Roman authorities, Jewish authorities and before religious leaders.

The last chapters in the gospel of Luke tell us that Jesus is tried before Pilate, Herod and Annas the high priest.

The last chapters of Acts tell us Paul is tried before Felix and Festus, Herod Agrippa, and Ananias, the high priest.

Then Satan seeks to destroy them both having Jesus condemned to be crucified and having Paul in a shipwreck.

If Paul had been killed on that boat trip, the letters of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians would never have been written. These are the books that teach us the truths about Jesus and the Church - how we as the Body of Christ are related to Jesus and therefore what is expected of us - truths that are so important to us today.

At the end of the gospel of Luke, after Jesus rose from the dead,

He tells 2 men on the Emmaus Road all that Moses and the prophets had said concerning Him.

At the end of Acts, Paul tries to convince the Jews about Jesus from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

Luke ends his books to show that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in spite of people and problems.

The gospel ends with the apostles continually in the temple praising God.

Acts ends with Paul preaching boldly and without hindrance.