

The background is a complex, abstract composition. It features a dense, swirling pattern of fractal-like shapes, possibly resembling a forest canopy or a microscopic view of a material. The colors are muted, with shades of blue, green, and brown. Overlaid on this pattern are several thin, white circular lines and arcs, some of which are accompanied by small, faint numbers (e.g., 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260) and arrows, suggesting a technical or scientific theme.

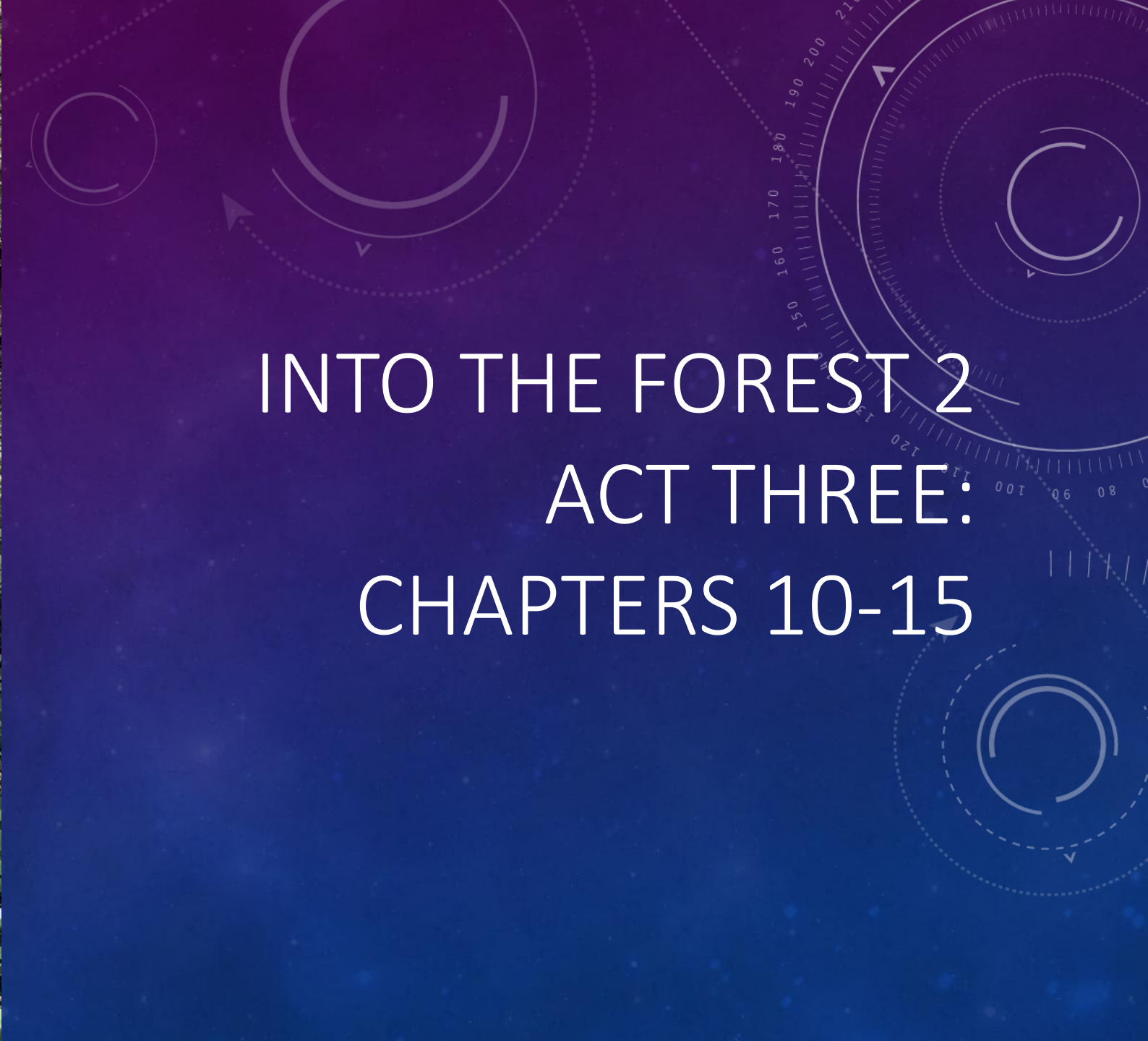
INTO THE FOREST 2: ACTS 10-15

BLACKBURN DIOCESAN CONFERENCE 2026

LOVEDAY ALEXANDER



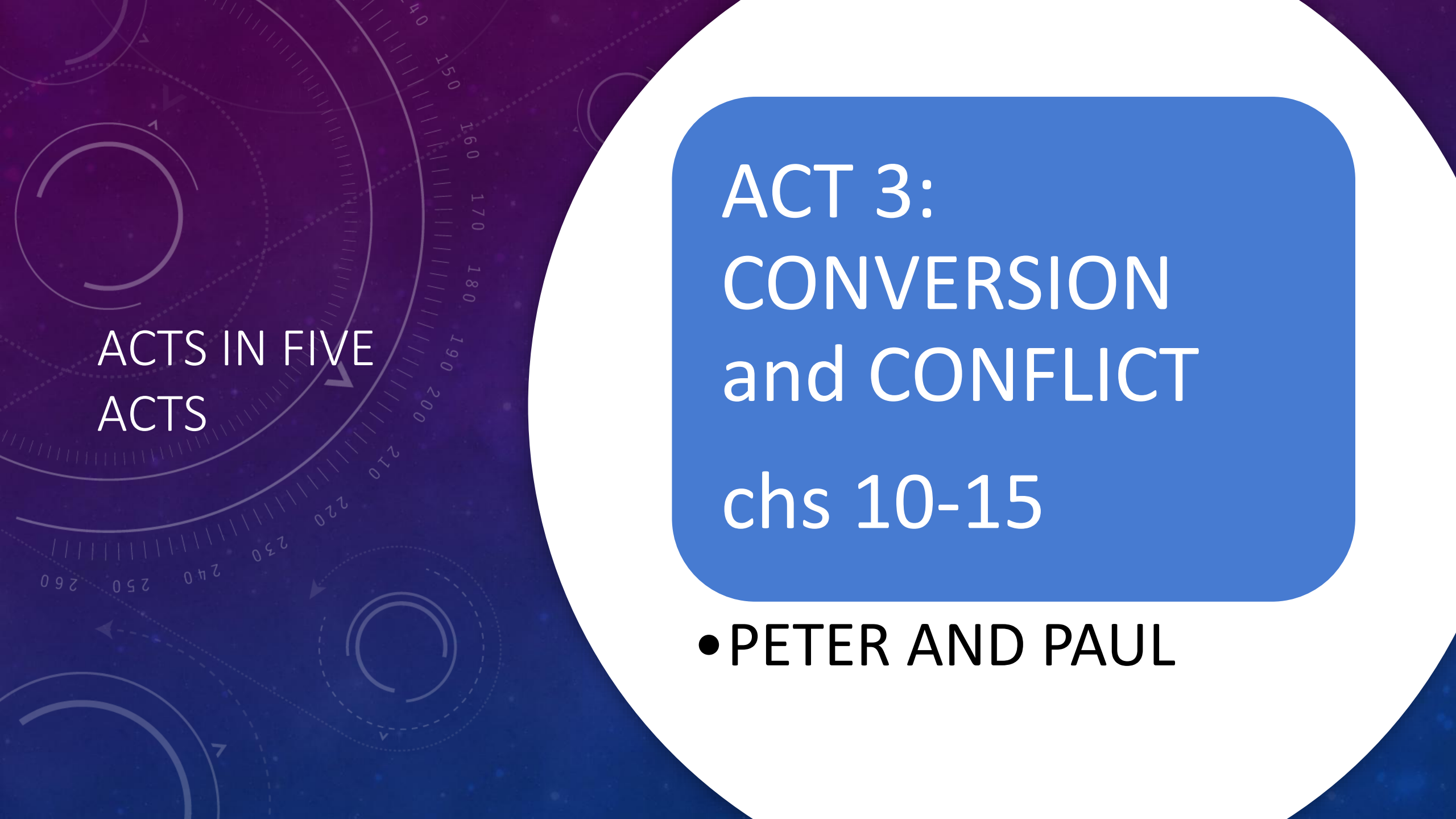
PRIVATE
WOOD
KEEP OUT



INTO THE FOREST 2

ACT THREE:

CHAPTERS 10-15



ACTS IN FIVE
ACTS

ACT 3: CONVERSION and CONFLICT chs 10-15

- PETER AND PAUL

ACTS IN FIVE ACTS

ACT 1: THE JOURNEY BEGINS chs 1-7

- Pentecost: Jerusalem

ACT 2: INTO A NEW WORLD chs 8-9

- Persecution: Judea, Samaria and Damascus

ACT 3: CONVERSION & CONFLICT chs 10-15

- Caesarea, Antioch, Pisidia, Jerusalem

ACT 4: PAUL THE MISSIONARY chs 16-20

- Anatolia, Macedonia. Greece, Asia

ACT 5: PAUL THE PRISONER chs 20-28

- Jerusalem, Caesarea, Rome
- Storm and shipwreck: “And so we came to Rome”.

CHANGE AND CHOICE

“Change and choice is at the heart of the quest. (Y14) Characters get what they need. Expecting one thing on their quest, they find themselves confronted with another; traditional worldviews aren’t reinforced, prejudices aren’t reaffirmed. Instead, the protagonists’ worldviews — and thus ours too — are realigned. Both literally and figuratively, we are moved. The quest is an integral ingredient of all archetypal stories. Change of some kind is at the heart of this quest, and so too is choice, because finally the protagonist must choose how to change.”

Yorke, *Into the Woods*, p.15

MULTIPLE PROTAGONISTS

“Identifying the mid-point in a story with multiple protagonists is complicated because individual stories can be connected in an array of different ways. ... In its most sophisticated form — the TV gang show like *West Wing* or *ER* — the work appears to have a fragmented, disjointed, episodic approach. But look closely and the same structural rules apply. All the key story components are there from inciting incidents to resolution, but each is carried by a different character —, the storytelling baton is passed from one to another as their individual vignettes pass by ... Thus different fragmented characters come together to create our recognizable story shape. ... The various protagonists, each with their own story and their own section, are pieced together to create a picture of the creation, rise, and destruction What appears arbitrary is in fact fixed and certain. It seems impossible to depart from the classic story shape.” (Yorke p.66)



9.31-43: DOWN BY THE DANGEROUS SEA

- Summary: The church in Judea
- Pastoral visits in Lydda and Joppa
- Peter in Joppa with Simon the Tanner

BIG CHANGE: FINDING A NEW TRUTH

“The midpoint in our change paradigm corresponds to the moment of Vogler’s ‘supreme ordeal’. It’s the point at which, in the ‘Hero’s Journey’, the protagonist enters the ‘enemy cave’ and steals the elixir; it is — in our paradigm — the moment of ‘big change’. It isn’t necessarily the most dramatic moment, but it is a point of supreme significance. As Macbeth illustrates, it’s the point from which there’s no going back. A new ‘truth’ dawns on our hero for the first time; the protagonist has captured the treasure or found the ‘elixir’ to heal their flaw. But there’s an important caveat ... At this stage in the story they don’t quite know how to handle it correctly. The ‘journey back’ is therefore built on how the hero reacts to possessing the ‘elixir’ and whether they will learn to master it in a wise and useful way.” (Yorke p.58)

PETER MEETS CORNELIUS (9.32-11.18)

10.1-8 Caesarea: Cornelius receives puzzling vision. Obeys and sends for Peter.

10.9-16 Joppa: Peter receives puzzling vision. Refuses invitation. Repeated 3x.

10.17-23a Joppa: Cornelius' men arrive and are invited in. Threshold 1.

10.23b-33: Caesarea: Peter goes to meet Cornelius. Threshold 2.

10.33/34 MIDPOINT: standing in the presence of God, Peter grasps a new truth: "Now I perceive".

10.34-43: Peter's speech: act of witness to Jesus Christ.

10.44-48: Transformation: Holy Spirit and baptism. Amazement.

11.1-4: Jerusalem: Peter summoned back to explain himself. Hostility.

11.5-18: Jerusalem: Peter returns home bringing renewed vision. Transformation.

PETER IN CAESAREA

The call to adventure

Initial reluctance. Cross 1st
threshold into special world

2nd threshold: enter inner cave
and find truth

Road back: experience spiritual
death

3rd threshold: resurrection and
transformation

1. Puzzling vision
2. “No, Lord” — “Go with them”
3. “Now I perceive”
4. “Why did you go in and eat with them?”
5. “Who was I that I should withstand God?”



JUSTO GONZALEZ, 179-80

“The place where we are, at this apparent edge, is where God is doing new things. And those who daily see the new things that God is doing in the world have the obligation toward God and toward the rest of the Christian world to go back to the old centers, which often have lost much of their vision, taking to them our renewed vision of what God is doing.”

THE CENTRE-POINT OF ACTS: CHS 10-15

PETER: “Then to the Gentiles also has God granted repentance unto life.” 10

PAUL: Antioch preaching to Gentiles. Barnabas brings Saul back to Antioch.

PETER: Symbolic death and resurrection. Death of a persecutor. (12)

PAUL: Sent out on mission by Antioch church. “We turn to the Gentiles.”

PETER & PAUL: APOSTOLIC COUNCIL: ch 15. “We believe that we will be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus, just as they will.” (15)

A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

Isaiah (49.6): The Lord says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel. I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

Simeon (Lk 2.32): “A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

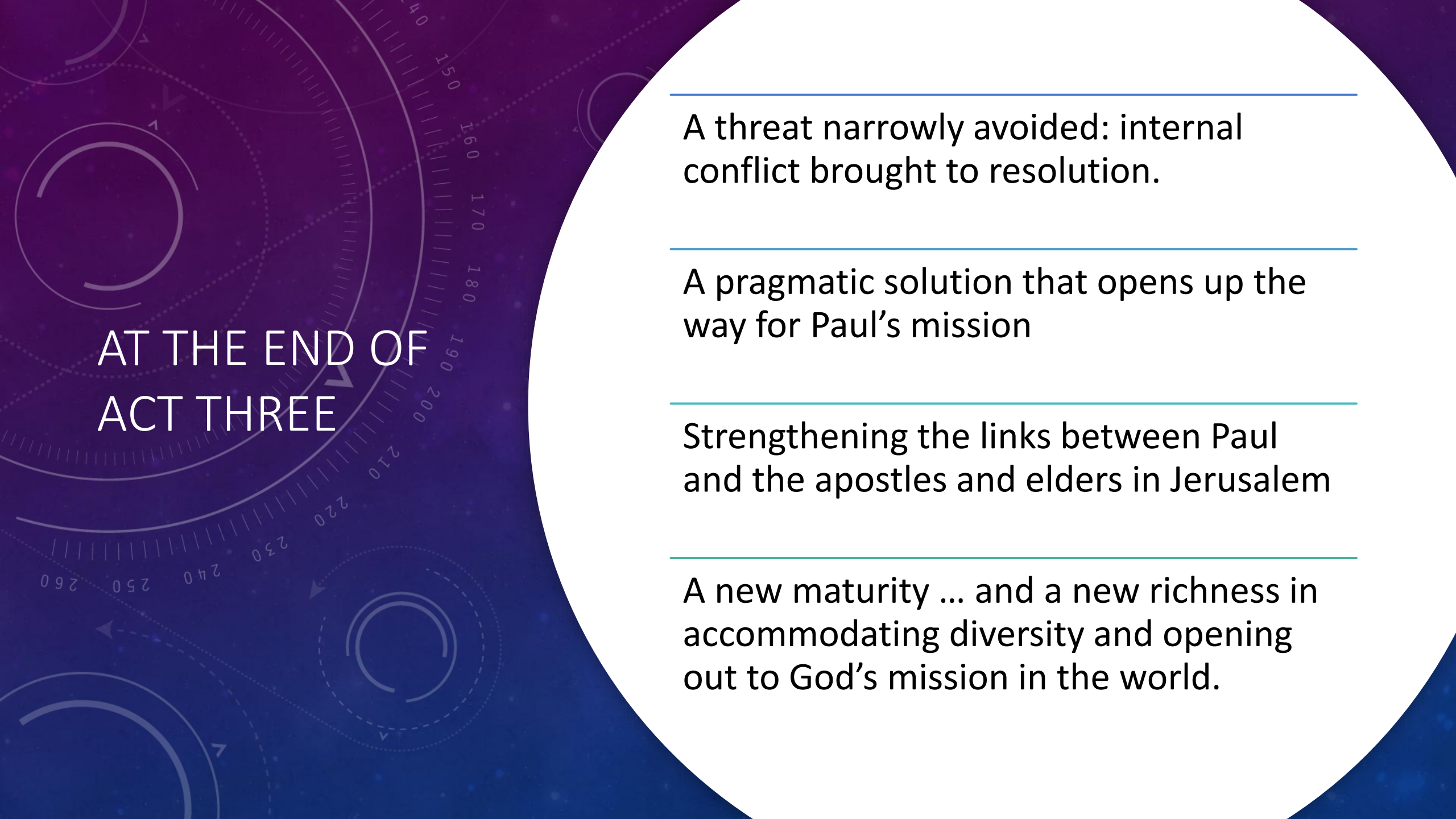
Paul (Acts 26.23): “To proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

STORY AND ARGUMENT

- A theory is posited, an argument explored, and a conclusion reached. [Thesis, antithesis, synthesis.] The theme *is* the drama. All dramas are arguments about the nature of the world. Stories work exactly like essays, like lawsuits, and, indeed, like perception itself: they posit an idea, explore it, then come to a conclusion that, if the drama is convincing, is proved true. (Y192)
- “You often hear the term, ‘You should have something to say in a story’. But that doesn’t always mean a message. It means a truth, some value that you yourself as a story-teller believe in, and then through the course of the story are able to debate that truth. Try to prove it wrong. Test it to destruction. (Y194)

ACTS 15: THE APOSTOLIC COUNCIL

- Diversity: problem or gift? Johnson 1996.
- Life in communion => accommodating diversity and debate (Galatians ch.2)
- EXPERIENCE: willingness to share what God is doing in our lives (15.3-4, 7-11, 12)
- REASON: “Therefore ..” (vv.10-11). Cf. 11.16-18. Cf. Eph 2.8.
- Listening and silence: 11.18, 15.12.
- SCRIPTURE: 15.13-17 James quotes Amos 9.11-12 (LXX). “The words of the prophets agree.”
- TRADITION: 15.18-21, 29: pragmatic solution based on “Covenant with Noah”.
- THE HOLY SPIRIT: 15.28. The Spirit is at the centre too!



AT THE END OF ACT THREE

A threat narrowly avoided: internal conflict brought to resolution.

A pragmatic solution that opens up the way for Paul's mission

Strengthening the links between Paul and the apostles and elders in Jerusalem

A new maturity ... and a new richness in accommodating diversity and opening out to God's mission in the world.

QUOTES CORNER

‘Rather than regard diversity as a problem for biblical authority or theology, I find it a great gift from God to the church.’

Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment*

“The church is the sum of a thousand individual journeys — they are all part of the same story. The ability to listen to each other’s story is what makes us the Body of Christ.”