



ACTS 12 · AD 41-44

Herod, Peter, and the Unstoppable Word

Who is Herod? —

Herod Agrippa I — grandson of Herod the Great. Grew up in Rome, personal friend of Emperor Claudius. Ruled Judea AD 41-44. Savvy politician who cultivated Jewish nationalist sympathy to consolidate power.

The Persecution (12:1-5) —

James (son of Zebedee) executed by sword — the first apostolic martyr. Peter arrested during Passover week with 4 squads of soldiers assigned. The church's response: earnest, sustained prayer (12:5).

The Escape (12:6-11) —

The angel strikes Peter awake in the night. Chains fall off. Iron prison gate opens on its own. Peter walks free — while the church praying for him doesn't believe it (12:15). Luke's irony is intentional.

Herod's Death (12:19-23) —

Caesarea, AD 44. At a festival honoring Claudius, Herod accepts worship as a god. Josephus confirms: struck by severe pain, dead within five days. The contrast: the angel struck Peter to save him; the same verb — struck Herod to kill him.

The Summary (12:24) —

"But the word of God increased and multiplied." Luke's refrain: persecution does not stop the mission — it accelerates it.

ACTS 12

JAMES (BROTHER
OF JOHN) IS KILLED
+
PETER IS
IMPRISONED AND
FREED



45AD

JAMES
(BROTHER OF
JESUS) WRITES
HIS LETTER



A C T S 1 2 : 2 5 - 1 9 : 4 1

Paul's Prophetic Witness in the Diaspora

The movement of God's Word from Jerusalem
to the ends of the Roman world — AD 41–57

One Suggested Chronology of Paul's Ministry

Event	Date / Reference
Paul's conversion	AD 32
Galatians 1 visit to Jerusalem	35, Acts 9:26–30
Famine relief visit to Jerusalem	46, Acts 11:30; 12:25
First missionary journey	47–48
Jerusalem Council	49, Acts 15
Second missionary journey, ends with trip to Jerusalem/Antioch	49–50
Third missionary journey	51–57
Arrest in Jerusalem	57
Journey to Rome	c. 60 (under house arrest in Rome, 60–62)
Release, travel, rearrest, and martyrdom	62 to 65–67

PAUL'S FIRST MISSION ACTS 13:4 - 14:28 AD 46-48

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PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- Read Acts 13: 1 - 14: 28
- Paul leaves Antioch in about 47AD
- They travel to Cyprus, through Asia Minor, through Galatia (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe)



Bible History Online

Sent Out from Antioch: Cyprus & South Galatia

The Antioch Team (Acts 13:1)

Barnabas (Cyprus) · Simeon called Niger (North Africa) · Lucius of Cyrene · Manaen (Herod's court) · Saul (Tarsus). A deliberately multicultural team for a cosmopolitan city. The Spirit speaks through prayer and fasting → hands laid on Barnabas and Saul → sent out.

Seleucia → Salamis, Cyprus	13:4–5	Barnabas's home turf. Multiple synagogues. Preached to Jews first (Acts 1:8 pattern).
Paphos, Cyprus	13:6–12	Confrontation with sorcerer Bar-Jesus / Elymas. Proconsul Sergius Paulus believes. Saul now goes by 'Paul'; leads over Barnabas (13:13).
Perga, Pamphylia	13:13	John Mark departs here — source of later Paul/Barnabas conflict (15:36–39).
Pisidian Antioch	13:14–52	Paul's first major sermon (parallel to Peter in Acts 2). Jews respond, then jealousy flares. Paul pivots to Gentiles, citing Isaiah 49:6. Disciples 'filled with joy and the Holy Spirit' (13:52).
Iconium	14:1–7	Many Jews and Greeks believe. Opposition mounts. Signs and wonders confirm the message. They flee when stoning is threatened.
Lystra	14:8–20	Lame man healed (parallel to Acts 3). Crowd tries to worship Paul as Hermes. Paul and Barnabas tear robes in horror. Same crowd stones Paul — he rises and continues.
Derbe, then back	14:20–28	Many disciples made. Paul retraces the entire route, appointing elders in each church. Returns to Antioch — mission report: 'God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.'

TABLE 4 · ACTS 2 VS ACTS 13

Parallels Between Peter's and Paul's Sermons

Luke is not showing that Paul plagiarized Peter. He is showing that one Spirit, one gospel, one God — working through two very different men, to two very different audiences, with the same saving message.

Sermon Theme	Peter (Acts 2)	Paul (Acts 13)
You killed Jesus	2:22–23	13:27–28
God raised him up	2:24	13:30
David says in Psalm 16	2:25–28	13:35
David remains dead	2:29	13:36
God raised up Christ from David's seed	2:30	13:23
Jesus did not see corruption	2:31	13:37

Teaching Point: Paul's Pisidian Antioch sermon (Acts 13:16–47) is his inaugural Lukan speech — doing for the synagogue audience what Peter's Pentecost sermon did for Jerusalem. Same structure. Same Christ. Different man. Same Spirit.

Parallels Between Peter's and Paul's First Healings

Luke builds a deliberate theological case: what God did through Peter in Jerusalem, he does through Paul in the diaspora. The mission is continuous. The power is the same. The Servant Lord is at work in both.

Parallel Element	Peter — Acts 3:1–6	Paul — Acts 14:8–10
Type of healing	Peter's first narrated healing	Paul's first narrated healing
Condition	Disabled from birth (3:2)	Disabled from birth (14:8)
Gaze	Peter and John look intently (3:4)	Paul gazes intently (14:9)
Faith present	Faith of someone brings healing (3:16)	Faith to be healed (14:9)
Command	Command to walk (3:6)	Command to stand (14:10)
Response	Leaping and walking (3:8)	Leaping and walking (14:10)
Setting	Near a temple gate (3:2)	Near gates (14:13)
Aftermath	Human adulation rejected (3:11–16)	Human adulation rejected (14:11–18)

48 - 49 AD

PAUL WRITES GALATIANS



JERUSALEM COUNCIL (49/50 AD)

- Read Acts 15:1-21
- Paul, Barnabas, James, Peter, and other leaders meet
- They set the theological record straight — it is a false teaching to say that salvation is through Christ plus works



ACTS 15 · AD 49 · ACTS 15 = GALATIANS 2 (MAJORITY VIEW)

The Jerusalem Council: Unity Without Uniformity

The Crisis

Judean teachers arrive in Antioch insisting gentiles must be circumcised to be saved (15:1). This is not a peripheral issue — it is the gospel itself.

The Parties

Pharisaic believers: circumcision required. Paul and Barnabas: Spirit and faith alone. Jerusalem leadership (Peter, James) must navigate both.

Peter's Argument

God gave gentiles the Spirit before circumcision (Cornelius, Acts 10). "Why do you put God to the test by placing a yoke on their neck?" (15:10).

James's Ruling

Amos 9:11–12 LXX: God always intended to take a people for his name from the gentiles. Gentiles need not be circumcised — but should abstain from idol food, sexual immorality, and blood (minimal markers of righteousness).

The Outcome

A letter sent. Judas and Silas dispatched as witnesses. The church in Antioch rejoices. Core principle: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

Commonalities: Acts 15 and Galatians 2

Most scholars identify the Jerusalem meeting of Galatians 2:1–10 with Acts 15:6–22. The accounts approach the same event from different angles — Luke as narrator, Paul as participant.

Commonality	Acts 15:6–22	Galatians 2:1–10
The same basic issue	Acts 15:5	Gal. 2:4
The same basic outcome	Acts 15:19–21, 28–29	Gal. 2:5–6
Paul's mission recognized	Acts 15:12	Gal. 2:2
Gentiles need not be circumcised	Acts 15:19–20	Gal. 2:7–9
Peter involved	Acts 15:7–11	Gal. 2:9
James involved	Acts 15:13–21	Gal. 2:9

Interesting Point: Galatians was likely written before the Council, which is why Paul doesn't cite its decree. He's arguing from experience and Scripture — not from an agreed resolution that hadn't happened yet.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSION ACTS 15:39 - 18:22 AD 49-52

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PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- Read Acts 15:36 -18:22
- Journey takes about 3 years
- Paul travels from Antioch and visits churches established on 1st missionary journey.
- From Troas, they go into Macedonia — Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth
- Paul remains in Corinth 50 - 52AD (see next slide)
- Paul leaves Corinth, visits Ephesus before landing in Caesarea, visits Jerusalem, and returns to Antioch



PAUL WRITES TO THE THESSALONIANS (50AD)

- The church at Thessalonica was founded (17:1 - 9)
- At some point, Paul and Silas had to slip away to Berea
- Trouble also came to a head in Berea so Paul moved south to Athens and the eventually to Corinth (50 - 52AD)
- Paul writes 1 Thessalonians and sends it with Timothy
- A few months later he writes 2 Thessalonians



The Mission Crosses into Europe

The Split That God Used

Paul and Barnabas part sharply over John Mark (15:39). God's sovereignty overrules human conflict: Barnabas takes Mark to Cyprus; Paul takes Silas (a Roman citizen) — better suited for Asia Minor and Europe. Timothy joins at Lystra: half-Greek, good reputation, circumcised for mission strategy (not salvation).

Syria & Cilicia	15:41	Delivering the Jerusalem decree; strengthening churches.
Derbe & Lystra	16:1–3	Timothy joins the team. Spirit blocks Asia and Bithynia (16:6–7).
Troas	16:8–10	The Macedonian vision: "Come over and help us." Luke joins (the first 'we' passage). The gospel crosses from Asia into Europe.
Philippi	16:11–40	First European city. Lydia (purple cloth dealer) converted — first European convert. Slave girl exorcised → Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned → midnight earthquake → jailer converted. Roman colony; Latin inscriptions. Beatings for 'promoting Jewish customs' (anti-Judaism under Claudius, AD 49).
Thessalonica	17:1–9	Three Sabbaths in the synagogue. Jason's house church formed. Accusation: 'These men have turned the world upside down' (17:6).
Berea	17:10–14	The Bereans 'examined the Scriptures daily' (17:11) — noble response. Agitators follow from Thessalonica.
Athens	17:15–34	Areopagus Council. Paul preaches to cultured Greek elite. Adapts message: creation → unknown god → resurrection. Mixed response — some mock, some believe.
Corinth	18:1–17	18 months. Aquila and Priscilla (expelled from Rome, AD 49 under Claudius). Gallio's proconsulship anchors the date to AD 51–52.

Paul at the Areopagus: Preaching to Power

Athens was the intellectual capital of the ancient world — more statues than people, competing philosophical schools (Stoics, Epicureans), and an Areopagus Council of ~100 elite members who controlled who could teach publicly. Paul wasn't sightseeing. He was grieved (17:16) and compelled.

The Hook

"Men of Athens — I see you are very religious" (17:22). The 'unknown god' inscription: Paul doesn't mock their religion, he redirects it. This is contextualization, not compromise.

The Message

One God → Creator of everything → Lord of heaven and earth → doesn't live in temples → gives life and breath to all → made all nations from one man → appointed times and places → so that people might seek him. The entire speech is Jewish monotheism in Greek clothes.

The Climax

Jesus raised from the dead (17:31). Resurrection was the sticking point for Greek philosophy (17:32). Some mocked; some believed — including Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris.

The Pattern

Paul preaches differently to synagogue audiences (13:16–47), rural pagans (14:15–17), and cultured Greek elite (17:22–31). Same gospel. Different frame. Spirit-led contextualization.



PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- Read Acts 18: 23 - 21: 15
- After Paul's second missionary journey, he returns to his home base in Syria to re-organize and sets back out
- He travels back through previously established churches in Asia Minor before arriving in Ephesus where he stays for 3 years



PAUL'S THIRD MISSION ACTS 18:23 - 21:17 AD 53-57

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- (1) Syrian Antioch 18:23
- (2) Tarsus?
- (3) Derbe?
- (4) Lystra?
- (5) Iconium?
- (6) Pisidian Antioch? 18:23
- (7) Ephesus 19:1
- (8) Troas?
- (9) Neopolis? 20:1
- (10) Philippi? 20:1
- (11) Amphipolis? 20:1
- (12) Apollonia? 20:1
- (13) Thessalonica? 20:1
- (14) Berea? 20:1
- (15) Athens? 20:2
- (16) Corinth? 20:2
- (17) Athens? 20:2
- (18) Berea? 20:3
- (19) Thessalonica? 20:3
- (20) Apollonia? 20:3
- (21) Amphipolis? 20:3
- (22) Philippi? 20:6
- (23) Neopolis? 20:6
- (24) Troas 20:6
- (25) Assos 20:13
- (26) Mitylene 20:14
- (27) Chios 20:15
- (28) Samos 20:15
- (29) Miletus 20:15
- (30) Cos 21:1
- (31) Rhodes 21:1
- (32) Patara 21:1
- (33) Tyre 21:3
- (34) Ptolemais 21:7
- (35) Caesarea 21:8
- (36) Jerusalem 21:17



54 AD

NERO BECOMES EMPEROR



Ephesus: The Longest Stay, the Biggest Showdown

After 18 months in Corinth, Paul returns to Antioch and then launches the Third Journey. The Spirit, previously blocked from Asia (16:6), now leads him straight to Ephesus — the most important city in the eastern empire.

Aquila & Priscilla instruct Apollos	18:24–28	Apollos — eloquent, knew Scriptures, but only John's baptism. Privately corrected. Models humble reception of fuller truth.
Disciples of John re-baptized	19:1–7	Disciples who had only John's baptism receive the Holy Spirit when Paul lays hands on them. Spirit evident in tongues and prophecy.
Hall of Tyrannus	19:8–10	2 years of daily teaching. 'All residents of Asia heard the word' (19:10). A lecture hall used by day, repurposed for gospel work by night (Western text: noon to 4 PM).
Extraordinary Miracles	19:11–12	Handkerchiefs and aprons carried from Paul's body bring healing and deliverance. The Spirit attests the message with power.
The Sons of Sceva	19:13–16	Seven sons attempt unauthorized exorcism 'in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches. ' The demonized man overpowers them all. Awe falls on the city.
The Bonfire	19:17–20	New believers bring sorcery scrolls worth 50,000 silver pieces and burn them publicly. "So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily" (19:20).
The Riot (Demetrius)	19:23–41	Silversmith guild leads riot in the theater to protect trade in Artemis shrines. The Artemision (temple of Artemis): 4× the size of Athens' Parthenon, one of seven wonders of the world. The city clerk dismisses the crowd — Paul's innocence protected by Rome.



PAUL WRITES 1 CORINTHIANS (54 - 55 AD)

- Paul is in Ephesus when he writes to the Corinthians
- He promises to visit them to discuss what is going on
 - The congregation was torn apart by quarreling
 - Dissatisfaction with Paul's authority arose



PAUL VISITS CORINTH BUT LEAVES IN DISGUST

SENDS A "SEVERE" LETTER
FROM EPHEBUS (NOT EXTANT)



PAUL LEAVES EPHESUS

- A riot forces Paul to leave Ephesus so he returns back through Macedonia and Achaia (northern and souther Greece)
- Paul had moved up to Troas as he received back the news from Titus and the severe second letter to the Corinthians, he writes what we call 2 Corinthians.
- Paul writes Romans in 57AD while in Achaia (Acts 20: 2 -3)
- On his way back to Jerusalem, Paul goes north through Macedonia and south through Miletus



THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS · ACTS 12-19

The Pattern Luke Never Lets You Miss

Seven times across Acts 12-19, Luke gives us the same sequence:

- 1. The Word Goes Out** Prayer → Spirit → Commissioning → Gospel proclaimed to Jew first, then Gentile.
- 2. Signs Confirm** Healing, exorcism, or power encounter attests the message. Not for show — for witness.
- 3. Opposition Rises** Jewish jealousy (13:45), economic interests (16:19), civic pride (19:25), or imperial politics.
- 4. The Mission Adapts** Paul moves synagogue → home church → lecture hall. Never the same method twice. Always the same message.
- 5. The Word Prevails** Luke's refrains: 'The word of God increased and multiplied' (12:24). 'The word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed' (19:20).

"The future always lies with obedience to God's plan." — Keener

The Word of God cannot be chained.

*Not by Herod. Not by jealous synagogues.
Not by Roman magistrates. Not by sorcerers.
Not by riot. Not by prison.*

**"But the word of God increased and multiplied."
Acts 12:24**

*"The word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."
Acts 19:20*