

# INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

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- ❖ The 4 Canonical Books = Gospel (4 sessions)
- ❖ Acts & Pauline Epistles (5 sessions)
- ❖ Catholic Epistles, letters & Revelation (1 session)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Session covered

- ❖ **Introduction to the 4 Canonical Books = Gospel**
- ❖ **Proof of their Canonicity (Internal & External evidence)**
- ❖ **Wisdom behind the existence of 4 Canonical Books = Gospel**
- ❖ **Meaning of the word Gospel and proper titles**
- ❖ **Purposes of each Gospel**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Session covered

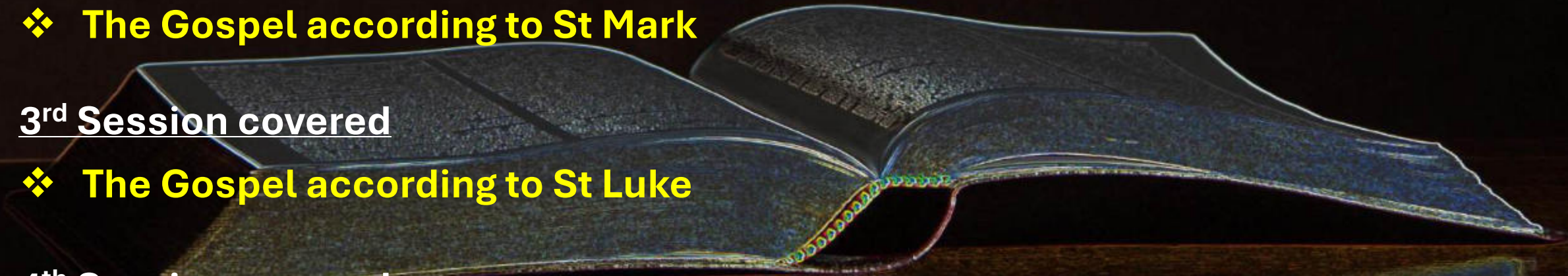
- ❖ **The Gospel according to St Matthew**
- ❖ **The Gospel according to St Mark**

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Session covered

- ❖ **The Gospel according to St Luke**

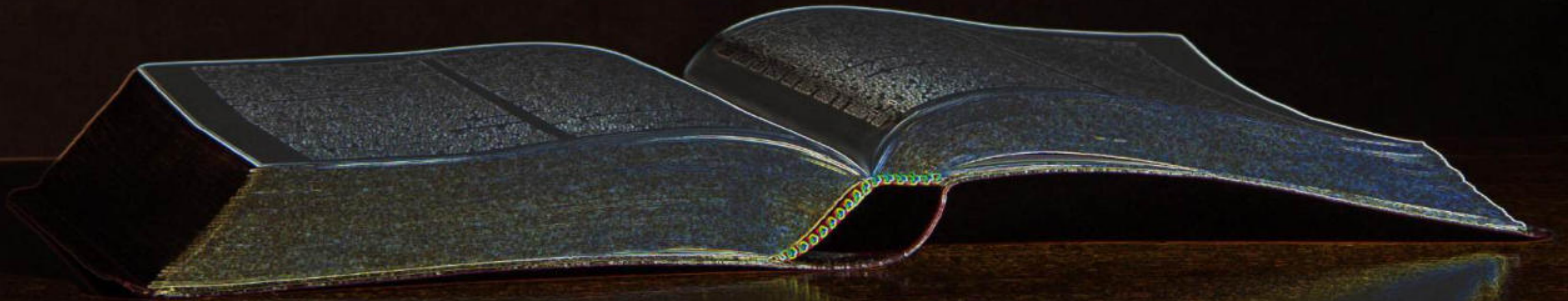
## 4<sup>th</sup> Session covered

- ❖ **The Gospel according to St John**



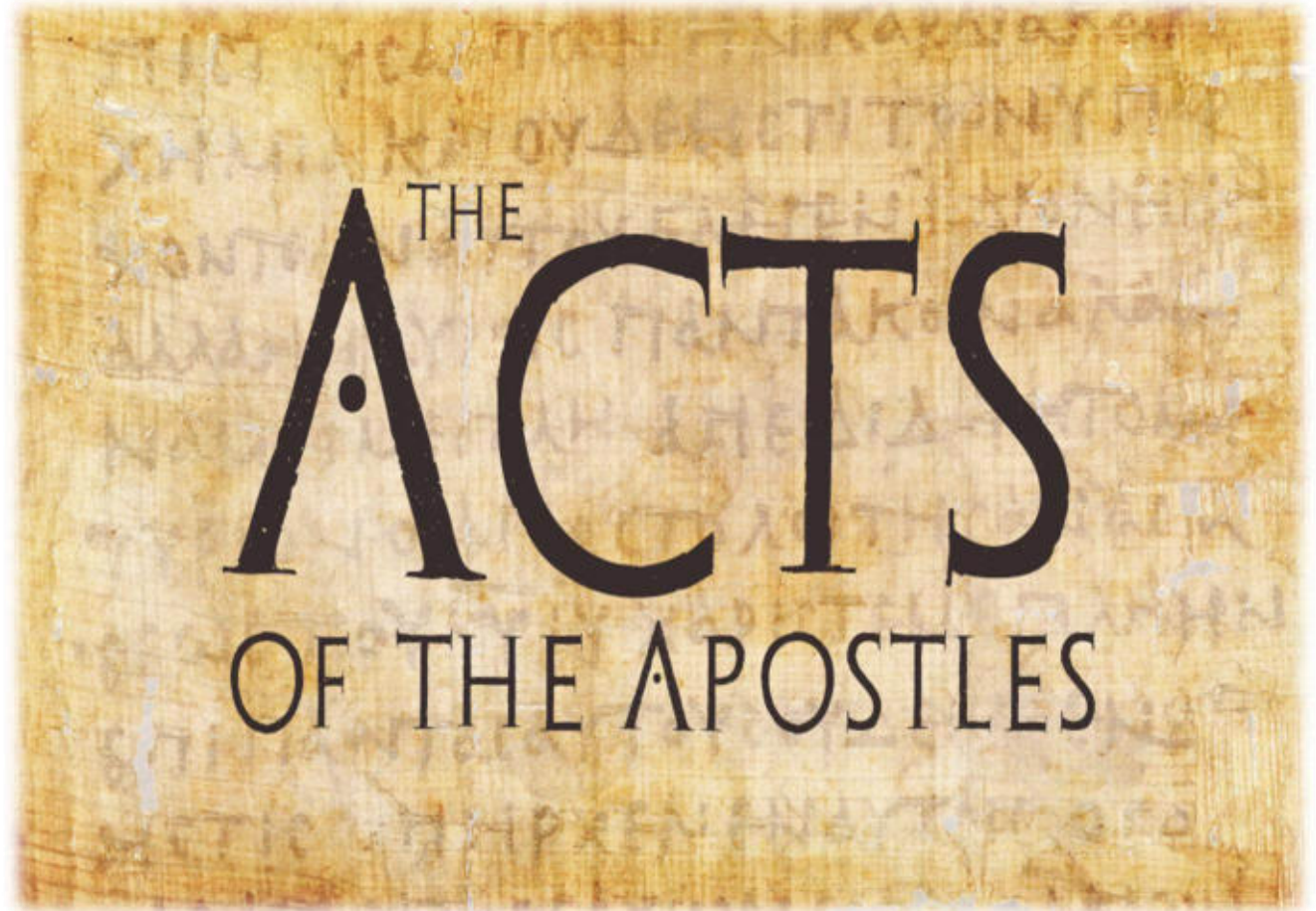
## The next 5 Sessions to cover Acts & St Paul's epistles

1. Acts
2. Romans, Corinthians, Galatians.
3. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians.
4. Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus.
5. Philemon & Hebrews.



# Book of Acts

1. Title of the Book of Acts
2. Who wrote Acts
3. Canonicity of the Book of Acts
4. About the Author
5. Time & place of the writing
6. Location of Acts – Important link
7. Objectives of the book of Acts
8. Importance of the Book of Acts
9. Contents of the Book of Acts
10. St Paul's Missionary trips
11. End of the book of Acts



# ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ



## 1-Title:

The Book of Acts “ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ” or Just Acts “ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ”.

This title appeared in the writings of St. Clement of Alexandria.

This title without using the article “**the**”  
(**Book of Acts not Book of **the** Acts**)

Agrees with the contents of the book,  
as it presents only a selections from the acts of the apostles  
that helped founding the early Church.

Book of Acts presents only a general outline of the works  
of St Peter and St Paul in Jerusalem and other cities under  
the Roman Empire among both Jews and Gentiles

## 2- Who wrote Acts

Church fathers confirmed its was written by St Luke, the writer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gospel.

### Proof:

1- Both books address the same person (**Theophilus**).

...I too decided to write an orderly account for you, **most excellent Theophilus**, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. Luke 1 (3-4)

**In my former book, Theophilus**, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving... Acts1:1

Theophilus: likely someone of high stature in the Roman Empire; because St Luke called him “most excellent” another view is that Theophilus means (Lover of God)

2- Both were written in Greek with strong similarities in language, style and concepts.

3- Acts is a natural continuation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gospel where Luke refer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gospel by “**former book**” then Acts is the latter book. In the Gospel he recorded the life, teaching & work of Jesus, and in Acts the work of the Holy Spirit

4- Many fathers when they referred to the book Acts said, **as it was written by St Luke**



## 2- Who wrote Acts

5- The author didn't mention his name, but it is obvious he is one of those who followed St Paul in his trips.

How we know?

- I. From Ch16 he met St Paul (during his 2<sup>nd</sup> trip) in Troas, after St Paul's vision of a Macedonian pleading with him, "*Come over to Macedonia and help us.*" Acts 16:9 As he used pronouns (we, our, us)  
"Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them" Acts 16:10
- II. From Ch17 when St Paul left Philippi, he narrated using pronouns of 3<sup>rd</sup> person "*Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica ...*" so he must have remained in Philippi
- III. From Ch 20 & 21 He must have met St Paul again returning from his 3<sup>rd</sup> trip towards Jerusalem as he returns to narrating in 1<sup>st</sup> person (we, our, us) "*And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.*"
- IV. He stayed with St Paul till end of Acts, even till St Paul's last epistle **2 Tim 4** "*Only Luke is with me*".

Four persons escorted St Paul (**Timothy, Titus, Silas and Luke**) One of them is the Author of Acts

Timothy, can't be the author as it in Acts 20" *....and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread"*

It cannot be Silas or Titus as neither of them was with St Paul in prison, only Luke

### 3- Authenticity/ Canonicity of the Book of Acts & St Luke as its author

#### A- External evidence:

Church tradition is the most important witness for the Book of Acts and its authorship to St. Luke.

Ex. Testimony of **Eusebius of Cæsarea** Pointed to the **Jewish historian Josephus** who wrote about An Egyptian who led 4k men to break into Jerusalem by force, when **Felix** was informed, he ordered soldiers to go against them, they defeated them, But the Egyptian escaped.

Eusebius commented on this saying “It is worth comparing the description mentioned by Josephus about the Egyptian versus the one mentioned in the Book of Acts. During the rule of Felix over Judea and after the Jews stirring people against Paul the centurion asked Paul *“Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?” Acts 21: 38*”

#### B-Internal Evidence:

Many internal evidences proves the authenticity & canonicity of this book,

These can be seen when comparing between

- **St. Peter’s preaching style in the Book of Acts versus the style of his two epistles**
- **What was quoted from both St Paul & St. James sayings in the Book of Acts versus their epistles.**

## 4- Who is St Luke



- A gentile, originally from Antioch, and likely of Greek origin
- Close disciple of St Paul and being from Antioch likely he became Christian at his hands.
- He was a doctor “**Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you**” Col 4:14
- An artist, considered the first iconographer and is revered for writing an icon of St Mary

St Luke was accurate in his writing both the Gospel & Book of Acts – As he said  
“.....having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus” Luke 1

**Notice how his detailed descriptions of:**

- The shipwreck in Malta with St Paul (Acts 27) Or
- Of St Peter left prison as the earth shook, the doors opened (Acts 12)

### Was he an Apostle?

Scholar Origen and some Church fathers said he was. However, St Luke who is the only evangelist to mention the sending of the 70 Apostles, did not write it as a witness and never claimed to be one of the 70.

There is also no proof that he received any teaching or saw Christ as he said himself **Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us (Luke 1:1)**

## 5- Time & place of writing the book

**A- Time:** Several years were needed to collate the information Luke witnessed during his companionship to St. Paul. It is believed St Luke finished Acts near the end of the 2y 1<sup>st</sup> imprisonment of St Paul in Rome, 62AD/ 64AD

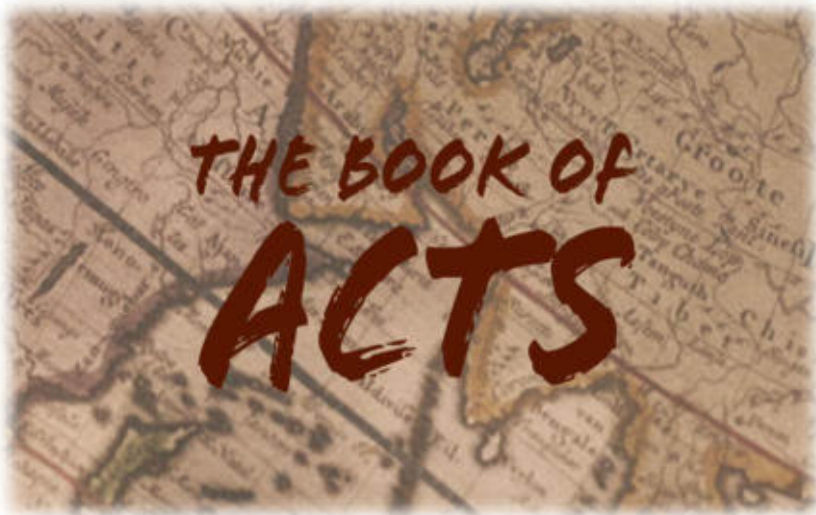
**Before 70AD:** As St Luke never mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem. Actually, it must have finished before 67AD as it never mention St Paul's martyrdom.

**Not before 62/63AD:** As he narrates till end of Yr2 of St. Paul's 1st imprisonment in Rome, which was 62/63AD

**As Acts concludes as follows:**

Then Paul dwelt **two whole years** in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him”.

This proves that the book was finalized between 62 and 64AD (**Right before Nero's persecution/ burning of Rome**).



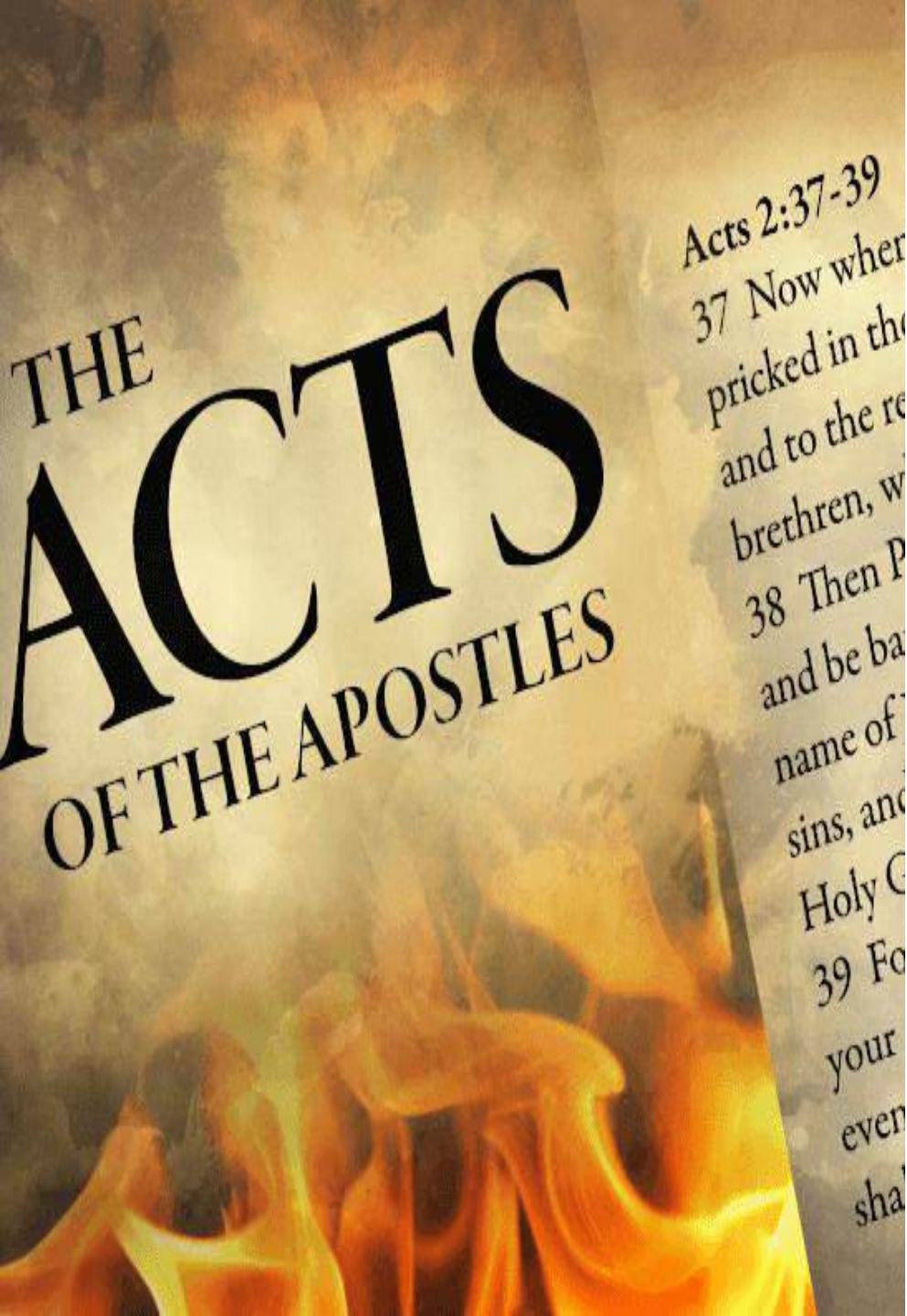
**B- Place:**

No agreement on this, but as it is likely St Luke wrote most of it at least in Rome during his time with St Paul.

St Paul mentions St Luke in some of the **captivity epistles**

*“Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you” Col 4:14* and

*“Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, **Luke**, my fellow laborers.” Philemon 23, 24.*



## 6- Location of Acts - Important link

Acts is located between the Gospel & Epistles.

Ideal location as it beautifully links the Gospel with the Epistles.

- The Gospel = life, teachings & work of our Lord Jesus Christ
- The Epistles = Teachings of the Apostles led by the Holy Spirit.

Without reading Acts, many of the Epistles won't be clear.

Acts is the only book in the Bible that remains open today:

When the deacon reads, he ends The

- Gospel with (Glory be to God forever Amen)
- Epistles with (Grace of God the father be with you all Amen)
- Prophecies with (Glory to the Holy Trinity)
- Acts (The word of God continues to grow & multiply in ...)

**Synaxarium follows Acts:** Indicating that the book remains open and is being written by the acts of the believers.

**Acts starts with the Ascension of Christ and will end by His second coming and our Ascension**

## 7- Objective of the Book of Acts

It is not to present comprehensive documentation of the acts of the apostles.

But to show the divine work of the Holy Spirit in spreading the faith in Jerusalem and beyond [Acts 1](#)

St Luke ends by confirming the message of Christ reached the end of the earth by entering the Empire's capital.

**Book of Acts is a perfect finale for the Gospel –and- Essential prelude for the Epistles. Why?**

**The signs & prophecies concerning promises about the Holy Spirit increase near the end of the Gospel:**

**Acts documents the fulfillment of all these promises:**

- **Mark 16:17, 18** *“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well”*
- **Luke 24:47-49** *“and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high”*
- **John 14:12-17** *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do.....And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”*

## 8- Importance of the Book

Many say Acts is just history, let's focus on the Gospel (as the life, work & teaching of the Lord) And the Epistles (as they contain teachings & guidance) – **So what is the importance of Acts?**

### **1- Rites**

The Book of Acts is the 1<sup>st</sup> and probably most important reference to all Rites and the order of the Church In Acts, we will see the: **Psalms Agpeya, Praise, Fasting, liturgies.**

**US**

### **2- Sacraments**

In Acts we see the sacraments: **Baptism, Mayroun, Priesthood (Laying of hands), Holy Communion.**



### **3- The order of the liturgy**

We see in Acts 2 how Christians gathered:

- Listened to the teaching of the Apostles (**Liturgy of the word**),
- Prayed (**liturgy of the faithful**),
- Partake in the sacrament (**Holy communion**), Then
- Have an **Agapy** together –

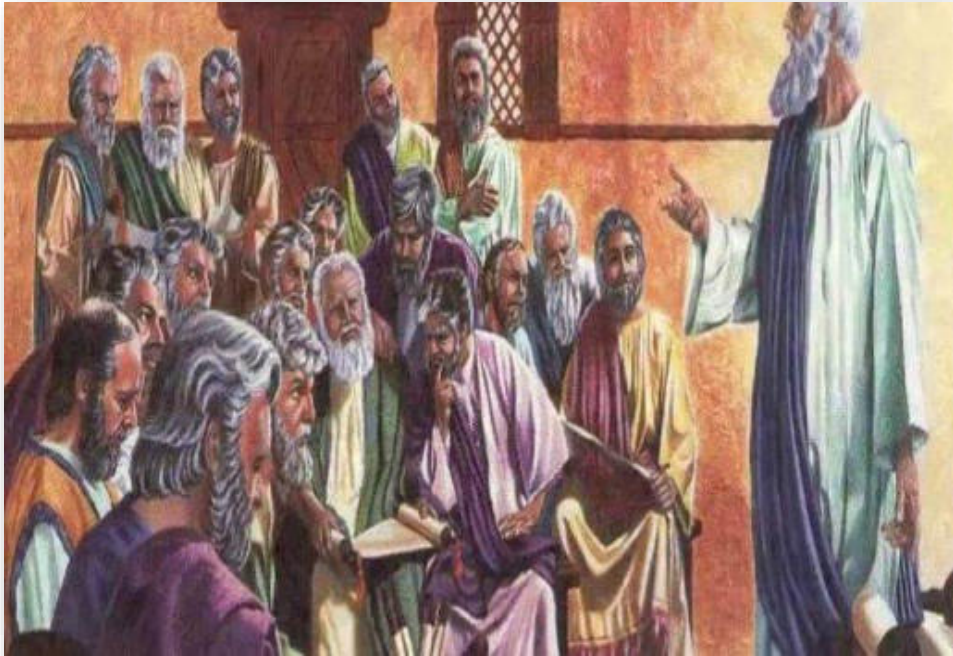
All in Acts 2 and is repeated in other places in Acts.



## 8- Importance of the Book

### 4- Church Order for example

- **The Priesthood** Ordination of men priests -A hot topic today - Was well established in Acts. St Paul travelled the known world, had many faithful women as followers & disciples mentioned in his epistles, yet he only ordained men priests and bishops.



- **Casting of lot (Acts 1)** The disciples decided God must be involved in the choice of Juda's replacement
- **Bishops, hegumens, Presveteros, Deacons (Acts 6)**
- **Councils (Acts 15)** Established the principle that when there is a problem, the fathers gather in a council to discuss and address it. Followed in 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> centuries
- **Day of the Lord (Acts 20)** Substitution of Sabath with Sunday as (New day of worship) day of the Lord

## 8- Importance of the Book

### **5- Evangelism & Ministry:**

Acts is **the main reference** for the 2 top roles of the Church:

#### **A. Ministry:**

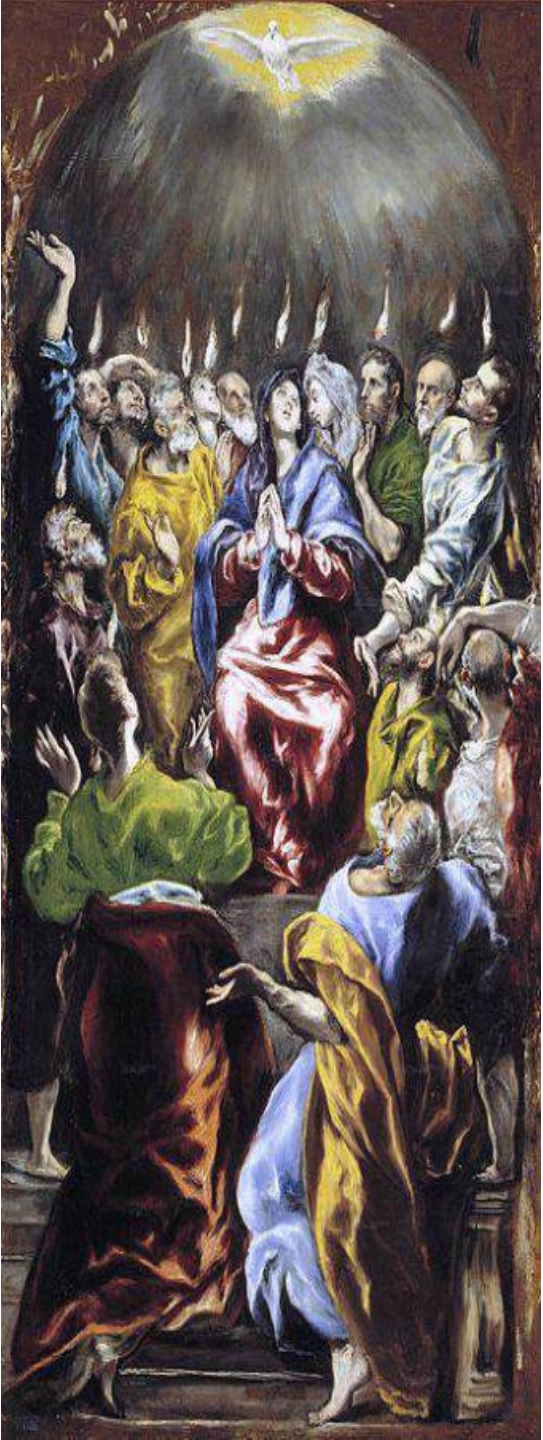
Shepherd and look after her children,  
the flock and ensure their salvation.

(Simon son of Jonah do you love me?  
.....Tend my sheep)

#### **A. Evangelism:**

The Church brings to Christ anyone who's lost  
(I will make you fisher of men).





## 8- Importance of the Book

## πράξεις του αγίου πνεύματος

### 6- Demonstrates the work of the Holy Spirit:

How could St Mark convert an entire country, or St Peter bringing 3k souls to Christ! If it was not the work of the Holy Spirit? They called them in Thessalonica

**“These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.) Acts 17:6**

**(My tongue is the pen of a skilful writer) Ps 45:1**

If they were highly educated (We’d say intellect), If rich, If in great number, if strong military leaders...., **But this was not the work of men but of God**

**We see dead arise in Acts; but the real miracle is how the word of God spread to the world at the hands of the unqualified**

How was it possible that the word God reach the known world in such short time?

This church was **The yeast that almost fermented the entire dough.**

Under huge pressure from Jews, Greeks & Romans, the word of God reached the world.

No facilities available...

## 9- Content of the book of Acts

**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1: 8**

Acts is split in 3 parts:

Part 1: Ch1-7 Spread of faith in **Jerusalem** – St Peter

Part 2: Ch 8 Spread of Faith in **Judea & Samaria** – Deacon Philip

Part 3: Ch9-28 Spread of Faith to the **rest of the world** – St Paul



### 1- Jerusalem Ch1-7

Ch1	(ONE)	One Ascended and one was replaced
Ch 2	(TWO)	2 words = Holy Spirit = Pentecost
Ch3	(THREE)	Peter, John & the paralytic
Ch4	(FOUR)	4 walls (imprisonment of Peter & John)
Ch5	(L-Y-I-N-G)	The betrayal of Ananias & Sapphira
Ch6&7	(6+1)	6 Deacons + 1 St Steven Martyrdom

## 9- Content of the book of Acts

### 2- Judea & Samaria Ch8

Ch 8 (Philip) After Steven's martyrdom Christians left Jerusalem and this what Jesus said would  
(Ethiopian) happen as the word of God started to spread to Judea & Samaria as Jesus predicted.  
(Sorcerer) So many joined the faith from Judea & Samaria

### 3- Gentiles Ch9-28

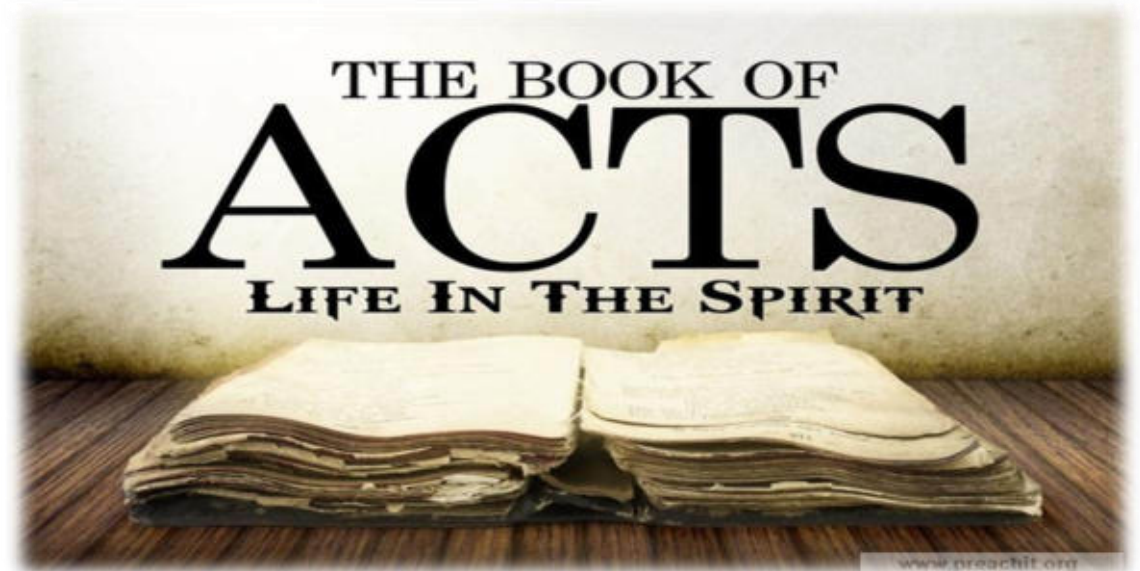
Ch9 (Damascus) Ananias Baptizes Saul, Saul escapes to Jerusalem & Tabitha arise.  
Ch 10 (x10 = 100) Cornelius the Centurion.  
Ch11 (Barnabas) Barnabas seeks Saul in Tarsus and brings him to Antioch to start his ministry.  
Ch12 (Persecution) Martyrdom of St James (Son of Zebedee), imprisonment of Peter.  
Ch13-End (Trips 3+1) 3 Trips + 1 last trip for his martyrdom in Rome

Except Ch 15 (Council of Jerusalem)

### St Paul's trips (Ch 13 to 21)

#### Keys to St Paul's trips

1. They always start from Antioch Seleucia (Syria)
2. They always pass by Lystra (Asia Minor)



## 10- St Paul's missionary trips **1<sup>st</sup> Trip**

**Ref:** Acts 13-14

**Time:** 48-50AD Two years

**Companions:** Barnabas and John Mark

### **Miracles:**

**Paphos:** The blinding of Elymas (Bar Jesus) (13:6-11)

**Lystra:** Healing of a man crippled from birth (14:9)

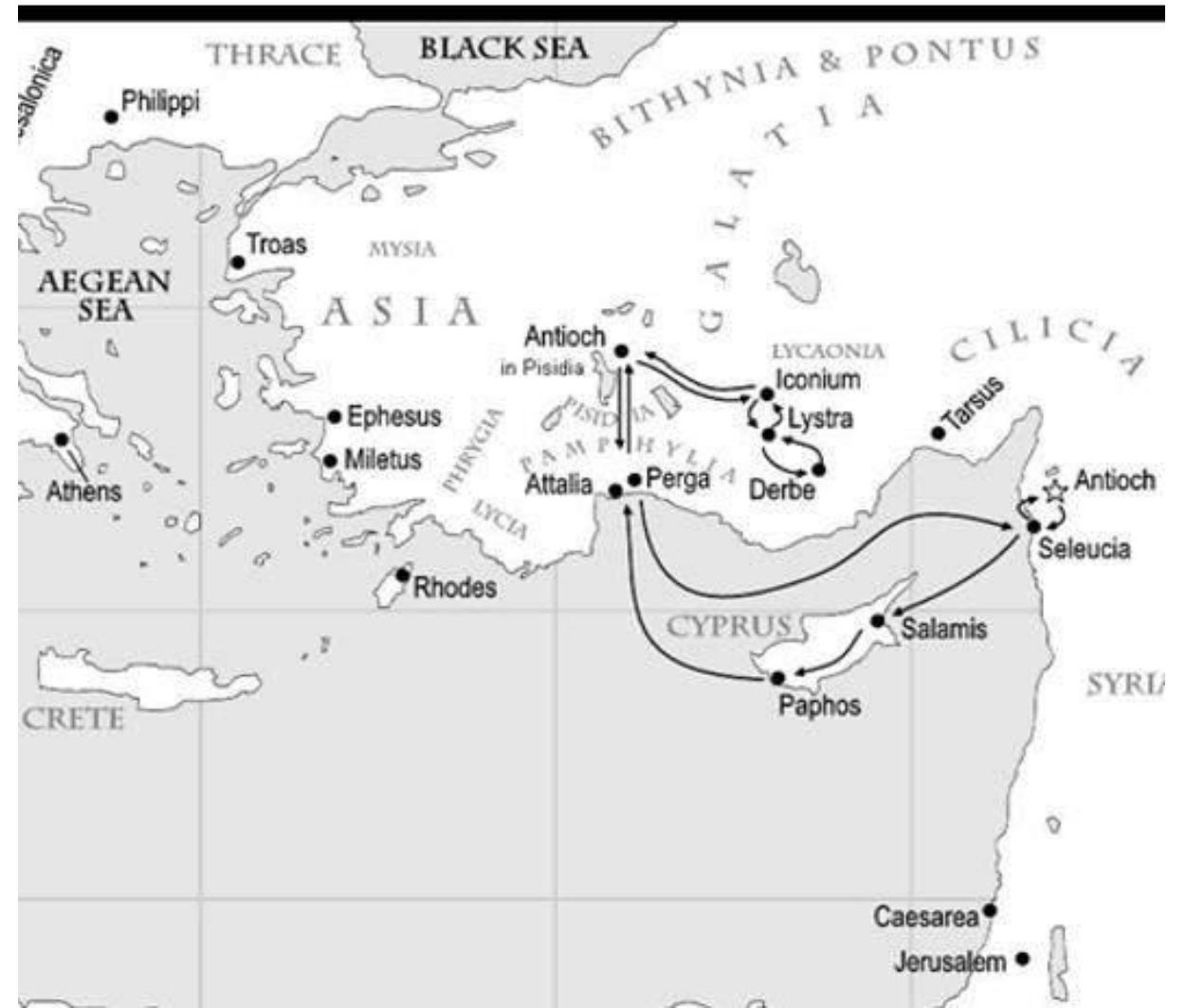
### **Troubles:**

Jews ran him out of town,  
Plotted against him in Iconium,  
stirred up the people,  
Stoned him and left him for death.

### **Converts:**

Sergius Paulus (Proconsul) (13:12)

**Epistles:** None



Cyprus (Paphos) → Perge of Pamphylia  
→ Antioch of Pisidia → Iconium → Lystra → Derbe

Back same way (No Cyprus) Perga then sailed to Antioch

## 10- St Paul's missionary trips

**Ref:** Acts 16-18

**Time:** 51-54AD Three years

**Companions:**

Silas, Timothy (Joined in Lystra),  
Luke (Joined in Troas, stayed in Philippi)

**Miracles:**

**Philippi:**

1. Exercises demon from a slave girl (16:16),
2. Miraculously released from prison (16:26)

**Troubles:**

Imprisoned in Philippi with Silas,  
Trouble making Jews in Thessalonica  
Forced out of Berea.

**Converts:**

Lydia (dealer of purple) (16:14), prison keeper (16:34),  
Crispus (head of the Synagogue in Corinth) (17:8)

**Epistles:** 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians  
About the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming



Tarsus → Derbe → Lystra → Iconium  
→ Antioch → Troas → Philippi → Thessalonica →  
Berea → Athens → Corinth

Ephesus → Jerusalem → Antioch

# 10- St Paul's missionary trips

**Ref:** Acts 19-21

**Time:** 54-58AD Four years

**Companions:**

Started alone but many joined in different parts by:  
Luke, Silas ... Acts 19:23 and 20:4

**Miracles:**

**Troas:** Raises Eutycus from dead (20:10)

**Troubles:**

Resistance in Corinth, brought up before the judgment seat (Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia), experienced an uprising in Ephesus (commotion) (Diana), and was plotted against which caused him to change route

**Epistles:** The big epistles

Galatians & Romans: Against Judaism

1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians: Problems solving



Lystra → Ephesus → Troas → Macedonia → Achaia

Achaia → Macedonia → Troas → Miletus → Tyre → Caesarea → Jerusalem

# 11- End of the book of Acts

- Ch22 Jews want to kill St Paul in Jerusalem, Paul reveals he is a Roman & is released by Roman commander
- Ch23 St Paul speaks in the Sanhedrin, Jews plot against him, Claudius Lysias sent him Felix the governor
- Ch24 St Paul in Caesarea talking to Felix who wouldn't listen - 2 years
- Ch25 Festus succeeds Felix - "I appeal to Caesar." "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"
- Ch26 St Paul speaks before king Agrippa - "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."  
"This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."
- Ch27 Paul is sent to Rome with Luke, shipwrecked in Malta, centurion saves Paul
- Ch28 Paul reaches Rome, remains under house arrest for two years preaching freely



## From 63AD to St Paul's martyrdom in 67/68AD

As we discussed earlier, St. Luke stopped narrating by spring of 63AD.

**No information about the rest of St Paul's life is provided in Acts.**

It is most believed that he was released from his 1<sup>st</sup> captivity. Supported by:

1. The circumstances around him during his captivity – House arrest
2. The epistles he wrote during this period reflect he was full of hope and joy.
3. In his epistle to Titus he says *“For this reason **I left you in Crete**, that you should -set in order- the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”* Titus 1:5.

But **St. Paul never visited Crete in any of his 3 missionary journeys**

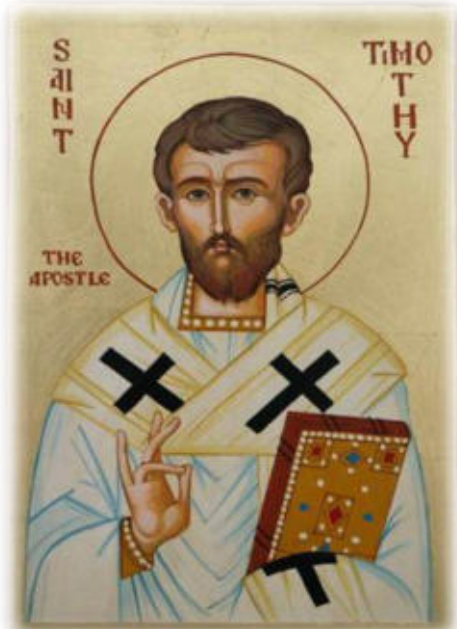
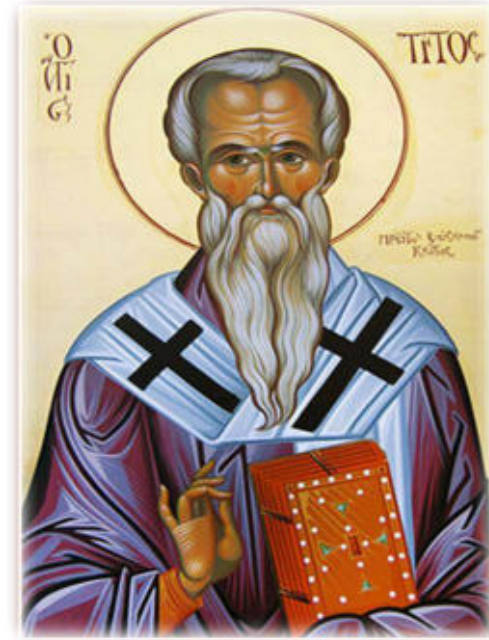
Although in his trip to Rome the ship took harbor there, but Titus wasn't with him [Acts 27:7-8](#).

**This is evidence that he was released, and went to preach in Crete, this time Titus was with him**



## A conclusion can be made that St Paul spent this period 63 to 68AD as follows

- ❖ After being judged before Nero he was released from his first captivity. Then he wrote his epistle to the Hebrews somewhere in Italy (circa 64AD) when he was preparing to travel to the east.
- ❖ On July 19<sup>th</sup> 64AD the fire of Rome took place, and Christians faced Nero's persecution.
- ❖ Went to Spain (as most believe) circa 64/65AD and from there he went to Asia Minor.
- ❖ Went to Crete and entrusted his disciple Titus to take care of the church there.



- ❖ Paul visited Ephesus and from there to Macedonia where he wrote his first epistle to his disciple Timothy around 66/67AD *“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia – remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine”* 1 Tim 1:3.
- ❖ He may have visited Corinth and Miletus and spent a winter 65/66 or 67, in Nicopolis in the region of Epirus (it is most believed that he was seized again there).  
*“When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there”* Titus 3:12.



- ❖ St Paul wrote his epistle to Titus from Ephesus in 66/67AD.
- ❖ It seems he went to Troas where he left some luggage *“Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come and the books, especially the parchments”* 2 Tim 4:13
- ❖ Many believe his was seized in Troas, from which he was taken to Rome. This is supported by the fact that he couldn't collect his cloak, books or parchments.
- ❖ Paul spent 2<sup>nd</sup> captivity in Rome where he wrote his last epistle, Timothy II in which he says *“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing”* 2 Tim 4:6-8.
- ❖ Paul's surrounding circumstances during his 2<sup>nd</sup> captivity was rough.
- ❖ He appeared before Nero (which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> defense, the 1<sup>st</sup> was in [2 Tim 4:16](#))
- ❖ Nero ordered St Paul's beheading 67/68AD.