



Bible History

The Apostolic Age

I. THE EARLY MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES

A. The Preaching Ministry of Peter

1. His ministry at Pentecost (Acts 1:15-26; Acts 2:1-47)
 - a. His leadership concerning the replacement of Judas (Acts 1:15-26)
 - b. His preaching on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41)
2. His ministry at the temple (Acts 3:1-26; Acts 4:1-31)
 - a. The healing of the man at the temple (Acts 3:1-26)
 - b. The imprisonment (Acts 4:1-4)
 - c. The answer after imprisonment (Acts 4:5-14)
 - d. The threat after imprisonment (Acts 4:15-22)
 - e. The prayer for safety (Acts 4:23-31)
3. His ministry in the giving (Acts 4:32-37; Acts 5:1-11)
 - a. The practice of the saints (Acts 4:32-37)
 - b. The deception of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
4. His continued ministry at the temple (Acts 5:12-42)
 - a. The healing ministry (Acts 5:12-16)
 - b. The imprisonment (Acts 5:17-18)
 - c. The continued preaching when set free (Acts 5:19-42)
5. His ministry at Lydda and Joppa (Acts 9:32-43)
 - a. The healing at Lydda (Acts 9:32-35)
 - b. The healing at Joppa (Acts 9:36-43)
6. His ministry to Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48)
 - a. Cornelius' need (Acts 10:1-8)
 - b. Peter's call (Acts 10:9-24)
 - c. Peter's preaching (Acts 10:25-48)
7. His leadership to open the door to Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18; Acts 15:7-12)
 - a. Concerning the salvation of Cornelius (Acts 11:1-18)
 - b. Concerning the ministry of Paul (Acts 15:7-12)

B. The Ministry of Stephen

1. His call to serve (Acts 6:1-7)
2. His controversial work (Acts 6:8-15)
 - a. His character (Acts 6:8)
 - b. His wisdom (Acts 6:9-10)
 - c. His persecution (Acts 6:11-15)
3. His sermon and martyrdom (Acts 7:1-60)
 - a. His preaching (Acts 7:1-53)
 - b. His death (Acts 7:54-60)



C. The Ministry of James

1. His power in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9)
 - a. At the meeting concerning Gentiles (Acts 15:13-31)
 - b. At the meeting with Paul (Acts 21:18-26)
2. His writing
 - a. Its association with the ministry of Christ
 - (1) Asking without wavering (James 1:6 with Mark 11:22-24)
 - (2) Man likened to grass (James 1:11 with Matthew 6:30)
 - (3) Ye do err (James 1:16; James 5:19 with Matthew 22:29)
 - (4) Good gifts from God in heaven (James 1:17 with Matthew 7:11)
 - (5) The need for cautious speech (James 1:19 with Matthew 5:22)
 - (6) Doers of the word (James 1:22 with Matthew 7:21-24)
 - (7) The poor: heirs of kingdom (James 2:5 with Luke 6:20)
 - (8) The merciful obtain mercy (James 2:13 with Matthew 5:7)
 - (9) No faith, no foundation (James 2:14 with Luke 6:49)
 - (10) Give to those who ask (James 2:15-16 with Matthew 5:42)
 - (11) Flattering titles reprimanded (James 3:1 with Matthew 23:8-14)
 - (12) By their fruits (James 3:11-12 with Matthew 7:16-20)
 - (13) The peacemakers (James 3:18 with Matthew 5:9)
 - (14) Ask and receive (James 4:2 with Matthew 7:7-8)
 - (15) The laughter turned into mourning (James 4:9 with Luke 6:25)
 - (16) The humble are exalted (James 4:10 with Luke 14:11)
 - (17) Motheaten and corrupted riches (James 5:1-3 with Matthew 6:19)
 - (18) Swear not by heaven or earth (James 5:12 with Matthew 5:34-37)
 - (19) The sick anointed with oil (James 5:14-15 with Mark 6:13)
 - (20) Confessing faults one to another (James 5:16 with Matthew 18:15)
 - b. Its timing and purpose
 - (1) Although we cannot be completely certain as to the timing of its authorship, the epistle offers some internal clues.
 - (2) When James wrote to the Jews, he mentioned that the Jews were “scattered abroad” (James 1:1) and facing “divers temptations” (James 1:2).
 - (3) Both statements reflect the same situation recorded in Acts chapter 8. In fact, after the four gospels, the phrase “scattered abroad” is only found four times. With the one occurrence found in James 1:1, the other three point to the fallout from the persecution in Acts chapter 8 (Acts 8:1, 4; Acts 11:19).
 - (4) This historical period recorded in Acts was marked by a strong Jewish evangelistic emphasis (exclusivity to some).
 - a) Since these “scattered abroad” ones were disciples of Christ, the early believers only directed their efforts at Jews.
 - b) Thus, they did indeed go to Jews who were “scattered abroad.”



- c) Repeatedly, we are told that the truly faithful believers considered all their possessions communal (Acts 2:44-45; Acts 4:32).
- (5) The hoarding of possessions by believers was viewed as a refusal to minister to others.
- (6) One can imagine why the rich would be viewed with the type of disdain expressed in the last chapter of James (James 5:1-4).
- (7) The early believers rightfully viewed accumulated wealth as corrupted riches, moth-eaten garments, cankered and rusted gold and silver.
 - a) These hoarded riches were a witness against the rich then and will be in the future too.
 - b) Additionally, they fraudulently cheated their laborers.
 - c) These practices sound curiously like the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).
 - d) Wealth is also a problem in the book of Revelation with many references to this phenomenon.
 - e) One such example points to the grief expressed at the loss of opportunity to gain wealth or influence after the destruction of the “great” city of Babylon.
- (8) The admonition given by James concerning anointing the sick with oil is likewise intriguing (James 5:14-15) because it serves as a Jewish practice and sign paralleling the ministries of Christ and the apostles (Mark 6:13).
- (9) So, what were James’ purposes in writing to these persecuted and scattered Jews? According to his own words, he wrote with three primary purposes:
 - a) To encourage the Jews to endure the present temptations (James 1:2-4, 12)
 - b) To admonish the Jews to manifest their faith through obedience (James 1:19-27; James 2:1-26)
 - c) To remind the Jews of the importance of their fellowship one with another (James 3:1-18; James 4:1-17; James 5:1-20)
- (10) Understandably, the persecuted Jews needed such encouragement.
 - a) James’ message was exactly what these Jews needed to help them find joy during diverse temptations.
 - b) The troubles were intended for their perfection.
 - c) If they needed wisdom, they simply needed to seek the Lord who would liberally give it to those who asked (James 1:5).
 - d) If they grew weary during these tumultuous times, they could simply reflect upon the ministries of the persecuted prophets or devilish temptations in the life of Job (James 5:11).



II. THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

A. The Zealous Persecutor (Acts 7:58; Acts 8:1-3; Acts 9:1-2)

1. He consented unto the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58; Acts 8:1-2).
2. He took men and women to prison for their faith (Acts 8:3).
3. He sought opportunity and authority to expand his persecution of the saints (Acts 9:1-2).

B. The Saved Sinner (Acts 9:3-9)

1. The interruption of the Lord (Acts 9:3-4)
2. The response of the sinner (Acts 9:5-6)
3. The change brought on (Acts 9:7-9)

C. The Call to Service (Acts 9:10-18)

1. The appeal to Ananias (Acts 9:10-12)
2. The concern of Ananias (Acts 9:13-14)
3. The admonition to Ananias (Acts 9:15-16)
4. The visitation to Paul (Acts 9:17-18)

D. The Early Preaching and Teaching (Acts 9:19-31; Acts 11:26)

1. The theme of his preaching (Acts 9:19)
2. The effect of his preaching (Acts 9:20-21)
3. The growth of his preaching (Acts 9:22)
4. The consequences of his preaching (Acts 9:23-25)
5. The reception of his preaching (Acts 9:26-31)
6. The faithfulness of his preaching and teaching (Acts 11:26)

E. The Missionary Journeys (Acts 13—Acts 19)

1. The first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-52; Acts 14:1-28)
 - a. The commission for the journey (Acts 13:4)
 - b. The preaching of the journey (Acts 13:5, 16-41, 46-47; Acts 14:3, 7, 15-17, 21-23, 25)
 - c. The report of the journey (Acts 14:26-28)
2. The second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41; Acts 16:1-40; Acts 17:1-34; Acts 18:1-22)
 - a. The conflict preceding the departure (Acts 15:36-41)
 - b. The introduction of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3)
 - c. The Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9-10)
 - d. The opposition of divination (Acts 16:16-40)
 - e. The idolatry of Athens (Acts 17:16-34)
 - f. The fellowship of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-3)
 - g. The return from the journey (Acts 18:22)



- h. The writings of the journey
- (1) Introductory thoughts
 - a) The epistles written during this period are often referred to as Paul's *Missionary Epistles* because they contain some doctrinal applications peculiarly associated to the period covered by those missionary journeys.
 - b) *In some cases*, the application of particular doctrines during this time significantly differs from the doctrines applicable in Paul's later ministry, which continue into today.
 - c) Therefore, some of the truths prevalent during Paul's earliest days have transitioned into obscurity before the conclusion of the first century (before AD 100).
 - d) For instance, this section contains Paul's earliest teachings and admonitions concerning the sign gifts.
 - e) On the other hand, these early epistles lay the groundwork for important doctrines such as salvation, proper fellowship, rejection of false doctrines, and the Church's departure at the blessed hope.
 - (2) Tracing Paul's steps
 - a) Paul's epistles contain internal hints that reveal the timing and location of the authorship of each epistle.
 - b) Pinpointing where and when Paul's epistles were written allows the Bible student to get a more complete understanding of the order and distinctions found within them.
 - c) Assuredly, God always provides the workman sufficient evidence when the necessary time is invested.
 - d) For instance, only Paul's epistles close with what is commonly called a *postscript* (found after the last verse in the epistle).
 - e) Each *postscript* provides pertinent information, such as the location from where the epistle was sent.
 - f) This noteworthy external information, along with the epistle's actual contents, helps to understand the general circumstances prevalent at the time of the writing of the epistles.
 - g) A basic timeline of the events involving the apostle Paul offers a proper perspective.
 - i) It is generally agreed that the apostle Paul's conversion in Acts chapter 9 occurred just a few years following the Lord's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
 - ii) Approximately a decade after Christ's ascension into heaven, Paul commenced upon his first of three missionary journeys.
 - iii) Nearly a decade after the first missionary endeavor, the apostle Paul took his second missionary journey.



- h) During this second missionary journey, Paul wrote:
 - i) The two epistles to the *Corinthians* were written from Philippi (Acts 16:12-40 or Acts 20:1).
 - ii) Both epistles to the *Thessalonians* from Athens (Acts 17:15-34).
 - iii) The epistle to the *Romans* was written from Corinth (Acts 18:1-18).
 - iv) With this internal biblical proof, we have identified these epistles, as well as Paul's epistle to the Galatians written during the missionary journeys, but sent from Italy, as his Missionary Epistles.
- 3. The third missionary journey (Act 18:23-28; Acts 19:1-20)
 - a. The opening of the journey (Acts 18:23)
 - b. The disciples ignorant of the Holy Ghost (Acts 19:1-7)
 - c. The preaching and miracles (Acts 19:8-12)
 - d. The interruption of the journey (Acts 19:21)
- F. The Journey to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21-41; Acts 20:1-38; Acts 21:1-15)
 - 1. Paul's decision to go (Acts 19:21)
 - 2. Paul's intermittent stops (Acts 19:22-41; Acts 20:1-38; Acts 21:1-41)
 - a. Trouble with the followers of Diana (Acts 19:22-41)
 - b. The scare with Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12)
 - c. The message to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38)
 - 3. Paul's warnings concerning going to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4, 10-14)
- G. The Hearings of Paul (Acts 21:16-40; Acts 22:1-30; Acts 23:1-35; Acts 24:1-27; Acts 25:1-27; Acts 26:1-32; Acts 27:1-44; Acts 28:1-14)
 - 1. Paul's vow in Jerusalem (Acts 21:16-26)
 - 2. Paul was taken by the Jews and drawn out of the temple (Acts 21:27-30).
 - 3. A chief captain intervened and took Paul into custody (Acts 21:31-38).
 - 4. Paul asked for permission and was granted to speak to the people (Acts 21:39-40; Acts 22:1-21).
 - 5. The chief captain took Paul for further examination, but learned that Paul was a Roman (Acts 22:22-29).
 - 6. The chief priests and council were called to appear and testify against Paul (Acts 22:30; Acts 23:1-11).
 - 7. The Jews' plot to kill Paul was exposed (Acts 23:12-22).
 - 8. The chief captain sent Paul to Felix, the governor (Acts 23:23-35).
 - 9. Paul has his initial time before Felix (Acts 24:1-23).
 - 10. Paul was called to appear before Felix a second time (Acts 24:24-27).
 - 11. Paul was brought before Festus (Acts 25:1-11).
 - 12. Paul appealed unto Caesar (Acts 25:11-12).
 - 13. Paul appeared before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-27; Acts 26:1-32).
 - 14. Paul set sail for Rome (Acts 27:1-44; Acts 28:1-14).



H. Paul's Initial Imprisonment (Acts 28:15-31)

1. Paul's conditions (Acts 28:15-16)
2. Paul's hearing before the Jews (Acts 28:17-29)
3. Paul's continued ministry (Acts 28:30-31)
4. Paul's writings
 - a. It was from Rome that Paul wrote seven of his epistles.
 - b. Even here, the circumstances varied from epistle to epistle. For example, Paul likely started or even finished his letter to the Galatians prior to his imprisonment (no mention of bonds), but the epistle was sent to Galatia once Paul's ship reached Rome in Acts chapter 28.
 - c. Additionally, the epistles of Paul to the saints in Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, along with his letter to Philemon, were all written from Rome. These are all considered *Prison Epistles* because of the specific emphasis upon Paul's bonds.
 - d. Paul's mentioning of being a "prisoner" or of being in "bonds" and "chains" affirms the fact that he wrote these epistles from prison.
 - e. The first of the prison epistles, the book of Ephesians, contains three passages which emphasize Paul's imprisonment (Ephesians 3:1; Ephesians 4:1; Ephesians 6:20); but it is not the only one with these clues (Philippians 1:7, 13; Colossians 4:3, 18; Philemon 1:9).

I. Paul's Time of Release

1. Upon careful examination, Paul's remaining epistles were written either between two distinct imprisonments or during his final imprisonment.
2. For example, Paul wrote to Titus from Nicopolis of Macedonia and began the epistle with a reminder to Titus concerning why he left Titus in Crete (see Titus 1:5; Acts 27:12). This correspondence to Titus took place after Paul's initial Roman imprisonment, which is confirmed by no mention of Paul's bonds in the epistle to Titus.
3. Also, during this final journey, Paul visited Laodicea where he penned an epistle to his son in the faith, Timothy. Sometime after the first epistle to Timothy was written, Paul traveled through Miletum where an illness forced Paul to leave Trophimus behind sick (2 Timothy 4:20).

J. Paul's Later Imprisonment

1. Finally, Paul returned to Rome (likely with Timothy) where he was again imprisoned.
2. According to the postscript in the book of Hebrews, Paul wrote that book from Italy and within the epistle he mentioned that he either was, or had been, imprisoned and hoped to visit the recipients (a visit that likely never took place).
3. By all accounts, Paul's epistle written to Timothy was his final epistle from Rome (again mentioning bonds) where the postscript says, "written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the SECOND time."



III. THE CONTINUED MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES

A. The Apostle Peter

1. It is thought that Peter died around the same time as Paul.
2. It is quite possible that Peter wrote his first epistle round about the same time that James wrote his epistle.
 - a. Both James and Peter wrote to those who were scattered (James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1).
 - b. This would associate to the time found in Acts 8:1.
3. While it is true that Peter's first epistle could have been written early, his second epistle was written later. This truth can be proven simply by the fact that by the time Peter wrote his second epistle he had read a good number, if not all of Paul's epistles (2 Peter 3:15-16).

B. The Apostle John

1. When the voices of Paul and Peter were silenced, God rekindled John's.
2. John's pen and voice concluded the prophecy with eternity future.
3. Some thoughts on his writings
 - a. A general overview of his writings
 - (1) In number
 - a) Paul—100 chapters (38.5%); includes Hebrews
 - b) Luke—fifty-two chapters (20.0%)
 - c) John—fifty chapters (19.2%)
 - (2) In classifications
 - a) John wrote of the Holy Ghost's provision for three categories of New Testament writings.
 - i) History—He will “bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26).
 - ii) Teachings—He will “teach you all things” (John 14:26) and will “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).
 - iii) Prophecy—He will “shew you things to come” (John 16:13).
 - b) This corresponds to the three major categories of writing in the New Testament
 - i) Things brought to remembrance are books of **History** (Matthew through Acts).
 - ii) The teaching and guidance into truth are the books called the **Epistles** (Romans through Jude).
 - iii) The things to come would refer to the New Testament book of **Prophecy** (Revelation).
 - c) Of the New Testament authors, only John wrote major books in all three categories
 - i) History—the gospel of John
 - ii) Teaching—the epistles of John
 - iii) Prophecy—the book of Revelation



- b. The time of his writing
 - (1) Related to the truth revealed
 - a) First John was certainly penned post-resurrection.
 - i) The life was manifested unto us (1 John 1:1-2).
 - ii) The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth (1 John 1:7).
 - iii) We have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).
 - iv) The fathers have known Him that is from the beginning (1 John 2:13).
 - v) He was manifested to take away our sins (1 John 3:5).
 - vi) The Son of God was manifested (1 John 3:8).
 - vii) He laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16).
 - viii) The Spirit was given (1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:13).
 - ix) God sent His Son into the world (1 John 4:9).
 - x) People are to believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).
 - b) Several thoughts above would lead us to believe that John's writings took place later because of the advanced revelation found in his epistles. This is especially true when one considers the false doctrines he refuted.
 - i) Early false teachers
 - (a) Cerinthus
 - (i) A Gnostic teacher of Asia Minor at the end of the first century
 - (ii) He separated the physical Jesus from the spiritual Christ and said Christ came upon Jesus at His baptism and left at His crucifixion. Therefore, the spiritual Christ was not born and did not die. John's writings had much that fought this teaching (see 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7, 9).
 - (b) Basilides
 - (i) A Gnostic who taught in Alexandria in the early second century
 - (ii) He also separated the physical Jesus from the divine Christ.
 - ii) An early false doctrine—Docetism
 - (a) Denied the humanity of Christ
 - (b) Since the flesh is evil, Christ only appeared to have a human body
 - (c) Scripture references: 1 John 1:1-2; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7
 - (2) Related to the age of the author
 - a) No introduction is given of John in this epistle.
 - b) However, the apostle who seemingly began his discipleship as a young man called himself "the elder" in both second and third John.