

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

Today's teaching is: THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT – especially about THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF ACTS AND THE LETTERS OF PAUL.

POINT 1. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

First. The writer, the date and the place of writing the book of Acts.

According to Acts 27:1 to 28:16, Luke was with Paul when he travelled to Rome as a prisoner. In Colossians 4:14, Paul himself tells us that Luke is with him during his first imprisonment in Rome from A.D. 60-61. The book of Acts was written soon after A.D. 61, because the book ends with Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts must have been written *before* the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, because this destruction is predicted in Luke 19:41-44 and 21:20. The book of Acts must have been written *before* the great fire of Rome in the summer of A.D. 64. The fire was probably caused by the cruel Caesar of Rome called Nero, who wanted to divert attention from himself by blaming the Christians. The fire destroyed three quarters of Rome. A great persecution against the Christians began in which they were burned publicly on stakes or thrown before wild beasts in the arena. But because the book of Acts still speaks positively of the Roman government everywhere, these books must have been written before A.D. 64. Luke made a lot of research for his Gospel and Acts and wrote his preliminary notes in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Asia Minor and Achaia. But he most probably wrote his final books in Rome. The Gospel of Luke was probably written in A.D. 62-63 and the book of Acts in A.D. 63 in Rome. After that date Paul himself says that only Luke is with him during his second imprisonment in Rome in about A.D. 64/65 (2 Tim 4:11). The book of Acts is one of the most accurate historical books in the world.

Second. The three purposes of writing the book of Acts.

The first purpose of Luke in the book of Acts was to write about Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of Luke, the purpose was to write about the things Jesus *began* to do and to teach. In his book of Acts, the purpose was to describe the *continuation* of the work and teaching of Jesus through his Spirit in his followers. The main purpose of Luke in the book of Acts was to describe the work of Jesus Christ in the extension of the Christian Church from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

The second purpose of Luke in the book of Acts was to win the intellectuals.

Luke wanted to make Christianity known to especially the educated people living in Rome. It was customary at Rome for a group of people to gather together to listen to a new literary work being read aloud by its author or someone else. If Theophilus was a representative of the intelligent reading or listening public of Rome, then the book of Acts was Luke's opportunity to provide such people with a more accurate account of the rise and progress of Christianity than they were likely to get anywhere else.

The third purpose of Luke in the book of Acts was to defend Christianity

Luke wanted to vindicate the attitude of the apostle Paul and of other Christians towards Roman law and government. Throughout the book of Acts there is an apologetic emphasis. Luke is concerned to defend Christianity against the charges which were popularly brought against it in the second half of the first century. Throughout the book of Acts it shows the respectful attitude of Christians towards the Roman government.

Third. The history described in the book of Acts.

One. Acts chapters 1-7 describe the extension of the Christian Church in and around Jerusalem.

The events recorded in Acts 1-7 took place between A.D. 30-33/34. The sudden transformation of the early disciples of Jesus from a group of thoroughly dejected individuals to a company of witnesses filled with joy and unshakeable conviction can only be explained by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That fact changed everything. Their main message everywhere became "the Lord Jesus Christ died as the atonement for sins, he arose from the dead and he ascended to heaven and is sitting at the right hand of God". The resurrection and ascension clarified the meaning of the cross. Moreover, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in May A.D. 30, Jesus Christ himself came to live in the hearts and lives of his disciples in order to give them courage, strength, joy and spiritual insight.

The preaching of the gospel resulted in the conversion of many people and the first local church was established in Jerusalem. The Christians were characterised by their devotion to the teachings of the apostles, by their fellowship of love and sharing, by their prayers and their witnessing. Everyday the Lord Jesus Christ added more converts to their number. Their rapid growth led to the persecution by the Jewish religious and political authorities. Although the apostles were threatened and flogged, Acts 5:42 says, "Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ." When the Greek speaking Jews in Jerusalem stoned Stephen to death, a great persecution arose especially against Greek speaking Jews who had become Christians!

Two. Acts chapters 8-12 describe the extension of the Christian Church southward to Ethiopia and northward to Syria. The events recorded in Acts 8-12 took place between A.D. 33/34-46. Thus, while the apostles remained in Jerusalem, the persecuted Greek speaking Jews were scattered and founded new churches everywhere they went. Philip the evangelist spread the gospel to Samaria and to an Ethiopian.

About A.D. 34 Paul was converted and began preaching in Damascus in Syria. The apostle Peter spread the gospel to Caesarea on the Coastal Plain. God had to use extraordinary means to show Peter that the gospel was meant not only for Jews, but also for non- Jews (Gentiles) and thus Cornelius and his family and friends were converted.

When the apostles heard that Gentiles were also converted in Antioch in Syria, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. In about A.D. 44/45 Barnabas brought Paul into the ministry at Antioch. And in A.D. 46 they brought Mark into the ministry at Antioch.

Three. Acts chapters 13-20 describe the extension of the Christian Church to Asia Minor and Europe.

The events recorded in Acts 13-20 took place between A.D. 47-57. Paul made three missionary journeys. The first journey was from A.D. 47-48 together with Barnabas and Mark. They went to Cyprus and to Pamphilia, South Galatia and Cilicia in modern Turkey.

In about A.D. 49/50, Jewish believers called Judaizers came from Jerusalem to Antioch, saying that unless Gentile Christians were circumcised, they could not be saved. Paul vigorously opposed them. As a result, a council or conference was held in Jerusalem to speak about the relationship between the Jewish and the non-Jewish Christians. This conference is described in Acts 15 and Galatians 2. At this council, the Judaizers received a severe blow. They immediately plotted revenge and their plan seemed to have been to follow the missionaries everywhere and oppose *the gospel of justification by faith alone*. These Judaizers came to the South Galatian churches in Asia Minor and succeeded to pull many new Christians into their legalism. So Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians especially to counter the false teaching of the Judaizers.

The second journey was from A.D. 50-52 together with Silas and Timothy. They went to Syria, Cilicia and South Galatia in Asia Minor or modern Turkey and then crossed over to Europe and established churches in Macedonia and Greece.

The third journey was from A.D. 52-57 together with Timothy. They worked for three years in Ephesus and also in Greece and Macedonia.

Four. Acts chapters 21-28 describe the extension of the Christian Church to Rome.

The events recorded in Acts 21-28 took place between A.D. 57-61. Paul spent almost all this time in prison. From A.D. 57-59 he was imprisoned in Caesarea and from A.D. 60-61 he was imprisoned in Rome.

POINT 2. THE LETTERS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

First. The early history of the apostle Paul, A.D. 34-49.

Paul was converted about A.D. 34, that is about four years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Galatians 1:17-18 says that he stayed in Damascus and Arabia for about three years.

In AD 37 he travelled back to Jerusalem for the first time after his conversion. How Paul got acquainted with Barnabas we do not know, but they both were Greek speaking Jewish Christians from the north, Barnabas from Cyprus (Act 4:36-37) and Paul from Tarsus in Cilicia (Act 9:31). Barnabas introduced Paul to the apostle Peter and James, the Lord's brother, in Jerusalem. Like Stephen before him, Paul debated with the Greek speaking Jews living in Jerusalem. However, they tried to kill him too. Therefore the Christian brothers sent Paul to his place of birth, Tarsus in Cilicia in modern Turkey.

There he stayed and ministered for about seven years. In Galatians 1:22-24, Paul says that he was personally unknown to the churches in Judea except that they heard that he was now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. During this time, Paul probably founded the Christian churches in Cilicia, which are mentioned in Acts 15:41.

In about A.D. 44/45, when many Gentiles were converted to the Christian faith in Antioch in Syria, Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch to help in the ministry among the Gentiles (Act 11:25-26). In A.D. 46 Barnabas and Paul brought the relief fund to Jerusalem and took Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, back with them to Antioch (Act 12:25). From A.D. 47-48 the Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey to Cyprus and Asia Minor or modern Turkey.

Second. Paul's letters during his second missionary journey, A.D. 50-52.

Paul together with his co-workers Silas, Timothy and Luke travelled through Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia. While Paul was in Corinth, before Timothy and Silas joined him there, he wrote Galatians from Corinth in A.D. 50. His purpose was to defend the gospel of justification by faith apart from the works of law. After Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth in AD 50. His purpose was to encourage the growth of the new church. Soon afterwards, he wrote 2 Thessalonians also from Corinth in A.D. 50. His purpose was to exhort the church to live calmly in view of the Second Coming of Christ.

Third. Paul's letters during his third missionary journey, A.D. 52-57.

Paul together with Timothy and Titus travelled to Asia Minor. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus in A.D. 55. His purpose was to teach that the church is in the world but not of the world. He wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia in A.D. 56. His purpose was to teach that God's power is manifested in the apostle's weakness. Finally, he wrote Romans from Corinth in A.D. 57. His purpose was to teach that justification is by grace through faith.

Fourth. Paul's letters during his first Roman imprisonment from A.D. 60-61.

After Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea from A.D. 57-59, he was imprisoned at Rome from A.D. 60-61. Paul wrote four letters from prison in Rome: Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians in A.D. 60-61 and Philippians in A.D. 61. His purpose with Colossians was to teach that Christ is the Pre-eminent One and the only and all-sufficient Saviour. His purpose with Philemon was to request that Philemon receive his fugitive slave Onesimus kindly. His purpose with Ephesians was to teach the unity of all Christians in the world-wide Church or Body of Christ. The theme of Philippians is Paul opens his heart and life to the Philippians.

Fifth. Paul's letters to his fellow workers from A.D. 61-64/5.

After his release from prison, Paul travelled much. Although we cannot be certain how he travelled, the following reconstruction is as good as any other. We assume that Paul travelled to Spain in between the journey he made to the places mentioned in 1 Timothy and Titus and the journey he made to the places mentioned in 2 Timothy.

Immediately after his release, Paul sent Timothy to Philippi (Phil 2:19-23), while he himself travelled to Asia Minor via Crete. He left Titus on the Island Crete (Tit 1:5) and travelled to Colosse where he visited Philemon (Philem 22). Then he travelled to Ephesus where he met Timothy again and urged him to continue to work in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). Paul travelled to Philippi in Macedonia (Phil 2:24). He hoped to return to Ephesus shortly, but rather expected that his absence may be prolonged (Eph 3:14-15). Paul wrote his letter 1 Timothy from Macedonia in A.D. 62-63. His purpose was to give his fellow worker, Timothy, directions for the administration of the church at Ephesus. He also wrote his letter Titus from Macedonia in A.D. 62-63. His purpose was to give his fellow worker, Titus, directions for the promotion of sound doctrine and holiness in individual, family, church and social relationships. He requested Titus to meet him in Nicopolis (Tit 3:12). Paul travelled to Nicopolis and spent the winter there.

Then Paul probably travelled to Spain (Rom 15:24). We do not know any details, neither if he took Titus with him. After he returned from Spain, he travelled to Asia Minor again. He left Trophimus sick in Miletus, just south of Ephesus (2 Tim 4:20). Possibly at this time he met Timothy and they shed much tears (2 Tim 1:4). At Troas he met Carpus, at whose home he left his cloak (2 Tim 4:13). At Corinth he left Erastus (2 Tim 4:20). At Rome he was re-imprisoned. His arrest may have taken place in Troas, Corinth or Rome. The cruel Caesar, called Nero, who had murdered his step-brother, his mother, his wife, his teacher and many others, was reigning. In July 19-24 of the year A.D. 64 Nero probably set Rome on fire, but falsely accused the Christians of doing this. A terrible persecution broke out against the Christians. Paul's second Roman imprisonment was severe and short (2 Tim 1:16; 2:9). Paul wrote his letter 2 Timothy from Rome probably in the winter of A.D. 64-65. His purpose was to give his fellow worker, Timothy, directions how to promote sound doctrine. He was condemned to death and according to the church fathers, who were the ancient

church leaders, he was beheaded on the Ostian Way, just outside Rome. Whether Timothy and Mark reached Rome before Paul's death we do not know.

Sixth. The reading, exchange and collection of the letters of the apostle Paul.

The apostle Paul encouraged *the public reading* of his letters (1 Thes 5:27) and also *the exchange* of his letters (Col 4:16). In the period after the death of Paul in about A.D. 64/65, conditions would have been most favourable for the stimulation of interest in his writings. Timothy was his trusted fellow worker for many years, had good contact with all Paul's other fellow workers and had worked together with Paul in all the churches. From prison, Paul commanded Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." One good way Timothy could do this was by collecting the various letters from Paul and by letting the churches make copies of this collection. The *parchments* mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:13 may have been a beginning of such a collection in Paul's lifetime. Since Timothy and his associates were in touch with all the churches to which Paul addressed his letters, it is reasonable to suppose that they took an active part in the collection. This would account for the inclusion of the letters to Timothy and Titus. From 2 Peter 3:16 it seems probable that there already existed a collection of Paul's letters by A.D. 64, when Peter was martyred under Nero's persecution.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read through Matthew chapters 8-14.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".