



Introducing the Bible: The Drama of Scripture

Week 7

1



Overview of this week

- ❖ Returning to Jesus
 - The uniqueness of Jesus
 - Our remarkable claims
- ❖ The Book of Acts and the early church
- ❖ Paul and his letters
 - Galatians
 - Philippians
 - Philemon

©2005 Scott L. Engle

2



A few keys to understanding Jesus in the NT

- ❖ “Messiah” and “God” are not synonymous!
 - There was no expectation that the Messiah would be divine.
- ❖ There were more than a few “would-be” Messiahs in Jesus’ day!
 - Nobody ever imagined that these “messiahs” were God. When they met their end (usually at the hands of the Romans), their followers concluded that they had been wrong! After all, the Messiah was to come in power & wonder & might & glory.
- ❖ Jesus got into trouble for several reasons
 - The proclamation that Jesus is Lord is a political claim!
 - Jesus did and said what only God could say and do.
 - e.g., forgiveness of sins
 - Jesus was calling the Jews to a new way of being God’s people, attacking the key symbols of 1st-century Judaism.



The Book of Acts (of the apostles)

- ❖ The history of the early church
 - 35 AD to 65 AD or so
- ❖ Ascension => Pentecost => spread of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean
- ❖ A better title?
 - The Acts of the Holy Spirit
 - The Holy Spirit is never an “it,” but always a “who”
 - Train yourself to refer to the Holy Spirit using personal pronouns!
- ❖ Pay special attention to the speeches

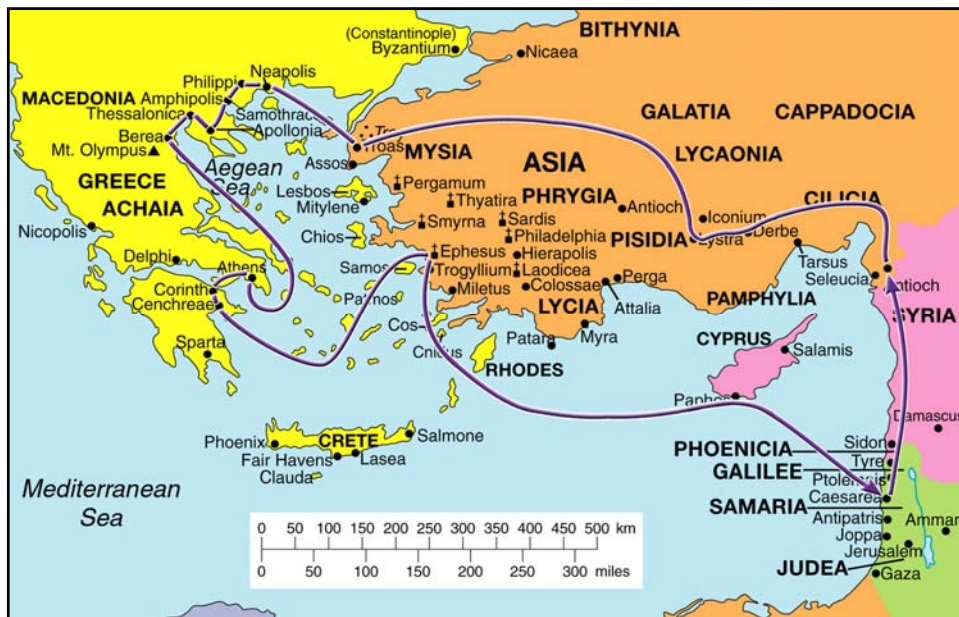


Paul and his letters

- ❖ All Paul's letters were written to specific people/churches for specific reasons
 - We don't always know all the reasons/problems!
- ❖ Paul was a Pharisee, taking a Jewish message to a pagan world
 - We first meet when he is actively persecuting Christians. Paul became a believer after his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).
- ❖ When reading Paul's letters, always keep the story in mind!
- ❖ How should Christians behave? Paul's answer:
 - Do whatever builds up the Christian community or is a good witness to non-Christians & avoid what does/is not
 - Paul is always concerned with the community!! His pronouns are plural!!! – He is starting colonies of the new human race!

©2005 Scott L. Engle

7



Paul's 2nd Journey – 50-52AD – The Spirit sends him westward.

©2005 Scott L. Engle

8



Galatians – A Life and Death Struggle!

- ❖ Perhaps the earliest of Paul's letters and his harshest
 - 49 or 50AD
 - Written to the churches in Galatia, an area in Asia Minor
 - When you read this letter, hear Paul's anger!
- ❖ The immediate question
 - Who can eat with whom? See 2:11-14
 - Must Paul's ex-pagan/gentile converts be circumcised and keep Torah?
- ❖ The bigger question
 - Who are the people of God, enjoying a right relationship with God?
- ❖ Good works v. the "works of the law"



Philippians – A friendly note of thanks

- ❖ Paul had founded the church in Philippi on his first missionary journey, about 50AD. Like Thessalonica, Philippi was a large commercial center on the highway from Asia Minor to Macedonia.
- ❖ The Philippians were very supportive of Paul's efforts, including sending money. This letter is one of unreserved thanks.
- ❖ Paul is writing from prison. This is probably a temporary imprisonment in Ephesus. The letter was probably written about 56AD.
- ❖ This is the most personal of Paul's letters and we get the fullest portrait of the man.



Philippians

- ❖ The Christ hymn (2:5-11)
 - Probably a hymn or confession from the early church that Paul adapted for his use here.
 - Paul is urging unity and harmony in the community -- the Christians must, following Christ's example, defer to each other.
- ❖ Paul's example -- Placing our faith in Christ; sharing in Jesus' suffering and resurrection; running the race & living as citizens of heaven (3:2-4:1)
- ❖ The joy, the peace, and the good (4:4-9)



Philemon

- ❖ Paul is sending Onesimus, a runaway slave, home to his owner, Philemon.
 - We can't tell for sure, exactly what Paul wants Philemon to do . . . free Onesimus? send him back to Paul? keep him and treat him kindly?
- ❖ Paul urges Philemon to receive Onesimus in Christian love, as a "beloved brother . . . Both in the flesh and in the Lord." Philemon is to welcome Onesimus as he would welcome Paul.
 - Note that Paul says he could command Philemon to do so, but would rather appeal to Philemon out of love. (v. 8)
- ❖ Paul offers to repay money that Onesimus owes Philemon.
- ❖ What was the place of slavery in Paul's world?



New Testament Timeline

