



Walking with the Spirit through the Book of Acts

Pastor Michael Cranford

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Schedule

April 7	The Holy Spirit	Sept 8	Acts 9:32-10:48
April 14	Acts 1:1-9	Sept 16	Acts 11:1-12:25
April 21	Acts 1:10-26	Sept 22	Acts 13:1-14:7
April 28	Acts 2:1-13	Sept 29	Acts 14:8-16:10
May 5	Acts 2:14-47	Oct 6	Acts 16:11-17:34
May 12	BREAK (Mother's Day)	Oct 13	Acts 18:1-20:38
May 19	Acts 3:1-26	Oct 20	Acts 21:1-22:30
May 26	Acts 4:1-21	Oct 27	Acts 23:1-24:27
June 2	Acts 4:22-5:11	Nov 3	Acts 25:1-28:30
June 9	Acts 5:12-42		
June 16	BREAK (Father's Day)		
June 23	Acts 6:1-15		
June 30	Acts 7:2-60; 8:1-4		
July 7	Acts 8:5-25		
July 14	Acts 8:26-9:31		



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

2. After passing through Galatia (Asia Minor), the group finally arrives in Europe. Arriving at the port of Neapolis, they travel inland along with Via Egnatia (a prominent Roman road) to the city of Philippi.

From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. (Acts 16:11-12)



The Second Missionary Journey: The Spirit Meets Opposition



Samothrace



Neapolis

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Via Egnatia

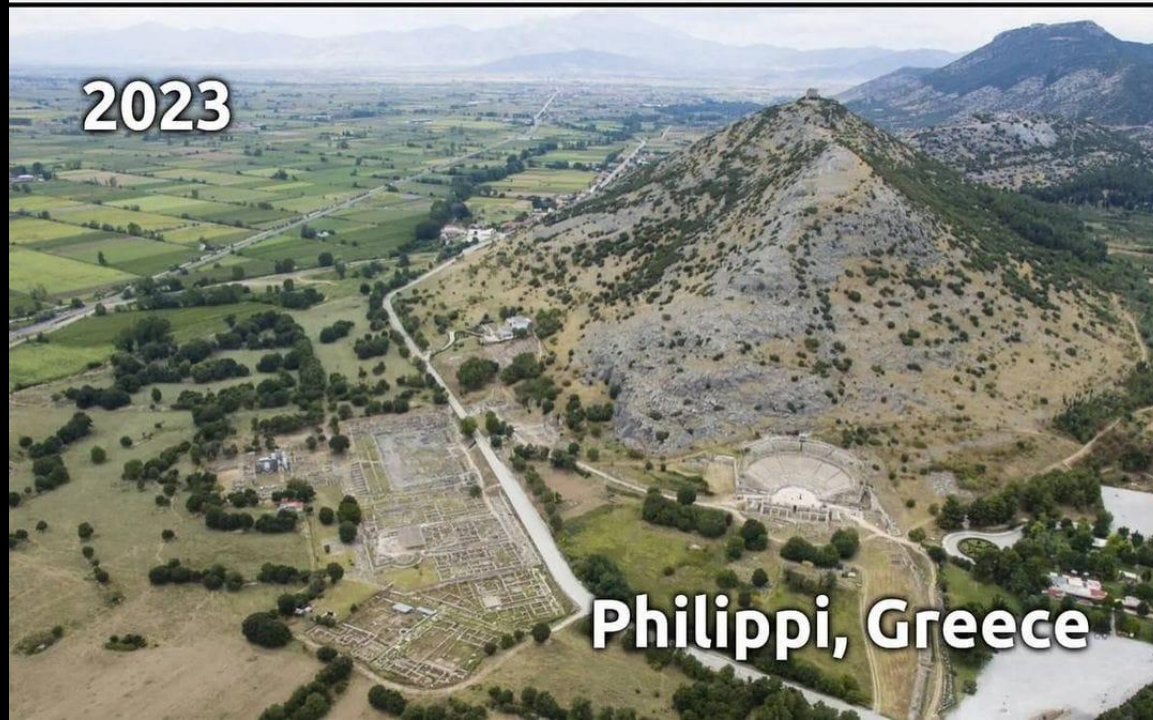


Philippi

200 BC



2023



Philippi, Greece



The Second Missionary Journey: The Spirit Meets Opposition

The Spirit Meets Opposition

Philippi



The Second Missionary Journey:

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- a) The first convert specifically noted on this trip is a woman—an affluent citizen of Thyatira who is living in Philippi and owns a home.

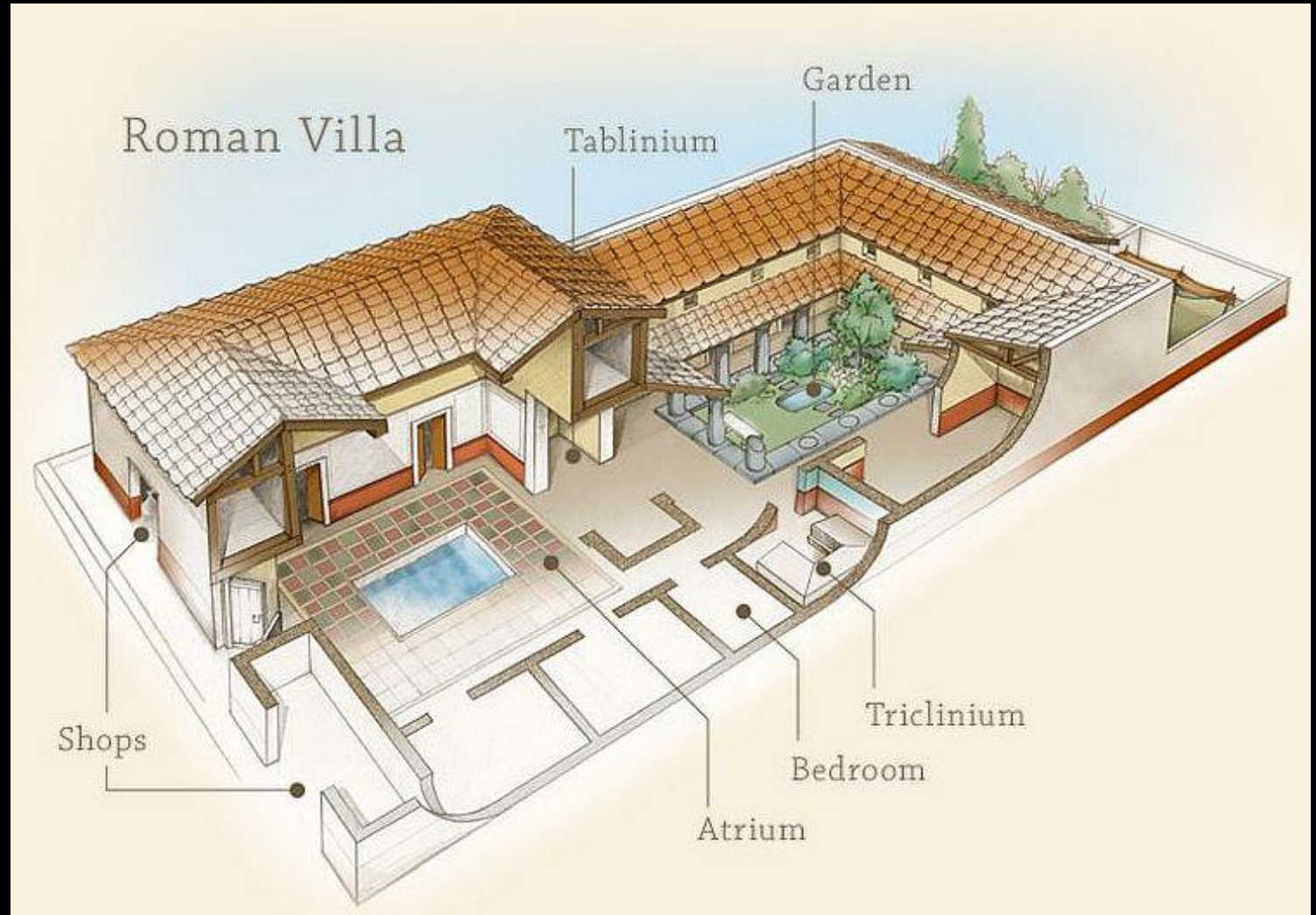
On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us. (Acts 16:13-15)



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

a) The first convert specifically noted on this trip is a woman—an affluent citizen of Thyatira who is living in Philippi and owns a home.



The Second Missionary Journey:

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b) The missionaries draw the attention of the demonic, which is operating behind the scenes in Philippi. The demonic is always at work in the book of Acts, behind the scenes, and looks like a counterfeit of the work of the Spirit.

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. (Acts 16:16-18)

The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Cor 2:7-8)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Eph 6:12)

...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (2 Cor 2:11)



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

c) The actual goal of the demonic is to stop the progress of the gospel. The way this normally happens (seen in the book of Acts) is by engaging and motivating culture. While it is the crowds who rise up to oppose the missionaries, we are reminded that the battle isn't against flesh and blood.

When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."



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The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:19-24)

Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. (2 Cor 11:25)

The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

d) The Spirit is powerful both in physical and spiritual realms; his purposes cannot be stopped. Circumstances are not a coincidence if you are living the Spirit's purposes. And you do not have to worry about anything.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" (Acts 16:25-28)



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

e) The end of the matter, here and throughout Acts, is salvation for those who believe.

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household. (Acts 16:29-34)

The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

f) The circumstances serve another, less obvious purpose: The Spirit leads the missionaries onward, to new cities and new opportunities for the gospel. Even problems are part of his plan.

When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: “Release those men.” The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.”

But Paul said to the officers: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.”

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The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left. (Acts 16:35-40)



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

3. After leaving Philippi, Paul and his companions travel west and arrive in Thessalonica, one of the largest cities in Macedonia.

Note: Luke stops referring to the missionaries as “we,” implying that he remained behind in Philippi.



The Second Missionary Journey: The Spirit Meets Opposition



Thessalonica



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

a) Paul begins in Thessalonica in his normal fashion—by speaking at the synagogue over the course of three Sabbaths. This formed the nucleus of a new church.

When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women. (Acts 17:1-4)



The Second Missionary Journey:

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b) This triggered a problem with local Jews who attempt to get them into trouble with Roman authorities by claims of sedition. One of the Christians (Jason) posts bond to permit them to escape imprisonment and leave the city.

But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go. (Acts 17:5-9)

The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

4. They fled to Berea, which is a destination less likely for accusers to locate them (because it was not on the Via Egnatia). They had a more favorable reception in that city, but the Jews tracked them down and created more problems for them. Paul was forced to go on alone, making his way to the coast and then (most likely) by boat to Athens. The others would catch up with him later.

As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

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But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. (Acts 17:10-15)

The Second Missionary Journey: The Spirit Meets Opposition

Berea



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

5. Athens was still, in some ways, the intellectual center of Greece, but it had declined in importance under Roman rule. It was still a haven for philosophical thought and popular religion, and therefore receptive to new perspectives. This is Paul's famous evangelical presentation of the gospel to pagans.

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The Second Missionary Journey: The Spirit Meets Opposition

Athens



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

- a) Paul begins his work (without the support of his comrades) by going to the synagogue, in his normal fashion, but he also debates philosophers in the agora (the marketplace).

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. (Acts 17:16-18)

The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

- Stoicism: God is in everything and there is reason (logos) behind the universe. Virtue is found by keeping your emotions in check and focusing on reason (what makes sense).
- Epicureanism: Everything is material and that means there (probably) are no gods or meaning behind existence. Virtue is found by finding pleasure in life and avoiding pain.



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

b) They bring him before the ruling council of Athens, which would include the key decision-makers and thinkers in the city. (The Areopagus is a hill inside the city, but here it is more clearly a reference to the group of people who met there and managed the affairs of Athens.) They want to hear Paul out.

Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) (Acts 17:19-21)



The Second Missionary Journey: The Spirit Meets Opposition



Athens



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

c) Paul begins his speech by directing attention to an idol to an unknown god. In other words, he starts with a point of common ground—something that his audience already believes, which in this case is the existence of a god they don't know anything about.

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22-23)



The Second Missionary Journey: The Spirit Meets Opposition



To an
unknown
god



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

d) Paul then distinguishes the God of the Bible from the gods they build idols to—by claiming that the true God made everything and therefore can't be represented by physical temples.

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. (Acts 17:24-25)



The Second Missionary Journey:

The Spirit Meets Opposition

e) Paul connects this God to humanity by claiming that he created all people for the expressed purpose of coming into a relationship with them. Paul supports this claim by reference to two stoic philosophers.

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' (Acts 17:26-28)



The Second Missionary Journey:

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f) Paul points out that, if these things are true, we shouldn't try to represent God with an idol, and that, while God has been tolerant of this ignorance in the past, that time is over. God expects people to repent (turn around) from their ignorance and has intervened in human history by appointing a man (Jesus) to judge everyone, and has confirmed this by bringing that man back from the dead.

“Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:29-31)

The Second Missionary Journey:

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g) Notice that Paul draws people from a point of agreement (common ground) through reason (common sense) to revelation (information they don't already know) to a critical point of decision (*do I want to know the God he speaks of?*), but he doesn't flood them with information or quote the Old Testament, as he did to the Jews.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:20-23)

The Second Missionary Journey:

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h) Those who are open to this presentation were able to seek additional information. In the end, the gospel makes sense. Some of those became converts.

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. (Acts 17:32-34)

