

*Famous People
Of
The Book of Acts*



Bible Study Series

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Introduction:

The book of Acts tells us about Christianity in its Infancy; and how it spread from Judea to Samaria, Asia Minor and Europe.

The earlier fathers called it “**Acts of the Apostles**”, and it is rightly so; but the contemporary scholars prefer the term “**Acts of the Holy Spirit**” which is also true since the Apostles were not actively involved in preaching the gospel till after they were filled by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. After all, no one can confess that Jesus Christ is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

In this study, we are going to see what the people of God did after the ascension of Christ and when, where and how they preached the good news.

We shall study them in alphabetical order.

Aristarchus

He was a pagan from Thessalonica in the region of Macedonia which was north of the region of Achaia which united later and became Greece which we know now. It is not quite clear as how and when he was converted, whether it was through Paul or some one else, but what we are certain of is that he became a faithful and adherent companion to Paul in his third missionary trip, and accompanied him to Ephesus where he was seized and nearly killed in the tumult which Demetrius the silversmith and his companions raised (Acts 19:29). Then he accompanied Paul to Greece, then to Asia Minor (Acts 20:4). Then he ended up in Rome as a prisoner (Philemon 24) and was called a fellow prisoner (Col. 4:10). The story behind that was as such: Paul was sent on ship from Caesarea to Rome to appear for trial at Caesar’s judgment seat; and Paul being a Roman citizen, he was allowed two slaves to accompany him on ship to serve his needs. Luke and Aristarchus elected to be registered as Paul’s slaves to be able to accompany him, and arriving at Rome they stayed with him under house arrest. We do not hear much about him after that, but tradition places him to have suffered martyrdom in the time of Nero.

Apollos

A Jew from Alexandria who was learned, eloquent and well acquainted with the Old Testament teachings (Acts 18:24).

He arrived to Ephesus in Asia Minor and began to teach in the synagogue the things concerned Jesus knowing only the teaching and baptism of John the Baptist (Acts 18:25).

Then he met Aquila and Priscilla who showed him the true way of Christ in a more accurate manner, and he preached Christ with great zeal and power (Acts 18:26).

Then from Ephesus, he moved to Corinth in Achaia (a province in south Greece) (Acts 18:27, 28, 19:1). By that time Paul had already preached the gospel there, established the church and left to Ephesus on his way to Judea to pass the Pentecost there (1st Corinthians 16:8)).

In Corinth, Apollos started to work in the field of God and was so loved by the members of the church there that some caused division in the church, following him, others followed Paul, others followed Cephas, and even some followed Jesus, the thing which so much disturbed Paul that he had to write to the Church of Corinth about (1st Corinthians 3:4 – 7).

So Apollos departed from Corinth unwilling to go back (1st Corinthians 16:12).

This is the narration of the Holy Scripture about this incidence, but according to Jerome, he went back after he heard that the matter of division was resolved by Paul's letter to them and he became the Bishop of Corinth, although there are other tales that he was the Bishop of Duras, Colophon, Iconium, and of Caesarea. In Titus 3:13, the Holy Scripture tells us that Paul recommended him to Titus who was in the island of Crete at that time.

There are no known doctrinal writings of Apollos to any church or individual, although some scholars claim that he is the author of the book of Hebrews which I do not believe.

Aquila & Priscilla

We have to talk about them together because they were husband and wife.

They were Jews who fled from Rome after Claudius Caesar ordered all the Jews out of Rome in 52 A.D, and settled in Corinth where they were met by Paul who worked and lived with them being all of the same trade as tent-makers (Acts 18:2). Priscilla's name in some instances is shortened to Prisca which could be an affectionate short name she was known by. (2nd Timothy 4:19).

It is not clear when they were converted to Christianity; it could be after Paul lived with them, or it could be that they were part of the scattered Jews who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and believed after they heard the message of the gospel each in his or hers own tongue (Acts 2:5 – 12).

And when Paul left to Ephesus, they went with him to serve the Lord there. (Acts 18:18).

Then the Scripture tells us that When Apollos, a very zeal and knowledgeable Jew from Alexandria, came to Ephesus, whose knowledge was only up to the baptism of John the Baptist, they took him in with them and instructed him about the Christian faith (Acts 18:24 – 26).

Then in 1st Cor. 16:19, we hear about them and the church in their house in Rome. Perhaps they elected to go back to their home in Rome after the order of Claudius was lifted up.

Then the last we hear of them, is in 2nd Tim. 4:19, where they were in Ephesus. From this short resume about their lives, we find that they moved a lot, but the fact remains that wherever they settled, they made of their house a place for Christians to gather for worship, radiating love, friendship, fellowship, and zeal for the word of God.

To this day in Rome there is a church of St. Prisca, and there is also a cemetery of Priscilla.

One thing we are sure about this couple, is that many in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome owed their knowledge of Christ to them and the church in their houses.

Paul himself writes that he owes his life to them (Romans 16:4).

What a great couple!.

Barnabas

He is a Levite native of Cyprus whose original name was Joseph or Jose. He was given this name which means “**Son of prophecy**” probably on account of his eminence as a Christian teacher. His name was first mentioned in Acts 4:36, 37 where we are told that he owned a piece of land which he sold and put the money at the disposal of the Apostles to be used for the benefit of the early Christian Community..

But a comment is due here because according to God’s orders to Joshua when he was about to divide the promised land between the twelve tribes of Israel, the Levites were not to own land but to live only on what is offered at the temple.

There are two possible explanations for that

1- This law may not apply to owning land in a foreign country.

2- The land may have been owned by his wife if he was married

As to his conversion to Christianity no body knows when and how it happened, but most probably it happened on the day of Pentecost.

When Paul was converted, no one believed that it was true and he was not accepted by the saints in Jerusalem, but Barnabas believed him and took him to the apostles and attested to his sincerity (Acts 9:27).

And when the saints heard about the revival at Antioch, they chose to send Barnabas (Who was described as good man and filled with the Holy Spirit and faith) (Acts 11:24) to Antioch for inquiry. When he arrived he found it true, so he stayed there for some time preaching, any many were converted through him and the church flourished there by his work.

Then he went to Tarsus to seek Paul who returned with him to Antioch, and they

both labored there for a whole year (Acts 11:19 – 26).

And when Agabus prophesied that there will be a famine in Judea (about 44 A.D.), the Christians in Antioch made a contribution for the saints in Jerusalem and chose to send it by the hands of Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:27 – 30) who came back to Antioch bringing John Mark with them who was Barnabas' nephew son of his sister Mary (Col. 4:10).

There are no known letters or writings of Barnabas included in the Holy Scripture, but the Holy Scripture tells us that Barnabas was involved in two preaching missions:

1) The first mission:

That was with Paul. Acts 13:2 tells us that he and Paul were separated by the Holy Spirit for missionary work; so after fasting, praying and laying their hands on them, the saints in Antioch let them go taking John Mark with them.

So, Barnabas being faithful to his people in Cyprus, he chose to deliver the saving message of Christ to them first. So they sailed to Cyprus visiting Salamis (Acts 13:5) and Paphos (Acts 13:6), and from there they sailed to Asia Minor where they preached the gospel into Perga Pamphylia where John Mark chose to leave them and return to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). From there they went to Antioch Pisidia (Acts 13:14) and preached the good news, but when the Jews saw that the Gentiles are accepting the gospel, they became full of envy, blasphemed and opposed Paul's teaching, and so Paul and Barnabas left them declaring that from then on they will preach the word to the Gentiles.

So they went to Iconium (Acts 13:51) where the Gentiles accepted the word with great joy, but when the Jews saw that, they became very envious and raised a lot of riot against them and wanted to stone them, so they fled to Lystra and Derbe of Lycaonia (Acts 14:6).

And in Lystra, it happened that Paul healed a born paralytic and the priests of Jupiter wanted to sacrifice for them, but Paul and Barnabas torn their cloths and went into the crowd and forbid them from that (Acts 14:8 – 18). But the Jews of Iconium went after them in Lystra and aroused the crowds against them and stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city thinking that he was dead, but the disciples gathered around him and he regained his strength and went back into the city, and in the morrow they went to Derbe, and from there they went back to Antioch passing by Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch Pisidia encouraging the disciples, then to Perga, then to Attalia from where they sailed to Antioch.

2) The second mission:

As Paul and Barnabas were preparing to revisit the cities of the 1st mission, a sharp dispute happened between them because Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again with them but Paul refused; and so they departed, and Paul took Silas as his companion, while Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus again (Acts 15:36 – 41).

We have no more knowledge about what he had done after that, but his name was mentioned few times in Paul's letters, the most prominent of all was in Galatians 3 where Paul mentioned that Barnabas was led away by the Judaizers zealots where he (Paul) also openly blamed Peter.

Tradition puts him as been martyred by stoning about 61 A.D. in the city of Salamis in Cyprus his native country. And there is a tomb carrying his name, which when opened, a Scripture of the Gospel according to Matthew was found on his chest.

And as the case with Apollos, his name was mentioned by some scholars as being the author of the book of Hebrews which I also do not believe.

Gamaliel

The word Gamaliel in Hebrew means the reward of God.

He was a Pharisee and a well known teacher of the law. His learning was so eminent, and his character was so revered that he was the only one of the seven Jewish doctors in law, who has been honored with the title of Rabban. And he was called "The beauty of the law". And there is a saying in the Talmud that since Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the law has ceased.

And though he was a Pharisee, yet he was not confined by the narrow bigotry of the sect. His character was far above the prejudices known about his party. His wisdom earned him great respect in his nation. This was very obvious in the incident mentioned in Acts 5:34-39 when the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin which was about to sentence them to death, he stopped them saying: "Men of Israel, take heed what you are about to do; stay away from these men, for if that plan is from men, it will be overthrown, but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them."

His council prevailed, and the apostles were set free after been beaten.

And in Acts 22:3, Paul addressing the Jews in his defense, boasted in the way that he was brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel who taught him the law according to the strictness detail.

Tradition tells us that he, his son Gamaliel, and Nicodemus were converted and baptized by Paul and Peter.

James

The correct name is Jacobos in Greek and Jacob in Hebrew (which means catching on the heel of others or replacing another), and I do not know why it was translated James in English.

However there are several people called James in the New Testament, but the well known of them all are:

1) James the son of Zebedee

He is the brother of John (Mat. 4:21; Mark 1:19, 5:37 & Luke 5:10), whose mother was Salome (Mat. 20:20-23; 27:56; 15:40 and 16:1), who asked Jesus to put one of her sons on His right hand and the other on His left hand in His

Kingdom (Mat. 20:20-23).

His name was first mentioned in Mat. 4:21-22 & Mark 1:19-20, when he and his brother were called by Jesus to follow Him. He also gave them the name **Boanerges** which means the sons of thunder because of their temper. They were fishermen by trade and partners of Simon Peter and his brother Andrew (Luke 5:10). He had the privilege to be one of the twelve disciples of Jesus and later was called apostle (mat. 10:2; Mark 3:14, 17; Luke 6:13, 14 and Acts 1:13). He, his brother John and Peter had the privilege to be alone with Jesus in three specific occasions. They were alone with Him on the mount of Transfiguration (Mat. 17:1; Mark 9:2 and Luke 9:28). They were also alone with Him when He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:37 and Luke 8:51). And lastly they were alone with the Lord at the garden of Gethsemane after the last supper (Mat. 26:37 and Mark 14:33).

This James was beheaded on Herod's order (Acts 12:2) at about 44 A.D.

2) James the Less the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:18 And Acts 1:13)

He was also one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. His mother was Mary's sister and also called Mary (Mat. 27:56; Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10 and John 19:25, although some commentators believe that she was not her actual sister; but her sister-in-law the wife of Clopas or Cleopas who was Joseph's brother) John 19:25), whom they also believe that he was known by the name Alphaeus.

He was called James the less (Mark 15:40), either because he was younger than James the above mentioned or because of his short stature. Some scholars also believe that Alphaeus died without offspring and that his wife was espoused by his brother Joseph according to the Jewish laws, and hence James the less was half brother of Jesus although that I believe they are dead wrong since Joseph as we know was not the biological father of Jesus.

3) James the brother or half brother of the Lord (Matthew 13:55).

This is the James who really concerns us in the book of Acts.

It is very wrong to call him a half brother of Jesus, because he was the son of Joseph from a previous marriage before he married Mary. So Mary was not his mother, nor was Joseph the biological father of Jesus since Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit. So he had no blood relation whatsoever to Jesus; so we cannot call him half brother.

The first two James were disciples of Jesus, but this one was not, and as a matter of fact he did not believe in Jesus Christ before His crucifixion and resurrection (John 7:5).

Then he believed after a special personal appearance of Jesus Christ to him after His resurrection (1st Cor. 15:5, 7), and the Holy Scripture tells us that the disciples all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brother (Acts 1:13-14). And although he was not one of the disciples, yet he was counted as apostle (Gal. 1:19) and became one if not the most important pillar of the church and head of the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:13).

He was wise and courageous because when he was confronted with the problem of the Judaizers in Antioch who spread the rumor that unless the Gentiles be circumcised and obey the law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers, they cannot be saved; he wrote a short daring letter to them saying that they don't have to do that, and all what they need to do is to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood and from things strangled and fornication (Acts 15:5 – 29). He was very zealous to the law which may be the main reason that he did not believe in Jesus at first, and he was called “**The just**” because he followed the law to its strictest detail.

He may have written several letters but we only know of one which bears his name and was sent to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (James 1:1).

John

This is a Hebrew name derived from “**Johanán**” which means Jehovah is gracious.

He was the son of Zebedee and the younger brother of James, and both were disciples of Jesus (Matthew 4:21).

They were both fishermen on the sea of Galilee (Mark 1:19-20 and Luke 5:10), and were partners of Simon Peter and his brother Andrew.

They were given the name “**Boanerges**” by Jesus (Mark 3:17), which means “sons of thunder” probably because of their quick temper and disposition to violence (Luke 9:54-55); and rebuking one who cast out demons in the Lord's name because he was not one of their company (Luke 9:49).

The Holy Scripture does not tell us much about their father Zebedee, but we are told about their mother Salome (Mat. 27:56 & Mark 15:40) who was one of the women who followed Jesus even at His crucifixion.

And she was the one who asked Jesus a special favor to place one of her sons one on His right hand and the other on His left hand in His Kingdom (Mat. 20:20-23).

He and his family may have been of considerable influence and wealth. This is obvious from two facts:

- 1) His mother among other women financially supported Jesus (Luke 8:3).
- 2) His acquaintance with Caiaphas the high priest as mentioned in John 18:15.

He probably was a disciple of John the Baptist before he joined Jesus as His disciple as implied from the incident recorded in John 1:35-39, and probably was among the disciples who were invited with Jesus to the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee (John 2:2).

He was the one who at the Last Supper was leaning on Jesus' bosom and asked Him who is His betrayer (John 13:25).

He was also one of the preferred three (Peter, James And John) whom Jesus gave the privilege to accompany Him on at least three different occasions which

were:

- 1) Raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Luke 8:51 & John 5:35-37).
- 2) On the mount of Transfiguration (Mat. 17:1; Mark 9:2 & Luke 9:28).
- 3) In the garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper, when Jesus asked them to come with Him to pray (Mark 14:32-33).

And like his mother, he was faithful to Jesus till the end even to the cross while all the other disciples ran away, the thing that caused Jesus to entrust him to look after His mother, and called him her son and her his mother (John 19:26-27). Apart from being among those who have witnessed the ascension of the Lord (Acts 1:9), and who shared in the election of Mathias (Acts 1:21-26), and who received the baptism by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-43), we find in the first few chapters of the book of Acts that his name is mentioned in close association with Peter on several occasions such as:

- 1) Together they entered the Temple to worship. (Acts 3:1)
- 2) Together they healed the born lame at the gate of the Temple which is called "Beautiful" (Acts 3:2-11).
- 3) Together they spoke to the people after healing the lame (Acts 4:1).
- 4) Together they were arrested and put into custody overnight by the priests, the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees, to be tried the next day (Acts 4:1-4).
- 5) Together they were tried the next day and released after being threatened neither to speak nor to teach at all in the name of Jesus Christ. But they boldly answered and said to them: **"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."** (Acts 4:5-20).

Tradition tells us that he left Jerusalem to Ephesus, probably after the death of Mary the mother of our Lord whence he was released from his commitment to look after her as per John 19:26-27 mentioned above.

Assuming that he is the author of the book of Revelation, we can deduce that persecution against Christians in Asia Minor generally and in Ephesus in particular, drove him to the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9) whence he wrote about the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 1:11).

Tradition tells us also that on his way back to Ephesus, he was shipwrecked; and that during the persecution under Domitian, he was taken to Rome where he was put in boiling oil, but by the power of God he was not harmed and then he returned to Ephesus. But whatever was narrated to us by tradition, whether had really happened or not, there remains the fact that John outlived all his contemporary apostles and died in Ephesus of old age.

He may have written several epistles and/or books, but we only know of the gospel named after him, the three epistles also named after him, and the book of Revelation although some scholars do not believe that he was the author.

One thing that should be mentioned here, that in writing the gospel named after him, he took the attitude of denying himself for he never mentioned the word "I", but instead, he used some other phrases pointing to him such as: **"The other disciple"** (John 18:15, 16 & 22:2, 8), and **"The disciple whom Jesus loved"**

(John 19:26 & 21:7, 20), and “**That disciple**” (John 21:23, and **This is the disciple**” (John 21:24).

Luke

Luke is a Greek name (Loukas) derived from the Latin (Lucanus). He is the author of the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts (Luke 1:3 & Acts 1:1). He was a physician (Colossians 4:14) and also a long time companion of Paul. For two years, he was Paul’s companion in prison in Caesarea. He was also his companion in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th missionary trips.

During those long years, he had every opportunity to study, research and gather information from other disciples and apostles. That is why he was bold and sure enough to tell the most excellent Theophilus that it seemed good to him, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first to write to him an orderly account. This was the opening statement of the gospel according to Luke (Luke 1:3).

He was a Gentile. This is deducted from what Paul has written in Colossians 4:11, where he named his co-workers who were from the circumcision, and then he named Luke separately in verse 14.

As for his conversion to Christianity, no body knows when and how.

He was not one of the disciples, nor did he witness nor serve the word as he states in Luke 1:2.

According to what mentioned in Acts 16:10-11, we can deduct that he joined Paul at Troas and sailed with him to Macedonia. It is believed that he stayed in Philippi alone till he rejoined Paul in his 3rd missionary trip (Acts 20:6). This is only deducted from his writing using the words “**WE**” and “**They**”. But certainly he was not scourged or imprisoned with Paul and Silas in Philippi. And again as he used the word “**We**”, one can understand that he kept Paul’s company on his return trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:6- 21:18), then he was in his company in his trip to Rome for trial, sharing his shipwreck (Acts 28:2), then reaching Puteoli (Acts 28:12-16), then stayed with him till the end of his first imprisonment as per what is mentioned in Philemon 24 and Col. 4:14.

We do not know more about him after that, but we find that his name was mentioned again in 2nd Timothy 4:11.

Tradition though uncertain puts him to have been martyred but not in Rome as Paul his life long companion.

Lydia

She was a rich lady originally from Thyatira in Asia Minor but lived in Philippi of Macedonia (Northern province of Greece).

She was a merchant of purple which was expensive at that time.

She was a proselyte Jew (not a Jewish descendant), then she was converted to

Christianity and baptized by Paul on his second missionary trip which was also his first trip to Europe. Obviously she was kind, generous and of good reputation. The Holy Scripture tells us of no husband of hers, probably she was a widow, yet she had the courage to invite Paul and his company who were three (Luke, Silas, and Timothy) to stay in her house. Her invitation was genuine, earnest and sincere that they were constrained (Acts 16:14, 15).

Mark

This is a Greek name (Markos or Marcus).

He was also known as John or John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25).

He was the son of Mary (Acts 12:12) who was Barnabas' sister (Col. 4:10). And it was to her house that Peter went when he was released from prison by the Angel of the Lord (Acts 12:12), where the apostles used as their head quarters after the Lord's ascension, gathering there for prayer; and some scholars believe that it was the place referred to as the upper room.

Some scholars believe that he was of Jewish parentage; but this cannot possibly be, because if his two parents were Jews, they could have not possibly named their son a Gentile Greek name. We know for sure that his mother was a Jew since she was the sister to Barnabas who was a Levite (Acts 4:36). However the Holy Scripture does not tell us anything about his father, so actually there is no place for speculation.

He was very young when Christ was crucified, and it is thought that he was the young man who fled naked from the Roman soldiers leaving his dress behind when they got hold of it (Mark 14:51-52)..

Then we hear about his involvement in the missionary work in Paul's first missionary trip when he went with Paul and his uncle Barnabas, but unfortunately left them in Pamphylia and went back to Jerusalem Acts 13:13).

Then on Paul's second mission, Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them, but Paul refuse and they departed each taking his own way, Paul taking Silas, and Barnabas taking his nephew Mark (Acts 15:36 – 40). But this contention was not a permanent severance of their relationship, since we find Paul mentioning his name (i.e. Mark) as being with him in Rome in his first imprisonment (Col. 4:10 & Philemon 24)

Later we see him with Peter in Babylon (?Rome) (1st Peter 5:13). It seems also that he was with Timothy in Ephesus when Paul wrote to him (i.e. Timothy) during his second imprisonment urging him to bring Mark to Rome about 66 A.D. (2nd Tim. 4:11).

we do not hear for a long time till his name was mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Colossians 4:10 when he (Paul) recommended him to the Colossians to accept him as co-worker in preaching the gospel.

Tradition puts him as the author of the gospel according to Mark about 65-68 A.D. while in Rome. Tradition also puts him as been sent by Peter in a mission

to Egypt where he founded the church of Alexandria, of which he became Bishop and later died as a martyr in the 8th year of Emperor Nero's reign.

Paul

A Jew born in Tarsus, Cilicia in Asia Minor which was a Roman colony and so he was Roman by birth. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and practiced his Jewish faith as a Pharisee. He was proud of his ancestry that he mentioned that more than once (Acts 22:3; 2nd Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:5 - 6). He was taught the Law at the feet of Gamaleal the famous teacher of the law, and lived as a Pharisee obeying the law and the traditions of the fathers (Acts 22:3).

The first appearance for him in the New Testament was as Saul in Acts 7:58 where he witnessed the Stoning of Stephens and agreed to it. Then his name appeared again in Acts 9:1 – 2, where the Holy Scripture tells us that he kept breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, not only that but he obtained letters of authorization from the high priest to the synagogues in Damascus to bring the Christians bound unto Jerusalem. Then from verse 3 to verse 22, the Holy Scripture narrates the miraculous story of his conversion, for as he was nearing Damascus, the Lord appeared to him in a very bright light that blinded him, and the voice of the Lord telling him: "Saul, Saul why do you persecute Me, it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, then the voice told him to enter the city and he shall be told what to do". Then the Lord appeared in a vision to a disciple in Damascus named Ananias and told him to go and see Saul and give him his sight back and tell him what the Lord wants him to do.

The Holy Scripture tells us also that Paul made four missionary trips including his trip to Rome to be tried at the judgment seat of Augustus Caesar, although the writings of Jerome the Bishop of Rome suggest that Paul made his long yearned for trip to Spain after been released from his first imprisonment in Rome.

We shall study them one by one:

1) The 1st missionary trip:

That was with Barnabas. Acts 13:2 tells us that he and Barnabas were separated by the Holy Spirit for missionary work; so after fasting, praying and laying their hands on them, the saints in Antioch let them go taking John Mark with them.

So, Barnabas being faithful to his people in Cyprus, he chose to deliver the saving message of Christ to them first. So they sailed to Cyprus visiting Salamis (Acts 13:5) and Paphos (Acts 13:6), and from there they sailed to Asia Minor where they preached the gospel into Perga Pamphylia where John Mark chose to leave them and return to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). From there they went to Antioch Pisidia (Acts 13:14) and preached the good news, but when the Jews

saw that the Gentiles are accepting the gospel, they became full of envy, blasphemed and opposed Paul's teaching, and so Paul and Barnabas left them declaring that from then on they will preach the word to the Gentiles. So they went to Iconium (Acts 13:51) where the Gentiles accepted the word with great joy, but when the Jews saw that, they became very envious and raised a lot of riot against them and wanted to stone them, so they fled to Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia (Acts 14:6).

And in Lystra, it happened that Paul healed a born paralytic and the priests of Jupiter wanted to sacrifice for them, but Paul and Barnabas torn their cloths and went into the crowd and forbid them from that (Acts 14:8 – 18). But the Jews of Iconium went after them in Lystra and aroused the crowds against them and stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city thinking that he was dead, but the disciples gathered around him and he regained his strength and went back into the city, and in the morrow they went to Derbe, and from there they went back to Antioch passing by Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch Pisidia encouraging the disciples, then to Perga, then to Attalia from where they sailed to Antioch.

2) The 2nd missionary trip:

As Paul and Barnabas were preparing to revisit the cities of the 1st mission, a sharp dispute happened between them because Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again with them but Paul refused; and so they departed, and Paul took Silas as his companion, while Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus again (Acts 15:36 – 41).

So, they (Paul and Silas) went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches, then to Derbe and Lystra where they found Timothy who joined them; but Paul had to circumcise him because it was known in that region that his father was Greek (though his mother was a Jewess). And passing through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. So they arrived at Mysia and through it to Troas. Here a vision appeared to Paul at night, a man of Macedonia pleaded with him to cross to Macedonia and help them (Acts 16:9). So they all sailed to Macedonia passing by Samothrace and Neapolis to Philippi (Acts 16:11-12). There on the Sabbath day, they went to the riverside where they spoke to some women among whom was Lydia a seller of Purple of Thyatira who was converted and baptized with her household, then persuaded Paul and his company to stay at her house (Acts 16:14-15). They stayed there for several days, and there was a certain slave girl who was possessed with a spirit of divination who used to follow Paul and his company saying that these men are the servants of the most high God who proclaim the way of salvation. Paul got annoyed and cast the spirit out (Acts 16:16-18). Realizing that their hope of profit has gone, her masters dragged Paul and Silas to the magistrates who ordered them to be beaten and secured in jail with their feet fastened in the stocks (Acts 16:19-24).

And at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns, and suddenly an earth quake happened, the foundations of the prison were shaken and the doors opened and the chains loosened, but none of the prisoners escaped. The jail keeper waking up on the commotion thought that the prisoners had

escaped, took up his sword and wanted to kill himself, but Paul shouted out loud not to do any harm to himself because all of them are still there. Asking for light he found that truly no body escaped. So immediately he fell to his knees and asked what can he do to be saved. To cut the story short, he believed and was baptized with his family (Acts 16:25-34). Tradition puts the jail keeper as being the first Bishop of Philippi later on. Then the magistrates came the next day and set Paul and Silas free but asked them to leave their city (Acts 16:35-40).

So they went to Thessalonica passing through Apollonia where they preached the good news (The gospel) to both Jews and Gentiles; but some of the Jews who did not accept the message became envious and gathered a mob from the market place and attacked the house of Jason, but the brethren sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea (Acts 17:1-10).

The Bereans were more fair-minded and they received the word with all readiness, but the Jews from Thessalonica came after them and ran them off from Berea. So the brethren sent Paul away by sea while Timothy and Silas remained there (Acts 17:11-14).

Then Paul arrived at Athens, and there he found that the city was full of temples for many idols. Then the Epicureans and the Stoic philosophers asked him to tell them about what he preaches. So he addressed them in the Areopagus, and after praising them of being so religious that they even worship an unknown god, he told them that he preaches that unknown God, and from thence he preached them the real God of salvation (Acts 17:15-34).

Then he departed from Athens to Corinth (Acts 18:1). There he found a Jew born in Pontus named Aquila and his wife Priscilla who were recently expelled from Rome because Claudius Caesar ordered all the Jews out of Rome (Acts 18:2) about 50-52 A.D. Paul stayed with them since they were all of the same trade making tents (Acts 18:3).

After some time, Timothy and Silas joined him (Acts 18:5) and they preached the gospel. Many of the Corinthians believed but there was great opposition from the Jews, and he continued there for 18 months preaching the word of God (Acts 18:11). The Jews took another shot at him complaining to Gallio the proconsul of Achaia against him, but Gallio dismissed them (Acts 18:12-16).

Then Paul decided to go back to Syria; so he sailed with his company, with Aquila and Priscilla stopping by Ephesus and leaving them there, he continued his journey to Caesarea then to Antioch (Acts 18:22).

3) The 3rd missionary trip:

After spending some time in Antioch, he departed and went over to the region of Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the brethren, and stayed in Ephesus for two years preaching the gospel, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord whether Jews or Gentiles (Acts 19:10). He then sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:22), but he stayed in Ephesus.

Then a great commotion arose, for a man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana their goddess, felt that Paul's teaching threatens his trade and prosperity. So he gathered a good number of the craftsmen and persuaded them that their craftsmanship and prosperity is threatened by what

Paul teaches. So they got very angry and caused a big riot shouting out “Great is Diana of the Ephesians”. And the whole city was filled with confusion; and after some time the city clerk was able by a short and wise talk, to quiet the crowd and dismiss the assembly (Acts 19:23-41).

Then Paul departed to Macedonia encouraging the brethren, and then he went to Greece (Achaia) (Acts 20:1-2). He stayed there for three months, and when he was about to sail to Syria, the Jews plotted against him, so he decided to return by land through Macedonia (Acts 20:3), and from Philippi by sea to Troas where he met with the brethren and stayed with them for a week (Acts 20:6). On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread; and Paul ready to depart the next day, he spoke to them till midnight; and there was a young man named Eutychus sitting in a window on the third floor, got overcome by a deep sleep and fell and was taken up dead. But Paul embraced him and comforted them, then he went up and broke bread, and ate and talked till the day break, and they all rejoiced and were not a little comforted bringing the young man alive (Acts 20:7-12).

Then Paul went on foot to Assos while his company sailed intending to take him on board there, then they all sailed to Mitylene, passing opposite to Chios and arrived at Samos, and spent the night at Trogyllium, and arrived the next day at Miletus (Acts 20:15). And as Paul was in a hurry to be at Jerusalem if possible on the day of Pentecost, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. When they came, he delivered a farewell speech telling them that he is innocent of the blood of any of them, since he delivered God’s message of salvation to them in all honesty, with pure conscience, faithfulness, and sincerity, and that they will not see him anymore because the Holy Spirit revealed to him that there will be sufferings and afflictions awaiting him in Jerusalem. He then encouraged them, prayed with them, and they all wept freely, then he departed (Acts 20:17-38).

From there they sailed to Cos, then to Rhodes, then to Patara where they changed ships and boarded a ship heading to Phoenicia. They passed by Cyprus on the left and reached Syria and landed at Tyre for that was where the ship was to unload its cargo (Acts 21:1-3). He stayed at Tyre for one week with the disciples who led by the Holy Spirit, advised Paul not to go up to Jerusalem, but Paul was determined, and when time came to depart, they all with their families and children bade him and his company farewell at the sea shore, and they all knelt down and prayed (Acts 21:4-5). From Tyre they went to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren and stayed with for one day, then departed to Caesarea where they stayed in the house of Philip the evangelists who was one of the seven elected deacons (Acts 21:8). And as they stayed there many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. He took Paul’s belt and bound his own hands and feet and said that the Holy Spirit says that the Jews at Jerusalem shall bind he who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles (Acts 21:10-11). This is the end of the 3rd missionary trip.

What happened next?

Now, Paul’s companions and all the disciples who heard this prophesy, pleaded

with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem, but Paul answered: "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:12-13).

So when he would not be persuaded, they stopped and said the will of the Lord be done. And so they packed and went up to Jerusalem accompanied with some disciples from Caesarea and another disciple called Mnason with whom they lodged (Acts 21:14-16).

The next day they met with James and the elders who glorified God for his work between the Gentiles. But they told Paul that all the brethren will hear of his arrival, and they are all zeal for the law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers; and they heard that everywhere you taught against circumcision and the traditions of the fathers. So in order to show every body that you are following the law and the traditions, we have here four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads (Acts 21:24). So Paul took their advice and having been purified with them, entered the Temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them (Acts 21:26).

And when the seven days were almost ended, some Jews from Asia seeing him in the Temple stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, charging that he is the one who teaches against the people everywhere and had brought Greeks into the Temple defiling the Holy Place. Then there was a great disturbance in the city, they dragged him out of the Temple and were seeking to kill him (Acts 21:28-31). The commander of the garrison heard about the commotion, took his soldiers and went to see what was the matter, and because he couldn't know for part of the crowd was shouting something and others something else, he commanded Paul to be chained and taken to the barracks to know the cause of the tumult. Then Paul asked for permission to address the crowd. And when he talked to them in Hebrew tongue asking them to hear his defense, they listened. Then he told them that he is a faithful Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of the fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as they are today, and persecuted Christians everywhere to death, bound them and put them in prisons. Then he told them the story of his conversion and how he saw the Lord on his way to Damascus (Acts 9). And they heard him till he said that the Lord told him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and then they shouted out: "away with such a man from the earth for he is not fit to live, and they tore their clothes and threw dust in the air. So the commander rushed him in the barracks, and commanded to be scourged that he might know the truth (Acts 22:1-25). As they were preparing to scourge him, Paul asked the centurion if it is lawful to scourge a man who is a Roman and not condemned. When the commander knew that, he immediately stopped the order, removed his chains, and the next day, he commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear before him, and brought Paul down and set him before them. And when Paul started his defense and realized that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, he said: "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee, concerning the hope and the resurrection of the dead, I am being judged." And as he said that a

dissension arose between them, and seeing that it could be dangerous to Paul's life, he commanded the soldiers to take Paul by force and bring him back into the barracks (Acts 23:1-10).

And when it came to the commander's attention that the Jews lay in wait to kill Paul, he sent him secretly by night under heavy guard with a letter to governor Felix in Caesarea who kept him in Herod's Praetorium (Acts 23:23-35).

After five days, Ananias the high priest and the elders and an orator named Tertullus came down and accused Paul with charges they couldn't prove, and so Felix adjourned the proceedings saying that he will look again in the matter when he has a convenient time. Later he heard Paul few times hoping that Paul would give him some money to be released (Acts 24:1-26).

After two years Festus succeeded Felix in office, and the high priest and his group tried another charge against Paul but it failed. And when they demanded that Paul should be brought up to Jerusalem to be tried, Paul protested and refused saying that he was standing at Caesar's judgment seat where he ought to be judged, and he appealed to Caesar. So Festus after conferring with his council told him that since he appealed to Caesar, to Caesar he shall go (Acts 25:1-12).

Meanwhile, while waiting for the arrangements to be made to send Paul to Rome, he was heard by king Agrippa and Bernice who found nothing wrong with him and said that this man could have been set free, had he not appealed to Caesar (Acts 26:1-32).

4) The 4th missionary trip:

A good number of scholars do not consider this a missionary trip. I am not a scholar, but I do consider it a missionary one, because he was going to Rome for trial, yet he never ceased preaching the gospel and gaining men and women to Christ whether in the ship, or in the island of Malta or during his two years imprisonment in Rome awaiting his trial. As a matter of fact, he may have preached to a far more audience than he ever did in his previous three trips.

The trip was so dangerous and tiresome which ended by the ship being completely wrecked at the coast of an island called Malita (Malta).

Then after staying three months on that island, they found another ship sailing to Rome, so they (Paul, Luke, Timothy, Silas, and Aristarchus a Macedonian from Thessalonica) got on board, and at last they arrived at Puteoli which was the sea port for Rome and at a distant of 150 miles, and so they completed the trip to Rome on foot. Arriving at Rome, the centurion in charge delivered all the prisoners to the authorities except Paul who was allowed to rent a house on his own though still chained to two soldiers.

On the third day, Paul called the leaders of the Jews and told them why he was in Rome, and from then on he started preaching the gospel.

And this ends the recorded history of Paul as narrated in the book of Acts.

Tradition puts Paul as been tried by Augustus Caesar. He must have been tried twice because in 2nd Timothy 4:16, he states that at his **first defense** no one stood with him, but all forsook him. And at that first defense he must have been found innocent and set free, because in 2nd Timothy 4:17, he states that he was

delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

And when Nero came into power, and after he burnt the city of Rome, he blamed the Christians for his evil doing and stretched his hand out in a campaign of persecution against them, add to that, the Jews succeeded in bad-mouthing Paul to Nero who put him in prison again and beheaded him about 68 A.D.

Paul by the guidance of the Holy Spirit wrote about half of the New Testament composed of 13 epistles to different churches and individuals, four of these he wrote while in his first imprisonment and they are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. The epistle to the Hebrews is not counted since the contemporary scholars do not believe that he is the author, but I do believe that he wrote and I still have in my possession an old printed Bible where it is stated that Paul is the author of the book of Hebrews.

Peter

His original name was Simon son of Jonah (John 1:42 & 21:15, 16, 17). Him and his brother Andrew were probably from Bethsaida in Galilee (John 1:44). By trade they were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee and partners of James and John the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10). They were all disciples of John the Baptist, but they adhered to Jesus when John the Baptist pointed Jesus out to Andrew as the lamb of God. Jesus gave him a new name Peter (English) or Petros (Greek) or Cephas (Hebrew), all of them mean “**Rock**” (John 1:36-42). Then one day as the four were fishing, Jesus was teaching on shore and the crowd was pressing upon Him, He entered Peter’s boat and asked him to sail a little away from the shore and continued teaching. Then the Lord realized that there was no catch, so He told Peter to cast his net on the right side of the boat, but Peter was reluctant and protested that they have labored all night but caught nothing, but then he said that on His word he will cast the net; and to their amazement, the net became full of fish that he could no longer drag it to shore. Then here comes Jesus’ call to follow Him and He will make them fishers of men (Luke 5:1-7). They accepted the call and followed him (Mat. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20 & Luke 5:8-11). Then Jesus did another miracle healing Peter’s mother in law (Mat. 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31 & Luke 4:38-40). He also witnessed the miracle of raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:22-37 & Luke 8:41-51). He was one of the twelve disciples, and then became apostle to the circumcised. He had few special encounters with the Lord where he experienced His power and glory. He walked on the water (Mat. 14:25-33); he confessed Him as the Son of the Living God and that is when Jesus told him that he is Peter and upon this rock He will build His church (Mat. 16:13-19; Mark 8:27-29 & Luke 9:18-20). He also with James and John saw His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat. 17:1-4; Mark 9:2-5 & Luke 9:28-33). On the other hand, he made the mistake of rebuking the Lord when He was trying to tell the disciples of what is going to happen to Him from suffering to death; and Jesus’ response was to get behind me Satan (Mat. 16:21-23 & Mark

8:31-33).

And at the day of the Last Supper, Jesus commissioned Peter and John to prepare for that (Luke 22:8), and before supper when Jesus began to wash the disciples feet, Peter in a whim of humility refused, but when Jesus told him that he will have no part with Him if he refuses to have his feet washed, he overly accepted not only his feet but also his hand and head (John 13:3-9). And when the Lord declared that one of them will betray Him, Peter beckoned to John to ask Him who will it be (John 13:24). Then later he adamantly declared that even if every body denied Him, he will never deny Him even up to death (Mat. 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:31-34 & John 13:36-38).

And at Gethsemane, he and the two sons of Zebedee accompanied Jesus for praying (Mat. 26:36-37 & Mark 14:32-33). And when Judas and the soldiers of the Temple were about to apprehend Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut the ear of Malchus a servant of the high priest (Mat. 26:51-52 & John 18:10-11). Then Peter and John followed Jesus at a distance to the palace of Caiaphas where Peter was recognized three times and denied by swearing that he knew not the Lord three times, and the cock crowed, then he remembered how Jesus told him that before the cock crows he will deny knowing Him three times; so he went out and wept bitterly (Mat. 26:73-75; Mark 14:70-72; Luke 22:59-62 & John 18:26-28).

At the cross, all the disciples including Peter fled away except John.

On the early morning of resurrection, the women finding that the stone over the sepulcher was rolled over, they ran back to the disciples and told Peter and John who immediately ran to the place, and Peter went in and saw the linen cloths and the face cloth laid carefully away, then John entered and believed that the Lord has been raised (Luke 24:10-12 & John 20:1-8).

After resurrection, the Lord appeared to Peter first as narrated by both Luke (Luke 24:34) and Paul (1st Cor. 15:5). Most scholars believe that this special appearance was for restoring Peter, since the Lord knew that the sorrow for denying Him may have an adverse reaction, and he may loose faith. So He appeared to him first to tell him that he is forgiven, and secondly to encourage him and strengthen his faith, and thirdly to tell him about his duties as a leader to the group.

But the great restoration was at the Sea of Galilee as narrated in John 21 when Jesus asked him three times if he loves Him; and contrary to the three times of denial, he now affirms three times that he loves Him, and three times he receives the commission to feed Christ's sheep. Then He gives him the prediction of his martyrdom to glorify the Lord.

After the Lord's ascension, the book of Acts tells us a lot about him. He was the one who pointed out to the disciples the necessity to fill the place of

Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-22).

He was the one who boldly spoke to the people on the Day of Pentecost when they thought that the apostles were drunk and resulted into the conversion of more than three thousand (Acts 2:14:41).

He was the one who with John healed the born lame at the gate called beautiful, and again preached the crowd, for which reason they were imprisoned, and appeared before the Sanhedrin the next day to answer as by what authority they did this, and Peter answered boldly and were dismissed (Acts 3:1 – 4:23).

And in the miracle of judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, he was the prominent figure (Acts 5:1-11).

And when many miracles were performed by the apostles, they became a threat to the authority of the high priest, Scribes, and Sadducees, so they were thrust into prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord released them and commanded them to go and preach in the Temple. So the next day while preaching in the Temple, they were brought back by the Temple soldiers to appear before the high priest and the council who rebuked them; but Peter boldly pointed out to them that they ought to obey God rather than men, and he charged them as being the murderers of our Lord Jesus Christ; and they became full of anger, and when they were about to sentence the apostles to death, they were restrained by the wise council of Gamaliel (Acts 15:14-40).

When persecution increased after stoning Stephen, a good number of the apostles and disciples left Jerusalem. So Philip went to Samaria and preached the gospel and many believed. Then Peter and John were sent over to Samaria to encourage and confirm the converts, and while there Peter rebuked Simon the sorcerer showing that though he professed his faith and was baptized, he was still poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity (Acts 8:14-24).

Then he met with Paul (Acts 9:26 & Gal. 1:17-18).

Then he travelled around visiting the newly established churches (Acts 9:32).

During this course, he healed Aeneas in Lydda (Acts 9:32-34), and raised Tabitha (Dorcas) in Joppa from the dead (Acts 9:39-41).

Then it was recorded how he preached Cornelius and baptized him and his household, the thing which greatly offended his country men (Acts 9:32 – 10:48 & Acts 11:2).

Then it came to pass that Herod stretched his hand against the believers and killed James the son of Zebedee by beheading, and when he saw that this pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter and put him in prison till he kills him after the day of unleavened bread. But the night before this could happen, the angel of the Lord came and released Peter though he was chained and guarded by four squads of soldiers. He immediately went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, and the sister of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), where the brethren used to gather for prayer (Acts 12:2-17). He did not stay but told them to tell James about his deliverance and left.

From now on there is no steady history of him save for some sporadic appearances here and there.

Some many years later, about 51 A.D., we find him in Jerusalem at the council of apostles and elders who assembled to discuss the problem that was raised at

Antioch by the Judaizers who told the pagan converts that they cannot be saved unless they are circumcised and follow the Law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers. He took the lead of discussion contending that salvation comes by Grace through Faith with no distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised (Acts 15:7-11). His argument was supported by Paul and James who wrote a letter to the brethren in Antioch informing them of the decision of the council. Then he appeared at a sharp contention between him and Paul who believed that Peter's conduct may end in serious consequences, he rebuked him (Gal. 2:11-14). This did not affect their brotherly communion which continued to the end of his life (2nd Peter 3:15-16).

There is a strong belief that sometime earlier he visited Corinth, though there is no strong Biblical reference to that. But he was definitely in Rome at the end of his life whence he wrote his two epistles just before he was crucified at the order of Nero, upside down at his request, for he considered himself unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as His master (according to Origen).

He was devoted to His master and served Him faithfully with courage and dare. We do not know if he wrote any other epistle than the two referred to above.

Philip

There are two men named by this name in the New Testament:

1) Philip the apostle:

He was of the city of Bethsaida, in Galilee (John 1:44; 12:21).

Little is recorded about him in the Holy Scripture. He followed Jesus and thus became the fourth disciple (Mat. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14 7 John 1:41-43).

He was the one who invited Nathanael to come and see Jesus. Nathanael's response was : "Can anything good comes out of Nazareth?"

And when Jesus was about to feed the 5,000, He asked Philip where can we buy bread, that these may eat (John 6:5-7).

And when some Greeks desired to see Jesus, they asked Philip (John 12:21-22).

He was also the one who asked Jesus to show them the Father and it is enough for them (John 14:8).

And after ascension, he was with the church at Jerusalem (Acts 1:13).

Tradition though vague and uncertain, puts him to have preached the gospel in Phrygia and that he died at Hieropolis in Syria.

2) Philip the evangelist:

Like the first Philip, nothing much is known about him or his family.

We first hear about him when he was elected and appointed as one of the first seven deacons (Acts 6:5).

Following the death of Stephens, he left Jerusalem to the city of Samaria where Simon practiced sorcery. Philip performed many miracles and thus drew the

attention of the people away from Simon who probably for prospectus gain, falsely solicited baptism to obtain the same power as Philip (Acts 8:5-13). Then he was directed by the Holy Spirit to proceed to Gaza, so that on his way, he would meet with the Ethiopian eunuch, and preach him the gospel which resulted in his conversion and baptism, and as they came out of the water, the eunuch saw him no more (Acts8:39). From there he went up north along the coast line where he preached in Azotus (Ashdod) and other cities till he reached Caesarea (Acts 8:26-40). Then he disappeared from the scene for a long time (about 15 – 19 years), to surface again hosting Paul and his company in his house after they returned from their 3rd missionary trip. The Holy Scripture tells us that he has four virgin daughters who prophesied. No one is certain about where he spent the rest of his life, or where when, or how he died.

Onesimus

He was mentioned once in Paul's letter to Philemon verses 10 – 21. There is nothing to indicate that he was imprisoned with Paul in Rome, but he was converted to Christianity by Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome as it is obvious in the verses mentioned above. Apparently he was a runaway slave from his master Philemon in Laodicea and went to Rome where he will not be easily found since Rome was a haven and a good hiding place for the runaways because the number of slaves in Rome far exceeded the Romans themselves. It is said that there was 60 million slaves in the whole Roman Empire; but we must understand that the majority of them were not blacks, because every country that the Romans conquered, they used them as slaves. He served Paul while he was in prison, and Paul wished that he would keep him for himself, but he would not do that without Philemon's permission. In his letter Paul pleaded to Philemon on Onesimus' behalf that he would forgive him and accept him back not as a servant but as a brother in Christ, and promised to repay any damage caused by Onesimus' misbehavior. Paul dictated the letter to Onesimus who wrote it and carried it by hand to Philemon. He also with Tychicus carried the letter of Paul to Colosse. Tradition tells us that later he became the first Bishop of Laodicea.

Silas (Silvanus)

This is a Greek name apparently derived from the Latin word "Silva" which means wood. He was a prominent member of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22).

Probably he was a Hellenistic Jew. Nothing much is known about his family or where he was born, but most likely he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37).

He was not one of the twelve disciples.

He was one of the delegates appointed by the council of Jerusalem to accompany Paul and Barnabas carrying the letter of the council's decision about the problem which was raised by the Judaizers in Antioch claiming that the Gentiles cannot be saved unless they are circumcised and follow the Law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers. The council's decree (about 50 A.D.) was firm and clear that they should not be burdened by such things, but to abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality (Acts 15:22-29).

After accomplishing this mission, he elected to stay in Antioch, although he was granted the permission to return to Jerusalem (Acts 15:33-34).

And the Holy Scripture tells us that he was a capable teacher, and that he stayed there teaching and preaching for a while.

And when dispute happened between Paul and Barnabas about taking John Mark with them for the 2nd missionary trip, they departed and Barnabas took John Mark (his nephew) and sailed to Cyprus, while Paul chose to take Silas with him for the mission (Acts 15:40).

And in Acts 16, the Holy Scripture tells us that he was scourged and imprisoned with Paul in Philippi, the incidence which led to the conversion of the jail keeper and his family.

Then they went to Thessalonica where they found great opposition from the Jews who also followed them to Berea and ran them off from Berea as well.

So, Paul elected to proceed south to Athens in Achaia, and left Silas and Timothy behind (Acts 17:10-14), and later they joined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5); and his presence in Corinth can be noticed in several of Paul's epistles such as 2nd Cor. 1:19; 1st Thess. 1:1; and 2nd Thess. 1:1; and his name was also mentioned by Peter as being the one who carried his 1st epistle to Asia Minor (1st Peter 5:12). Tradition though uncertain, places him as becoming the Bishop of Corinth later.

Stephens

This name is derived from the Greek name Stephanos which means a crown. As his name implies, it seems that he was of Hellenistic origin. However, we know nothing about where and when he was born, nor do we know anything about his family, how he ended up in Jerusalem and how or when he was converted.

The first accurate account of him was mentioned in Acts 6:5, when he among seven men of honest report and filled of the Holy Spirit and wisdom were elected to equally distribute the common fund that was entrusted to the apostles for support of the poorer brothers. That was after some of the Hellenistic brethren complained that their own widows were neglected. The newly elected deacons were brought to the apostles who ordained them for this task (v. 6).

He was described as a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit (v. 5) and full of grace and power (v. 8), and of irresistible wisdom and Spirit (v. 10). And he attracted attention by the great wonders and miracles that he did among the people.

Then arose some Hellenistic Jews and others who disputed with Stephen, but they were unable to resist his wisdom and Biblical knowledge. So they secretly induced men to say that they have heard him saying blasphemous words against Moses and God, and they stirred up the people, and seized and brought him to the council for trial which outcome was already determined (Acts 6:9-15).

As for the trial itself it was a gimmick and sham, for as it happened in the trial of our Lord, they built the whole case on false witnesses, and they didn't care to seek the truth; add to that, the high priest did not take the council's votes, but single-handed he pronounced him to death.

His defense was very lengthy involving the whole history of the Jewish nation from the time of calling Abram to leave his country and family till the time when Solomon built the house of God (Acts 7:1-50).

But what really made them angry was when he at the end addressed them as uncircumcised in heart and ears, and that they always resist the Holy Spirit as their fathers did before, and accused them and their fathers of persecuting the prophets and killing those who foretold the coming of the Just One who they murdered, and though they received the Law by the direction of angels, yet they didn't keep it (Acts 7:51-53).

Then they cried out with a loud voice, ran at him with one accord, cast him outside the city and stoned him (Acts 7:57-58), as he was calling on the Lord to receive his spirit, then knelt down and asked Him not to charge them with this sin, and then fell asleep (Acts 7:59-60).

It is worthy to mention here that all this happened in the presence of a man called Saul of Tarsus who consented to their action (Acts 7:58).

Theophilus

Though his name was only mentioned twice in the New Testament (Luke 1:3 & Acts 1:1), and in both times it was mentioned by Luke addressing him as the most excellent theophilus, yet we do not know that much about him.

Traditionally he was thought to be a rich man of high rank and authority residing in the city of Antioch in Syria.

Obviously from his name, we can safely deduct that he was most probably a Greek Gentile who heard about Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead, and wanted to know more about Him. And obviously from the gospel according to Luke and the book of Acts, we see that Luke being also of Greek origin, took that task of narrating all events mentioned in both books on his shoulder, and certainly he succeeded by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to give complete and perfect account of what had exactly happened.

Cement in his writings about the middle of the 2nd century, confirms the above,

and describes him as a great Lord residing in Antioch the capital of Syria.

Timothy

A Greek young man(1st Timothy 4:12) who was a long time companion and a fellow worker of Paul.

He was from a Jewish believer mother Eunice (Acts 16:1 & 2 Tim. 1:5) and a Greek father (Acts 16:1). His mother was faithful in teaching him the Holy Scriptures since his childhood.(2 Tim. 3:14,15)

Him, his mother and his Grandmother Lois, probably were converted to Christianity during Paul's first missionary visit to Lystra, their hometown. (Acts 14:21).

On his second missionary trip, passing back by Lystra (Acts 16:1), Paul found in Timothy a man of love and zeal to serve the Lord. So, he asked him to join them (Paul and Silas) in the work of God. But because he was Greek, Paul had to have him circumcised (Acts 16:1-3) so that he would not be a stumbling block to the Jews, because as we notice, although Paul was called the Apostle of the Gentiles, yet the Holy Scripture tells us that in every city Paul passed by, he preached the good news of salvation in the Synagogues first.

Apart from accompanying Paul in his travels, we should not forget his great work of correcting the Heresies and false teachings and also establishing the governing system in the churches of Ephesus and Corinth. (1Cor. 4:17 & 1Tim. 4:12)

On many occasions, Paul called him "Son" (Philippians 2: 22). And he was well entrusted by Paul (Phil 2:19, 20) as being as faithful and caring as he is.

Having full confidence in his abilities, Paul sent him to few side missions (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17 & Phil. 2:19).

Paul mentioned him in several of his Epistles such as 2nd Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st & 2nd Thessalonians and Philemon.

He was imprisoned in Rome and then released; for the Holy Scripture tells us that Paul asked Him to go to Rome (2Tim. 4:9, 21). Then he was released from Prison (Heb. 13:23).

And that is the last we hear of him in the Holy Scripture.

Tychicus

This is a Greek name meaning "By Chance or accidental".

He was a native of Asia Minor, and one of Paul's fellow laborers.

His name with Trophimus, was first mentioned as a companion of Paul during portion of his return trip from his 3rd mission (Acts 20:4). Trophimus completed

the trip with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:29), but Tychicus remained behind in Asia Minor probably at Miletus (Acts 20:15, 38).

Then the Holy Scripture tells us that he was with Paul at Rome in his first imprisonment (Col. 4:7 & Eph. 6:21-22).

The next reference to him is in Titus 3:12 where Paul writing probably from Ephesus saying that he may send Tychicus to Crete; but in 2nd Tim. 4:12 during his 2nd imprisonment, Paul writes that he has sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

There is a thought suggesting that Trophimus and Tychicus were brothers as being together associated with Titus (2nd Cor. 8:16-24) in collecting for the poor saints of Judea.