

URGENT

Journey Through The Bible



A c t s

Readings:

Luke 24:36-53 Page 749

Acts 1:1-14 Page 770

Acts: An Action Filled Book

“Peter said many other things to warn them. He begged them, “Save yourselves from these evil people.” Those who accepted his message were baptized. About 3,000 people joined the believers that day.” (Acts 2:40–41, NIV)

Supernatural Power



Conversion

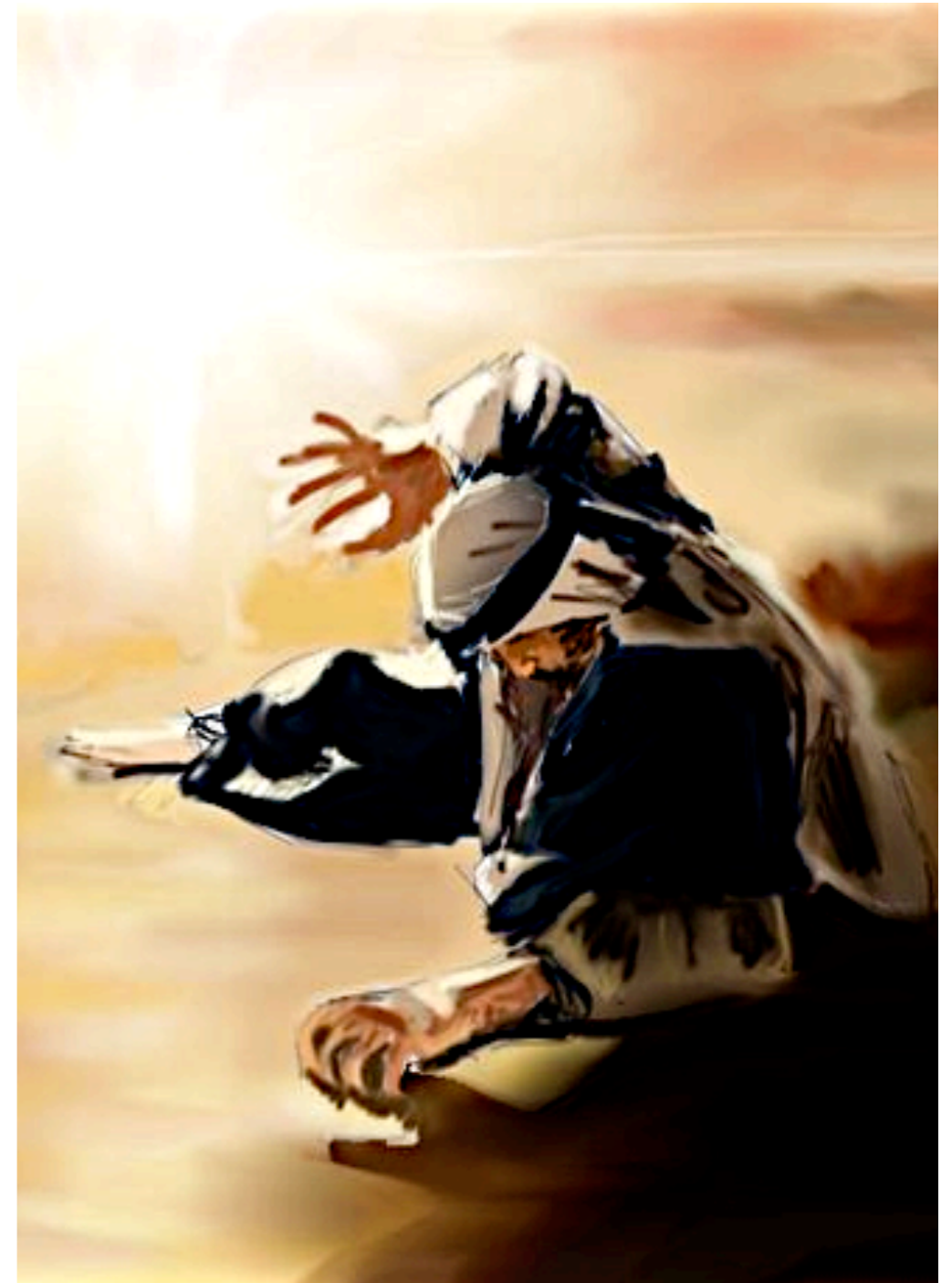
“As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him.

He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting Me?”

“Who are You, Lord?” Saul asked. And the voice replied, “I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

.... He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.”

(Acts 9:3–9, NLT)



Confrontation

“Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour.



Confrontation

But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape.”
(Acts 16:16–23, NLT)



Shipwreck

The Gospel goes to Rome.

Acts 27:1-44

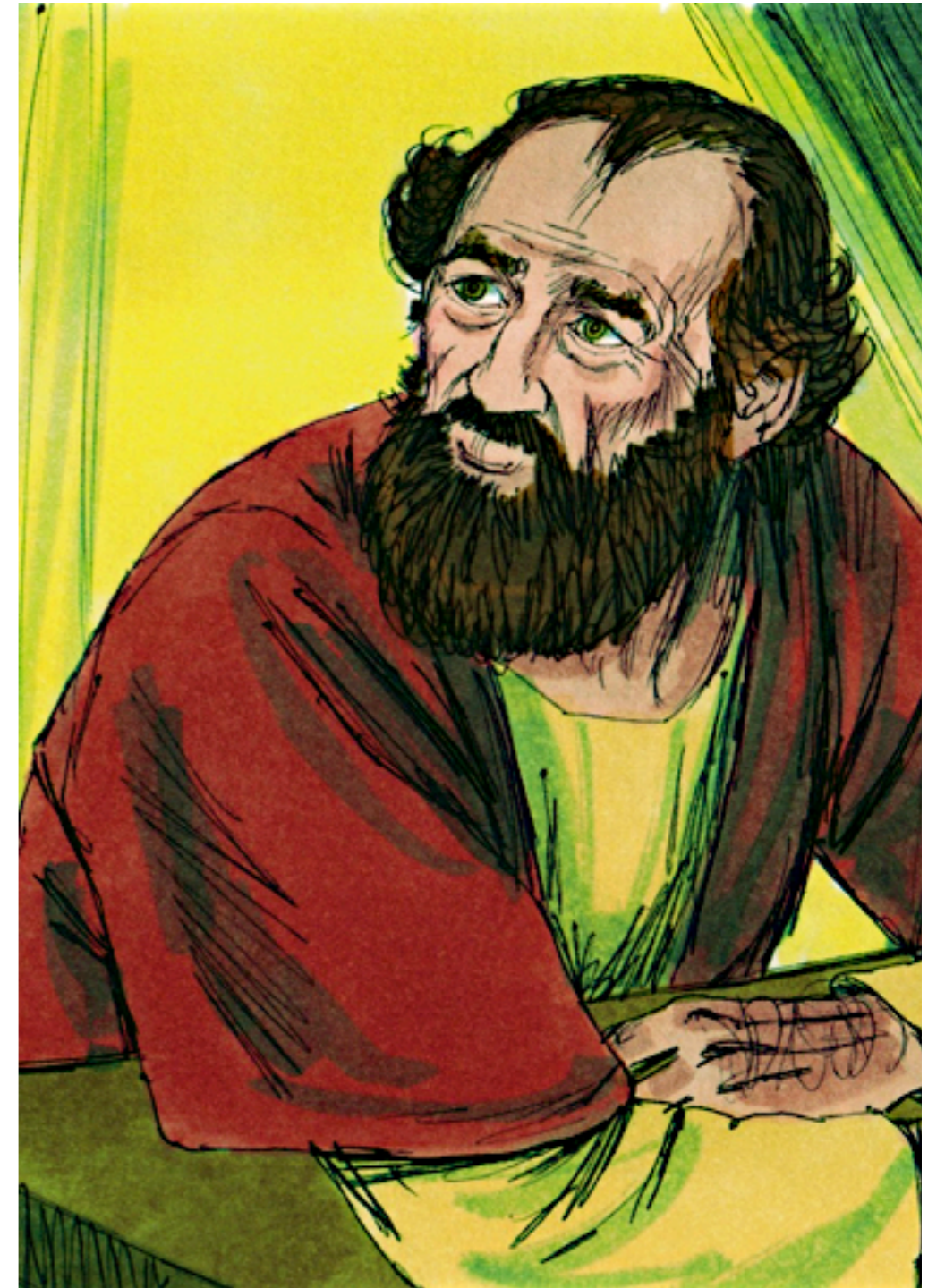
One of the most vivid and direct descriptions of sailing and shipwreck in ancient literature.



Obedience

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.”

And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”



Ananias and Saul

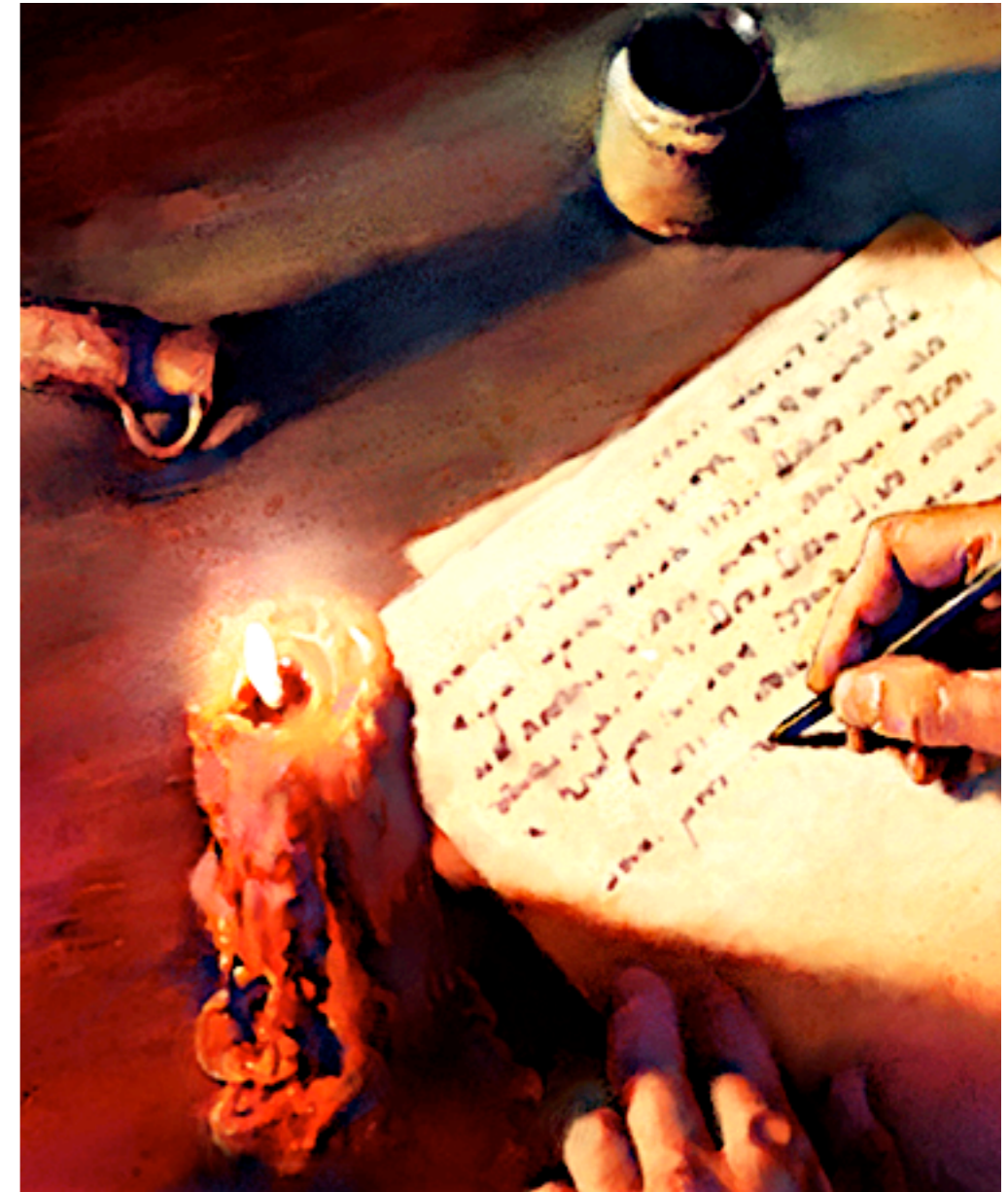
Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your Name.”

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My Name’s sake.”
(Acts 9:10–16, NKJV)



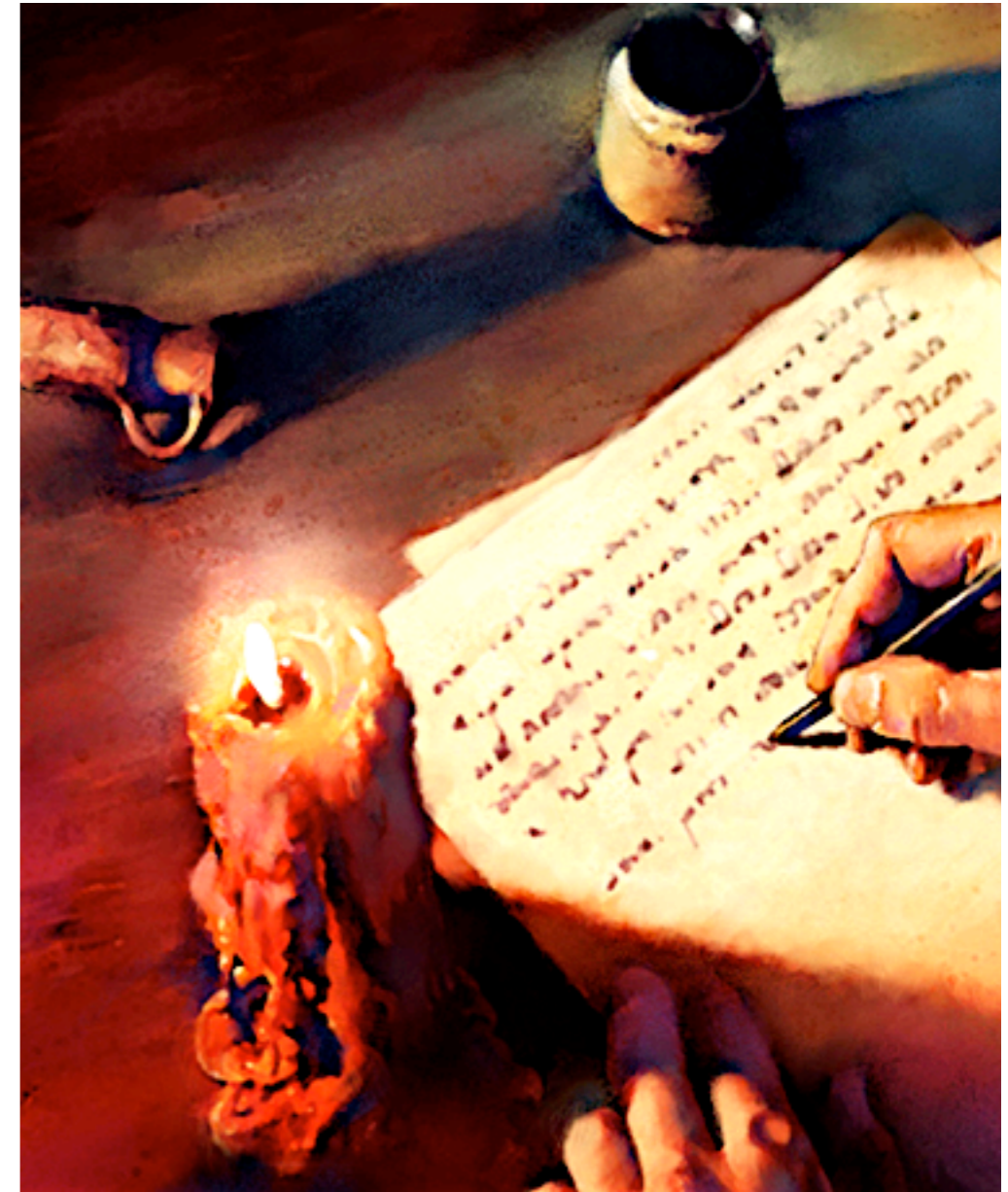
Acts of the Holy Spirit

- Very few of Jesus' 12 apostles feature in the story.
- Of the original 12 only Peter, John, and Philip are mentioned by name after chapter one.
- The real hero of the book of Acts is the Holy Spirit.
- It is the Holy Spirit that leads and empowers the amazing expansion of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.



Acts of the Holy Spirit

- The action or presence of the Holy Spirit is described **43** times in Acts.
- In Matthew's Gospel the Holy Spirit is mentioned **5** times
- In Mark's Gospel the Holy Spirit is mentioned **4** times.
- In Luke's Gospel He is mentioned **12** times
- In John's gospel **10** times.



Acts of the Holy Spirit

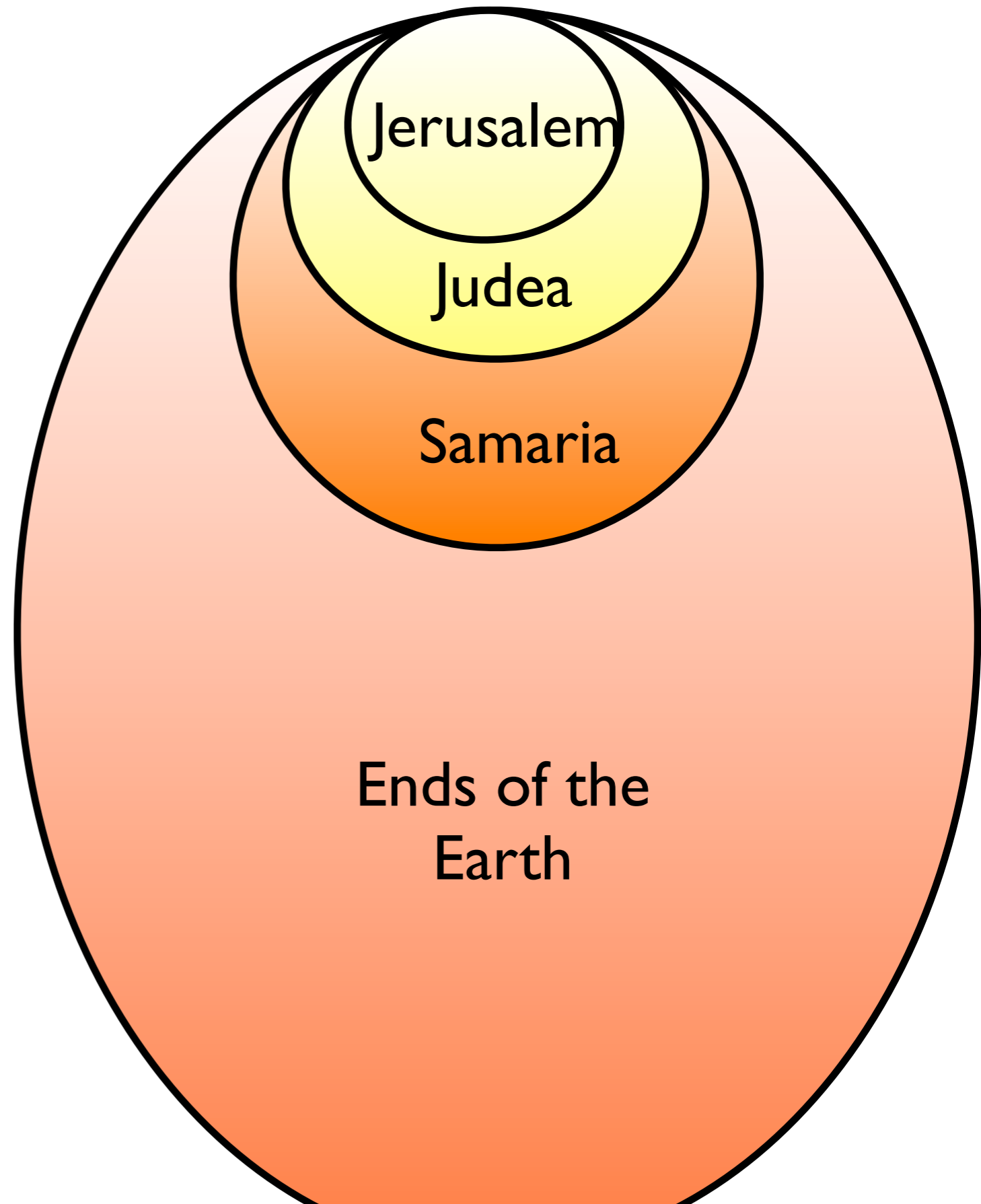
The Holy Spirit directs and empowers individual believers to spread the good news. This is exactly what Jesus promised.

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:4–8, NKJV)



- Acts covers a period of about 30 years from Jesus' ascension through to Paul's house arrest in Rome in 61 AD.
- The good news spread and fellowships of believers sprang up through out the Roman empire.
- To the small group of disciples Jesus' command was an impossible challenge.
- Each stage represented a huge barrier in their minds.
- Without the Holy Spirit Christianity would not even have got out of Jerusalem.

The Plan



Acts of the Holy Spirit

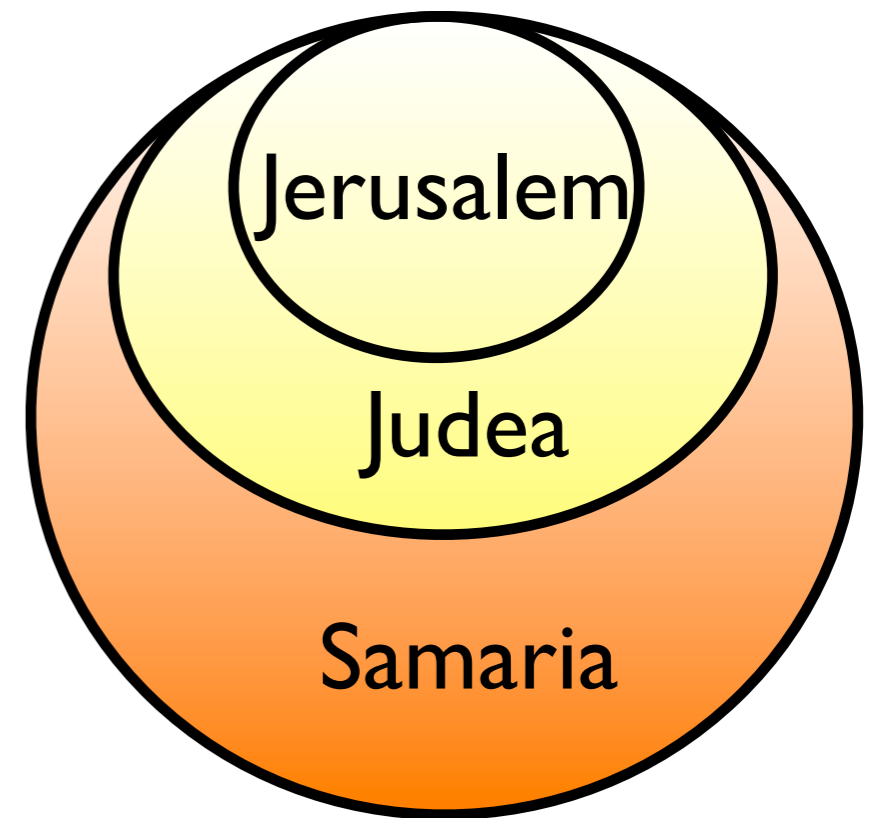
- The Holy Spirit came in power and filled the disciples
- Peter and the others started testifying about Jesus; fearlessly preaching and doing amazing acts of healing.
- People became believers in Jerusalem and from Judea. 3000 became 4000 within a year.
- The religious authorities tried to shut down the new “movement”.
- The effect of their persecution was to drive the gospel to Judea and Samaria.



Out To Samaria

“Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.”

(Acts 8:4–8, ESV)



“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message, they sent Peter and John there. As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:14–15, NLT)

Breaking Barriers

The Holy Spirit falls on the gentiles in Cornelius' house.

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.”

(Acts 10:44–46, NIV84)



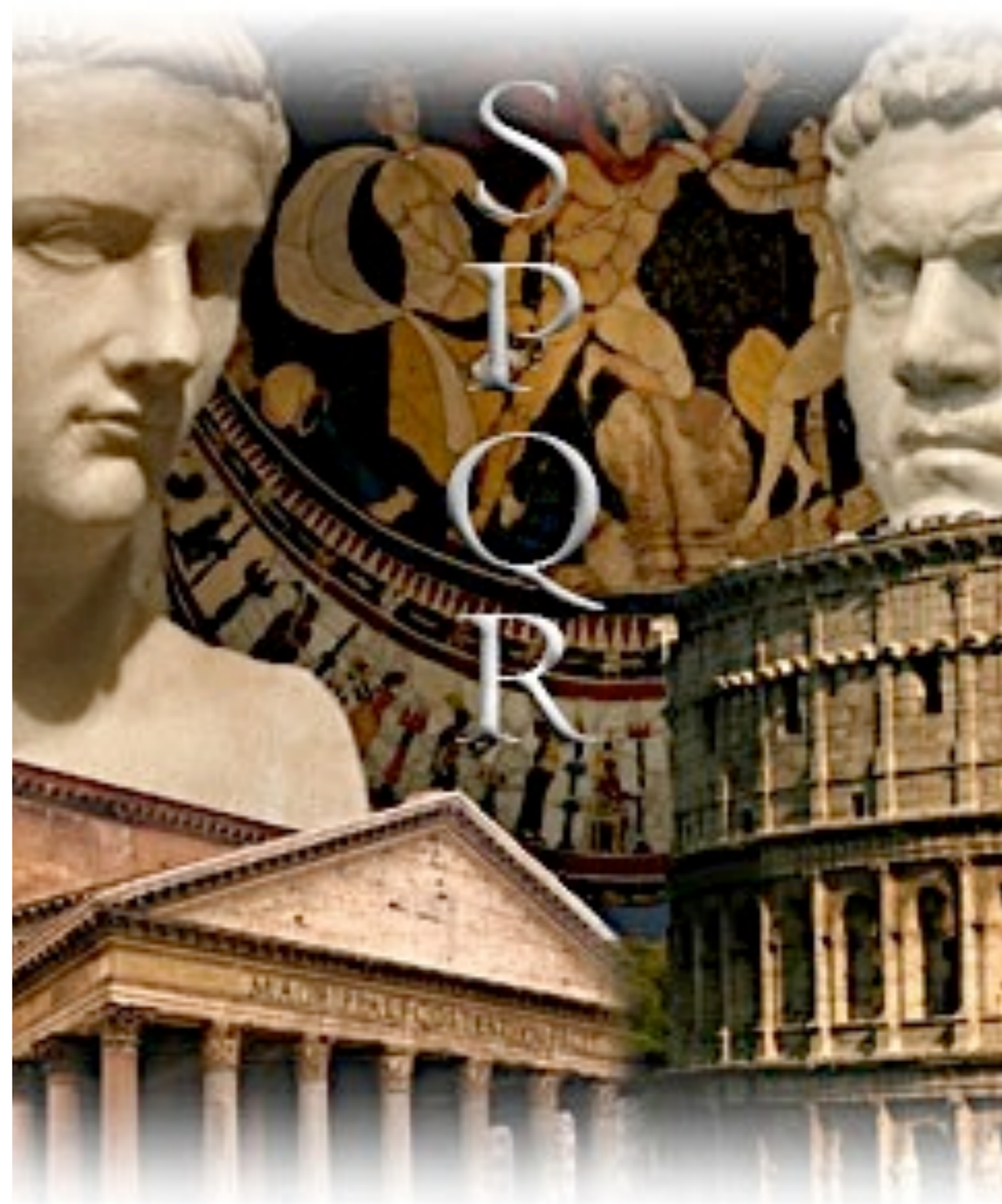
Breaking Barriers

- Very few of the Jewish believers were capable of overcoming the religious stronghold of Judaism in their minds.
- Even Peter himself struggled and was ill-equipped to take the good news to the gentile world.



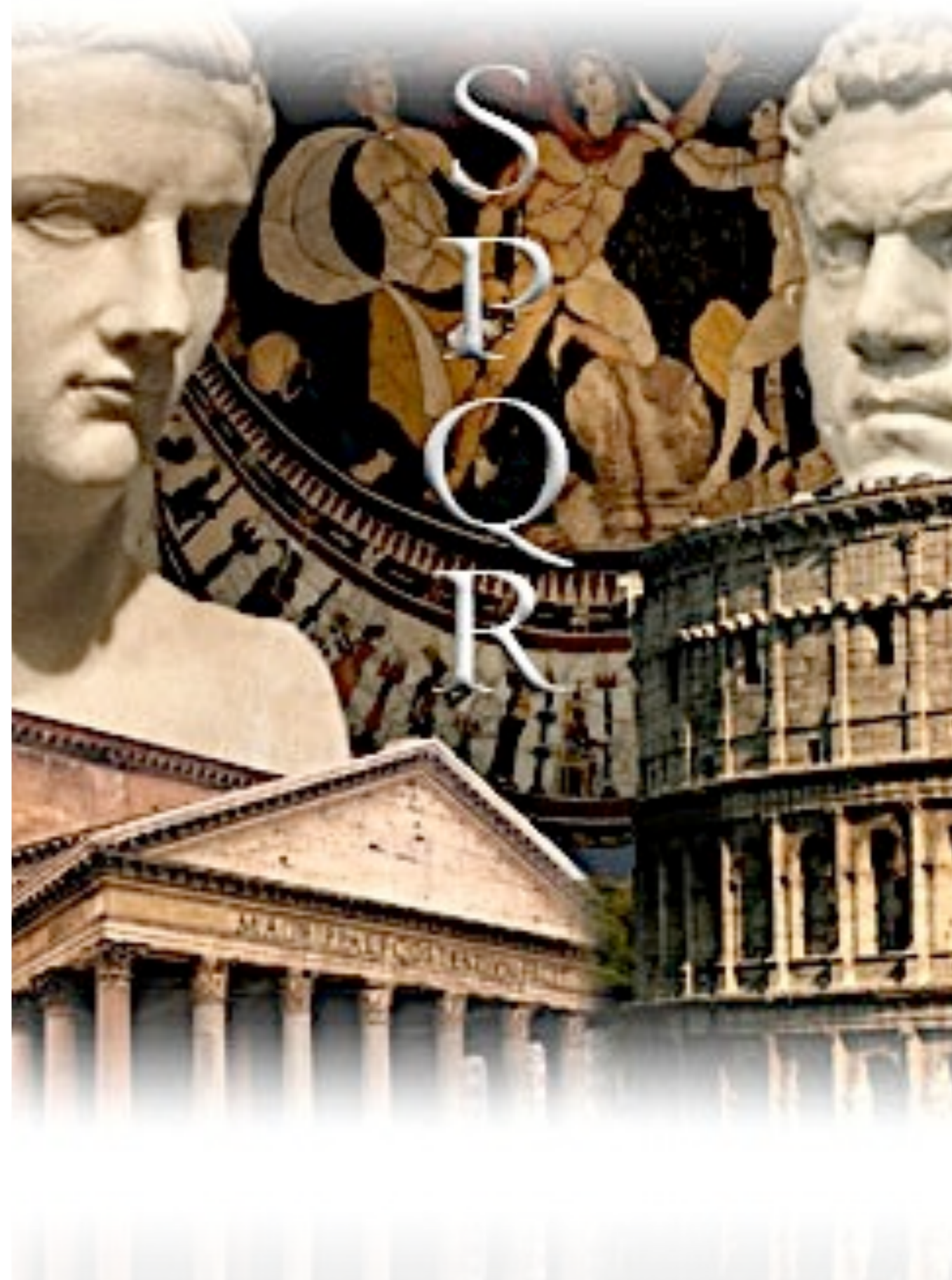
- Jesus personally intervened revealing Himself to the most unlikely Jewish evangelist to the gentile world.
- Who but God would have chosen a Pharisee of the Pharisees and greatest enemy of the church to be the greatest evangelist of the gentile world?
- Once again we see how God looks at the heart not at the outside appearances.

To the Gentile world



Paul

- Highly qualified to take the Gospel out to the Graeco-Roman world:
 - Highly educated
 - A Jew and a Roman citizen
 - Profound knowledge of the O.T.
 - Skilled debater
 - Filled with love and zeal for the Lord.
- He needed a vision of Jesus to change him from an enemy of believers to evangelist.



Mission

- After a time of preparation the Holy Spirit began the first systematic mission to bring the Gospel to the rest of the world.
- “One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus.” (Acts 13:2–4, NLT)



Acts has not ended

- The good news of Jesus and the kingdom of God began the long process of spreading into every nation and culture on earth.
- The story continues today and remains the primary task of the church and all believers.
- When it is complete Jesus will return.
“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14, NKJV)



Acts 29

- The spread of the gospel was not achieved without suffering and blood shed.
- Satan will not yield up his dominion without a fight.
- In the book of Acts Luke does not hide the difficulties, hardships, persecutions and bloodshed that happened as the gospel spread.
- He shows that the Holy Spirit enabled ordinary people to do what seemed impossible acts.
- He shows the opposition to the truth and ignorance of God being overcome by the power of God in dramatic ways but it was never easy.

