

The Legal Character and Purposes of the Book of Acts

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The book of Acts has always been somewhat of a mystery to commentators. Its chronological connection with the Gospel of Luke is obvious, but why it proceeds in the manner it does, and why its author (Luke) selected the incidents he did is not always particularly clear. Its abrupt ending, almost midsentence, leaves the book of Acts as a work of history dangling, which calls out for some other explanation of the nature and purpose of this book. It is obviously not a biography (either of Peter or Paul), and it is scarcely a history of all twelve of the apostles.

Lacking a better thematic explanation, one that comprehensively embraces the entire contents of the book of Acts, I propose that this book should be understood predominantly as a collection of episodes that deal in one way or another with the legal affairs of the apostles. Indeed, beyond the extent to which has been previously noted,¹ almost every episode in the book is either essential to or is an account of some kind of lawsuit, legal decision, or legal action.

While many people have noted the obvious legal content of the last half of the book of Acts, where readers are told of Paul's several encounters before such a prominent Roman officials as Gallio, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, it is not only in these judicial proceedings that legal terminology and precedence are in evidence. Throughout the entire book, one finds a dominance of legal terminology, themes, precedents, and purposes. Indeed, the book of Acts is probably the most legal book in the entire New Testament. It is saturated with actions and events of legal significance.² Its author was obviously familiar with technical legal terminology³ and expected his audience to be conversant with legal jargon (see Appendix 1 below). Luke makes a

¹ On the law in Luke-Acts in general, see Craig L. Blomberg, "The Law in Luke-Acts," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22 (1984): 53–80; Markus Bockmuehl, "The Beginning of Christian Public Ethics: From Luke to Aristides and Diognetus," in Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 177-228; François Bovon, "The Law in Luke-Acts," in François Bovon, *Studies in Early Christianity*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 59-73; F. Gerald Downing, "Law and Custom: Luke-Acts and Late Hellenism," in Barnabas Lindars, ed., *Law and Religion* (Cambridge: James Clark, 1988), 148-58; Jacob S. Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," *Harvard Theological Review* 64 (1971): 21–36; Paul W. Walaskay, "And So We Came to Rome": *The Political Perspective of St. Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Stephen G. Wilson, *Luke and the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

² See generally A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); A. Stewart, "Judicial Procedure in New Testament Times," *Evangelical Quarterly* 47 (April 1975): 94–109.

³ A. T. Robertson, "Luke's Knowledge of Roman Law," in *Luke the Historian in the Light of Research* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1977), 190-206; Allison A. Trites, "Importance of Legal Scenes and Language in the Book of Acts," *Novum Testamentum* 16 (October 1974): 278–84.

point of reporting legal events especially in provincial capitals or key cities, including Antioch (capital of the Roman province of Syria, second largest city in the Roman Empire), Tarsus (capital of the province of Cilicia), Ephesus (provincial capital of the province of Asia), Philippi (capital of the province of Macedonia), Corinth (capital of the province of Achaea), and Caesarea (capital of the province of Judaea), as well as Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome.

Seeing the dominant legal characteristic of the book of Acts exposes its rhetorical purposes and techniques, which helps modern readers understand how the book of Acts would have served early Christians, reassuring them that—even though they might be arraigned before various magistrates of the law, whether Jewish, Greek, or Roman—they will eventually be vindicated before men or beatified by God. In this regard, the book of Acts may well have served as some type of apology, justifying in several ways and to various audiences why Christians believed and acted as they did (see Appendix 2 below).

The book of Acts may also have served specifically in various courts as a type of legal brief informing potential judges about the legal nature of Christianity, as questions about the legality of Christian beliefs and actions may have been brought before those judges for determination.⁴ In this role, the book of Acts would have told an adjudicator what Christianity was all about, how it behaved, and where it parted company with Judaism, especially in forensic settings.

In demonstrating to Christians and their legal opponents that the Christian teachings and practices were legally well formed and had been repeatedly sustained in various courts, the book of Acts would also have helped Christians who found themselves subject to Roman litigation during the first and second centuries, as, for example, before Pliny. Above all, Acts shows that the Christians were friendly to Rome and her legal interests, and that a Christian could even be a Roman citizen.

In addition, beyond serving apologetic or defensive litigious purposes, the book of Acts may also have served as a type of constitution for the Christian community. The decisions and actions of the apostles certainly set precedents that rose quickly to halakhic force and effect, serving important functions in establishing normative Christianity. Interestingly from a jurisprudential point of view and their influence on Western legal thought and history, these legal affairs established norms and precedents essentially by use of the practical case method, and did

⁴ John W. Mauck, *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001).

not privilege the opinions of learned scholars or esteemed teachers (as was often the case with rabbinic law) and did not proceed by producing or appealing to summaries or restatements of the law produced by jurists (as was the case with the Roman codes or commentaries of Labeo, Gaius, Theodosius, and Justinian).

The following analysis breaks the book of Acts down into forty episodes or case-precedents. Stitched together loosely, running together more like a digest of often unrelated events than like a fully self-conscious saga, the book of Acts presents readers with one precedent-setting event after another. By asking the questions, what legal issues gave rise to this case or encounter, and what legal significance might each of these events have taken on in the young Christian community, each of these case-precedents, as well as the entire book of Acts, can best be understood.

This paper is a working paper, intended to promote exploration and discussion of the nature and purposes in the book of Acts, which may well be the most legal book in the New Testament. My hypothesis is that this book should be understood predominantly as a book about legal affairs. Indeed, even its title, *Praxeis Apostolōn*, may signal the pervasive legal nature of this book. The book did not come to be known as the *Erga*, the Works, or Deeds, of the Apostles. The word *praxis* has a much broader range of meanings than simply deeds or acts. Entries in Liddell, Scott and Jones show that it covered such meanings as proper courses of everyday conduct, functions, transactions, undertakings, glorious official deeds and decrees (as in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*), military actions, magical practices, successes, achievements, good outcomes, discourses a philosopher or rhetorician (advocate or lawyer), business affairs, trading voyages, the collection of money, a legal action for recovery of debts, the conduct of public office, and legal actions carrying out the execution of punishments against the condemned. Aristotle, for example, speaks of *hai praxeis tōn katadikasthentōn* (*Politics* 1321^b42). Taken together, all of these meanings amply describe the contents of the book of Acts, but most striking are the legal threads that run through so many of these meanings and also through out the affairs of the apostles, their official functions, decrees, and deeds, the legal status of their healings, their encounters with illicit magicians, the legal content and purposes of their discourses and financial affairs, and their appearances before councils and judges concerned with the execution of punishments—in other words, the legal cases and affairs of the apostles.

Case-Precedent 1. Commissioning the Apostles

In the first eleven verses of Acts 1, the eleven apostles received their commission as witnesses⁵ and their instructions about the return of the Lord to restore the sovereignty of Israel. Legal content can be found here in almost every sentence. (a) The word *apostolos*, before it became a technical ecclesiastical term, was an ordinary word meaning agent, one set out with legal power and authority to act on behalf of a principle.⁶ (b) The resurrected Jesus not only instructed them for forty days, but gave them commandments or orders (*entello*). This legal term interestingly is used in the context of issuing one's last will and testament and, specifically, to "invest with legal powers, authorized to act."⁷ So, for example, the old prophet in Bethel used this word in declaring that "for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, 'You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way that you came'" (1 Kings 13:17). (c) According to Acts 1:3, the apostles had been given many infallible and ample proofs (*en pollois tekmeriois*) that Jesus was still alive. The word used here comes from the spheres of medicine, law, and logic. Medically, these sure symptoms allow a positive diagnosis of an illness; in the law, these proofs are properly of an argumentative kind that allow for a compelling reason to rule in favor of one legal position or another; and in the logic of Aristotle such constitutes demonstrative proof, as opposed to merely some fallible sign or analogy.⁸ (d) When the Apostles were gathered together and Jesus was in their company, the nature of their assembly is perplexing, because the word used to describe their gathering seems to refer to eating salt together (*sunalizomenos*), which may have some relevance to a covenant making meeting of some special significance beyond normal table fellowship. Among other things that may have been enjoined and constituted at such an assembly, the apostles were called (e) to be witnesses (*martures*) in a legal sense, specifically to be "my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and throughout the land." Following this commissioning, Jesus ascended in the presence of two men, who stood (f) as the required two legal witnesses who took the stand in white clothing to testify to the men of Galilee that Jesus would return. Thus, the purpose of the first

⁵ Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁶ "The Greek term *apostolos* primarily designates *shlichut* [Hebrew] or commission (cf. *TDNT*: 1:407ff). The Apostles were Jesus' representatives or agents among the people—in line with the mishnaic dictum 'A man's agent is like to himself (Ber. 5:5).'" Hilary Le Cornu and Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Academon, 2003), 1:8.

⁷ Diogenes Oen. 66; Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 575.

⁸ Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1768.

episode is to legally bind and commission the apostles as witnesses and to supply them with legally compelling evidences.

Case-Precedent 2. Replacing Judas Iscariot

This episode involved the selection of Judas's successor by means of divination to select Matthias as one of the twelve (1:12-26). (a) While Judas had the legal place or right (*klēros*) to remain in this service, he had forfeited that position. (b) He had used the thirty pieces of silver that he had received unjustly (*adikias*, illegally) from the judges and chief priests to purchase the field known as the field of blood where he died, talionically overcome by the property itself. (c) In Psalms 109:8, the apostles found legal grounds to let someone else take his office (*epikopēn*). That psalm speaks of Satan or an accuser standing at the right side of a rascal and having his hoarded wealth or office "falling to another." (d) The apostles then follow legal steps in nominating two men, casting lots (*edōkan klērous*),⁹ and "pebbling" (*sugkatepsēphisthē*) Matthias with the other eleven as a witness of the resurrection (1:26). The word for "lot" here is the same as the word used initially for Judas's right or place in the council.

Case-Precedent 3. The Feast of Pentecost.

Legal themes are abundant in this account (2:1-37). (a) Pentecost commemorated the day on which the Lord appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai and gave him the Law, surrounded by flames of fire and thunder in the holy mountain.¹⁰ Just as Moses had taken seventy elders into the mountain, symbolically representing the applicability of the Law of Moses to all nations, seventy languages were understood as Peter spoke on the new day of Pentecost. (b) Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32, legally justifying and recognizing that God's spirit had come upon all flesh. (c) Peter testified that Jesus of Nazareth was a man singled out by God and made known to the people

⁹ "In line with biblical patterns, Peter seeks a sign from God to show whom God has chosen, since there are two possible candidates, the sign serving as the answer to the prayer. Casting lots was a method commonly employed for revealing God's choice, either in respect of discovering who was responsible for certain acts (cf. Achan in Josh. 7:14f, and most notoriously Jonah), for dividing property, or for appointing God's representatives (cf. 1 Sam. 10:19f)." Le Cornu and Shulam, *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:48-50, citing Jewish legal precedents for drawing lots and casting votes in similar situations.

¹⁰ Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in Edwin R. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch, eds., *Religion and Law: Biblical Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 38-47. Le Cornu and Shulam, *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:58-59, state: "It seems clear that Like is familiar with this tradition and associates and interprets the events which occurred on this Shavout as a re-enactment of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai (for the Qumran rite, cf. Vermes, *Dead: 79f*)."

through “miracles, portents, and signs, which God worked among you through him.” Under Jewish law, one of the most difficult things to determine was whether a miracle worker was acting legally through the power of God or was acting illegally through evil forces (see Deuteronomy 13:1-6). Peter testified that Jesus performed miracles by the power of God and not through evil forces. (d) Peter also commented on Jesus’ execution¹¹ and testified that this occurred with the full foreknowledge of God and within divine purposes, but unlawfully or by an anomalous hand (*cheiros anomōn*) (2:23). As evidence that the crucifixion had been foreseen by God, Peter quoted Psalms 16:8-11. Among other results, this case set the clear precedent that Christians should continue to celebrate Pentecost, as had been required under the law of Moses, but for them this feast would now take on new but related significance.

Case-Precedent 4. Peter’s Instructions

At the end of his Pentecost speech, Peter exhorted his audience (a) to repent and be baptized (2:38), and he extended the legally significant “promise” of the covenant of Abraham to them, their children, and their distant posterity (2:39). Establishing the ecclesiastical order of the church, those who were baptized (b) followed Peter’s rules of worship and Christian conduct (his *didachē*) and (c) people in this diverse audience were united in full fellowship into the new Christian community (*koinōniai*) (2:42). As they exercised reverence as godfearing, pious people (*phobos*), the apostles were able (d) to perform many signs and wonders (2:43), again under the proper authorization of Deuteronomy 13:11, echoing the legal requirement that all Israel shall hear and fear (*phobēthēsetai*). Legally it would be important to equate Jesus with Jehovah, since miracles that led others to believe in any other god besides the one who had delivered Israel from Egypt were strictly forbidden. (e) These people had all their property in common (*koina*) (2:45-46; 4:32), *koinonia* being a legal term for a partnership or association for the common management of money or property for defined purposes.¹²

¹¹ Regarding the treatment of the death of Jesus in Acts, see for example, Richard J. Cassidy, “Luke’s Audience, the Chief Priests, and the Motive for Jesus’ Death,” in Richard J. Cassidy and Phillip J. Scharper, eds., *Political Issues in Luke-Acts* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 146–67; J. Bradley Chance, “The Jewish People and the Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts: Some Implications of an Inconsistent Narrative Role,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 30 (1991): 50–81; Earl Richard, “Jesus’ Passion and Death in Acts,” in D.D. Sylva, ed., *Reimagining the Death of the Lukan Jesus* (Frankfurt: Hain, 1990), 125–52; John R. Wilch, “Jewish Guilt for the Death of Jesus: Anti-Judaism in the Acts of the Apostles?” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 18 (1984): 49–58; Jon A. Weatherly, *Jewish Responsibility for the Death of Jesus in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

¹² Richard S. Ascough, “Types and Functions of Associations,” ch. 2 in *Paul’s Macedonian Associations* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). David Daube, “*Societas* as Consensual Contract,” *Cambridge Law Journal* 6 (1938): 381–

Case-Precedent 5. Aftermath of Giving to a Lame Beggar

A lame man begging for alms in the gate of the Temple was healed (3:1-10). When the beggar asked Peter for money, Peter had to tell him that he had no silver or gold, which indeed was true because Peter had given all his property to the *koinonia*. (a) This, however, raised a legal problem for him and for the members of the new community, because the poor laws in Deuteronomy required them to give to the poor: “If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be” (Deuteronomy 15:8-9).¹³ Peter’s example of blessing the beggar with health in the name of Jesus Christ set a precedent to be followed by all Christians, that they should give “that which they had,” namely the blessings of Jesus. Having attracted a large crowd, Peter next took the opportunity (b) to bear witness that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had given the highest honors to Jesus, even though (reviewing the trial and death of Jesus) he was delivered up for trial (*paredōkate*) and repudiated (*ērnēsasthe*) in presence of Pilate, even though Pilate had made the legal decision (*krinantos*) to release him (3:13). Peter laid the legal blame for the death of Jesus on the Jews, “you killed him” (3:15), but the good news was that God had raised him from the dead, (c) of which the apostles were “witnesses” (3:15). Peter made the specific legal point that (d) Jesus’ death occurred by ignorance (*agnoian*) (3:17), perhaps invoking to their benefit the provision of the law of Moses regarding those who sin ignorantly or unwillingly (Numbers 15:27-29).¹⁴ In that light, Peter was able to reassure the Jews that (d) because of God’s obligations under his covenant with Abraham, the Lord came to them first, so that they might turn away from their iniquities (3:26).

403; reprinted in *Collected Studies in Roman Law* 1:37–60.

¹³ See generally, Leon Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1983); Jeffries M. Hamilton, *Social Justice and Deuteronomy: The Case of Deuteronomy 15* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). For a discussion of charity and alms-giving in the Jewish legal tradition see Le Cornu and Shulam, *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 180-83.

¹⁴ “The Torah distinguishes between sins committed deliberately (*be-zadon*) and those committed inadvertently (*bi-shgaga*). While a person who acts presumptuously is put to death (cf Dt. 17:12), the one who sins unintentionally must atone for his sine by bringing a sine offering (cf. Lev. 4:22ff). . . . It is possible that Peter means in this regard that if the people repent and accept the ‘Prince of Life’ they will be judged as having acted inadvertently (see verse 13-15, 19-24). If, however, they continue to harden their hearts, they remain part of the conspiracy which handed him over to be killed by the Romans and will be judged accordingly.” Le Cornu and Shulam, *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 203.

Case-Precedent 6. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin

As an immediate and predictable result of this healing, Peter and John were arrested and taken to stand trial before the Sanhedrin (4:1-22).¹⁵ Legal details, naturally, are plentiful in this account. (a) Because it was evening, and trials could not go into the night, the two apostles were held in prison over night (4:3). (b) The next day, an august array of judges, including Annas the High Priest, commenced to examine the accuseds. (c) The legal question involved here was, in what name was this miracle performed? (4:7) Performing miracles in the name of the Lord God was permissible, but performing such in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth was questionable, to say the least. (d) Peter first presented evidence that the result of his miracle was unquestionably good, which implies a presumption of divine authorization and approval, and (e) perhaps for this very reason the penalty imposed by the court was not death (as would have been required under Deuteronomy 13:1-6), but rather only the issuance of a prohibition against further speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus. In a similar way, a *damnatio memoriae* typically was used to forbid the speaking of the name of a vile criminal who had been executed. The court strictly ordered them to refrain from all public use of this name (4:17). But Peter and John, setting an important legal principle for all Christians to follow, (f) refused to be bound by this order, it being more righteous to obey God than this court (4:19). The court could do nothing at that point except (g) reissue the warning and discharge Peter and John: For one thing, the two apostles had not yet ignored the prohibition, and thus could not be punished, even though they stated their intention to disobey the court's order; but also, the people were wildly in favor of what the apostles clearly had done, the man having been known as a cripple for forty years (4:21). Perhaps that number was symbolic of him, like Israel, having been delivered by God from a life of wilderness. As soon as Peter and John returned to their people, they praised God and (h) swore to stand up against kings and rulers (4:26-27), setting the precedent for bold civil disobedience of Christians, as they planned to continue to heal and to cause signs and wonders to be performed by invoking the name of Jesus. This episode established the legal rule that miracles could be performed by Christians in the name of Jesus, notwithstanding the commandments to have and to worship no other god (Exodus 20:3; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; Isaiah 42:8; 45:5-6), to call upon no ghosts or spirits (Leviticus 21:26-27), and to put only "my name," the name of

¹⁵ On the judicial powers and functions of the Sanhedrin, see Sidney Benjamin Hoenig, *The Great Sanhedrin* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1953); Paul Winter, "The Trial of Jesus and the Competence of the Sanhedrin," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1964): 494-99.

Jehovah, upon the children of Israel (Numbers 6:27).

Case-Precedent 7. Entrusting Property to the Apostles

This case arose out of the deposit of property at the feet of the apostles (4:35). For Christians, this apparently was tantamount to (a) making pledging property and paying a vow to the temple under Numbers 30. (b) It also illustrated how the believers should follow the commandment of Jesus, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21). (c) Barnabas, a Levite, sold his land and gave the money to the apostles (4:36-37). It is interesting that Barnabas was a Levite, born in Cyprus, for under the division of land after the conquest of Canaan, the Levites received no land among the tribes of Israel. From a legal perspective, his land would not have been subject to any rights of redemption under Leviticus 25, and thus this transaction would have posed no problems concerning any rights of first refusal on the part of any next of kin. If this precedent is limited to the facts of this case, Jewish converts to Christianity were not to be required to sell the lands of their inheritance in the land of Israel, only their personal property or their estates in other land. (d) Ananias and Sapphira, however, held back part of the sale of their possession, which was personal property (*ktēma*), not realty (5:1). This precedent established the rule that lying to God will result in divine, not human, punishment (5:4; compare Malachi 3:8, “will a man rob God?”).¹⁶ Thus, robbing God will not be punished by the apostles or any other church authorities, but will be left to God’s judgment.

Case-Precedent 8. Using the Name of Jesus in Healings

This case begins with multitudes being healed and many “signs” (*sēmeia*) being given (5:12-16), which brought about (a) the second arrest of the apostles (this time perhaps all of them) by the High Priest (5:18).¹⁷ Legal elements are obviously present here. Having been placed (b) in the common prison, they were freed by the angel of the Lord, leaving the prison still locked (5:19-24). Nevertheless, (c) they were peacefully arrested again and (d) were accused of

¹⁶ “Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths fall in this scheme under the category of *karet* (and/or death at ‘the hands of heaven). This biblical classification relates wither to deliberate or to unwitting transgression with or without prior warning, suggesting that Luke intends to present the incident as a personal punishment, although naturally one from which the whole community—and those outside it—could learn.” Le Cornu and Shulam, *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:266.

¹⁷ For a discussion of “signs and wonders” in the Jewish legal tradition, see Le Cornu and Shulam, *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 1:99.

speaking in the name of Jesus and filling Jerusalem with their doctrine (5:28). At trial, Peter and the other apostles reaffirmed (e) that they would “obey God rather than men” (5:29), and they took the opportunity (f) to stand as witnesses in court to testify again that the Jews had killed Jesus (5:30), which cut the judges to the heart (5:33). Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, (g) advised the Sanhedrin to let the matter go be (5:34, 39), since all who followed the brigands Theudas and Judas had been killed or scattered. The apostles were (h) beaten and again (i) prohibited from speaking in the name of Jesus (5:40), and as they left they counted it (j) as an honor to be worthy to suffer legal indignities for the sake of the Name (5:42). This episode expanded the circle of those who might expect to be arraigned before courts from Peter and John to all the apostles, and at least in Gamaliel’s opinion held that the court should consider the Christians to be like bandits or robbers, whom the Romans should execute or disperse.¹⁸ Thus, caveat Christians.

Case-Precedent 9. Caring for Widows of the Greeks

In this brief section, the question of (a) providing care for the widows was raised (6:1-7). For Jewish converts, the laws of Exodus 22:22 protecting widows and orphans, as well as the law of Levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10), may have been thought to cover these social needs among that sector of the community. But this left open the question of what was to happen to the Greek widows, and the Hellenists were not slow about complaining that their widows were being neglected (6:1). The solution was to (b) ordain a committee of seven¹⁹ (Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, all Greeks by name) to “serve tables,” so that the apostles could attending to preaching the word of God (6:2). These men were set before the apostles, who (c) prayed and laid their hands upon them, not unrelated to the ordination of Joshua by Moses (Numbers 27:23; Deuteronomy 34:9) and to the discussion of this topic in rabbinic texts,²⁰ Stephen being full of faith and the spirit, just as Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom. (d) The legal validity of these ordinations is corroborated by the fact that a large

¹⁸ John W. Welch, “Legal and Social Perspectives on Robbers in First-Century Judea,” in John F. Hall and John W. Welch, eds., *Masada and the World of the New Testament* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1997), 141-53.

¹⁹ On the appointment of these seven men, see David Daube, “A Reform in Acts and Its Models,” in Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs, eds., *Jews, Greeks and Christians—Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976; reprinted in *Collected Works of David Daube* 2:831-840), 151-63.

²⁰ See David Daube, “The Laying on of Hands,” in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, 224-46; reprinted in *Collected Works of David Daube* 2:599-616. For discussions of dozens of legal points in the book of Acts, see the index of references at the end of this volume of Daube’s collected works.

multitude of priests (of the Temple?) converted and were obedient to the faith.

Case-Precedent 10. The Stoning of Stephen

This lengthy section is quite obviously entwined, from beginning to end, with legal issues arising out of the accusation, arrest, trial, and execution of Stephen (6:8-7:60).²¹ This charitable man, who was first on the list of those set apart to care for the Greek widows, found himself the target of members of a synagogue of diasporadic Jews, who “disputed” (*suzētountes*) against him (6:11). It is unclear what the debate may initially have been about, but, given Stephen’s position, it is possible that it had something to do with the way in which the law or the temple treasury should be used by Jews to care for widows. The followers of Jesus had adopted a new way, but these Hellenistic Jews refused to adopt a way that deviated from the customary laws (*ta ethē*) given by Moses. Witnesses were pushed forward (*hupebalon andras*) (6:11), accusing Stephen of blasphemy against the Temple and the law, alleging that he had said that Jesus would destroy the holy place and change the law of Moses (6:11-15).

In Stephen’s lengthy speech of self-defense, legalistic topics include the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham (7:8), Joseph in Egypt as a ruler in the house of Pharaoh (7:10), Moses acting as a judge and ruler in a neighborly dispute (7:26-27), and Moses seeing God in the burning bush (7:30-34). That same Moses, who said that the Lord would raise up another prophet (7:37), also gave oracles and was disobeyed (7:39). Moses wanted one kind of tabernacle, but the people took up the tabernacle of Moloch (7:43, quoting Amos 5:25-27). Likewise, David found favor with God, but Solomon built an unacceptable temple (7:47-48).

Having established the repeated practice of the Jews to pervert the legally intended and divinely authorized use of the Tabernacle as a place of witness, Stephen decried his contemporaries as being no better than their idolatrous and materialistic fathers. In legally accusatory language, Stephen charged them with the crimes of betraying and murdering the Righteous One (7:52) and, having received the law (*ton nomon*) from angels, they have not kept or guarded it (*ephulasate*, 7:53). These words hit a raw spot with the members of the Sanhedrin and they gnashed their teeth (7:54), and when Stephen then claimed to see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God, they refused to hear any more. They shouted in one great

²¹ François Bovon, “The Dossier on Stephen, the First Martyr,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 96 no. 3 (2003): 279–315; Alan Watson, *The Trial of Stephen, the First Christian Martyr* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

voice, stopped their ears, and acting quickly with single resolve against him (*hōrmēsan homothumadon ep' auton*) they expelled (*ekbalontes*) him from the holy city and stoned him. Apparently the son of Man was “standing” to pronounce a verdict of judgment the Jews, which in their mind was unthinkable and unallowable. From a Christian perspective, this case established the precedent that it was legal, if not expected, in the eyes of God for all Christians, and not just the apostles, to speak out in opposition to legal errors and unrighteousness (Leviticus 5:1), even at the highest levels of government and religious leadership.

Case-Precedent 11. Honoring the Dead, Even at Risk of Legal Arrest

Saul, who as a young man had the coats of those stoning Stephen thrown at his feet (7:58), was apparently not legally old enough or had not been a personal witness of Stephen’s blasphemy and therefore was not a participant in the stoning. He was, however, well connected and known to enough members of the Sanhedrin (especially to Gamaliel) that he was commissioned as a young officer to legally arrest or impede the growth of the church (8:1-3). This was a time of great persecution of the church in Jerusalem. Stephen was given a burial by certain cautious, devout men (*andres eulabeis*, 8:2), implying that this was a secret, extralegal burial (compare Jeremiah 26:23, where Urijah’s body was disreputably thrown into a common grave). At the same time, Saul entered into private homes, handing over men and women to prison (8:3). From a Christian perspective, these developments set the precedent that discrete, righteous (*eulabeis*) men (not women) were now obligated to care for honoring their dead (perhaps indicating that this duty superseded any concerns about corpse impurity). It also directly followed that all Christians were subject to arrest and imprisonment for supporting their common cause.

Case-Precedent 12. Dealings in Samaria

While the apostles remained in Jerusalem (8:1), Philip (now the first on the list of other officers with Stephen gone) began preaching in Samaria (8:4-25). He cast out evil spirits and cured crippled people (8:7). If there had been any legal question about followers of Jesus associating with Samaritans, this episode completely resolved the Samaritan question. A case of sorcery was overcome, and Simon Magus and many others were converted and baptized (8:9-13), with Peter and John arriving to give them the gift of the Holy Ghost. When Simon tried to

purchase the apostle's power for money, he was rebuked, repented, and was blessed (8:18-25). This episode is reminiscent of Jewish laws against purchasing torah scrolls. Holy things are not to be lawfully bought or sold for money.

Case-Precedent 13. Baptizing a Eunuch

Continuing on, Philip encountered, taught, and baptize a eunuch, a high official of the queen of Ethiopia (8:26-40). This straightforward story establishes several legal precedents, for example, about how long proselytes must study and what they must know in order to be legal acceptable as candidates for baptism. One may assume that when the eunuch asks “does anything stand in the way of my being baptized? (*ti kōluei me baptisthēnai*),” he was asking if there was any legal requirement preventing him as a novice but also as a eunuch from being receiving Christian baptism. The answer in this precedent setting case was no. In contrast, under Jewish law, eunuchs were not allowed as male members of the assembly of Yahweh (Deuteronomy 23:2-9), although Isaiah's universalist sympathies saw God's love for eunuchs as an indication of his infinite love (Isaiah 56:3-5). Interestingly this eunuch had with him and was reading an Isaiah scroll.

Case-Precedent 14. God Intervened to Prevent the Arrest of Christians

Legal themes proliferate as Paul's efforts to arrest Christians intensified. He was empowered with open letters of authority (9:2) from the chief priests to arrest and bind all men and women who called upon the name of Jesus (9:14), even though this blanket arrest warrant would seem to violate the normal Jewish rules of individual warning, accusation, and legal due process. Perhaps even for that reason, having exceeded the just rules of law, these legal steps against Christians were foiled. With legal significance and consequences,²² Jesus intervened to stop and blind Paul on the road to Damascus, Ananias was prepared to receive Paul as a talionically chosen vessel or instrument (*skeuos eklogēs*) to bear the very name that he was trying to legally impede (9:15). Paul's eyes were healed, he was baptized, and taught cogently (*sumbibazōn*), weaving together logical inferences that Jesus was the Messiah. The Jews of Damascus, however, reached a decision (*sunebouleusanto*) to apprehend (*anelein*, not

²² Heikki Räisänen, “Paul's Conversion and the Development of His View of the Law,” *New Testament Studies* 33 (July 1987): 404–19.

necessarily to kill) Paul (9:23), evidently to punish him legally for disloyalty and blasphemy, but he managed to escape to Jerusalem, to Caesarea, and home to Tarsus (9:26-31).

Case-Precedent 15. Food Laws and Fellowship

In the next section, Peter healed and converted Aeneas (a Roman?) at Lydda (9:34), raised Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead (9:41), issued a new food law (replacing Leviticus 11:2-47),²³ and authorized fellowship with the uncircumcised. The establishment of the new food law is probably the best known of these actions, but all of them involve matters that would have been of legal concern at least for Pharisees and Essenes (10:1-11:18). Peter's actions also opened the way for converting Romans, raising the dead without concerns about corpse contamination or charges of necromancy (Leviticus 20:27), and eating with uncircumcised Gentiles without contracting impurity.

Case-Precedent 16. The Name of Christians

In Acts 11:22-26, Barnabas was sent by the church in Jerusalem to Antioch. After working there for a time, he went to Tarsus to bring Paul back to Antioch, where they teach many people for a year's time. Here, in the capital of the Roman province of Syria, the disciples were first "called" (*chrēmatisai*) Christians (11:26). With this action being taken at the provincial capital, it would seem that this naming was somehow legal in nature, perhaps obtaining legal recognition of a Christian group as an association or *collegia*, since the words *chrēmatisō* and *chrēmatismos* are often used in special legal senses, such as to take or bear an official name, a decree or ordinance made by a sovereign or public authority, a decision in a case or petition, a public document, record, or title-deed (referring to slaves),²⁴ or to have the name of God put upon oneself (Num. 6:27).

Case-Precedent 17. True Prophets

The next incident briefly exemplified a case of true prophecy regarding a famine in the days of Claudius, which came to pass (11:28). Under the law of false prophecy in Deuteronomy

²³ Peter Zaas, "The (Double) Vision of the Divine Picnic (Acts 10:1–11:18): The History of New Testament Kashrut III," in E.A. Goldman, ed., *Jewish Law Association Studies 9: The London Conference Volume* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 289-301; Peter S. Zass, "Paul and the Halakhah: Dietary Laws for Gentiles in 1 Corinthians 8-10," in *Jewish Law Association Studies 7, The Paris Conference Volume* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 233-45.

²⁴ Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 2005.

18:15-22, this prophet should be followed as a true prophet.

Case-Precedent 18. Payment of Money to the Church in Jerusalem

Sending relief from Antioch to Jerusalem (11:29) established the rule that Christians should continue to pay money to Jerusalem, perhaps in lieu of the previously required temple tax.

Case-Precedent 19. The Death of Herod Antipas

In this case, Herod Antipas killed James, the brother of John (12:1), and imprisoned Peter at Passover (12:2-4). But Peter was delivered by an angel, the iron gate of the prison opening on their own accord. For Christians, this must have seemed as auspicious as the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and their passage through the opened sea. As the soldiers of Pharaoh were killed, the guards of Herod Antipas were executed (12:19). For his wickedness, Herod Antipas was smitten; arrayed in royal apparel and seated on his throne he died as a destroying angel (or bird omen) flew over (12:20-23). Not only were the principle elements of Passover instantiated here for the benefit of Christians, the legal principle of talionic justice was carried out as Herod Antipas was killed for his having killed James and the guards.

Case-Precedent 20. Commissioning Barnabas and Paul

In Antioch there were five prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Paul. Setting the precedent for how men would be commissioned as traveling preachers, these five fasted and were inspired by the Holy Ghost to “separate” Barnabas and Paul for the work (13:2-3). They fasted further, prayed, and laid their hands on them, and sent them out (13:4). From this point forward in the book of Acts, Paul found himself in court every place he went, but in every case he was vindicated or managed to extricate himself from legal problems.

Case-Precedent 21. The Case of Bar-Jesus

On Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas were summoned in a case before Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul, concerning a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus (13:4-12). Paul blinded him, proving him to be a false prophet (13:6) and leading the proconsul to believe and to admire the doctrines of Jesus. Bar-Jesus was led away, and once again the power of Christian prophets prevailed over

that of a magician (*magos*).²⁵

Case-Precedent 22. Expulsion from Antioch

In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul fell into legal conflict with Jewish leaders (13:13-52) over his interpretation of the law in the synagogue (13:15).²⁶ Asserting that Jesus was executed even though no cause of death was found against him (13:28), and arguing that all believers are justified by Jesus from all things, which the law of Moses cannot do (13:39), Paul convinced many people, which drew the envy of the leaders of the synagogue, who expelled Paul and Barnabas from city (13:50). As they left, they shook off the dust of their feet against them (13:51).

Case-Precedent 23. Evading Assault in Iconium

In Iconium (14:1-7), the people were divided over the miracles that Paul performed. The Jews aroused Gentiles to rush against Paul and Barnabas, but multitude was divided, and sensing the threat of assault, Paul and Barnabas escaped.

Case-Precedent 24. Surviving Stoning in Lystra

In Lystra (14:8-20), the locals thought that Zeus and Hermes had come down in the forms of Paul and Barnabas (14:12). The Jews from Antioch and Iconium hold sway over the townspeople, and they stoned Paul (14:19) and dragged him out of the city as if dead, but he revived. This episode served apologetic functions in the book of Acts.²⁷

Case-Precedent 25. The Legal Action of the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem

Acts 15:1-35 gives a report on the Council at Jerusalem, which dealt mainly with pressing legal questions that needed resolution, including the stance of Christians with regard to the law of circumcision (15:1-19), and in Acts 15:20, four of the Noachide laws were deemed

²⁵ On false prophets in general, see Deuteronomy 18:20. On the illegality of magical practices under both Jewish and Roman law, see John W. Welch, "Miracles, Maleficium, and Maiestas in the Trial of Jesus," in James H. Charlesworth ed., *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 349-83.

²⁶ See generally, G. Gager, "Jews, Gentiles, and Synagogues in the Book of Acts," in George W.E. Nickelsburg, and George W. MacRae, eds., *Christians among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on His 65th Birthday* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 91-99.

²⁷ Dean P. Béchar, "Paul among the Rustics: The Lystran Episode (Acts 14:8-20) and Lucan Apologetic," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2001): 84-101.

applicable to Gentile converts: abstaining from pollution by contact with idols, fornication, strangled meats, and blood.²⁸

Case-Precedent 26. Deliverance from Prison in Philippi

Following a few verses about travels and the conversion of Timothy,²⁹ Paul arrived in Philippi (16:11-40), where he and Silas were accused of interfering with a soothsayer's business (offering the services of a girl with an illicit spirit of divination, 16:16, 19), troubling the city, and teaching customs unlawful for Romans to receive (16:21). They were taken to the rulers of Forum (16:20), and there the magistrates tore their clothes and beat Paul and Silas without a proper conviction. They were held overnight in prison, but did not flee when an earthquake hit. In the morning, they were released from prison and asked to leave town when Paul disclosed his status as a Roman citizen (16:37).

Case-Precedent 27. Avoiding Legal Problems in Thessalonica

In Thessalonica (17:1-9), Paul went to the synagogue and reasoned there with them out of the scriptures (17:2). Many Greeks believed but few Jews, who aroused the rabble and put the city into an uproar, but Paul managed to escape. His host Jason, however, was arraigned before the city fathers for turning the world upside down, for violating decrees of Caesar by saying that Jesus was king (17:7). Jason was able to settle the case with the city fathers who took a security offering and released Paul's friends from custody. The Jews from Thessalonica pursued Paul to the next city, Berea, and stirred up the same questions (17:10-15).

Case-Precedent 28. Testifying before the Areopagus in Athens

In Athens (17:16-34), Paul disputed in the synagogue and in the city center, because of which philosophers took him to the High Court, the Areopagus. Paul argued that there was one blood in all nations (17:26) and that the resurrected Jesus would be the judge of all (17:31). After listening to Paul, the court recessed to hear more about the matter at a later time, and Paul took the opportunity to leave Athens voluntarily.

²⁸ Markus Bockmuehl, "The Noachide Commandments and New Testament Ethics," *Revue Biblique* 102 (1995): 72–101; Hubertus Waltherus Maria Van de Sandt, "An Explanation of Acts 15:6–21 in the Light of Deuteronomy 4:29–35 (LXX)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 46 (1992): 73–97.

²⁹ Shayne J.D. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986): 251–68.

Case-Precedent 29. Legal Exoneration in Corinth

In Corinth (18:1-17), the ruler of the synagogue converted to Christianity, and other Jews accused Paul of apostasy and leading people into apostasy (18:13). They took him before Gallio, the proconsul of the province of Achaia, who declined to take jurisdiction over the case on the ground that it presented a question of Jewish law only (18:15). The complaining ruler of the synagogue, Sosthenes, was beaten publicly for having troubled the Roman government with the case.

Case-Precedent 30. Paul Keeps a Vow

In order to fulfill a vow³⁰ (18:18), Paul went to Ephesus and on to Caesarea and Jerusalem to keep a Jewish festival (18:21),³¹ after which he travels to Antioch.

Case-Precedent 31. Correcting Baptismal Practices

Back in Ephesus, Paul corrects Apollos who preached only the baptism of John (18:24-19:12). He taught in the synagogue and daily in the school of Tryannus, performing miracles.

Case-Precedent 32. Exposing Illegal Magical Activities

Also in Ephesus, Paul opposed the illegal use of magic by the sons of Sceva (19:11-32). These Jewish exorcists used the name of Jesus, and the exorcised spirit recognized Paul, which caused both Jews and Greeks to become afraid and confess their illegal activities. Many magical books were burned in public (19:19), the practice of magic being prohibited under Roman law.

Case-Precedent 33. Dodging Litigation in Ephesus

On another occasion in Ephesus, Paul's preaching threatened the silversmiths' business (19:21-40). The city clerk and a large assembly heard a public complaint raised by the silversmiths and other devotees of Artemis. Two of Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus,

³⁰ See Numbers 30; Jacob Neusner, "Vow-Taking, the Nazirites, and the Law: Does James' Advice to Paul Accord with Halakhah?" in Bruce David Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *James the Just and Christian Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 59-82.

³¹ One may well suspect that the unnamed festival would have been the Feast of Tabernacles. Le Cornu and Shulam, *Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Acts*, 2:1020. Acts 27:9 refers to the connected holy day, the Day of Atonement, as "the fast." Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days* (New York: Ktav, 1978), 28.

were arrested (19:29). Alexander, a Jew, was dragged in front of Ephesians in theater (19:33), but the city officer intervened and required Demetrius, the complaining silversmith, to follow proper procedure: he should bring a complaint against Christians, “the law is open” (19:38). He acquitted Paul and the believers as being “neither robbers nor blasphemers” (19:37) and, fearing that the baseless prosecution in the theater was a dangerous precedent for Ephesus’s reputation (19:40), he disbursed the large assembly that had gathered in the theater.

Case-Precedent 34. Observance of Passover and the First Day

Paul traveled to Philippi to keep Passover there (20:6). He also kept the first day of the week in Philippi (20:7). Both points set precedents regarding the observance of holy days for early Christians.

Case-Precedent 35. Farewell Instructions in Miletus to Church Elders

Anticipating another Jewish-Christian holy day, Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost (20:16). As he traveled down the coast of Asia, he stopped in Miletus, where he gave what would become his last charge to the elders of Ephesus (20:17-38). He reiterated several legal obligations: to remain pure from the blood of all men (20:26); to be overseers (20:28) and to warn everyone (20:31), discharging the legal duty to warn (Ezek. 3:19; 33:7-9); to obtain an inheritance as sons of God (20:32); and not to covet (20:33). Suitably, his final word comes from the last of the Ten Commandments.

Case-Precedent 36. Arrest at the Temple in Jerusalem

Having returned to Jerusalem, Paul entered the temple with some of his uncircumcised Gentile converts. The remainder of the book of Acts deals with the prosecution of this case against Paul.³² Jews from the Roman province of Asia readily recognized Paul from his activities

³² See throughout, Harry W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989); Dean P. Béchar, “The Disputed Case against Paul: A Redaction-Critical Analysis of Acts 21:27–22:29,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 (2003): 232–50; William R. Long, “The Paulusbild in the Trial of Paul in Acts,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 22 (1983): 87–105; J. Paul Sampley, “‘Before God, I Do Not Lie’ (Galatians 1:20): Paul’s Self-Defense in the Light of Roman Legal Praxis,” *New Testament Studies* 23 (1977): 477–82; Fred Veltman, “The Defense Speeches of Paul in Acts,” in Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* (Danville, Va.: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), 243–56; Bruce W. Winter, “Official Proceedings and Forensic Speeches in Acts 24–26,” in Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke, eds., *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting Vol 1: The Book of Acts in Its Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 305–36.

in Ephesus and throughout Asia, and they accused him of desecrating the people, the law, and the temple. Jerusalemite men, being zealous of the law (21:20), seized Paul and attempted to kill him, but the Roman captain, Claudius Lysias, intervened, and took Paul into custody in chains. Claudius Lysias allowed Paul to speak to the crowd from the steps of the Temple (21:40). Paul declared that he had been “brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day” (22:3), but the crowd only accused him further. A military tribunal then examined Paul by scourging him in the Antonia Fortress. At that point Paul invoked his Roman citizenship (22:25), and all Roman charges against Paul were dropped.

Case-Precedent 37. Success before the Sanhedrin and Protection from Opponents

Paul was then taken before the Sanhedrin to answer the Jewish charges (22:30-23:11). The High Priest commanded that Paul be hit, contrary to the law (23:2), for speaking evil of the ruler of the people” (23:5; Exodus 22:28). The Sanhedrin and chief priests, however, became divided over their theological differences, and the Roman captain took Paul back to the fortress. The Pharisees had not wanted to fight against God in case Paul *had* actually seen a spirit or angel (23:9), and the Lord assured Paul that, just as he had testified in Jerusalem, he would bear witness also in Rome (23:11). A curse and an oath, however, was sworn to kill Paul (23:12), and a conspiracy was launched between the chief priests and elders to assassinate Paul (23:15), but the chief captain’s plan and letter saved Paul (23:22-30).

Case-Precedent 38. Proceedings before Felix

With his case removed to Caesarea, Felix, the governor of the Roman province of Judea, held a preliminary hearing regarding Paul’s case, based on a report filed by Claudius Lysias (23:23-24:23). Felix took jurisdiction over the case, but postponed trial until the accusers could be summoned and could appear to make actual accusations. Meanwhile, Paul was placed in Herod’s Praetorium. Eventually, Tertullus and Ananias appeared before Felix to charge Paul of disruption, sedition, and profaning the temple (24:5). Felix suspended the case for lack of proof (24:13), awaiting Claudius Lysias’s personal testimony. Paul claimed that his heresy consisted only of belief in God, the law, and the prophets (24:14). For two years Felix held Paul in house

arrest,³³ hoping for a bribe. But the Jews of Asia who initially accused him are no longer in the area, or at least never appear in court to testify (24:19).

Case-Precedent 39. Proceedings before Festus and Agrippa

Eventually, Jews from Jerusalem accused Paul of offending Jewish law and Caesar once Festus had arrived as governor of Judea, but the charges could not be substantiated (25:7). Paul refused to be tried in Jerusalem and appealed to Caesar in Rome (25:10-12). His appeal was accepted, but Festus was unsure what charges he should report when he sent Paul to Rome. King Agrippa,³⁴ the son of Herod Agrippa I, volunteered to help Festus with the case, and together they found Paul innocent of all charges (25:13-26:32), especially because Roman law required an accuser to make his case face to face (25:16). Moreover, the Jews had only raised certain questions against Paul of their own superstitions and about Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive (25:19). Nevertheless, even though the cause of action had failed, Agrippa decided that Paul's appeal to Caesar must stand and could not be revoked (26:32), and Paul and his case were thus transferred to Rome, fulfilling Paul's desire to preach the gospel in Rome and, through the Emperor himself, to the entire world. He should have been sent with a bill of particulars about the crimes laid against him (25:27), but he had done nothing in public (26:26) that that was worthy of death or imprisonment (26:31).

Case-Precedent 40. Transfer to Rome for Appeal to Caesar

The final episode in the book of Acts recounts Paul's voyage to Putoli and the shipwreck along the way. An angel told Paul that none will die because Paul must be brought to Caesar (27:24), and when a venomous snake bit Paul but did not hurt him (see also Mark 16:18), the men with him thought that this was god, not a murderer (28:4-6). Paul remained in house arrest in Rome for two years (28:16), where he was able to address the Chief of the Jews in Rome (28:17) and other Jews in Rome (28:22). As far as the record indicates, Paul's hearing before the Emperor never happened.

³³ Matthew L. Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21–28* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994).

³⁴ David R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I: The Last King of Judaea* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990).

Conclusions

There is no section of Acts that does not have legal implications, sustaining the hypothesis that the title of this book should be understood as “The Legal Affairs, Actions, Precedents, and Cases of the Apostles.”

The forty cases or episodes in the book of Acts set legal precedents regarding (a) the ecclesiastical authority and duties of apostles and officers, (b) arguments explaining the death of Jesus and in defense of Christian, (c) rules regarding Christian membership, (d) the observance of Jewish festivals and practices, (e) modification or adaptation of Jewish laws, (f) issues regarding magic, prophecy, divination, and exorcism, (g) the identification of plaintiffs and accusers, mainly Jews, (h) the judicial bodies, whether Jewish, Greek, or Roman, that could not or would not impeded the work and witnessing of the apostles, and (i) the always favorable legal holdings and outcomes of the legal cases involving the apostles (see Appendix 3).

The book of Acts ends giving the final impression that no legal action brought against Peter, John, Paul or the apostles ever succeeded. Only Stephen was executed or seriously punished in any way, as far as we are told, but he was not an apostle. In this way, the book of Acts fulfills the prophecy of Jesus that the apostles would be brought before synagogues, rulers, authorities, kings and governors for Jesus Christ’s name’s sake, and would be delivered up to prisons; but that this would be a time to bear testimony, and thus they should not worry about what they should answer the legal charges brought against them, for the Holy Spirit will reveal in that very hour what they should, which no adversary will be able to withstand or contradict (Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-15).

With Peter’s seven speeches in the book of Acts (2:14-40; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 11:5-17; 15:7-29), together with Paul’s seven speeches (13:16-47; 17:22-31; 19:2-4; 20:18-35; 22:3-21; 26:2-29; 28:17-28) and Stephen’s oration (7:2-53), all of which were delivered in legal contexts, ample testimony had been born to satisfy the law that in the mouth of two or three witness every word shall be established (Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1).

Appendix 1 Judicial Terminology in Acts

This list is based on Allison A. Trites, "The Importance of Legal Scenes and Language in the Book of Acts," *Novum Testamentum* 16 (1974): 278-84.

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| <i>kritēs</i> | trial, judgment | 13:27 |
| <i>katēgoroi</i> | accusers, plaintiffs | 22:30; 23:30, 35; 24:2, 8, 13, 19, 25:14-19; etc. |
| <i>sunedrion</i> | judicial council | 4:15; 5:21, 27, 34, 41; 6:12, 15; 22:30, etc. |
| <i>gerousia</i> | elders for reconsideration | 5:21; Judith 4:8 |
| <i>dikastēs</i> | arbitrators of a dispute | 7:27, 35 |
| <i>politarchai</i> | magistrates | 17:6 |
| <i>archontas</i> | rulers | 16:19-21 |
| <i>sumboulion</i> | advisors in a court | 25:12 |
| <i>bēma</i> | judgment seat or bench | 25:6, 10, 17 |
| <i>akroatērion</i> | procurator's audience hall | 25:23 |
| <i>rētōr</i> | speaker in court | 24:1 |
| <i>martus</i> | witness | 6:13; 7:58 |
| <i>hupebalon</i> | instigate witnesses | 6:11 |
| <i>diagnōskein</i> | court to be open in session | 23:15; 24:22 |
| <i>anetheto</i> | lay a case before a judge | 25:14 |
| <i>proskalein</i> | summon | 5:40 |
| <i>en tōi mesōi</i> | placing a defendant on trial | 4:7 |
| <i>achthēnai</i> | bring in | 25:17 |
| <i>ēgagon epi</i> | bring defendant to court | 18:12 |
| <i>proagein epi</i> | bring defendant to court | 12:6; 25:26 |
| <i>metapemspato</i> | re-summon | 24:24 |
| <i>metakalein</i> | re-call | 24:25 |
| <i>aitian pherein</i> | bring an accusation | 25:18 |
| <i>synepethento</i> | join in the charge | 24:9 |
| <i>aitiōmata</i> | charges | 25:7 |
| <i>adikēma</i> | wrong doing | 24:20 |
| <i>epunthanonto</i> | launch a judicial inquiry | 4:7 |
| <i>diakouein</i> | give someone a hearing | 23:35 |
| <i>emphanizein</i> | to inform against | 24:1; 25:2, 15 |
| <i>phaskontes</i> | each side alleges its case | 24:9; 25:19 |
| <i>zētēmata</i> | points of dispute | 23:29; 24:3; 25:19-20 |
| <i>suzētountes</i> | the opponents dispute | 6:9 |
| <i>diekrinonto</i> | they contend | 11:2 |
| <i>enkalein</i> | prosecute vigorously | 23:28-29; 26:2, 7 |
| <i>katepestēsan</i> | rise up against | 18:12 |
| <i>anakrISIS</i> | direct examination | 25:26 |
| <i>anetazein</i> | examine by scourging | 22:24-29 |

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>mēnutheisēs</i> | formal report of information | 23:30 |
| <i>parastēnai</i> | prove | 24:13 |
| <i>apodeixai</i> | demonstrate | 25:7 |
| <i>apologeisthai</i> | offer a defense | 24:10; 25:8; 26:1 |
| <i>kateseisen</i> | make gestures | 21:40 |
| <i>kathizein</i> | sitting in judgment | 25:6, 17; John 19:13 |
| <i>parastēnai</i> | stand before a judge | 27:24 |
| | contending parties stand | 25:7, 10, 18; Dt 19:17; Psalms 1:5, etc. |
| <i>enetuchon</i> | petition for judgment | 25:24 |
| <i>kakologountes</i> | call for execution | 19:9 |
| <i>katapherein</i> | to cast a vote against | 26:10 |
| <i>diagnōsis</i> | decision in an imperial court | 25:21 |
| <i>enklēma</i> | finding no cause of action | 23:14, 15, 22 |
| <i>akatakritous</i> | stand uncondemned | 26:37 |
| <i>katadikē</i> | sentence of condemnation | 25:15 |
| <i>apēlasen</i> | dismiss | |
| <i>epikaleisthai</i> | appeal to Caesar | 26:32 |
| <i>anapempō</i> | refer to a higher tribunal | 25:21 |
| <i>anebaletō</i> | adjourn | 24:22 |

Appendix 2

The Book of Acts as an Apologia

This Appendix, prepared by John B. Fowles, is a summary of Alexandru Neagoe's research survey of works treating Luke-Acts as an apologia of one kind or another. It is condensed and the outline of the works is slightly reorganized from that found in *The Trial of the Gospel*, 4-24.

1. *As an Apologia for Paul*: **M. Schneckenburger**, *Über den Zweck der Apostelgeschichte* (Bern, 1841) (arguing as the first thorough examination of Luke's purpose that Acts was addressed to Jewish Christians as a defense of Paul against attacks of Judaizers); **E. Trocmé**, *Le 'Livre des Actes' et l'histoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957) (defining the Book of Acts as "une apologie intrachrétienne," a defense of the churches influenced by Paul in Asia Minor against the Judaizing churches); **J. Jervell**, "Paul: The Teacher of Israel: The Apologetic Speeches of Paul in Acts," in J. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972) (positing that the Book of Acts is a defense of Paul's Jewish orthodoxy); **R.L. Brawley**, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) (Petrine Christianity v. Pauline Christianity); **A.J. Mattill**, "The Purpose of Acts: Scheckenburger Reconsidered," in W.W. Gasque and R.P. Martin (eds.), *Apostolic History of the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970) (arguing that Luke is attempting to counter the Jewish Christians' indifference to Paul and get their support for him in his trial in Rome).

a. *The Book of Acts as Material for Paul's Trial Before Nero*: **M.V. Aberle**, "Exegetische Studien. Über den Zweck der Apostelgeschichte," *TQ* 37 (1855), 173-236; G.S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry: A Reconstruction (With Special Reference to the Ephesian Origin of the Imprisonment Epistles)* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 96-100; **D. Plooiij**, "The Work of St Luke," *Exp* 8:8 (1914), 511-23; and "Again: The Work of St Luke," *Exp* 8:13 (1917), 108-24.

b. *The Book of Acts as a Call for Solidarity among Believers*: **J.I. Still**, *St Paul on Trial* (London: SCM Press, 1923); **V.E. Vine**, "The Purpose and Date of Acts," *ExpT* 96 (1984), 45-48 (Luke attempting reconciliation between Judaizers and Paul so that the Judaizers "will not disown so faithful a witness of Christ" (48)).

2. *As a Political Apologia for the Church*: **C.A. Heumann**, "Dissertatio de Theophilo cui Lucas Historiam Sacram Inscriptit," *Bibliotheca historico-philologico-theologica*, classis IV (Bremen, 1720), pp. 483-505 (arguing that Luke wrote to the Roman magistrate Theophilus to defend against false accusations against Christianity); **E. Zeller**, *The Contents and Origin of the Acts of the Apostles Critically Investigated by Dr. Edward Zeller* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876 (German original, 1854) (suggesting that Luke intended to defend Christianity against Pagan charges and to show Christians how they might defend themselves); **J. Weiss**, *Über die Absicht und den literarischen Charakter der Apostelgeschichte* (Marburg and Göttingen, 1897) (arguing that Luke addressed the apologia to Pagans to defend Christians against Jewish accusations).

a. *A Case for Christianity's Religio Licita Status*: **F.J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake (eds.)**, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, part 1, vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1922), 177-87; **H.J. Cadbury**, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (London: SPCK, 1968), esp. 299-316; **B.S. Easton**, *The Purpose of Acts* (London, 1936), reprinted as *Early Christianity: The Purpose of Acts and Other Papers*, ed. F.C. Grant, London: SPCK, 1955), 33-57; **F.F. Bruce**, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Apollos, 3d Ed., 1990), 23; **G.B. Caird**, *The Gospel of St Luke* (London: A. & C. Black, 1968), 13-15; F.V. Filson, *Three Crucial Decades* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1963), 17-18; **J.A. Fitzmeyer**, *The Gospel According to Luke*, vol. I (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 10; **E. Haenchen**, *The*

Acts of the Apostles (Oxford, Blackwell, 1971), 102, 630-31, 691-94 (proposing a view of a religion quasi licita rather than the strict category of a religion licita at the time of the writing of Luke-Acts). **Allison Trites**, “The Importance of Legal Scenes and Language in the Book of Acts,” *Novum Testamentum* 16 (1974): 284, concludes that, by use of the forensic scenes in Acts, Luke “tries to show that Christianity cannot be construed as a *religio illicita*, for the Christian confession . . . is opposed neither to Jewish or Roman law.”

b. A Case for Christianity’s Political Harmlessness: H. Conzelmann, The Theology of St Luke (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 137-49 (arguing that Luke wrote Acts as an apologetic definition of Christianity with two independent arguments: one going to Judaism and the other to the Roman Empire); and “Geschichte, Geschichtsbild und Geschichtsdarstellung bei Lukas,” *TLZ* 85 (1960); **H. Flender, St Luke, Theologian of Redemptive History (London: SPCK, 1967), 56-62 (following Conzelmann and bringing in elements of the Gospel of Luke).**

3. As an Apologia for the Emperor: P.W. Walaskay, ‘And so we came to Rome’: The Political Perspective of St Luke (Cambridge: CUP, 1983) (“Far from supporting the view that Luke was defending the church to a Roman magistrate, the evidence points us in the other direction. Throughout his writings Luke has carefully, consistently, and consciously presented an *apologia pro imperio* to his church” (64).).

4. As an Apologia for the Gospel: L. Alexander, “The Acts of the Apostles as an Apologetic Text,” in M. Edwards, M. Goodman, and S. Price (eds.), *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), 15-43 (arguing that Luke uses “apologetic scenarios” as the backbone of Acts to defend the Christian world-view as a whole rather than to defend against specific charges).

a. Luke-Acts as a Defense against Gnosticism: C.H. Talbert, Luke and the Gnostics: An Examination of the Lucan Perspective (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966) (“Luke-Acts was written for the express purpose of serving as a defense against Gnosticism” (15).).

b. Luke-Acts as the First Fully Fledged Christian Apologia: F.F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary (Leicester: Apollos, 3d Ed., 1990) (identifying Luke as the first Christian apologist and a prototype of the three main strains of second-century Christian apologetics: defending against Pagan religion, against Judaism, and against political accusations); and more generally by Bruce, *The Apostolic Defence of the Gospel: Christian Apologetics in the New Testament* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1959). **H.C. Kee, Good News to the Ends of the Earth (London: SCM Press, 1990) (using similar examples as Bruce to illuminate these three apologetic strains).**

c. Luke-Acts as the Confirmation of the Gospel: W.C. van Unnik, “The ‘Book of Acts’: The Confirmation of the Gospel,” NovT 4 (1960), 26-59 (suggesting that Acts is an apologetic reassurance of the Christian message from the Gospel of Luke through Old Testament prophets, eye-witnesses, and God himself that “Jesus’ activity is saving” (49).); **E. Franklin, Christ the Lord: A Study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke-Acts (London: SPCK, 1965) (maintaining vis-à-vis Conzelmann and Haenchen that “Luke stood . . . within the eschatological stream of the early Christian expectations, and that salvation history in his two volumes, though present, is used in the service of his eschatology rather than as a replacement of it” (6).); **D.P. Fuller, Easter Faith and History (London: Tyndale Press, 1968) (suggesting that Luke’s combination Christian faith and historical knowledge served as a verification of the Christian faith for those who did not witness Christ’s resurrection); **I.H. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary 3 (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 35-36; *Luke—Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1988, Third Edition), 158-59; *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentary* (Leicester:******

Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 17-22; *The Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 31-46; “Luke and his ‘Gospel’,” in P. Stuhlmacher (ed.), *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983), 289-308 (generally advocating Luke’s concern with confirming the Christian message in Luke-Acts).

d. Luke-Acts as an Exponent of a Literary Apologetic Tradition: J.C. O’Neill, *The Theology of Acts in Its Historical Setting* (London: SPCK, 1970) (“Luke-Acts was primarily an attempt to persuade an educated reading public to become Christians; it was an ‘apology’ in outward form but, like all true apologies, it had the burning inner purpose of bringing men to the faith” (176).); **G.E. Sterling**, *Historiography and Self-Determination: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992) (arguing that Luke-Acts is a self-definition of Christianity in relation to the world in the form of an apologetic historiography, which is “the story of a subgroup of people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows the group’s own traditions but Hellenizes them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world” (17).).

e. Luke-Acts as Apologia by Virtue of its Use of “The Plan of God” Motif: J.T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993) (arguing that Luke is writing “a kind of cultural ‘translation’” (190), with three goals: (1) to confirm the Christian faith to believers, (2) to provide the means by which to present the Gospel in a culturally translated form appropriate for the Hellenistic world, and (3) to help Christians defend their beliefs against objections).

f. Luke-Acts as a Christian Apologia Related to Judaism: J. Dupont, “Apologetic Use of the Old Testament in the Speeches of Acts,” in J. Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 129-59 (emphasizing Luke’s use of the Jewish scriptures as a legitimating factor for Christianity in relation to Judaism); **C.A. Evans**, “Prophecy and Polemic: Jews in Luke’s Scriptural Apologetic,” in C.A. Evans and J.A. Sanders (eds.), *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 171-211; **L.T. Johnson**, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 3-10; “Luke-Acts,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, eds. D.N. Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:405-08; *The Writings of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1986) (showing generally that Luke highlights God’s dealing with the Jews in order to confirm the validity of his relationship with the Christians in light of the Jewish rejection of the Gospel and the Gentile acceptance of it); **R.J. Karris**, “Missionary Communities: A New Paradigm for the Study of Luke-Acts,” *CBQ* 41 (1979), 80-97; *What Are They Saying About Luke and Acts: A Theology of the Faithful God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); **M.L. Strauss**, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) (suggesting that Luke’s apologetic purpose is to reassure Christians that they are God’s people and heirs to His promises to Israel).

Appendix 3

Legal Cases, Precedents, and Holdings in the Book of Acts

- A. Ecclesiastical Authority and Duties of Apostles and Officers
 - Authorization and installation of apostles and other officers (1, 2, 9, 20)
 - Laying on of hands (9)
 - Duty to testify as multiple witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (1, 2, 5, 28, 37, 39, 40)
 - Duty to speak out against errors and unrighteousness (10)
 - Duty to warn (35)
 - Adopting the legal name of Christians (16)

- B. Arguments Explaining the Death of Jesus
 - Argument that the death of Jesus was by ignorance and for no legal cause (3, 5, 8, 10, 22)
 - The use of the scriptures to legally justify Jesus and Christianity (3, 10, 13, 14, 22, 27, 31, 40)

- C. Baptism and Conduct of Church Members
 - Requirements of proselytes for baptism (4)
 - God's spirit is on all flesh (3, 28)
 - Approval of associating with and converting Samaritans (12)
 - Approval of table fellowship with the uncircumcised (15)
 - Eunuchs may be baptized (13)
 - Followed by the Gift of the Holy Ghost (31)
 - Duty to follow the Didache of the Apostles (4)
 - Divine punishment for unjust use of illegally obtained property (2)
 - Holding property in common in Jerusalem (4, 7)
 - Selling lands for donation to the community (7)
 - Divine punishment for lying to God about contributions of property (7)
 - Alms giving, duties to the poor (5)
 - Care of widows (9)

- D. Observance of Festivals and Maintenance of Other Jewish Practices
 - Pentecost (3, 35)
 - Giving to the poor (5)
 - Passover (19, 34)
 - Festival (Day of Atonement?) in Jerusalem (30)
 - Burial (11)
 - Prohibition against the sale of sacred things (12)
 - Validity of continuing prophecy (17, 20)
 - Christians keep vows (30)
 - Christians do not covet (35)
 - Christians remain zealous for the law (36)

- E. Modification or Clarification of Jewish Laws
 - Use of the name of Jesus (6)
 - Blasphemy against the Temple (10)
 - Continuing validity of the covenant with Abraham (5)
 - Rejection of the rights under the covenant with Abraham (10)
 - Payment of support to Jerusalem in lieu of temple tax (18)
 - Circumcision (25)
 - Food laws (15, 25)

Noachide laws (25, 35)
Keeping the first day of the week holy (34)
Question about uncircumcised converts entering the Temple (36)

F. Issues Regarding Magic and Numinous Activities

Legal performances of miracles, by Jesus (3)
Legal performance of miracles by the Apostles (4, 15, 23, 31)
Legal performance of miracles by others, such as Philip (12)
Use of the name of Jesus in performing healings (6)
Calling upon the name of Jesus (14, 32)
Illegal use of supernatural or magical powers (12, 21, 32)
Rejection of false prophets (21)
Rejection of Greek divination (26)
Rejection of illegal exorcism (32)

G. Plaintiffs and Accusers

Apostles arrested by Jews in Jerusalem (6, 8, 10)
Arrest warrant issued by the Sanhedrin, all Christians liable to be imprisoned (11)
Complaint raised by Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem (10) and Athens (28)
Opposition by leaders of local synagogues (22, 27, 29)
Actions initiated by soothsayer in Philippi (26) and silversmiths in Ephesus (33)
Complaint at the Temple by Jews from Asia (36)
Curse, oath and illegal conspiracy against Paul's life (37)

H. Courts and Judicial Powers

Cases before the Sanhedrin (6, 10, 37) and High Priest (8)
Actions before Greek courts or administrators (27, 28, 33)
Cases before Roman courts (26, 29, 38, 39)
Obey God rather than men, civil disobedience (6, 8)
Honor to suffer beating and legal indignities (8, 37)
Examination by scourging (36)
God will punish political leaders who kill Christians (19)

I. Legal Holdings and Outcomes

Christianity does not teach customs unlawful for Romans (26, 27, 29)
Christianity does not commit blasphemy against Artemis (33)
Christians can be Roman citizens (26, 36)
Paul was not proven guilty of disruption, sedition, or profaning the temple (38, 39)
Release from prison (8, 19)
Christians are not robbers (8, 33)
Expulsion from cities (22)
Escape from threats of assault (23)
Escape from uproar (27)
Settling with city fathers by making a security offering (27)
Stoning does not harm Paul and Barnabas (24)
Witnesses fail to appear or prove their case (38, 39)
After long detention, Paul is transferred to Rome (39)
Paul is not guilty of death or imprisonment (39)
Poisonous snakes do not harm Paul (40)