

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 16, Acts 15-16

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his instruction on the book of Acts. This is session 16, Acts chapters 15 and 16.

You may have noticed a few hours ago I got so excited all my hair fell out.

No, actually I had a haircut. But I had promised you that I would go on to the last paragraph of Acts chapter 15 and I whetted your appetite for it. And I'm glad your appetite is whetted because you have to wait just a little bit longer because there's some background that I want to give you about the Jerusalem Decree and the Jerusalem Council.

This is a debate that's often been held and my previous discussion was presupposing my conclusion of this debate. But the debate is whether the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 is the same time as Galatians chapter 2 or some people think it's the same as Galatians chapter 1. Here are some of the different views. Galatians 2, 1 through 10, instead of that being Acts 15, it's when Paul and Barnabas took the collection from Antioch to Jerusalem in Acts 11:30 and 12:25. It's held by William Ramsey and is held by many evangelical scholars and some other scholars today.

Galatians chapter 2, verses 1 through 10, being the same as Acts 15, was held by J.B. Lightfoot, who was a 19th-century evangelical scholar, and by many scholars today, including myself, a number of evangelical scholars, although not perhaps as many as the other view, and a number of other scholars as well. Perhaps the majority of scholars, but there's some debate. Galatians 2, 1 through 10, is both of them with two different sources recounting it differently.

That's not my view. I'm just giving you views. Some say, well, we don't care about Acts at all, and so Galatians chapter 2 doesn't have anything to do with any of them.

And then some say it's Acts 15 plus some added elements, perhaps from Acts 11 or somewhere else. Here are the arguments favoring it being the famine visit of Acts 11:30. I'm going to give you those arguments and then give you the reasons why I'm not persuaded by them. You're, of course, free to hold your own view.

Paul would not have omitted the famine visit, they said, in Galatians. Well, there's no reason to mention it in Galatians. After all, he's emphasizing his independence from the apostles.

They may have been in hiding at that point if it's chronologically the same as in Acts. And if it was delivered to the elders, there's no reason to mention it. Well, they say, well, why not mention the decree, if the decree had already happened by the time that Galatians was written? Well, regardless of when you date Galatians, it's also not mentioned in 1 Corinthians and Romans, which surely comes after the decree of the council was made.

Also, Acts specifies the range of the decree. It's to Syria and Cilicia. It didn't go as far as Galatia.

When the decree was made, it wasn't an issue yet in Galatia. The further you go from Jerusalem, also, the more the appeal to first principles was valuable rather than an appeal to centralized authority. Well, some say there are too many discrepancies if you identify this not with the famine visit, but with Acts 15.

Well, it's even worse. You have more discrepancies if you identify it with the famine visit. The comments about the famine visit in Acts are so brief that you can make comparisons only from silence.

There's nothing in common between the famine visit and Galatians 2, except that both Barnabas and Saul are present, which is also true in Acts 15. Further, why in Galatians 2 would they ask them to remember the poor during a famine visit when exactly that's what they were doing, was remembering the poor? Yet Galatians 2:10 says they were asked to remember that. Well, some have argued, and I think this is a reasonable argument, and I'm not saying this position is not a reasonable position.

In fact, probably most of my friends hold it. But anyway, revelation in Galatians 2:2, they've identified that with the prophecy in Acts 11:28-30. But if you look in the context of Galatians, the phrasing of revelation or revealing in Galatians 1:12-16 refers to Paul's own encounter with Christ. And so when he's speaking of going up because of a revelation in Galatians 2:2, he's probably speaking of the gospel that was revealed to him that he's defending in Galatians 2:1-10. Another argument that's been made for Galatians 2:0 identified with the famine visit is that it allows for an earlier date of Galatians.

Well, the problem is it sounds more like it's from the period in Paul's life as Romans, although somewhat earlier than Romans, not the same period as 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. So, if you're trying to do it based on date, actually it might be easier to argue the other way. In Acts 15, the conflict had just reached Antioch in Syria.

It hadn't yet reached Galatia. And that's why the decree is only addressed to Syria and Cilicia and not to Galatia. A sixth argument, they say, well, maybe Acts 15, which talks about circumcision and so on, revisits an earlier subject that was raised during the famine visit.

In logic, you have something called Ockham's razor, where the simplest solution tends to be the best. The simplest solution is that Galatians 2 and Acts 15, which address the same topic, are the same visit, rather than saying, well, maybe this topic was broached in the famine visit earlier where it's not mentioned, and that's why it's mentioned later on. Here are some arguments besides the arguments I've been giving against the famine visit view.

Here are some arguments for why it represents Acts 15. The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is the same as Galatians 2:1 through 10. First of all, Titus is mentioned, in Galatians 2:1 through 3. Paul mentions him as known to the Galatians.

Probably Titus was a Galatian. If not, he was probably with Paul on his visit there, but probably he was a Galatian. Acts 11 and 12 took place before Paul's missionary journeys.

So, the famine visit would have been before Titus' conversion if he was a Galatian. Acts 13 and 14 were that first, what's often called a missionary journey. Titus was therefore probably not yet converted when the famine visit took place, but he was surely converted after, you know, by the time you go through the ministry in Galatians 13 and 14, he was surely converted by Acts 15.

Also, there are a number of commonalities between Acts 15 and Galatians 2. Both councils, so to speak, have the same basic object. Both have the same basic outcome. Paul's mission is recognized in both.

The leaders agree in both that Gentiles need not be circumcised. Peter was involved and James was involved. And as mentioned before, of course, Paul and Barnabas were involved just as they were in the famine visit.

Granted, there are some omissions, but you can't argue from silence. I mean, Luke is not bound to mention everything Paul mentions or vice versa. Luke knows Paul's collection.

He mentions it in 24:17, but almost completely omits it as not relevant to his account because it's not his point. It's not what he's going to be stressing. We could talk about why that is.

Personally, I think it's probably because it didn't achieve all that Paul was hoping that it might achieve, namely the reconciliation of Jewish and Gentile churches, or perhaps because it was just a non-issue by the time that Luke was writing. So many other things had happened that were more significant. Maybe the Jerusalem church itself was not so much of an issue at that point.

But anyway, Luke knows Paul's collection, but he almost completely omits it as not relevant to his story. Joseph Fitzmeyer, a leading commentator on Acts, points out that none of the differences is, quote, significant enough to undermine the substantial agreement of the two reports. So, what this gives us then is multiple attestations to the Jerusalem Council that answer those who think that Acts 15 is Luke's fiction to make it look like the church could get along.

Well, actually, they did come to a kind of consensus in Galatians chapter 2, even though it had to be revisited under unfortunate circumstances when Peter visited Antioch in 2.11 through 14 of Galatians. So, moving on now to Paul returning to the mission field. Paul and Barnabas return to the mission field, but not together.

God uses, and by the way, if that was all confusing, you don't have to worry about it. Just the nature of this course is just to take what you find useful and use it. But anyway, this section, 15:36 to 41, reminds us that God uses real, which means fallible people.

In this case, it was Barnabas's strength and Paul's strength came into conflict. Both of their gifts came into conflict because sometimes our greatest strength is our greatest weakness if we're not careful to watch out for it. Israelite literature reported the failings of heroes even during the epic period.

Judges is full of that. By now, it was also standard for Greco-Roman biographers. Well, even before this, it was standard for Greco-Roman biographers to admit heroes' weaknesses.

Greek epic had been doing that for a long time. Achilles and Agamemnon have this conflict. Anyway, it wasn't something that they normally swept under the rug.

And yet we see God's blessing on the new Paul and Silas team that go out, probably the Barnabas and Mark team as well, as they went on to Cyprus. They went back to revisit a place where they had connections. Paul had a vision to reach new areas.

He wasn't willing to take somebody who wasn't totally committed, and he didn't trust Mark. Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance. Mark had matured, as we normally do.

So, they split. And the language that's used here in Greek, it was a rather severe split. It doesn't mean that they became perpetual enemies.

Paul's letters, he later cites Barnabas as somebody who worked with him. He's not hostile to him. But they couldn't work together at this point in their lives.

So, they split. And yet God used that, and God blessed this new ministry team of Paul and Silas. And it was also providential because, probably unlike Barnabas, who doesn't have a Roman name, Silas apparently is also a Roman citizen.

And that's going to help in Philippi, where Paul and Silas can point out that the Roman citizens in 16:37. But none of this means that the split, which wasn't a planned split for strategic reasons, it was a split because they had some major differences between them. None of this means that that was good, because you can contrast it with the preceding context.

I mean, look at how God brought about consensus in the council, and then look at how they split right after the council. But in Acts chapter 16, we're going to find out that Paul does want at least a younger person to work with him. Not Mark, but he's going to get Timothy instead.

And Timothy is from the region that he's previously evangelized. He goes north, probably through Cilicia, although for some reason Luke doesn't recount that much. Perhaps things hadn't gone as well in Cilicia.

But in any case, he goes north. Apparently, the season is well enough that he can cross the Taurus mountains. In winter, that would be very difficult, but there's a pass, the Cilician gates, where you could get through the mountains, especially when it wasn't winter.

And he goes back to the region that he'd previously evangelized with Barnabas. Paul is now in the lead himself. He doesn't have Barnabas with him, and he hasn't had to do this by himself before going into a new region.

So, he starts by going back, confirming the churches that are already there, which was a very important thing to do. And in one of these places, in Lystra apparently, he finds Timothy, who is a believer. He's been a believer since Paul was there before.

He was raised with the knowledge of the Torah, but he was raised in Judaism by his mother, not by his father, who apparently, even though fathers were supposed to take the lead in religion in the Roman Empire, apparently didn't mind the mother raising the child in Jewish faith, but wouldn't let him be circumcised, which was considered brutal and uncivilized by many Greeks and Romans. His father was a Gentile. Now, Judeans believed normally that intermarriage with Gentiles invited God's wrath.

Some Diaspora Jews were less strict, especially in a place like Lystra or Derbe, where there weren't very many Jews to begin with. I mean, you had a limited number of options. So, in chapter 16 in verse 3, we see that Timothy's Gentile father probably forbade him to be circumcised.

The Jewish people then would view him as a Gentile. According to later Talmudic law, if your mother's Jewish, you count as Jewish, but his mother, that rule probably wasn't in effect yet at this point, and also, he hadn't been circumcised. So Jewish people would probably view him as a Gentile.

Gentiles would view him as too Jewish to be Gentile. And so for the sake of mission, Paul standardizes his status, which was an important thing in the ancient world where people talked about, I mean, the rabbis laid it out. Well, what is your status based on your parents' status in terms of Judaism? Roman law had to decide, well, what is your status with regard to Roman citizenship based on your parents and so on.

So, he standardizes it for the sake of the mission. Now, keep in mind, this is the same Paul who, according to Galatians 2, wouldn't let Titus be circumcised. But there's a difference.

One was for the sake of defending the gospel, of showing the Gentiles don't have to be circumcised. The other is for the sake of mission, is for the sake of contextualization. So, we have to make a distinction between what we do for mission and what we do is a requirement for salvation.

We can't add requirements to salvation other than being in Christ. We can't add requirements to being part of God's covenant people. Paul would remind us of that.

And James would seem to agree by the way he handles Amos, other than being in Christ. But for the sake of mission, there are sacrifices we're willing to make. And this was a painful sacrifice.

They wouldn't be able to travel right away after that either. I'd have to give it a few days. But anyway, so now the mission team is augmented.

It's got Silas and it's got Timothy. They press into a new region and Paul isn't hearing positive guidance from the Holy Spirit. So, they're moving, they're doing something, but they don't have, it seems, direct guidance about exactly what they're supposed to do.

They may have been sharing Christ along the way, but they don't know what they're doing. And this is kind of embarrassing now that Paul is leading the team. Sometimes life can be like that, where we don't know exactly what God wants us to do, but we're trusting that he'll let us know.

Paul gets some negative guidance, but he's not getting too much positive guidance. Much of Phrygia was in the southern Roman province of Galatia. Well, the Roman province, the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia.

North Galatia was less populated. It doesn't appear in Acts. We have no evidence that it appears in Galatians either.

A number of scholars have argued that Paul actually ministered in North Galatia and it's just left out of Acts. And coincidentally, when Paul doesn't mention South Galatia, even though it appears in Acts, and even though most of the other places he went in Acts appear in his letters, most scholars today recognize that that's not true. Paul went to South Galatia.

There's no reason to go to North Galatia to minister. It had a lower population. It was less advanced in terms of Roman colonies.

It didn't have a very high Jewish population at all, as opposed to the southern part of the province of Galatia. People say, well, no, Paul must be speaking of ethnic Galatians as opposed to Phrygians, ethnic Galatians being in North Galatia. However, he usually uses titles of provinces.

So, when Paul says, you Galatians, he's talking about the province of Galatia, which did include much of Phrygia, which he administered clearly in the book of Acts. And those who are experts on Anatolia, the interior of Anatolia, not just William Ramsey, but also Stephen Mitchell, who is the leading Anatolian archaeologist today, and Barbara Levick, who was probably the leading Anatolian archaeologist of the previous generation. Anatolian archaeologists agree that Paul went to South Galatia, not North Galatia.

And again, that's convinced also the majority of New Testament scholars. So, Paul is still in South Galatia, in Phrygian Galatia, and in verse 6. In verses 6 and 7, we see he gets negative guidance. He's forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go in certain directions.

He's forbidden to go to Asia. Now, what Asia means here is the Roman province of Asia. He's already in Asia.

In fact, the gospel originated in Asia. It originated in Galilee and Jerusalem, which, according to Greek and Roman standards, was Asia, near Africa. So, there was a major Roman road that went west from where he was to this Roman province of Asia in western Asia Minor, western Turkey today.

Well, he's forbidden to go that way. Sometimes God's no is a temporary no. Later on, there was a huge revival there, but Paul wasn't ready for that yet.

So, he's got to be trained in smaller places first. God can do it in whatever way he wants. But in any case, the next place he goes, the text says in verse 7, that it was over against Mysia.

It's translated in different ways, but probably that's the closest way of translating Kata there. But at the place where he's at, he could turn right to go to Bithynia in the north, or he could turn left to go to Mysia and Asia, the Roman province of Asia in the west. But he was forbidden to do that.

So, he travels through Mysia in verse 8. Now, some translations say by Mysia, but through Mysia probably captures it better. Although some of these labels were used in different ways by different people, but probably goes through Mysia because he proceeded northwest to Troas, which is in northwest Mysia. Now, Troas was a very important Roman colony in this period.

Its full name is Alexandria Troas. It may have had a hundred thousand people, which was very, very large by ancient standards. It was a Roman colony.

So again, it had connections with Rome. It does appear in Paul's letters, although we don't have a letter to the Trojans or something like that. It's near Old Troy.

If you're familiar with Homer's Iliad and Greek literature in general, but Homer's Iliad was like the Greeks regarded it as their canon, their literary basis for other things. It speaks of the Trojan War that took place. Well, this is legend, but there probably was a Trojan War, but a lot of the details in the Iliad are legendary, but often estimated around 1186, 1196 B.C., so a millennium or more before this time.

So, the Trojan War was understood from a Greek and Roman perspective as a European invasion of Asia. The whole way we talk about continents today is really kind of a Eurocentric invention in the sense that the Greeks defined everything to their east as Asia. To themselves and the west, that was Europe, and to the south of the Mediterranean Sea, that was Africa.

Of course, they didn't know about the continents of the Americas that were named after Amerigo Vespucci a long time after that. So, the boundary between the Greek world and what became the Persian world and what they considered the Asian world was the boundary between Greece and what's now Turkey. And the place where they usually invaded, this is true also for Alexander the Great, who saw himself as a new Achilles trying to do something similar to the Trojan War, they saw themselves as Europe invading Asia, or Greece invading Asia.

Well, here Paul comes to Troas, and God is going to do something that readers in the ancient Mediterranean world may have viewed as the opposite. Now by this time,

cultures had spread both ways. After Alexander, Greek culture was influenced by Asia and Asian culture, Western Asian culture was influenced by Greece.

But in any case, despite the cultural overlap, Greeks and Romans were still using these geographic dividers. And so now, launching out from Troas into Macedonia, we have Asian faith spreading into Europe. But as opposed to this being a militant conquest, this is bringing the good news of peace.

And now the influence is positively going the other way, not from conquerors, but the good news of salvation coming from Asia into Europe. And of course, Judaism and Christianity were seen as Asian faiths. We can speak of them as Middle Eastern faiths, but Western Asian faiths.

Now, here we have some confusing guidance. The Holy Spirit had been forbidding them. They're not getting positive guidance yet on where to go.

But finally, in Troas, Paul has a dream or a night vision, and he and the others gather together, and they interpret it together and conclude that the dream must mean that they're to go into Macedonia. Paul sees a man of Macedonia in the dream saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. How does he know that this is a man of Macedonia? People sometimes argue about the man's distinctive clothing, or there could be various reasons, but certainly, one reason that he would know that the man is a man of Macedonia is because the man says, come over to Macedonia and help us.

And people have speculated, who is this man of Macedonia? Maybe Alexander the Great you could recognize from statues. Or maybe some have speculated, maybe it's Luke. But actually, it doesn't give us any clue.

Probably if it were one of those, it would tell us just, that it's a man of Macedonia. He says, come over to Macedonia and help us. Maybe it's the Philippian jailer, but then again, maybe Luke would tell us if it were that.

So, in any case, they sail for Philippi. Now, later on, Paul will go to Asia. There'll be a huge revival there, but it's not time yet.

God's timing is important, as well as God's calling. Guidance was going to matter. It's good they're not just wandering at this point.

It's good they have at least a dream to go on. A dream may not seem like a whole lot sometimes, but they have to have something to hold on to. They get beaten in Philippi.

They get beaten in Thessalonica. They get chased out of Berea. Basically, they get run out of Macedonia.

It's really good to know that you have at least some guidance when you go into situations of difficulty. Say, well, the Lord wanted me to be here, so it's all right. And that's what they had to have.

Well, they sail from Troas, and the voyage takes only two days, which means it's the right time of year. They have favorable winds. Later on in Acts, it's going to take them about six days for the reverse voyage because of the seasonal winds and because they're going in the opposite direction.

And that all fits what we know of the wind patterns and so on at the respective times of year. But it says that they pass Samothrace. Samothrace is about halfway through.

There's a huge mountain there that would let you identify Samothrace from a distance. Since it's a two-day voyage, they may have anchored in Samothrace overnight. Samothrace was known for the mysteries of the Kiberi and so on, but they probably didn't do much in Samothrace.

Their goal is to get to Macedonia. And so, we read about that in chapter 16 verses 11 through 20 as they are coming into Philippi. And we read about the initial response in Philippi in verses 11 through 15.

I mentioned mountainous Samothrace would be visible. That would be the first port. It was about halfway.

But finally, when they come to Macedonia, they come to Neapolis. That was one of the two best ports of South Macedonia. The other was Thessalonica, which we'll come to in chapter 17 in verse 1. Neapolis was the port city or the port town that directly served Philippi.

The two-day voyage indicated favorable winds, as I mentioned, except during winter. Sea travel was quicker and less expensive. And at this point, you don't have that far to travel.

This is one of the closest points where you could travel from Asia to Macedonia. They were perhaps moving about 100 miles a day when they came there. Neapolis.

Philippi was about 10 miles to the northwest across Mount Symbolim. And this was the eastern end of the Ignatian Way. The western end was the Adriatic port, Dyrratium, on the other side of Greece, or north of Greece, from which one could sail to Italy.

Philippi had been a proud Roman colony since 42 BC. When I say a proud Roman colony, they emphasized using Latin, having Latin inscriptions, for instance, very much devotion to Diana. Well, traditionally, Macedonians were, they identified more with Greeks and she would have been called Artemis.

But in Philippi, she was Diana. They were very emphatically identified with their Roman culture. If you were a citizen of Philippi, which not all residents were, probably Lydia is not.

If you were a citizen of Philippi, you were thereby an honorary citizen of Rome. That's part of what it meant to be a Roman colony, even if you'd never been there. That's why when Paul writes to the Philippians in Philippians 3.20, he can speak of our citizenship being in heaven because the Philippians certainly understood what it meant to be a citizen of a place that they'd never lived.

Now Philippi, even though it was a Roman colony, because of some of the Roman civil wars earlier and Rome's earlier conquest of Macedonia, but it was more an agricultural than a commercial center, unlike many of the urban areas that Paul visited. But it was still, it was a colony, it was a place where Paul wanted to minister. Thessalonica was Macedonia's capital, but Philippi here, Luke calls it the first city of the province.

Now sometimes people use first to mean the top one, but all over the place I found in ancient literature, including, for instance, in Strabo's geography, as he's talking about different cities, he speaks of this as a first city and this is a first city, meaning it's a chief city, it's a major city. Philippi was a major city of the province, one of the most eminent there alongside Thessalonica. Paul and Silas are looking for some connection.

They don't have a synagogue there, but they suppose that if there's anybody here who practices Judaism, it's going to be near water because that's where you would have to practice your washing of hands and so on, ceremonial lustrations for your prayer time. So, they go looking for a place of prayer. A place of prayer, the terminology could mean a synagogue, but Luke usually says synagogue when he means that.

So apparently there's no building here. What they find is some women. Normally, at least according to later tradition, you need a quorum of at least 10 Jewish men to make up a synagogue.

I know there's a synagogue where I used to visit in one town and I couldn't count because I'm not Jewish. So, to get a quorum of 10 Jewish men, sometimes they didn't have enough. Actually, this was a reformed synagogue, so they may have counted

the women sometimes too, but sometimes they didn't have enough to hold a service.

So, they had to call some people on the phone and have them come out so they could have their quorum. But in any case, at least it needed to be held in a pure place near water and excavations show the importance of that to ancient synagogues. If you didn't have enough people to have a synagogue, at least you could have a prayer meeting.

Well, so they go out by the river, according to verse 13, looking for them. Now, what river do they mean? Well, the nearest actual river was the Gengites. It's a tributary of the Strymon River.

It's about one and a quarter miles or over two kilometers from Philippi. So it was more than a Sabbath day's journey by Pharisaic standards. Some others have supposed that it's the Creek Cronites on one side of the city.

Some others have supposed it's a dried up stream on the, then wasn't dried up, on the other side of the city, where in fact there's a tradition and there's a church there, the tradition that this is where it happened. I'm inclined to think it probably was near the river Gengites, that given the fact that they didn't even have a quorum, these women were probably not too concerned about Pharisaic standards in Judea about a Sabbath day's journey. And Paul is more concerned about reaching people than about not walking more than 2,000 cubits.

So, they go there and they do find them. It says that it's outside the city gate. Well, all these proposals are outside the city gate, probably the city gate here, if we're talking about the Gengites, probably is the colonial archway of Philippi, through which the Via Agnesia, the Roman road that ran from the Italian side of north of Greece through Macedonia, from which you could catch sea to Troas.

It was a major east-west conduit between Rome and Asia Minor in terms of mostly land journeys. That ran through Philippi and went out to the Gengites. In 16:14, they find these women there, and women tended to be more open to non-local faiths, to Asian faiths, and so on, because they had less status to lose by not following local faiths.

Conservative Romans often complained about this. They complained that women were pursuing Eastern religions, by which they included Judaism and the Christian movement. Josephus says that far more women than men followed Judaism.

This applied naturally to full converts, for whom circumcision could be a painful experience as an adult, presumably for a Jewish woman. Adults tend not to remember that experience so much, although there was a person at the synagogue

who told me, you know why there are so few Jewish alcoholics today? It's because we put a little bit of wine in their tongue before we circumcised them as a baby, and you grew up thinking, boy, if it hurt that much, I don't want to do it too much. Anyway, he was joking.

But Josephus pointed out that there were far more women than men who followed Judaism. That was not only for full converts, but that was also for sympathizers with Judaism. Again, they had less to lose, so it's not surprising that the people that they find here are women.

Well, women often had been restricted in Greek culture, not so much in Macedonia, where they are, but in general. But the one sphere where even Greeks gave women any public responsibility when I say Greeks, I'm thinking more of Attica, like the Athenian culture, as opposed to Sparta. But the one sphere where Greeks gave women any public responsibility, especially, was religion, and women were heavily involved here in the Diana cult in Philippi.

And Macedonian women historically had been freer than Greek women anyway. Well, Paul's teaching women and focusing on women. Some Judeans would deem that suspicious.

In fact, if you had enemies and you had women as your supporters, as Jesus did back in Luke 8, 1-3, and of course the previous passage where the woman is washing his feet in 7, 36-50, conservative Judeans look down on that. And anybody who didn't like you would look down on that. They would use that as a cause of complaint.

When some Pharisees had some women supporters, people who didn't like Pharisees complained about that and said, ah, you see, you're catering to women. But in any case, Paul reaches the people who are there to be reached and starts where he can start. Lydia was from Thyatira.

It says God opened her heart for the gospel. Lydia was from Thyatira, verse 14. Lydia was a common name, but it especially fits somebody from Thyatira because Thyatira was in ancient Lydia.

And if somebody had, for example, a servant who had been bought from a region in Lydia, they'd sometimes nickname the servant Lydia or give that name. Thyatira was known for dyer's guilds and textiles. Inscriptions show that other Thyatira business agents also sold purple dye in Macedonia.

So, it's not surprising that this would be Lydia's occupation. And often they were becoming prosperous in doing so, even though the majority of Macedonians were poor. There were some very rich Macedonians, and this was a very profitable trade.

The name and the trade suggest to many scholars that she may have been a freedwoman. Now, when we speak about things like this, we're talking about levels of probability. She may have been a freedwoman, that is, a former slave.

Freed persons often continued to work as agents in their former slaveholders' businesses. And that was true, we know from inscriptions, of many traders in purple dye, but many of them were freed persons. So that may also be true of Lydia.

By this period, women were sometimes engaged in business. And even slave women could become managers, just like slave men could be. Probably she was well-to-do.

When I say probably she was well-to-do, she could have been marginally well-to-do as a slave even, because slaves were often allowed to hold some money on the side. Technically, it belonged to the slaveholder, but Roman law actually allowed the slaves to control it to a great degree, provided the slaveholder did, which normally was the case with managers who, if the slave manager had their own income. However, much more likely that she'd be a freed person, or she could be just free, but probably a freed person.

Now, she was probably well-to-do as a seller of purple. That had been a luxury good in the Mediterranean world, and to the east in Persia as well. It had been a luxury good in the Mediterranean world for over a thousand years.

The main source of purple dye, especially as a luxury good, was the Murex shellfish near Tyre. You would have to crush a lot of this mollusk to squeeze out the purple from it. And then that was used on garments.

You might have to squeeze a thousand of them to get just a bit of purple garment. So that's why it was so expensive. That was the main source of purple.

And naturally, since it was based on the squeezed gunk of mollusks, purple dye didn't smell very good. But that was all right. It was a status symbol.

People were willing to endure the smell for the sake of the status symbol. And so that was normally traded in something very, very wealthy. Now, there was also some imitation purple and some of that was based on some things that were available in Asia Minor.

You had the Kermes oak from which you could get red dye. And also, near Macedonia, you had a way you could get imitation purple. So, she may not have been selling the most expensive form of purple in this period.

She may have been selling something cheaper. But in any case, she's probably well-to-do because you would be handling a lot of money doing any of this. She's not a maker of purple dye.

It's not going to be stinky like Simon the Tanner's home, but she's a seller of things dyed with purple. So, hospitality. Paul, until he met Lydia, and Silas and Timothy and Luke, who's with him at this point, may have been staying at an inn until then.

That was certainly not ideal. Certainly, it was better to find hospitality from another Jewish family. That's normally how it was done.

That's how Jesus said to do it. But if you had nowhere else to go, you would have to go to an inn. Inns were notorious for immoral inn owners who sometimes even could rob people.

When people were out, they could steal things. Inns were also notorious in Jewish culture for their immorality because a lot of times you'd have a tavern, which wasn't considered immoral in itself, but the barmaids of the tavern, who were often slaves who had been rescued from the trash heaps as babies. Now they were raised as slave prostitutes.

They would serve as prostitutes in the rest of the inn. So, this wasn't an ideal place for Jewish people to stay. There also were problems with things like bedbugs.

You read about those actually in the Acts of John in the late second century. It's a novel. It's my favorite of the novelistic acts where you have all these bedbugs and John wants to get rid of them.

So, he commands them in the name of the Lord. You're expecting fire to come down from heaven and devour the bedbugs, but I like this. No fire.

He just commands them and they line up single file and go out of the room. But in any case, hospitality was a major value in the ancient Mediterranean world, a major value in Judaism, even more so than many other cultures. Lydia provides hospitality.

It was considered an honor actually to provide hospitality for a man or a woman of God. So, she functions as their patron or their benefactor. Not patron in the most technical Roman sense, but patron in the more general way in which New Testament scholars use it today.

Not like somebody who's in the Roman Republic who was running for office and had these clients follow him around to make it look like he had a great retinue so more people would vote for him, but in the more general way in which we use it. She functions as a benefactress or a patron. Very similar to what you see in 2 Corinthians

4:8 through 11, where the Shunammite woman says, hey, let's make a room for this man of God to stay with us, Elisha.

And somewhat, although a bit less voluntarily, for the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17. Apparently, she's the head of her household. There may be a man there who's just kind of laid back, but apparently, she's the head of the household.

And perhaps this means she has many servants. She could be a widow, but as a freed person, she just may have not chosen to get married. She would have a great deal of choice about what she would have done, but there would be many people there.

If somebody were looking for a cause for scandal, uh-oh, they're staying with the woman. Well, they're not staying with her alone. I mean, there's a whole bunch of them and there's a whole bunch of her household is there, but this would still be something that accusers would use as scandal, just like Jesus having women following along with his disciples as he's teaching.

There's, it's pretty clear from the descriptions we get of Jesus and Paul that these were highly moral people, but sometimes for the sake of the gospel even, they did have to break some traditional boundaries. Not that this was never done. This was done.

It's just if you had enemies, they might look for a cause for slander, but that's not what they get slandered for in Philippi. They get slandered for something else. So, we're going to look at exorcisms and economics, 16:16 through 22.

Sometimes people have ulterior motives for accusing you of things, especially if it costs them something. Well, here we have a slave girl, *paidsce*, probably very young. that term is used a couple of other places in Luke Acts.

It's used for Peter's critic back in Luke 22:56, who, uh, says, you also are Galilean. I saw you with Jesus. It's also used for Hroda, the, um, the servant in the house of Mary, John Mark's mother back in chapter 12 verses 12 and 13.

Her name means Rose. She's very positive, very positive figure contrasted here with a figure is kind of ambivalent. Uh, she's being exploited by her slaveholders.

Those are the ones who are really the negative figures here, but she's also being exploited by them because she's being exploited by a spirit. Um, as far as, as far as Luke's view of women, um, some have said, ah, Luke is trying to suppress this female voice. You know, when, when Paul commands her to be silent, it's exactly parallel to what we have in Luke chapter four, where you have a male demoniac crying out and Jesus silences him in the synagogue.

It's exactly parallel to that. So, it's not that he's silencing women. You remember the women proclaimers at the tomb, uh, Lydia and her household appear very favorably here and also Rhoda.

I mean, there's humor in that narrative about Rhoda, but the humor, some people have said it's a Rhoda's expense. It's not. She's the only one who knows the truth in that narrative.

It's at Peter's expense and especially the expense of the other people in the household. Rhoda is comparable to the women at the tomb in Luke 24 who tell the truth and initially are not believed. Well, Paul initially does nothing because perhaps he doesn't want to stir up the trouble that in fact does ensue once he does cast out the spirit.

But she's, she's going around saying, these men are servants of the most high God. And you think, well, that's not harmful. It's actually correct.

But, uh, in a Gentile context, that could mean, you know, there are many gods and these are, you know, it relativizes who they are, but it also, you don't want a demon testifying for you, just like Jesus didn't want a demon testifying about his identity in Luke chapter four and cast it out. So finally, Paul casts it out. He spiritually liberates her.

Physically, she's still a slave to her masters, but she's spiritually liberated. And on account of that, as we're about to see, she becomes worthless economically to her masters afterward. So perhaps Lydia and the others could carry on what Paul had done and physically liberate her afterward.

They probably could afford to buy her freedom at this point. She's been spiritually liberated. Hopefully, she can become a member of the church, but slaves could participate in those things anyway, in their free time, as far as the slaveholders were concerned normally.

In fact, in the second-century church, we, we, Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, actually says that two of the, two of the leaders in the church that he's interrogating under torture are slaves, but they, they appear to have been deacons of the, of the church, depending on how you translate the language. But, but, um, slaves were able to, actually that's why often the church had to meet early in the morning too before official duties began. But in any case, the spirit of a Pythoness, literally is what's, is what's said in this passage.

She, she, uh, translations often say a spirit of divination, and that's what it means, but the spirit of divination was a very powerful spirit of divination. A Pythoness, was

the term that was applied to the Delphic Oracle of Apollo, to the priestess of the Delphic Oracle of Apollo. She was called a Pythoness.

She was mantic, that is she prophesied in a frenzy, or at least it's often said to have been a frenzy. The Oracle at Delphi was so famous, uh, even, even Herodotus talks about how Croesus, this was many centuries earlier, in the time of Cyrus, king of Persia. Croesus was the king of Lydia, and he wanted to know if he could make war in this nation or that nation.

And so, he inquired of different oracles to find out which oracle would be most accurate. And the Oracle of Delphi was able to tell him what he'd hidden under his bed. So, he said, this one's very accurate.

So, he sent to them and he said, okay, I want to make war against the king of Persia, against the Persians and the Medes, Cyrus. So, shall I make war or not? And the response came back, make war and you will destroy a great kingdom. Well, unfortunately Croesus didn't catch the ambiguity in that response.

He did make war against Cyrus and he was defeated and his kingdom became part of the Persian empire. And as he was being burned at the stake, he said, oh, now I understand. Yes, I destroyed a great kingdom, my own.

And according to Herodotus, Cyrus said, what's he saying? I want to hear about this. And when he, when he heard about it, he said, no, no, bring Croesus here, don't burn him at the stake. And so, he said, yeah, this is good.

I like to, I like to hear the story. Anyway, may not all be true, but that's how the story goes. In any case, the Delphic priestess of Apollo was famous.

You had some other famous oracles, the Oracle of Zeus at Dodona with the oak there. And you had also, Apollo was famous as a prophetic deity at Delos, the supposed site of his birth, and so forth. But, especially Delphi, that was the most famous of all.

Now she was a virgin. She had to be young. So again, that fits the age of probably this Paidiske.

That's not saying something negative toward young virgins. Contrast the virgins of Acts 21, the four virgin daughters of Philip who do prophesy. And because of the normal age of, you know, when they use the phrase virgins, they're probably in their young teens actually.

But in any case, they're viewed very positively, but she is captive to a different kind of prophetic spirit, not the spirit of God. It was said that she would sit, the Pythoness,

not this woman here, but the Pythoness in Delphi would sit on a tripod and that there were these mafitic vapors that would come up. Archeology shows that probably that's not true, but in any case, supposedly these inspired the woman.

And then the priests would have to interpret. They would have to arrange her wording, make it more eloquent, make it more poetic, and sometimes if necessary, make it more ambiguous, just in case. But Lucan depicts the Pythoness' possession in very graphic terms.

Not everybody agrees with that, but it does appear elsewhere in ancient literature that she would become frenzied, her hair would stand up on edge, and so on, as she was possessed by the spirit of Apollo. Now, the reason she was called Pythoness was named after the Pythian Apollo, who was the slayer of the great dragon, Python. And you can probably read about that in certain Revelation commentaries in Revelation 12.

But anyway, this is not to say that this young lady had ever been in Delphi, necessarily. It's just to say that if she's said to have the spirit of a Pythoness, this is no minor demon. I mean, this is a high-power demon.

Maybe not Legion, but this is a high-power demon. And verse 17, her message, these are servants of the Most High God. Well, they were servants of the Most High God.

Most High God is common in Jewish texts. It's in the Bible, but it also appears in pagan sources. It can refer there to the Jewish god, or it can refer to Zeus.

So, there's a degree of ambiguity there in a Gentile context. In pagan magic, the supreme god, who is often identified with the Jewish god, was seen as the most powerful. And so, in magic, too, people would like to invoke this Most High God.

And she says they are proclaiming to you the way of salvation. Well, interestingly enough, even though the demon may be stirring up trouble, God can sometimes even use the demon's testimony for good. We see that in Acts chapter 19.

I mean, you don't want to go listening to demons and don't want to go assuming the demons will always tell the truth. I mean, that's why they're demons. But anyway.

But, you know, the star of Bethlehem, I mean, here the magi are astrologers. They're looking at the stars. That's forbidden in Scripture.

But sometimes God will use something, even something pagan. And how does he use this? Well, later on, when the jailer asks Paul and Silas, what must I do to be saved? Where did he get that language saved? Well, probably he'd heard the story that this

young woman had been going around proclaiming that they proclaimed the way of salvation. And now he believes them after the earthquake and their staying there.

16:18. Exorcists often tried to use the names of higher spirits to evict lower spirits. We see that in chapter 19, verse 13, where the seven sons of Sceva try to invoke the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.

But they don't have the right to use that name. Paul, however, does have the right to use that name. And here Acts gives us a sample of one of his actions in that regard.

Paul uses Jesus' name. That is, Paul acts as Jesus Sheliach, or his agent, speaking for Jesus. He, on behalf of Jesus, a representative of Jesus, he commands the spirit to come out.

And it comes out. Now, some people who are more skeptical, will make fun of people who believe in spirits at all or demons at all. But it's interesting that anthropologists have widely documented spirit possession trance.

Now, anthropologists, many, probably still most, don't believe that these are actual spirits. Some today are more open to at least using indigenous understandings and saying that our business is to deal with the indigenous understanding, not to evaluate it. But anthropologists have widely documented possession trance to the extent that denial of possession trances is regarded as the anthropological equivalent of being a flat earther.

Seventy-four percent of societies have spirit possession beliefs. And this is from a source in the 1970s. It could be higher now as they've studied more societies.

It's higher in some areas than in others. There are some different cultural expressions of it in different societies, although a lot of them look very suspicious like what we see in the Gospels and Acts. But there's a consistent psychophysiological substrate when trance states occur.

Anthropologists typically define it as an altered state of consciousness indigenously or locally interpreted in terms of the influence of an evil spirit. Sorry, not an evil spirit. Often, it's a good spirit, many people locally interpreted, but an alien spirit.

There's an altered neurophysiology during possession trance where people have been tested with hyperarousal and so on, tested by EEG readings. Now, I don't want you to think that all cases of hyperarousal are due to that. There are other causes of that, other causes of trance states even.

But I'm ADD. That's probably one reason you hear me talking very quickly. The other reason is I'm trying to get through it quickly so I can cover as much material as possible.

But there are different kinds of brain activity, but you have an altered neurophysiology that does typify this possession trance, even if sometimes you can have it during other things that are not due to that. Possession behaviors. Raymond Firth, an anthropologist, and I don't know what happened to my screen here, but Raymond Firth says that sometimes it's been hard for the anthropologist to persuade himself—today we'd say himself or herself—that it's really the same person as before whom he's watching or confronting.

So, mark it as the personality change in their behavior the change in the pitch of their voice, and so on. Yoram Mugari was a traditional African exorcist in traditional religion before he became a Christian. So, he had some stories to tell me about things that he witnessed that should have been humanly impossible, where actually possessed persons kind of moved up the wall along their backs almost like a snake and onto the ceiling, which should be humanly impossible from what we know of the human body.

And then he was converted to Christianity and now he's done his Master's degree at Gordon-Conwell and now he's doing his PhD in the UK. Or I think maybe he's finished it by now. In some cases, and I mention this because of some cases like Legion and the demoniac in the case of the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19, this is not all cases, but in some cases, possession trance is expressed in violent behavior, such as banging one's head, jumping into the fire—you also have that in Mark 9—cutting themselves in places like Indonesia, from which I have this very nice shirt, firewalking or immunity to pain.

Sometimes it also could be expressed in violence towards others. Now some of those things can happen under other kinds of circumstances too. Now obviously people can be violent without having a demon and people can have altered states of consciousness due to other things too.

I mean our state of consciousness is altered when we're asleep as well. But something that clearly signals a demon, although it doesn't always happen when there's a demon present and probably doesn't usually happen, there are certain occult phenomena like the person being able to slither up a wall, which is physically impossible, certain occult phenomena. Many supposed cases of demonism may be merely personality disorders or just physical ailments, but some are more extreme when you have objects moving without being touched or flying through the room or so on.

And I have friends who have witnessed some of these things and I have witnessed some things that I really don't want to talk about because they are really unpleasant. But in any case, exorcism also appears in anthropological literature. In some cultures it's considered the only cure for possession illness and psychiatrists and psychologists who don't believe in spirits—I mean some do, but probably the majority don't—who don't believe in spirits debate whether to accommodate local beliefs.

Among Christians, we see exorcism very frequently. Around 74% of Christians in Ethiopia, for example, claim to have witnessed exorcisms. My student, Paul Mokake, a Baptist from Cameroon, described to me a woman writhing like a serpent as sea spirits were cast out.

Now, I don't, and there are others who describe these kinds of things to me. Locally they're considered sea spirits, water spirits or river spirits. That may just be the local tradition, local interpretation.

The Bible doesn't say, you know, you have sea spirits or whatever, but yeah, they appear to have been spirits of some sort. Nepali pastor Minna K.C. recounts a case of three sisters who were mute for three years. Now, I'm in no wise implying that muteness is normally caused by spirits or by demons.

You can have physical ailments for a variety of different reasons. You can also have emotional stress and mental stress for a variety of different reasons. But we're not built for other personalities to live inside of us.

So, when you have a spirit, sometimes it will afflict a certain part of the body or afflict the nervous system, afflict the mind. It's not to say those are the only things that can afflict the body or the mind, but spirits can sometimes do that, and that was the case. Why were these three sisters all mute starting at the same time for three years? She cast out a demon, Pastor Minna K.C. cast out a demon, and then they were healed during that.

Robin Snelger, the head of the Department of Industrial Psychology at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. Well, earlier in his life, he recounts his own former experience of an alien personality controlling him. Nothing helped him.

Medicine didn't help. Other kinds of practices didn't help until spontaneously he was exercised through a Christian. Euserpina Acosta Estevez in Cuba.

I interviewed her when I was in Cuba. She said that back until 1988, she had been invoking spirits. I don't know if she was involved in Santeria or what, but she was invoking spirits.

She was too sick to walk. Pastors prayed for her one day in 1988. She fell back.

The chairs around her were thrown back, and the severe heart and kidney malfunctions that were so severe she couldn't walk suddenly were healed, and she's still fine to this day. So, when people ask questions about the reality of spirits, some anthropologists have explored this. I mean, mostly they're interested in what local culture says, but there have been some interesting studies.

Edith Turner, who's the widow of a famous anthropologist by the name of Victor Turner, is a lecturer in anthropology at the University of Virginia. She's editor of the journal *Anthropology and Humanism*. During the Zambian traditional African spirit ritual, not Christian, they didn't want Christians present, but during the traditional African spirit ritual in Zambia, she witnessed spirit substance ejecting.

She actually saw this blob come out with her own eyes from the person's back. Now, she's not approaching this from a conventional Christian perspective. She actually teaches her students to experience spirits, which most of us as Christians would have problems with as much as some other anthropologists who are not Christians would have problems with.

But in any case, she believes in the reality of spirits, and she's argued forthrightly for that and has dealt with that also among the Inuit population in Alaska and so on. Anthropologist Solon Kimball, during fieldwork in Ireland, an apparition began moving toward him. He put out his hand to protect himself.

His hand went through it. He said, ah, that must be a hallucination. But later he discovered that many others had seen the same figure in the area at times independently.

His explanation was, well, maybe the culture affects even our hallucinations. But again, this was independent, so it may actually be something more serious than that. Globally, the majority of Christians around the world do accept the reality of spirits.

They've convinced an increasing number of Westerners, some of whom had been closed to this by their experiences. In fact, one Bible translator in the area around Peru was, I'm sorry, the person who shared this with me was from Peru, but in Southern America, among the traditional people, he was translating the Bible for them, and they believed that there were spirits all around them. And he said, no, no, those things aren't real.

And they said, well, it's translated, and you translated it for us in the Gospel of Mark. It talks about them. And he says, no, no, they're not really real.

And they responded, they are all around us. We can see them. You're the only one who can't see them.

But our proper enlightenment reaction to superstition throughout spirits altogether, and this was pointed out by a very well-known missionary anthropologist who said, you know, my theological training helped me understand something about God. My anthropological training helped me understand about culture and humans. But it was when I was in India, this is Paul Hebert, when I was in India, they helped me understand that there's this intermediate realm as well, that our Western culture had gone overboard throwing out the baby with the bathwater, and a more critical approach is to look at the evidence for each case.

Psychiatrist Scott Peck, there were a lot of things he could explain psychiatrically and said that, you know, most things that people think are demons are just psychological problems. But he encountered two cases that couldn't be explained any other way than as demons. William Wilson, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, and many others have said similar things.

David Van Gelder, Professor of Counseling, and this is published in a counseling journal, there was a 16-year-old who was acting like an animal, and the crucifix that was hanging on the wall fell, but it didn't just fall, the nails actually melted. That's something that's not a psychological disorder. And so, he and some other Christians, they were called in as Christian counselors, Christian psychologists and psychiatrists, they came together and they couldn't deal with them in any traditional psychiatric or psychological ways.

Finally, they said, okay, well, try saying Jesus is Lord. And in another voice, it came out of him, you fools, he can't say that. Finally, they cast it out in the name of Jesus.

But as professionals, they recognized this was not epilepsy, this was not psychosis, this had to be a real spirit. David Instone Brewer, who is a very well-known scholar of rabbinics, is a Christian scholar who teaches at Tyndall House at Cambridge. In earlier times, he was doing rounds studying to be a psychiatrist before he went into what he does now.

And he said that one time he was making his rounds in a hospital and just quietly, privately in his own heart, he was praying for this man that he sat down beside in the hospital who seemed to be asleep. He was just praying that God would help him when the man suddenly bolted upright pointed in his face and yelled, he's mine, let him alone. He said that was a very interesting experience.

Well, all that is to say that what we read about in the New Testament is very credible. And if you don't believe in spirits, hopefully, you will at least see that those of us who do believe in spirits do have some reason for doing so, and that it's actually

a pretty widespread belief in many parts of the world. But probably most of you who are watching this already do believe in this.

But anyway, here is just some additional information to help you see that what we read about in Acts chapter 16 is very plausible. Now, the upshot of this is persecution that's not just plausible, but it is also mentioned by Paul and 1 Thessalonians about what he suffered in Philippi. And that we will see in the next session.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his instruction on the book of Acts. This is session 16, Acts chapters 15 and 16.