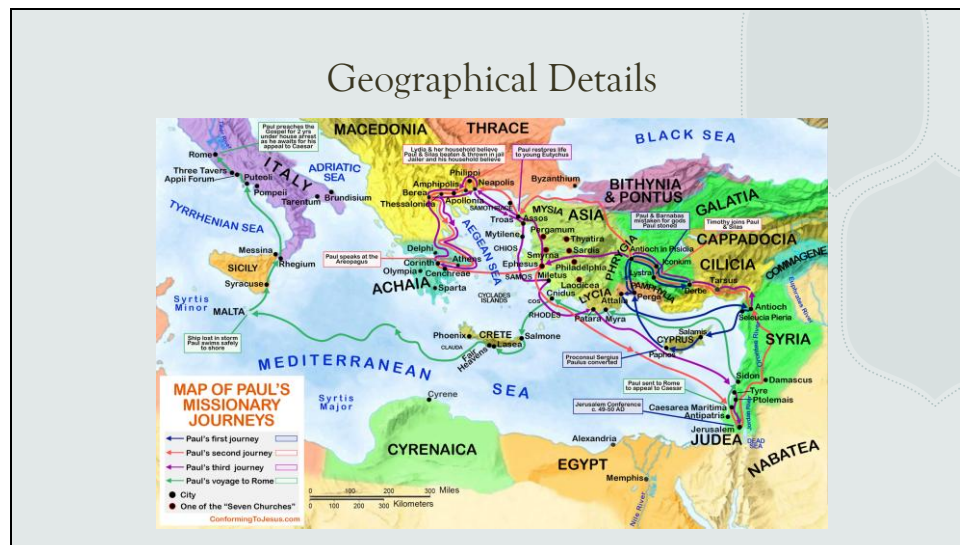


- Acts contains over three hundred references to people, places, events, cities, districts and titles of various officials. We can use these references to fact-check the believability of Acts' account, and evaluate whether the sources demonstrate local contemporary knowledge, and therefore if they are likely to be eyewitness testimony.
- Today, we will skim through some verifiable details, which are based on *The book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* by Colin Hemer.



### Journey Times

- Acts 1:12. Knowledge of local journey time in Jerusalem.
- Acts 21:8. The correct travel time between Ptolemais and Caesarea.

### Ports

- Acts 13:4-5. The correct crossing between ports (Seleucia, Syria to Salamis, Cyprus).
- Acts 13:13. The proper port (Perga) for a ship arriving directly from Cyprus.
- Acts 14:25-26. The proper port, Attalia, for returning to Antioch
- Acts 27:5-6. Myra is the principal port to find a ship sailing to Italy.

### Locations

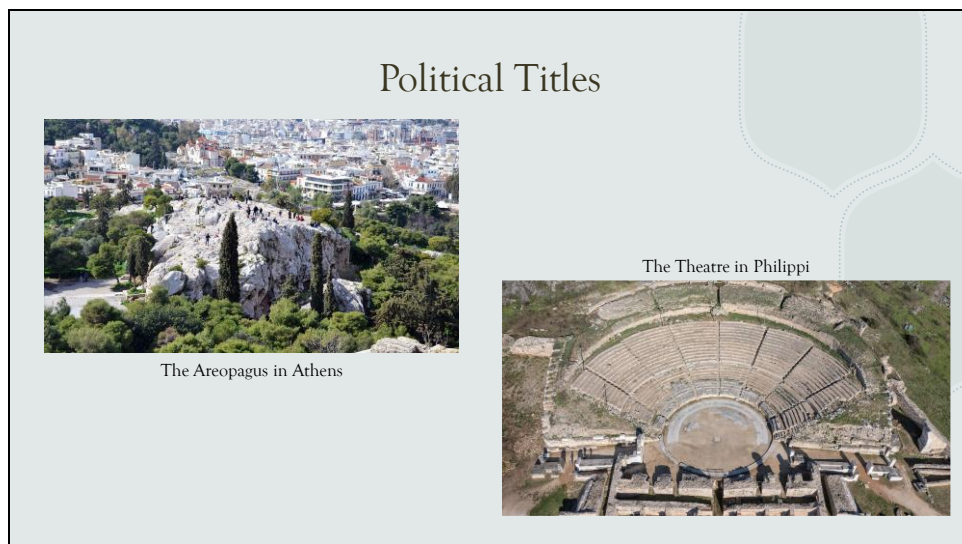
- Acts 14:6. Lystra and Derbe are both said to be in Lycaonia, which is correct only for this time period (AD 37-72).
- Acts 16:13. The correct location for the Gangites river near Philippi.
- Acts 20:14-15. The correct travel sequence of Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Miletus. (20:14-15)
- Acts 23:24. Correctly places Tarsus (Paul's city) in the province of Cilicia.
- Acts 27:8. The correct locations of Fair Havens and the neighbouring site of Lasea.
- Acts 27:16. The precise place and name of the island of Cauda.

### Routes and Rest stops

- Acts 15:41 - 16:1. The correct land route to Derbe and Lystra from the Cilician Gates.
- Acts 16:11. Samothrace was a common resting place for ships travelling to Macedonia.
- Acts 17:1. Travellers would spend successive nights at Amphipolis and Apollonia on their journey.
- Acts 23:31. Antipatris was the natural stopping point on the way to Caesarea.
- Acts 28:15. The Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns were stopping places on the Appian Way.

### The presence of Synagogues in

- Acts 17:1. Thessalonica.
- Acts 17:17. Athens.
- Acts 18:4. Corinth.



- Acts 13:7-8. Sergius Paulus is correctly called "proconsul" of Paphos, Cyprus.
  - Sergius Paulus is also attested by Pliny the Elder and several inscriptions.
- Acts 16:12. The proper description of Philippi as a Roman colony.
- Acts 16:22. The term "strategoī/strategos" used for the magistrates of Philippi was a common designation for the "duoviri/duumviri" of Roman coloniae, as found in inscriptions.
- Acts 17:6. The rulers of Thessalonica are correctly referred to by the rare term "politarchs", confirmed by an inscription from the city.
- Acts 17:34. The correct term "Areopagite" for a member of the court in Athens
- Acts 18:12. Gallio is correctly called the "proconsul" of Achaea.
- Acts 19:35. The chief magistrate in Ephesus is correctly called a "grammateus".
- Acts 19:38. The proper term "agoraioi/agoraios" for the court.
- Acts 28:7. The proper Maltese title "chief of the Island" for Publius.

## Terminology




The district of Lycaonia

The temple of Artemis/Diana in Ephesus



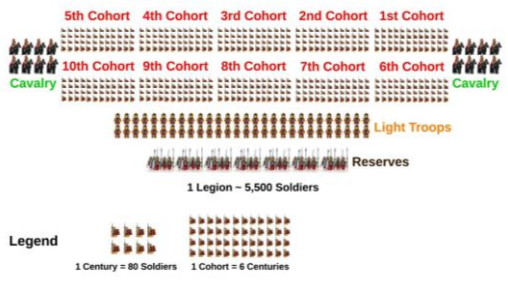
- Acts 14:6. The unusual but correct declension of the name "Lystra".
- Acts 14:11. The correct language spoken in Lystra—Lycaonian.
  - According to Tim McGrew: "This was unusual in the cosmopolitan, Hellenized society in which Paul moved. But the preservation of the local language is attested by a gloss in Stephanus of Byzantium, who explains that "Derbe" is a local word for "juniper." Hemer lists many other native names in the Lystra district."
- Acts 16:8. The proper form of the name "Troas".
- Acts 17:18. The use of the correct Athenian slang word "spermalogos" for Paul.
- Acts 19:9. The name Tyrannus as attested from Ephesus in first-century inscriptions.
- Acts 19:27. The well-attested term "great goddess Artemis".
- Acts 19:35. The proper title of honour "guardian"/"neokoros" which was authorized by the Romans.
- Acts 19:39. The precise expression, the "regular"/"ennomos" assembly.
- Acts 20:4. The precise ethnic designations, "Berean"/"beroiaios" and "Asian"/"Asianos" (20:4)
- Acts 21:1. The correct name of the city as neuter plural "Patara"
- Acts 25:18. The correct legal formula.
- Acts 25:26. The characteristic form of reference to the emperor at the time, "lord".
- Acts 27:27. The proper term of the time for the Adriatic Sea.

## Local Customs, Politics



Madder root. A possible source of Thyatira's purple dye.

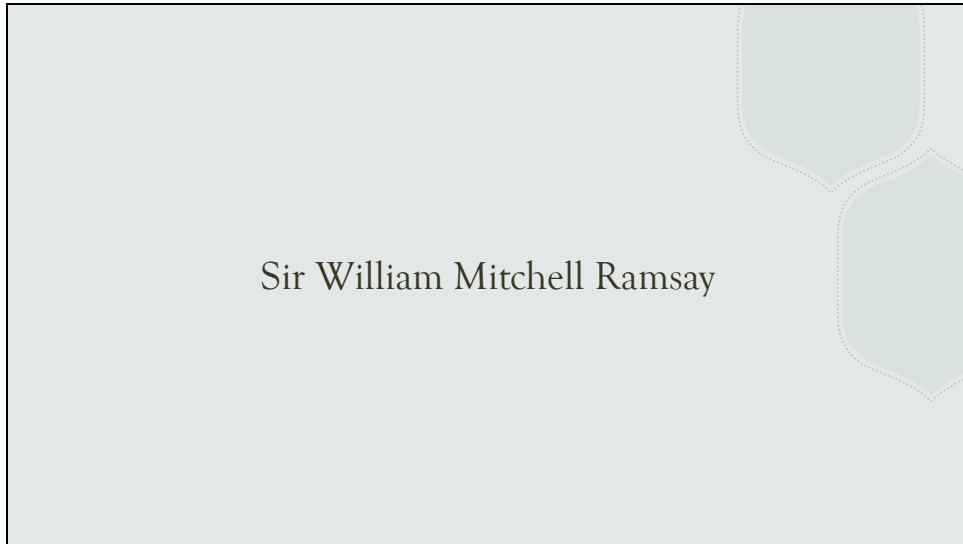
The organisation of a Roman Legion into Cohorts and Centuries.



1 Legion - 5,500 Soldiers

Legend  
1 Century = 80 Soldiers    1 Cohort = 6 Centuries

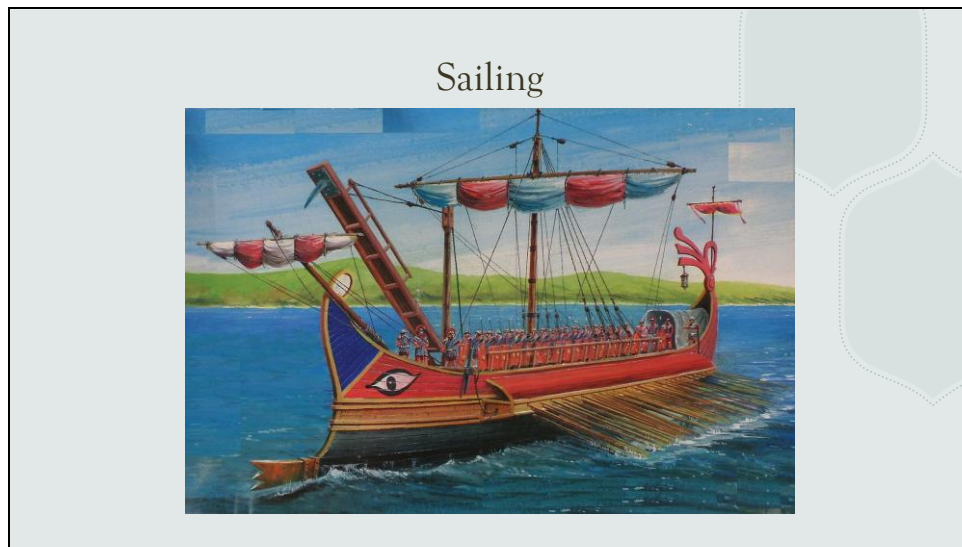
- Acts 14:12. Two gods known to be associated with Lystra—Zeus and Hermes.
- Acts 16:14. The proper association of Thyatira as a centre of dyeing.
- Acts 17:16. The abundant presence of images in Athens.
- Acts 17:17. The depiction of the Athenian life of philosophical debate in the Agora.
- Acts 17:21. The proper characterization of the Athenian character.
- Acts 17:23. An altar to an “unknown god” (17:23).
  - These altars are mentioned by Pausanias and Diogenes Laertius.
- Acts 17:32. The proper reaction of Greek philosophers, who denied the bodily resurrection.
  - See the words of Apollo in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 647-48.
- Acts 18:12. The "judgment seat"/"bema", which overlooks Corinth's forum.
- Acts 19:24. Well-known shrines and images of Artemis.
- Acts 19:29-41. The function of town assemblies, which met in the Ephesian theatre, in the operation of a city's business is described accurately.
- Acts 21:24. A characteristically Jewish act of piety.
- Acts 21:28. The Jewish law regarding Gentile use of the temple area.
  - Archaeological discoveries and quotations from Josephus confirm that Gentiles could be executed for entering the temple area. One inscription reads: “Let no Gentile enter within the balustrade and enclosure surrounding the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will be personally responsible for his consequent death.”
- Acts 21:31. The permanent stationing of a Roman "cohort"/"chiliarch" (led by a Tribune) at Antonia to suppress any disturbance at festival times.
- Acts 21:31,35. The flight of steps used by the guards.
- Acts 22:28. The common way to obtain Roman citizenship at this time.
- Acts 22:29. The tribune being impressed with Roman rather than Tarsian citizenship.
- Acts 24:1-9. The provincial penal procedure of the time.
- Acts 25:11. The right of appeal for Roman citizens.
- Acts 27:12. Fair Havens was a poorly sheltered roadstead.
- Acts 27:42. The severe liability for guards who permitted a prisoner to escape.
- Acts 28:4-6. The local people and superstitions of the day.
- Acts 28:16. The appropriate means of custody with Roman soldiers.
- Acts 28:30-31. The conditions of imprisonment, living “at his own expense”.



- A British Archaeologist and New Testament Scholar. Initially a skeptic, he was impressed and won over by the historical details in Acts.
- "I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without prejudice in favour of the conclusions which I shall now seek to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavourable to it, for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the theory, had at one time quite convinced me. It did not then lie in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely, but more recently I found myself brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth. In fact, beginning with a fixed idea that the work was essentially a second century composition, and never relying on its evidence as trustworthy for first century conditions, I gradually came to find it a useful ally in some obscure and difficult investigations."  
Sir William Ramsay. 1962. *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*.



## Slide 8



- Acts 17:14-15. The implication that sea travel is the most convenient way of reaching Athens due to the favouring East winds in Summer.
- Acts 21:3. The appropriate route crossing the open sea South of Cyprus favoured by persistent northwest winds.
- Acts 27:7. The slow passage to Cnidus, in the face of the typical northwest wind and the subsequent right route to sail, in view of the winds.
- Acts 27:13-14. A noted tendency of a south wind in these climes to back suddenly to a violent northeaster, the well-known gregale.
- Acts 27:15. The nature of a square-rigged ancient ship, having no option but to be driven before a gale.
- Acts 27:16. The appropriate manoeuvres for the safety of the ship in this situation.
- Acts 27:27. The fourteenth night. This timing has been confirmed by the judgment of experienced Mediterranean navigators with a remarkable calculation, based inevitably on a compounding of estimates and probabilities.
- Acts 27:28. The precise term "bolisantes" for taking soundings and the correct depth of the water near Malta.
- Acts 27:39. A position that suits the probable line of approach of a ship released to run before an easterly wind.
- Acts 28:13. Rhegium as a refuge to await a southerly wind to carry them through the strait.

- "His [Luke's] style? though accurate, is unprofessional. No sailor would have written in a style so little like that of a sailor; no man not a sailor could have written a narrative of a sea voyage so consistent in all its parts, unless from actual observation. This peculiarity of style is to me, in itself, a demonstration that the narrative of the voyage is an account of real events, written by an eyewitness. The geographical details must have been taken from actual observation, for the geographical knowledge of the age was not such as to enable a writer to be so minutely accurate in any other way"  
James Smith. 1880. *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*.