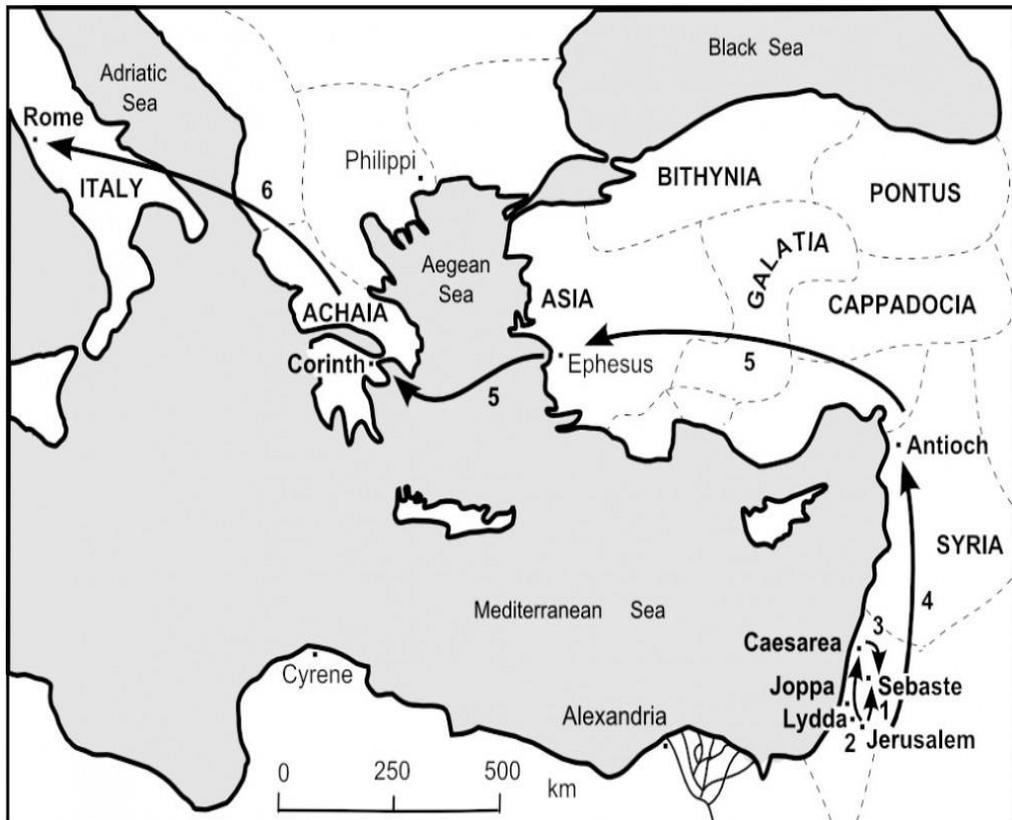


ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

WEEK FIVE "PETER"



Peter in **Acts 12:1-19** 44AD – Peter’s arrest in Jerusalem

Acts 15:1-21 Peter addresses the assembly of believers in **Jerusalem** in 49/50AD

Beyond Acts.....

Galatians. 2:11-14 Peter meets Paul in **Antioch** in 50AD, shortly after the Council of **Jerusalem (4 on map)**

1 Cor. 1:12 When Paul writes to the Corinthian believers in 56AD, some believers in **Corinth** claim to follow Peter, while others claim to follow Paul or

Apollos. Peter may, therefore, have escaped to **Corinth** between 44 and 49AD (see **5** on **map**).

1 Pet. 1:1 In 66AD, Peter writes from **Rome** to the Jewish believers in the Roman provinces of **Asia Minor** – in **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia** and **Bithynia** (see **6** on **map**).

2 Pet. 1:14-15 In 67AD, Peter writes again from **Rome**, where he has been imprisoned and is about to be executed.

Read with your heart

Remember what you know about Peter from the gospel too; standing around the fire denying that he knew Jesus, weeping bitterly, always being the one to challenge Jesus, argue with him, speak up on behalf of the disciples. Jesus yells at him at one point “Get behind me Satan”. Peter jumps in the lake, tries to walk on water then sinks, and he’s hurt when he sees Jesus on the beach after the resurrection and Jesus asks him three times “do you love me”? Do you relate to Peter personality-wise? How do you feel about him? About yourself in relation to him?

Read with your head

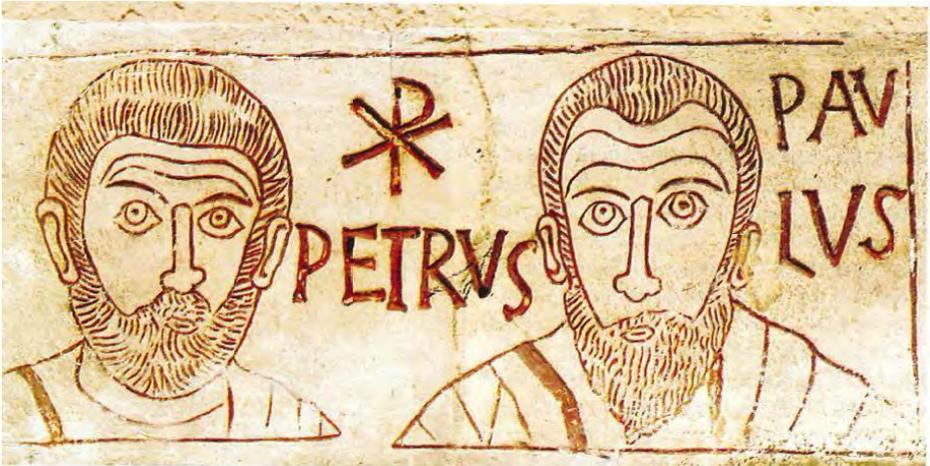
Acts 2. 1-29: Luke has been very specific, more than anywhere else in his gospel or Acts, about the makeup of the crowd. He has listed the nationalities so that when Peter stands up, we know he is addressing a very mixed gathering “Judeans and all those dwelling in Jerusalem”. The famous comment that Peter makes about the disciples not being drunk because it’s only 9am, indicates that the experience of listening to *glossolalia* is sufficiently ambiguous as to require some explanation and interpretation. Luke is a historian, Greek not Jewish, intending to write the story to “give confidence” to those who hear it (his stated purpose at the beginning). And so his use of rhetoric, the speeches that he gives to his key figures, follows historical conventions. The speeches give a kind of commentary on the events, linking them to prophecies, and providing a programme that makes sense of the rather tumultuous events themselves. The scene Luke paints – of ecstatic utterance of a group, and then followed by a single speech by an individual who interprets the ecstatic utterance- follows a pattern, for

example, that is evident in the Gentile religions, for example at Delphi, where divine revelations followed this pattern. Within this, Peter is then being presented to us by Luke as the cult “prophet” who will make the utterances of God intelligible to mortals. But that’s not what Peter does! Luke surprises readers who will be expecting a straight “translation” of the ecstatic tongues. Peter interprets the whole Christ event. Luke/Peter changes the prophecy from Joel in significant ways; *in the last days says God*. In Joel, it reads *after these things*. And there is no *says God* in Joel. This frames the whole of the quotation in an eschatological way (Peter is saying that they are living through the end times) and as ordained by God. Verse 18 Luke changes *the slaves/servants to my slaves/servants*. And so the context is that of the end of the world (imminent) and the people who are servants who belong to God. There is a universalism implied by the use of this prophecy *all flesh* meaning all humanity. Psalm 2 and psalm 109 are used as further Hebrew examples of prophecy that will convince the crowd that Jesus of Nazareth’s death and resurrection is linked fundamentally to this ecstatic happening they see. Peter has to make the link for them. It’s not obvious to the crowd what is happening. The challenge Peter is putting before them is 1. Change your perception of Jesus and what his death/resurrection means 2. Take part in the prophetic, eschatological Spirit being poured out. Peter is challenging the crowd to respond to the activity of God in their midst.

Chapter 4: Peter again is the spokesperson, this time challenging the religious leaders. Again wanting to make the link between what they are seeing now (a healed man more than forty years old) with Jesus of Nazareth. (verse 10). Luke then uses a quote from psalm 117 he’s used before in his gospel (at the end of Jesus’s parable of the vineyard), again driving home the point that Jesus is the Messianic figure they are waiting for. Verse 13 Peter is again bold (*parresia*). It also carries the meaning of *frank, plain speaking*. They are described as *agrammatos* which literally means illiterate, but means lack of education generally.

Luke is following the pattern of Moses in these descriptions of Peter (and John) emerging as leaders of the early church. They are rejected, they are then empowered to do works of wonder. It is the existing leaders who are upset at them: the people seem to be listening. Luke is so keen to draw very sharp distinctions between the apostles’ authority (filled with the Holy Spirit)

and the Sanhedrin, the existing religious leaders, who take refuge in political manoeuvring. The apostles pray for a spirit of frankness and boldness, and the Holy Spirit-filled community shares its possessions. The phrase laying “at the apostles’ feet” is a clear statement from Luke that the community recognise the authority of the apostles, one of Luke’s key concerns.



Read with your feet

Peter is a disciple (one who learns) who turns into an apostle (one who is sent out). What pattern of learning and speaking out do you discern in your own everyday life? How do you learn? What do you say?

‘a disciple is, as we have seen, simply a learner; and this ultimately is what the disciple learns: how to be a place in the world where the act of God can come alive.’ Rowan Williams *Being Disciples*

Listening to the personality, story of Peter, what’s your personality and story as a follower or companion of Jesus in everyday life? What’s the personality and story of this community?