

Lifecycle

- Things and events have: Beginning / Middle / End
 - What are examples?
- Why do things and events end?
 - Internal limitations and failings
 - External limitations, enemies, and obstacles
- What doesn't have a Beginning / Middle / End?
- What about Christianity and Christians? Why? Really?

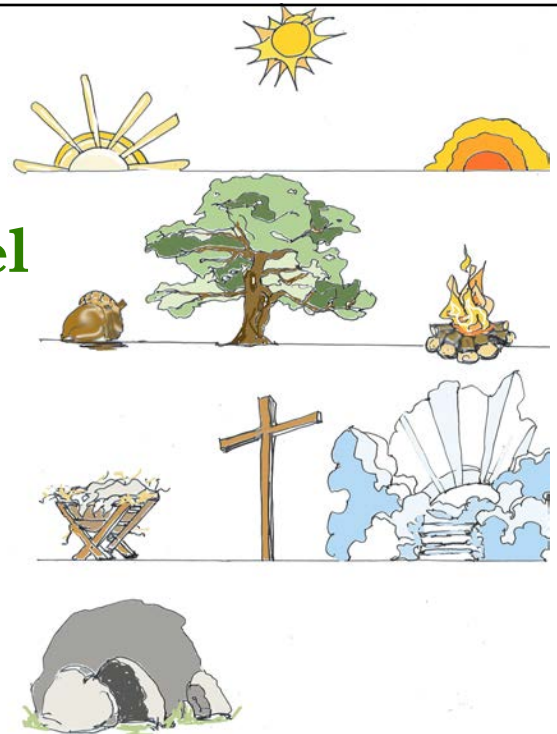


1

The Unstoppable Gospel

Acts 28:17-31

bib.ly/Ac28+NIV



2

Overview of Acts from Acts 1:6-8

Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to **restore the kingdom** to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will

receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my **witnesses**

Persecution in Jerusalem, Acts 1–7, Peter
Peter + Unknown and in all Judea and Samaria, Acts 8–12, Philip & Peter
“eschaton” and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 13–28, Barnabas, Paul

3

Overview of Acts 21-28

Paul was arrested in Jerusalem (Judea)

- Jewish leaders were upset with Paul
 - Paul’s claim that Jewish traditions were no longer necessary
 - Paul including Gentiles among Jewish people
- They accused him of crimes before Roman rulers

Paul “appealed to Caesar” to try to get justice

Paul had just arrived in Rome as a prisoner
after a 4-month journey that almost took his life

4

Acts 28:17-22

Three days later he **called together the local Jewish leaders**. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “**My brothers**, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against **my own people**. For this reason I have **asked** to see you and talk with you. It is because of the **hope of Israel** that I am bound with this chain.”

5

Acts 28:17-22

They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. But **we want to hear** what your views are, for we know that people **everywhere are talking against this sect.**”

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Acts 28:17-31

17-22 Paul: carefully reached out to the Jewish leaders

- 23-29 • In chains because of the “**hope of Israel**”
- God will send a Savior (Messiah) to rescue them:
- 30-31
- Restore the Kingdom → resurrection
 - Paul: I am not against Israel and not against you!
 - Jewish leaders: skeptical, yet want to hear more
 - This is often true for us:
 - People are skeptical of Christians and Christianity
 - Perhaps have heard & seen many concerning things, or it seems that we are against them
 - Yet we often share the same hopes and concerns
 - Open, humble conversations can be powerful!

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Acts 28:23-29

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in **even larger numbers** to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from **morning till evening**, **explaining** about the **kingdom of God**, and from the **Law of Moses** and from the **Prophets** he tried to **persuade** them about **Jesus**. Some were convinced by what he said, but others **would not believe**. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

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Acts 28:23-29

“Go to this people and say,

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

For this people’s **heart** has become **calloused**;

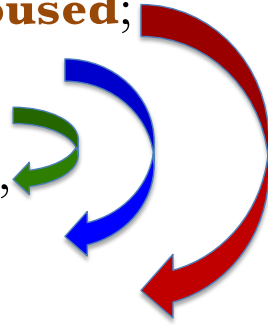
they hardly hear with their **ears**,
and they have closed their **eyes**.

Otherwise they might see with their **eyes**,

hear with their **ears**,
understand with their **hearts**

and **turn**, and I would heal them.’

“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”



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Acts 28:17-31

17-22 Paul: carefully reached out to the Jewish leaders

23-29 Paul explained Jesus from a Jewish perspective

30-31 • The Kingdom of God and Jesus the Messiah

- Thoroughly and persuasively
 - Not just to inform them. Tried to convince them
- Mixed response: some belief and some resistance
- Paul quoted Isaiah: Their hearts were calloused
 - Like Ezekiel: hearts of stone
- Prophetic warning → hoping for a change of heart!
- Ongoing pattern:
 - “For the Jew first, and also the Gentile”

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Acts 28:30-31

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.

He **proclaimed** the **kingdom of God** and **taught** about the **Lord Jesus Christ**—with **all boldness** and **without hindrance!**

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Acts 28:17-31

17-22 Paul: carefully reached out to the Jewish leaders

23-29 Paul explained Jesus from a Jewish perspective

30-31 **Though still a prisoner, Paul continued to proclaim**

- Message: the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ
- Boldly and without hindrance → maybe...
 - Bold=internal strength
 - Without hindrance=external resistance ineffective
- In-person and in writing
- Presumably supported financially by churches
- Ends with realistic confidence
in the growth of the Gospel even in troubles

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Big Idea

The Good News of Jesus Christ
will grow and go to all peoples
until the end of this age

By the Spirit and power of God

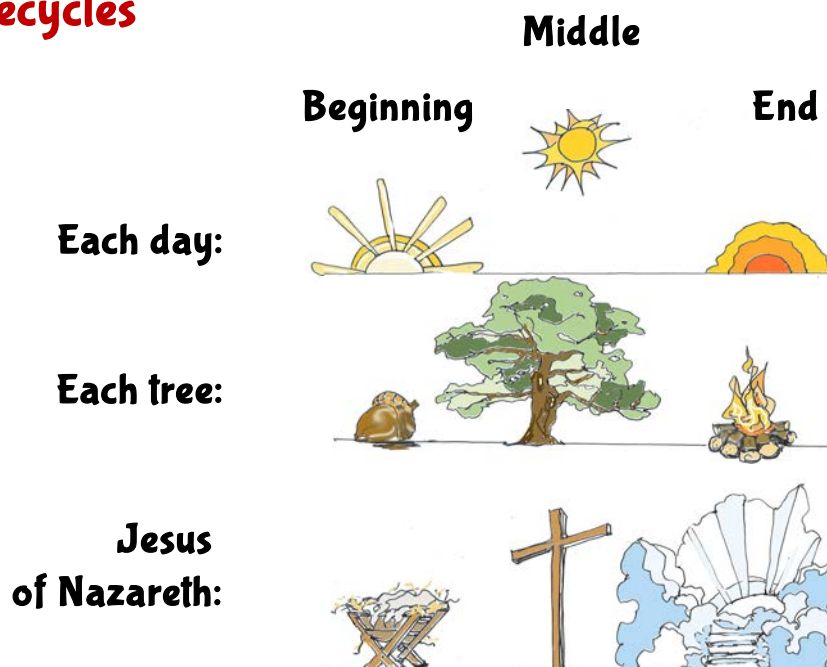
Even through human and supernatural opposition and failings

This is the big idea of all of Acts

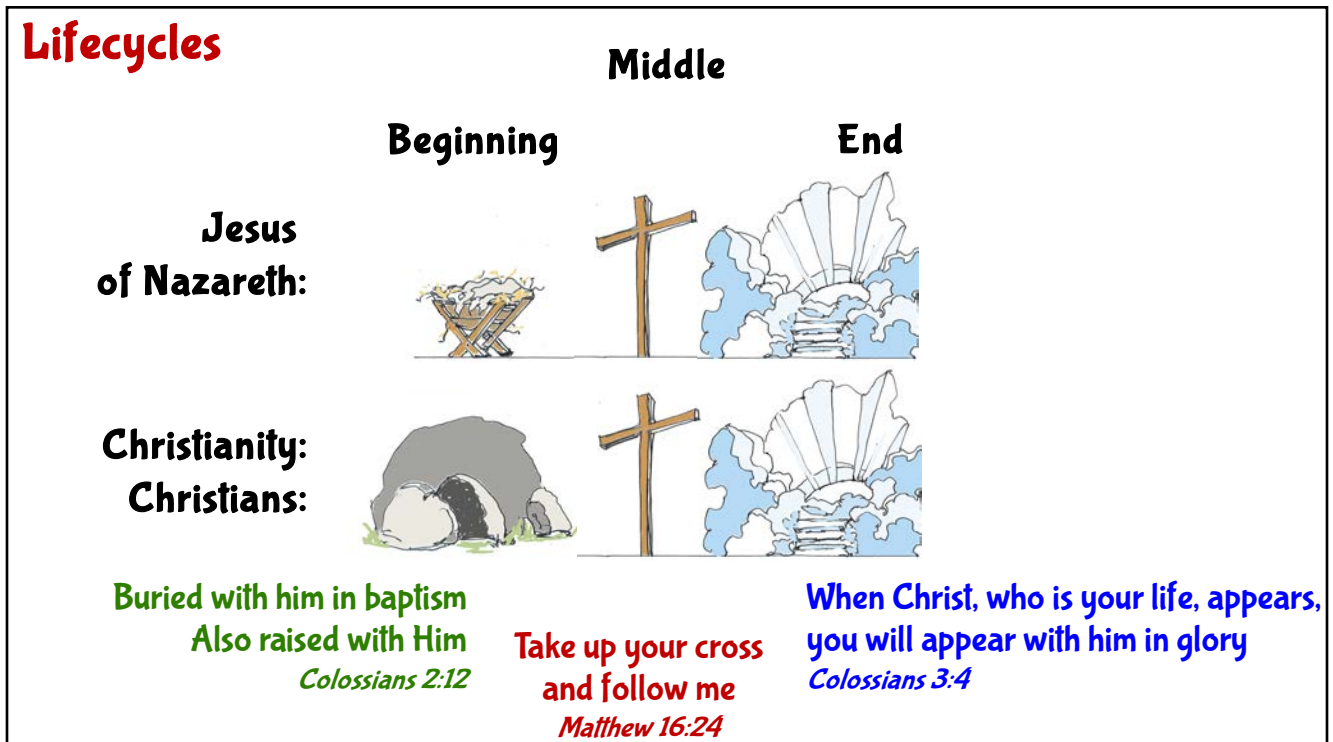
- **With all boldness and without hindrance**

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Lifecycles



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Paul said: “Remember Jesus Christ, **raised** from the **dead**, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which **I am suffering** even to the point of being **chained like a criminal**. But **God’s word is not chained**.”

2 Timothy 2:8-9, perhaps during a later imprisonment leading to his death

- This is the exact ending of Acts
 - Christian witnesses in chains, yet the Gospel going out
 - And that is victory!
- **This is the Church**
 - Not a martyr complex: self-pity
 - Not triumphalistic expectation: expect all blessing
 - Not foolish, sloppy living
 - Rather: Realistic optimism & skillful, faith-filled godliness

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Big Idea

The Good News of Jesus Christ
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until the end of this age

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Application

Boldly: Proclaim the Kingdom of God and Jesus

- **Show** the Kingdom/God's ways: **share the fruits**
 - The church: be an image of God's values in action
 - In the world: actively pursue God's values and ways
- **Tell** about the Kingdom: **share the root**
 - The resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - The power of the Spirit of God in us

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Application

Boldly: Proclaim the Kingdom of God and Jesus

Without hindrance: No matter the challenges

- Be confident in God and His Gospel by the Spirit
 - Focus on the power, not the problems
 - Not naïve or blind faith
 - Rather: focus on
the immeasurable power and glory of God
- Nothing can stop the Gospel!
 - It may take twists and turns
 - There may be dark days

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Sometimes it seems like we're going backwards!

- **External** obstacles, hindrance, troubles
 - Not able to join together physically → evangelism...
 - Authorities that limit the church → friends elsewhere
 - Injustice, decay, conflicts, hate, racism, ungodliness, ...
 - Like shooting of and arrests of Ahmaud Arbery
- **Internal** obstacles, hindrance, troubles
 - Conflicts among people
 - Problems in leadership
 - Problems in followership
 - Slow movement, distractions, limitations, ...

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“How fast is the earth moving?”

Scientific American, 1998

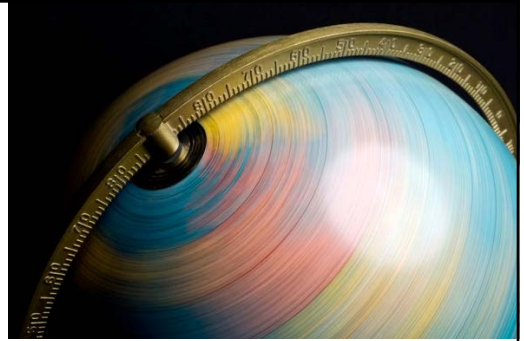
Spinning: 460 m/sec [1,000 mph]

- But that means sometimes we are going ‘backwards’ at 1,000 mph!

Orbiting the sun: 220 km/sec [490,000 mph]

- So even when we’re going ‘backwards’ at 1,000 mph, we’re actually going ‘forward’ 480,000 mph

Milky Way to the “Great Attractor”: 1,000 km/sec [2,200,000 mph]



21

“What about when the Church seems to be making so little progress?”

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not

overcome it.” *Matthew 16:18* gates of Hades = Satan’s opposition

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” *Romans 8:28*

It might look and feel like we are going backwards, yet ***nothing can stop*** the work of God to build His church



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Big Idea

The Good News of Jesus Christ
will grow and go to all peoples
until the end of this age

Rejoice in the power of God and the Gospel!

Proclaim the Gospel: boldly and without hindrance

- **Show and tell the Good News of Jesus**
- **Even when socially distancing!**

Let's share the Good News by God's power together!