To Give Witness to the Resurrected Messiah


Janusz Kucicki

Abstract

The second part of this study concerns the witness given by Paul. His life as witness to Resurrected Messiah can be divided into three periods: his testimony shortly after his conversion; his witness during the period of mission activity; the time of his imprisonment. The importance of the circumstances for Paul’s witness to the Resurrected Messiah is the main purpose of this study.

1. Witnesses to the ends of the earth.

1.1. Paul and the Antioch community

Following the narrative regarding Peter’s apologetic speech, Luke places the narrative about the beginning of the community of Jesus’ believers in Syrian Antioch. The citizens of Antioch were the first who used the name “Christian” when referring to Jews believing in Jesus of Nazareth (Ac 11, 26). Luke underlines the fact that fugitives from Jerusalem were spreading the kerygma only to Jews dwelling in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Ac 11, 19). However, the diaspora Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene preached the kerygma also to Gentiles, who were positive in their reception of it (Ac 11, 20–21). In this way Luke shows that the mission to the Gentiles was initiated by Jews of the diaspora, not by Palestinian Jews. As a result, the Antioch Christian community consisted of Jews and Gentiles, which was looked on with suspicion by the community in Jerusalem, who sent Barnabas to Antioch to investigate the situation (Ac 11, 22). Barnabas found that the Antioch Christian community was not only stable and in good order, but also showing promise of development. That development, however, required more diaspora Jews who were able to approach the Gentiles, and for this task Barnabas considered Saul of Tarsus to be a very useful co-worker (Ac 11, 23–26). The needs of the Antioch Christian community were the reason for Saul’s “activation” by his main mentor Barnabas at the beginning of his mission service (Ac 11, 25–26. 30; 12, 24–25). In this way, Luke included Saul again in his narrative, and he would become the central and exclusive personality in Ac 13–28.

1 Paul almost never worked alone and many co-workers of Saul/Paul are mentioned by Luke. He is singled out for focus in the narrative.
Before this, however, Luke describes the persecution of the apostles in Jerusalem (Ac 12, 1–25), where the king Herod Agrippa I beheaded James and imprisoned Peter.

The narrative regarding Saul/Paul as the witness to the Resurrected Messiah consists of three expositions: the first regards Saul/Paul’s cooperation with the Antioch Christian community (Ac 13, 1–15, 35); the second concerns Paul’s independent mission activities (Ac 15, 36–21, 16); the third recounts the period of Paul’s imprisonment (Ac 21, 17–28, 31). Each of the expositions has its own specific character designed to underline several different aspects of Saul/Paul as witness to the Resurrected Messiah. The first presentation of Saul/Paul’s mission activities as a member of Antioch community shows him to be subordinate to Barnabas, his mentor and co-worker (Ac 11, 25–30; 12, 24–25). As a team they contributed successfully to the development of the community, earning the respect of the members (Ac 13, 1). After one year of service, they were elected by the community, on the direct order of the Holy Spirit, to undertake the mission in Cyprus as part of the mission activity of the Antioch community (Ac 13, 2–3). Luke shows little interest in the mission activity of Barnabas/Saul/John during their time in Cyprus (Ac 13, 4–12) but concentrates exclusively on their encounter with Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of the island, who was the only convert mentioned by Luke in the narrative regarding Cyprus (Ac 13, 12). Sergius Paulus may also have been involved in extending the mission journey of the missionaries from Antioch to include the region of Pisidia, especially to the city of Pisidian Antioch, where the first mission speech of Paul was given. Luke’s account has other peculiarities, such as the sudden abandonment of using the name Saul (Ac 13, 9. 13). From now on the name Paul is almost exclusively used. Rather than it being the result of his meeting with Sergius Paulus, the change to using the name Paul probably derives from Luke’s narrative concept and reflects the fact that from now on Paul takes the initiative. Another peculiarity is Mark’s sudden return to Jerusalem. This will become a source of conflict between Paul and Barnabas (Ac 15, 36–41), and is consciously presented by Luke in a very enigmatic manner. It seems that this narrative (Ac 13, 4–12) is a turning point in Luke’s presentation of Paul, who from here acts as the leader and gives the speech in Pisidian Antioch (Ac 13, 16–41. 46–47). The mission of the Antioch Christian community was addressed to the Jews living in the Diaspora – first in Cyprus, and then additionally in the regions of Pamphylia and Pisidia, which is the main factor that determines the content and form of the speech. This speech is the first presentation of Paul’s kerygma about Jesus, the Resurrected Messiah. It is composed entirely of arguments based on extensive quotations from the Scripture that are interpreted from a Christological perspective. The main point of his kerygma concerns Jesus as the Savior of Israel, who was promised by

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2 We refer here to a possible connection between Sergius Paulus and the region of Pisidia, which may be assumed on the basis of an inscription that (probably) contains the names of his family or relatives. It was discovered near Pisidian Antioch by W. Ramsay. Cf: W.M. Ramsay, Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920, pp. 150–172.

3 In the address of the speech (Ac 13, 16, 26), Paul mentions also “those who fear God”, which refers to Gentiles attracted to Judaism and in some way related to the Synagogue.

God to David (Ac 13, 23–25). This divine promise, however, was rejected by the inhabitants of Jerusalem and by the Temple authorities when they condemned Jesus (Ac 13, 26–30). The rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah was an act of disobedience to God, as was shown by God’s raising Jesus from the dead (Ac 13, 30–33). The statement concerning the resurrection of Jesus is dwelt on at length by Paul (Ac 13, 33–37) since he is proclaiming to the diaspora Jews not merely the Messiah, but the Resurrected Messiah, something that was new even for Jews. The speech ends with teaching regarding Jesus being the only Savior for Israel (Ac 13, 38–41) and this requires that the Jews also believe in the Resurrected Messiah.

In this speech Paul (like Peter) indicates twice that he is the witness to whom the teaching was given regarding salvation in Jesus the Resurrected Messiah (Ac 13, 26), and who proclaims the Good News promised to the ancestors (Ac 13, 27). In general terms, his teaching was rejected by the Jews more out of human weakness (Ac 13, 45) than on a basis of religious arguments. As a consequence of this rejection Paul and Barnabas were forced to proclaim the kerygma to the Gentiles (Ac 13, 46–47), something that was warmly appreciated by the Gentiles (Ac 13, 48). Luke’s narrative shows the modus operandi of Paul’s mission activity: from now until the last event recorded in Acts, the Jews’ rejection of his proclamation of the kerygma is the immediate cause of his proclaiming the kerygma to the Gentiles.

The narrative regarding Paul’s mission in Pisidian Antioch shows some general characteristics of Paul, the witness to the Resurrected Messiah. First, Paul’s mission to the Gentiles is a direct consequence of the Jews’ opposition to his activity, which indicates that Paul, when proclaiming the kerygma, gave priority to the Jews. Secondly, the opposition was based on human emotions, and led to rejection of his kerygma, and in the future to his persecution. Thirdly, Paul’s argument that Jesus is the Resurrected Messiah is based in the main on specific interpretations of texts from the Jewish Scripture.

The rest of the narrative concerning the mission in the region of Pisidia (Ac 14, 8–28) offers information about Paul’s activity in the cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. In Iconium, Paul’s modus operandi and the reception of his kerygma was similar to that in Pisidian Antioch, but the impact seems to have been stronger in Iconium because the citizens were split into two factions: Paul’s supporters, and his opponents (Ac 14, 4). The situation led to an attempt to eliminate Paul by leaders not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles (Ac 14, 5). Despite the considerable success of his mission and his long stay in the city, Paul was forced to flee for his life. Luke’s narrative here is clearly a preparation for recounting an event that took place in Lystra, a town located 30 kilometers south of Iconium that was established in 26 BC as a colony by Caesar Augustus with the name Julia Felix Gemina Lustra, and administratively belonged to the province of Galatia.

Luke’s account of the mission in the city tells us nothing about the mission activity in Lystra nor about the establishment of the community by Paul and Barnabas⁵. The narrative goes

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⁵ Ac 14, 20 indicates that at the time of Paul’s stoning there was a community of believers in the city, and this information is supported by Ac 16, 1–2. However, Luke does not speak directly of the origin of the community. Judging from the fact that Paul visited the community during the second mission journey, the claim that the community was established by Paul can be accepted.
directly to the miracle (Ac 14, 8–14), which was wrongly interpreted by the local community due to their religious background (Ac 14, 11–14). The action of the people was forcefully opposed by Paul and Barnabas and was the immediate cause for the first speech by Paul that was set entirely in a Gentile context⁶. Paul’s speech concerns two subjects: the human origin of the apostles (Ac 14, 15a), and teaching concerning the one and only God, the creator of the universe (Ac 14, 15b–17). His teaching regarding the first shows the idolatry of Gentiles living in the interior, and with a polytheistic religious background, as being the main problem in approaching them with the kerygma regarding Jesus, the Resurrected Messiah⁷. The second part of speech is an example of Paul’s approach to the Gentiles with teaching based on monotheistic religious belief that there is only one God, who is creator and ruler of the world (Ac 14, 15b–17, 17, 24–28), and to whom the inhabitants of Lystra should convert (Ac 17, 22–31). This part of the speech shows some similarities with Paul’s speech on the Areopagus (cf. Ac 14, 15b–17 and Ac 17, 26–31). These similarities show the first of the two most difficult problems encountered in proclaiming the kerygma to Gentiles who had not known Judaism, namely, their idolatry. Before the kerygma can be proclaimed to them the monotheistic concept of God must first be accepted by the Gentiles⁸. In this context the action of Jews from Antioch and Iconium, in their determined opposition to Paul and Barnabas, paradoxically hinders the spread of the most fundamental teaching of Judaism. The action of the Jews led to the stoning of Paul and his subsequent flight to Derbe, where another successful mission was undertaken (Ac 14, 21).

During the first mission journey Paul and Barnabas gave witness to diaspora Jews that Jesus of Nazareth is the Resurrected Messiah, and also to the Gentiles that there is only one God, the creator of the world. While the first is a direct realization of Jesus’ order, the second is a necessary preparation for those who had not yet encountered the Jewish concept of God, before the kerygma about Jesus could be proclaimed to them.

The next narrative concerning Paul’s witness to Jesus relates to the conflict in Antioch that became the immediate cause for the so-called Jerusalem Council (Ac 15, 1–35). The conflict within the Antioch Christian community between Paul and Barnabas (and their supporters), who opted against obligatory conversion to Judaism for Gentiles believing in Jesus as the Resurrected Messiah in order to be saved, and the “brothers from Jerusalem” who opted for an indispensable obligation of conversion to Judaism if they, as believers in Jesus, wanted to be saved (Ac 15, 1). This soteriological issue goes beyond theoretical discourse and has very practical consequences, since, although the coexistence of Jews and Gentiles as the followers of Jesus was decided (Ac 11, 14–18), however the status of Gentiles within the community had not yet been clarified. Ac 11, 18 says that after hearing Peter’s apology the Jews concluded that “God has granted to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to Life”, which leaves room for

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⁶ Ac 14, 11. 19 strongly suggests the absence of Jews in the crowd who deified Barnabas and Paul.

⁷ Paul’s approach to the idolatry of the Gentiles is also presented ironically in the narrative part (Ac 17, 16) as well as in the speech on the Areopagus (Ac 17, 22–23, 29).

⁸ In this speech the teaching concerning the only God naturally has a very strong Jewish character. L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 251.
different interpretations of the phrase “to grant the repentance”\textsuperscript{9}. Paul’s interpretation was finally recognized as the correct one by Peter during the Council (Ac 15, 11), which according to Luke’s narrative approves (theoretically) the integration of the Gentiles with the Jews within the community of Jesus’ believers\textsuperscript{10}. However, Paul’s defense of this interpretation was not over since he will have to uphold the doctrine of salvation by faith so often in the near future.

The last event in the narrative concerning Paul’s very close co-operation with Barnabas and the Antioch community is the break between him and Barnabas due to disagreement over John’s participation in the next mission journey (Ac 15, 36–40). The account serves to indicate the end of “dependence” on Barnabas and the Antioch community, but it does not mean the end of their relationship.

1.2. Paul’s quest to the ends of the earth

After his separation from Barnabas, Paul seems to act independently from the Antioch community (Ac 15, 40), but in fact he is still connected with it (Ac 18, 22). During the next two mission journeys Paul freely chooses his co-workers and the places of his mission activity, with the exception of the first part of the so-called second mission journey, during which Paul, after visiting the communities established during the mission work with Barnabas (Ac 16, 1–5), was not allowed by the Holy Spirit to work in some places he had planned (Ac 16, 6–8). Luke’s account of the missions in Macedonia and Achaea, two regions where Paul achieved considerable success in his mission to the Gentiles, shows clearly his achievement among the Gentiles, despite the fact that Paul’s \textit{modus operandi} in mission did not change. In Philippi, a Gentile dominated environment, where the presence of a Jewish diaspora is not explicitly mentioned (Ac 16, 13), Paul and Silas were arrested specifically because of “negative consequences” of the healing miracle performed by Paul (Ac 16, 18–19), but indirectly it was due to anti-Jewish prejudice (Ac 16, 20–21). However, their suffering brought important mission success (Ac 16, 22–40) in the cases of the conversion of Lydia and the jailer with his household. The scene then moves on to Thessalonica, where Paul started his mission activity according to his \textit{modus operandi} by approaching the local Jews of the diaspora (Ac 17, 1–2). This brought as a result some new followers of Jesus, but also created some new ardent opponents to the kerygma he proclaimed (Ac 17, 4–5). Forced by circumstances, Paul and Silas fled to Berea, where the mission to diaspora Jews brought much better results, with many new and devoted believers (Ac 17, 10–12). His opponents in Thessalonica, however, persecuted Paul even in Berea (Ac 17, 13–14). The opposition of the Jews from Thessalonica should be considered as strong and dangerous for Paul, since the disciples from Berea sent Paul as far as


\textsuperscript{10} Peter’s speech recognized the teaching of Paul and Barnabas regarding salvation by faith; however, in order to justify the decree, the Twelve and the elders sent official delegates (Sylas and Juda) who would testify verbally to the origin of the decree concerning the particular obligation for the Gentiles (Ac 15, 25–27). C.S. Keener, \textit{Acts}, Vol. 3 (15, 1–23, 35). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014, pp. 2290–2291.
Athens (Ac 17, 15). The reasons for the relatively short mission in the region of Macedonia were the prejudices of the Gentiles and the intransigent opposition by some diaspora Jews.

Although Paul’s mission in Athens can hardly be considered to have been successful, the only speech delivered by Paul during the second mission journey is inserted here (Ac 17, 22–31). This journey (Ac 15, 36–18, 22), that was intended as a mission to the Diaspora Jews dwelling in Asia Minor, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Ac 16, 6–10) and faced with constant opposition by some Jews (Ac 17, 5; Ac 18, 5–6), became a mission not only to Jews, but also to Gentiles. Luke’s narrative of the mission in Macedonia and Achaea concentrates on the mission to the Gentiles, with a short and rather schematic presentation of the mission among the diaspora Jews. For this reason, the speech is placed in Athens, the city boasting of being the cradle of Greek culture and philosophy. In form and content, it is addressed to the Athenians, the representatives of the Hellenistic world. The speech, using a high rhetorical style, presents first the teaching about the only God who, although unknown to the Athenians, is probably respected by them, due rather to courtesy than any real interest\textsuperscript{11}. The God proclaimed by Paul is the source of all life and the creator of the whole universe (Ac 17, 22–23), which distinguishes Him greatly from the Athenians’ gods who in order to exist need human service and in fact were made by human hands (Ac 17, 24–25). The true and living God was not made by human hands and has no need of human assistance; on the contrary, He is God for every nation because He is the source of all life and the principle of existence (Ac 17, 26–28). The Athenians, therefore, must convert from serving idols to worship of the only God, who by the message proclaimed by Paul calls them to recognize the truth and accept it (Ac 17, 30–31). Their answer to Paul’s teaching is of crucial importance, because it will influence God’s judgment on them, which will be executed by the man raised from the dead (Ac 17, 31)\textsuperscript{12}. At this point of the speech Paul was interrupted by the Athenians because the concepts of resurrection and judgment by a dead man were unacceptable by philosophical standards (Ac 17, 32–33). The Athenians found Paul’s teaching to be irrational, and they considered Paul to be no more than a scavenger. The lack of success in the mission in Athens, explains both brevity of the account concerning the mission, and the elaborate context of the speech. In Luke’s narrative strategy the speech on the Areopagus does not relate to the Athenians alone, but the teaching contained in it should be taken as an example of Paul’s approach to the Hellenistic world. Before the kerygma about salvation in Jesus can be proclaimed to the Gentiles, the monotheistic concept of God must be introduced to them as a kind of necessary preparation. The rejection of both Paul’s teaching regarding the idea of God’s judgement over humanity, and the possibility of resurrection of the dead, points out the main obstacle to proclaiming Jesus as Christ to those who were not familiar with Judaism\textsuperscript{13}.

\textsuperscript{11} The content of Paul’s speech probably did not differ substantially from the typical Jewish view-point regarding the Gentiles and their religions. Some Athenians would have known about Jews and Judaism since the presence in Athens of a Jewish community with a Synagogue is mentioned in Ac 17, 17.


\textsuperscript{13} The basics of Jewish teaching, such as “God the one and only creator”, was probably known to the Athenians as a result of their interaction with Jews dwelling in Athens. This teaching was intended by Paul as preparatory teaching
The lack of success in Athens is balanced by the following narrative concerning the very successful mission in Corinth (Ac 18, 1–22). This mission, lasting a year and a half, is summed up in a very schematic manner (Ac 18, 1–9). The activities were characterized (in general) by rejection of his kerygma by the diaspora Jews (Ac 18, 5–6) and acceptance (in general) by the Gentiles (Ac 18, 7–8). The opposition of the Jews (Ac 18, 12–17) seems to have been an indirect reason for ending the second mission journey (Ac 18, 18–22).

In this narrative of the second mission journey, Luke gives a strong impression of underlining the events in Philippi and Athens, both cities those were barely influenced by Jewish religion and culture, and so making them to be good examples to show the difficulties incurred in proclaiming the kerygma in this kind of environment. From this it is possible to deduce that outside of Palestine the presence and influence of Judaism was one of the major factors that determined the success of the mission to the Gentiles.

In developing the narrative concerning Paul’s mission activities the account of the so-called third mission journey (Ac 18, 23–21, 16) is of crucial importance for understanding Luke’s presentation of Paul, since it has a conclusive character. The first part of the narrative presents Paul’s mission in Ephesus (Ac 19, 1–40) where three major events are mentioned. The first is Paul’s meeting with the disciples of John the Baptist (Ac 19, 1–7), who, after Paul’s explanation regarding the relation between John’s mission and Jesus’ mission, became followers of Jesus. This entirely new aspect of Paul’s activity presents a solution to the issue regarding the messianic dignity of John the Baptist in some Jewish circles. In the context of proclaiming Jesus as the Resurrected Messiah the solution to this issue was of critical importance for the witnesses of Jesus. The second event was Paul’s success in the struggle with idolatry in the city (Ac 19, 11–20), where many of those who were involved in magic were converted by signs and actions related to Paul’s activity. According to Luke’s narrative, Paul’s presence in the city had considerable influence on the social life because many people forsook magic and cults, causing in an indirect way a considerable loss of income for the craftsmen whose prosperity was closely related to the religious activities of the society. The third event was the opposition of the craftsmen from Ephesus who suffered material loss due to Paul’s activity (Ac 19, 21–40). The riot of Demetrius shows the socio-political context in which Paul’s mission activity was undertaken, and which greatly affected the witnesses, causing restriction on their activities (the opposition of Demetrius) or in some cases supporting indirectly Paul’s activities (the town clerk’s speech). Luke gives little attention to the mission addressed to the diaspora Jews (Ac 19, 8–10), and the presentation of Paul’s modus operandi serves to show the general pattern characterizing the reception of his kerygma by Gentiles – while the Jews rejected the kerygma, the Gentiles accepted it. The opposition of some Jews who rejected the kerygma was a direct reason for proclaiming the kerygma to the Gentiles.

The second part of narrative of the third mission journey concerns Paul visit to the regions of Achaea and Macedonia, where he had worked during the second mission journey, and his
return to Jerusalem (Ac 20, 1–38). Despite his knowing about Paul’s visit to Achaea and Macedonia, Luke chose to write almost nothing about it, with the exception of the information regarding the Jews’ attempt to kill Paul in Achaea (Ac 20, 2–3). Most of the narrative is taken up with details of Paul’s trip to Achaea and back to Jerusalem. However, the most important part of the narrative concerns Paul’s speech to the Elders of the community in Ephesus, which was given in Miletus (Ac 20, 17–38). Paul begins the speech in an unusual manner: ignoring the rhetorical rules, he proceeds directly to the example of his own mission activity in Ephesus (20, 18–21). Luke (Ac 20, 18) in an opening statement gives a general idea of the content and theme of the speech, presenting Paul’s conviction concerning the knowledge of the Elders of Ephesus about his life during the mission in Asia Minor. In this speech, Paul is an example that gives direction and also serves as a point of reference. Paul’s constant and unchanging conduct during his long stay in Asia, presented as being a well-known fact, is summed up in following verses. The hardship of the mission in the region is presented. This was the result of a Jewish plot against him, which is new information that has not been yet mentioned in Luke’s narrative concerning the third mission journey. This opposition was the reason for his tears, and it was for him a time of permanent and ongoing testing (v. 19). Despite the circumstances, Paul served his Lord with humility. In this verse Paul presents himself as the witness to the Lord who serves Him despite great personal cost. Paul shows (v. 20) that in the midst of such unfavorable conditions he has not neglected his duties towards the Elders (in particular) and the believers in Ephesus (in general), but on the contrary he always contributed to their progress in the faith. He raised them up by proclaiming the kerygma and teaching them a correct interpretation of the Gospel. Mention here of proclaiming and teaching is intended to show Paul’s holistic approach to mission work, that includes not only the initial spreading of the Gospel, but also its explanation, leading to correct understanding. All his activities were aimed at leading both Jews and Greeks to repentance toward God, and to believe in Jesus the Lord (vv. 20–21). This statement indicates not only the purpose of Paul’s service as the servant of the Lord among the inhabitants of Asia Minor, but also it shows the main purpose of his activity. There was no difference between Jews and Gentiles, in general, in Paul’s attitude to mission (v. 21). In this way, Luke in Ac 20, 20–21 presents his overview of the characteristics of Paul’s mission.

The narrative in Ac 20, 18–21 presents Paul’s attitude towards mission, which in the speech serves on the one hand as an educational example for the Elders, and on other hand forms the narrative basis on which the whole speech is built, because most of the following narrative (Ac 20, 28–32) refers to topics presented in this account (Ac 20, 18–21). The elders knew Paul’s teaching and his life style, and this can serve as an example to be followed by the Elders whenever they find themselves in circumstances similar to that under which Paul’s has been working.

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14 This didactical speech is an example of teacher-disciple relationship between Paul and the Elders, not only in Ephesus but also in other communities established by him. C.S. Keener, *Acts*, vol. 3, p. 2992.
After presenting the summary of Paul’s mission in Asia Minor, Luke offers Paul’s feeling concerning the visit to Jerusalem (Ac 20, 22–24). The readers of Acts have already been informed about Paul’s plans (Ac 20, 3, 16), which makes it possible to assume that the Elders of the church in Ephesus also knew about his decision, however they still (until v. 25) did not acknowledge that it is the last time they would see Paul. In this part of the speech, Paul begins with a presentation of the reason for his decision, that is followed by Paul sharing his doubts and awareness of potential dangers connected with his visit to Jerusalem. At the same time, Paul shows that he overcame his anxiety in order to follow the will of the Holy Spirit. Despite his own experience, Paul is determined to obey the Holy Spirit and accepts the expected captivity and oppression in Jerusalem as part of God’s plan which he is willing to fulfil (v. 24). Paul is aware of the potential cost of his visit, which may also include the loss of his own life, but he cares more about accomplishing the ministry to which he was appointed by the Lord Jesus (Ac 9, 15–16). Verse 24 indicates that Paul understands his life as the “course” which has a definite purpose that must be fulfilled. This “course” for him is “ministry” understood as “official commissioning for a particular task”. This ministry was given to him by the Lord Jesus, whom he accepted as his Lord, the owner of his life and deeds. This ministry involves “bearing witness”, which here is limited particularly to proclaiming. The proclaiming concerns “the good news of God’s grace”, which means the kerygma about the Resurrected Messiah. Paul proclaims this “good news of God’s grace” to the Diaspora Jews and to the Gentiles, but not yet to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The speech is placed at the end of Paul’s mission activities among the Diaspora Jews and the Gentiles, but it does not mean that Paul sees his task as having been accomplished; rather he is convinced that the task will be accomplished only when he will proclaim the kerygma also to the Jews in Jerusalem.

Luke’s narrative continues with Paul’s specific teaching concerning the Elders of the church in Ephesus (Ac 20, 25–33). The nurture that was provided by Paul will be not available anymore, which means that the Elders themselves must become responsible for the believers (v. 26). This is a transfer of the responsibility for the community from Paul to the Elders. The Elders take on responsibility for the community that belongs to God, but also they have to “keep over yourselves”, which means that there will come a time when some of those who were chosen by the Holy Spirit to became overseers looking after the whole flock, will begin to speak deceptively, tearing apart the community, in order to draw the believers away as their own followers (v. 30). The dangers from outside (v. 29) and from within (v. 30) are here named by Paul as the biggest challenge for the overseers who take full responsibility for the fate of the local community. For these reasons, Paul calls on them to be vigilant day and night, in the same way that Paul was during his three-year stay in Ephesus, when he was always on guard, looking after them and instructing them. The Elders cooperated with Paul successfully in building the community during his work in the city, and now have to cooperate with God and the Gospel (the teaching proclaimed by Paul) in order that they may accomplish the task they

18 Paul, in order to show the desired relationship between the communities and their leaders, used the image of “shepherd/sheep”. E.J. Schnabel, *Exegetical Commentary*, p. 862.
had been chosen for (v. 32). Verse 32, where he commits the Elders to God, is the climax of Paul’s transmission of responsibility for the community in Ephesus to the Elders.

In the third and final part of the speech (Ac 20, 33–35), Luke gives Paul’s self-presentation regarding his attitude toward material goods, which serves as an example for the Elders’ correct handling of this issue. Paul’s presentation of the correct attitude regarding material things contains three different aspects of the issue. The first aspect (v. 33) gives the true reason for Paul’s service to the community, which was never based on any desire to possess the goods belonging to the believers who were under his care. Such desire refers not only to the wish to take over the goods of the flocks, but most probably includes also any demand for compensation for service to the community. Indirectly, Paul calls the Elders to follow his example and to avoid any material motivation in their service to the community in Ephesus. The second aspect concerns the way in which he earned money necessary for living (v. 34). Paul earned the necessary money by the manual work undertaken during his mission work in Asia Minor, in order to make provision for his own needs as well as for needs of his co-workers (v. 34). Indirectly, Paul instructed the Elders that they should work in order to provide the necessary material support for themselves (and probably for their families), and not to take advantage of the community. The third aspect refers to assistance to those who are in need. Paul sees the work as a source of financial stability, which first serves to support himself and those who are his co-workers, but also makes it possible to help those who are unable to provide for their own needs (v. 35). Paul refers to his own example, as something well known to the Elders, which is another item of information that Luke does not include in the narrative concerning Paul’s mission in Ephesus. In fact, Paul in Ac 20, 33–35, in an indirect manner, focuses on the social obligations of the Elders, who must serve the community without expecting any reward, but instead they must work not only for their own needs, and also they are obliged to share their possessions in order to provide for the daily needs of the believers. Luke presents Paul as the man who fulfilled these obligations, and who has expected the same conduct from those to whom he ceded the responsibility for the community that he had built successfully.

Summing up

The main personality in Luke’s narrative regarding the mission to the ends of the earth is Paul, who is presented in a Hellenistic environment. This does not mean that his mission was limited to the Gentiles, since his modus operandi of first preaching to the Jews has not changed. However, the narrative concentrates on the problematic issue related to proclaiming the kerygma to the Gentiles (the second mission journey), where the polytheistic and philosophical backgrounds are presented as the main obstacles to accepting Paul’s teaching. Another aspect concerns the socio-political reality of the world Paul was working in, where his mission successes had social consequences, and were not always welcomed by the local communities (as in Ephesus). Despite problems and difficulties, Paul’s mission activity in the Hellenistic world brought some spectacular successes. Ephesus serves as an example where a strong

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community was established, capable of continuing without Paul’s supervision. Paul’s speech to the Elders (Ac 20, 17–35) shows that Paul’s attitude toward mission work serves as the example that should be followed by others.

2. The time of imprisonment Ac 21, 17–28, 31

The final stage of Paul’s presentation as a witness to the Resurrected Messiah is the narrative concerning his imprisonment (Ac 21, 17–28, 31), which contains three interrelated accounts: the first concerns Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem (Ac 21, 17–23, 35); the second refers to Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea (Ac 24, 1–26, 32); and the third relates Paul’s voyage to Rome and the beginning of his imprisonment in that city (Ac 27, 1–28, 31). Each of the accounts has its own specific issue and its own way of presentation, but despite these differences all three accounts create a narrative that explains the reason and the manner of Paul’s arrival in Rome. The narrative begins with Paul’s coming to Jerusalem at the end of the third mission journey, and his visit to James almost immediately after his arrival (Ac 21, 17–26). This offered an occasion for the speech of James and Elders of the Jerusalem community (Ac 21, 20b–25), which serves to show the relation between Paul and the community before the account of Paul’s imprisonment will be presented. The speech contains important information concerning the different attitudes towards Paul held by members of the Jerusalem community, some of whom were very critical of his mission activity among the diaspora Jews (v. 21). This issue could become a source of division within the community (v. 22), and therefore some solution should be found. Since the controversial issue concerned Paul’s teaching regarding the Mosaic Law, James and the Elders proposed to him that he shows his respect for the Law by attending a purification ritual required by the Law from those who returned from abroad20. Paul accepted the suggestion. After this event the narrative does not mention anything that suggests further antagonism towards Paul, or any involvement of the members of the community in the events leading to his imprisonment21. Paul’s imprisonment was not linked with the community in Jerusalem, and also the Jews of Jerusalem can be excluded since the narrative directly mentions (v. 27) Jews from Asia Minor as the initiators of action against Paul22. Indirectly the speech offers two important details. The first is the fact that the community in Jerusalem was aware of the existence of controversy concerning Paul’s teaching, and even some members of the community seem to have shared this critical evaluation that originated most probably in the circles of diaspora Jews. The second concerns Paul’s attitude towards the Mosaic Law, which is respected by him even after many years spent in a Gentile environment. He did not abandon Judaism or neglect the Mosaic Law.

After completing the ritual of purification Paul went to the Temple to complete the

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21 According to Luke’s account the solution was accepted by the group of believers in Jerusalem, Indirectly, however, this solution led to a situation where the same accusation was made by the Diaspora Jews against Paul (Ac 21, 27–29).
To Give Witness to the Resurrected Messiah

formalities, and there he was recognized by Jews from Asia who did not accept Paul’s teaching (Ac 21, 28). Their action led to the capture of Paul and an attempt to kill him (Ac 21, 30–31). The routine presence of Roman soldiers saved Paul’s life, but at the same time it marked the beginning of his imprisonment (Ac 21, 31–40). Clarification of Paul’s identity by the soldiers gave him an opportunity to deliver a speech (Ac 21, 37–40).

This is the first speech by Paul given in Jerusalem in Luke’s narrative, and for some reason he decided to put Paul’s speech to the Jews in Jerusalem at the end of his mission activities. The speech is also the only account of Paul’s preaching to Jews in Jerusalem, which may indicate that Paul too, like the Twelve, fulfilled Jesus’ order (Ac 1, 8). An alternative explanation is that in this arrangement Paul is given an opportunity to present an apology for his action. Paul’s apology is addressed particularly to the Jews gathered in the Temple, but in the narrative strategy of Acts, it is addressed also to all Jews. The speech contains biographical information that supports his claim to be a faithful servant of God. For this reason, Paul first offers information regarding the period of his life from his birth until the event at Damascus, in order to show his Jewish background (Ac 22, 3–6). Next (Ac 22, 6–16), Paul presents the sequence of events that occurred at Damascus leading him to change his attitude, and to submit to Jesus, becoming one of the believers in the Resurrected Messiah. Luke’s presentation of the event gives strong accent to divine intervention that is a part of the divine plan for Paul’s life (Ac 22, 10–14). The last part of the speech concerns Jesus’ revelation to Paul in the Jerusalem Temple (Ac 22, 17–21). Paul claims that Jesus (and not God) spoke to him in the Temple when he was in a trance, and gave him a direct order to leave Jerusalem, since he was appointed by the Lord to the mission among the Gentiles (without mention of the diaspora Jews). This claim was the immediate reason for provoking the wrath of the crowd, who did not accept either the possibility of a revelation of Jesus in the Temple, nor the divine origin of his appointment for the mission to the Gentiles (Ac 22, 22–23). Paul gives witness to Jesus the Resurrected Messiah to the people of Jerusalem, and this witness was rejected. This is the goal to which Luke’s narrative in his presentation of Paul was directed, namely, Paul was rejected in Jerusalem because of his faith in Jesus and his association with Gentiles, both of which were considered to be a betrayal of Judaism.

Paul’s position deteriorated in his relations not only with the Jews, but also with the Romans, who probably misinterpreted the whole situation and for this reason decided to get further information about Paul in a more effective way (Ac 22, 24). However, Paul’s laying claim to Roman citizenship (Ac 22, 25–29) forced them to go the longer way and cooperate with the

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27 Note that Paul in his speech mentions Stephen as being a witness of Jesus who also asserted the divinity of Jesus (Ac 7, 56).
Jewish authorities. The interrogation before the Sanhedrin became the next opportunity to give witness to Jesus the Resurrected Messiah (Ac 23, 6), even if it seems to have been caused not directly by Paul, but rather by the unexpected wrong treatment of Paul by the Sanhedrin. This led to a minor but critical conflict with the Highest Priest that forced Paul to save his life by dividing his opponents (Ac 23, 7–10). The reason for the division in the Sanhedrin was Paul’s witness to faith in the resurrection. The Pharisees generally accepted the concept of resurrection, and stood with Paul in this debate, considering him to be free of a guilt on this subject, and going so far as to interpret the Paul’s claim (Ac 22, 17–18) in a manner that avoided the deification of Jesus (Ac 23, 9). Luke’s narrative clearly shows the true intention of the Sanhedrin, and the danger of Paul’s situation, which is shown in a more direct way in the narrative concerning the plot to kill him (Ac 23, 12–22). This plot was a direct reason for Paul’s being sent to Caesarea in order to save his life, and also became the reason for writing the first official document of the Roman official that contains a preliminary evaluation of Paul’s case. The official report was sent by Lysias to the procurator Felix residing in Caesarea and gave a very short and formal but sufficiently coherent account of the results of his investigation of Paul’s case. Lysias presents Paul as a Roman citizen, threatened by the Jews but saved by his soldiers (Ac 23, 26–27). Information concerning the interrogation before the Sanhedrin suggests only indirectly that Paul is a Jew, but the letter of Lysias never says this directly. In the final evaluation of the case, Lysias identified Jewish religious controversy concerning the Mosaic Law as being the main reason for Jewish opposition to Paul, who is considered at the same time to have committed no crime against the Roman law. The planned assassination of Paul by the Jews was the direct reason for sending the prisoner to Caesarea in order to save his life, and to avoid a potential social problem in Jerusalem. Lysias’ affirmation of Paul’s innocence (Ac 23, 29) remains unchanged until the end of the narrative, however the following narratives prove it to be powerless in the face of the corrupt and politically-influenced Roman judicial system in the province. The report also shows indirectly that the case of Paul involves only a strictly religious issue within Judaism, and de facto should not be a subject for the Roman juridical system. However, in order to avoid potential conflict with influential Jews, the interests of the Roman citizen were ignored during the trial before the procurator of Judea (Ac 23, 30).

In this way, Paul left Jerusalem for Caesarea, where he spent two years in prison. During this time, he was submitted to two trials, before Felix and before Festus, and one interrogation before the king Herod Agrippa II. Each of these events marked another step in a progressive narrative presenting sequences of unjust treatment of Paul that finally led to his appeal to Caesar (Ac 25, 11–12). The narrative contains also two speeches by Paul, given during the trials, that clarify the actual state of Paul’s case, and one speech before King Agrippa that

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presents Paul’s attitude as a witness of the Resurrected Messiah. The first official trial of Paul took place in Caesarea, when Felix was in office as procurator (Ac 24, 1–23). Following official procedure, the accusers (Tertullus representing the Sanhedrin) submitted their accusation, and Paul, the accused, presented his defense. The speech of Tertullus (Ac 24, 2–8) is mainly a captatio benevolentiae aimed at securing the good will of the procurator, and only briefly and in general terms refers to the Paul’s case (Ac 24, 5–6). To this Paul replied in a rational, methodical and convincing way, pointing to the lack of proof that would support the accusation. However, Paul affirmed a part of the accusation presented in Ac 24, 5 concerning his belonging to the sect of the Nazarenes. He did this intentionally to get the opportunity to give witness to the Christian community before the procurator of Judea, who was familiar with the religion and customs of the Jews, since his wife was Jewish. Although it is his personal speech of defense, Paul speaks as a person representing the whole community.

Paul fearlessly confessed his belonging to the sect of the Nazarenes, which for him is one of many groups within Judaism that follow the tradition of the ancestors (Ac 24, 14). This weakened the case against him relating to disturbances among the Jews (Ac 24, 5). He also presented the most important and crucial characteristic of the group, the teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead (Ac 24, 15). While this is offered here in a very general manner that would make it acceptable to Jews, particularly the Pharisees who accepted the possibility, at the same time, for those familiar with the teaching of the Christian movement it would relate directly to the resurrection of Jesus. The issue of the resurrection, which is again presented in Ac 24, 21, is the only accusation which Paul himself would consider to be the offense for which he is being on trial. However, this issue is a strictly religious matter that should not be brought to trial before a Roman official. Paul’s beliefs obliged him to be zealous before God and in the eyes of the people. This zeal can be confirmed by his financial assistance given to the nation, and his intention to offer sacrifices in the Temple (Ac 24, 17). This attitude of Paul excludes the possibility that he might attempt to desecrate the Temple. In this way, Paul not only proved convincingly that Tertullus’ accusations were unfounded, but also showed that the Way is deeply rooted in Judaism and harbours no antipathy towards the Temple (Ac 24, 16–17). On the contrary, it is socially orientated group motivated in its activities by the teaching and deeds of the founder. Paul’s speech skillfully moved his case to be a matter of strictly Jewish religious controversy which was not subject to Roman law (Ac 24, 14–16. 20–21). Such a solid defense given against a weakly presented accusation convinced Felix that Paul should not be punished (Ac 24, 22). However, this does not result in automatically abolishing of the accusation that was made, or in freedom for Paul (Ac 24, 23). Paul spent the next two years in prison, for a reason that has very little connection with juridical matters but was related to Felix’s private interests (Ac 24, 26), and was probably caused by Paul’s confession regarding financial assistance for the community in Jerusalem (Ac 24, 17).

The information in Ac 25, 1 suggests that Felix left Paul’s case unsolved, and most probably

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33 Note that Paul does not refer to the accusation that he is the leader of the group.
no other accusation from the side of Jews was considered. The opportunity finally came again when a new prefect, Festus, payed a visit to Jerusalem (Ac 25, 1–5) where Paul’s case was raised by the Sanhedrin. Festus knew little or nothing about the case, and even less about the socio-religious reality of the province of Judea, but he nevertheless submitted Paul to a second trial (Ac 25, 1–6). The fact that Luke did not include a presentation of the accusation against Paul allows us to assume that the accusation was similar to that presented by the Sanhedrin during the first trial before Felix. Neither did Luke give an extensive account of Paul’s defense, which is reduced to one summary sentence indicating Paul’s innocence in relation both to the Mosaic Law and Roman law (Ac 25, 8)35. Luke’s attitude here derives from his narrative strategy, which in general terms always avoids repetition of information that has already been presented if it does not contribute to showing the progress of the theme of the section. In this case Luke is no longer interested in continuing the narrative regarding the accusation against Paul, since his innocence has been sufficiently proved, but Luke is very concerned with advancing the narrative to the point where the reason for Paul’s appeal to Caesar can be presented. Without knowledge of Lysias’ letter, Festus was prepared to side with the Jews and send Paul to Jerusalem for trial (Ac 25, 9), which was the wish of the Sanhedrin (Ac 25, 3). Paul knew that there would be no escape from Jerusalem, and in his speech gave his reason for his appeal to Caesar. Festus’ proposal (Ac 25, 9) forced Paul to give a short but coherent defense that contains the reminder that Paul possesses Roman citizenship, was not found guilty of crime either against the Mosaic Law or against Roman law, and for this reason he must be judged by the Roman authorities36. Luke presents the proposal of Festus as an attempt to hand over Paul into the hands of the Jews, although Festus assures him that he would personally take part in the trial, something that clearly shows his lack of knowledge and understanding of Jewish realities. In these circumstances, Paul has no choice but to claim his right as a Roman citizen and to appeal for a trial before Caesar (Ac 25, 11)37. Paul’s request (Ac 25, 12) was unconditionally accepted by Festus. This was not the result of any neglect of due juridical process but came from his ignorance of the socio-political realities of the Judea province. In this way the Lord’s order to Paul (Ac 23, 11) would be fulfilled. However, for all parties involved in the trial the final outcome was not satisfactory. For the Sanhedrin it resulted in another unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Paul. For Paul it meant that despite his undoubted innocence he was forced to ask for another trial, this time in Rome. Festus was confronted with the fact that he lacked a valid reason for sending the prisoner to Rome. In order to solve the problem, Festus submitted Paul to an interrogation before the king Herod Agrippa II (Ac 25, 13–27), which became the only opportunity for Paul to give witness about the Resurrected Messiah before the king. The speech (Ac 26, 2–29), although it has a public character, is directed in particular to the king Agrippa38. Although at the beginning (vv. 2–3) Paul declares


36 The proposition to go to Jerusalem for the trial in the context of a legal trial must give rise to some suspicion. E.J. Schnabel, *Exegetical Commentary*, p. 990.


38 The speech shows Paul’s fulfilment of his mission to the kings, which was included in Jesus’ plan for Paul (Ac 9, 15).
that he intends to present a defensive speech before the king, de facto he gives a speech that is entirely autobiographical, in which he presents himself as a zealous Jew, serving God in accordance to his conscience and understanding of God’s will (Ac 26, 4–11). This attitude has led him to an unexpected critical change in his life, and at Damascus he changed almost instantly from being a persecutor to becoming a servant of the Lord (Ac 26, 12–18). This change caused conflict with the Jews in Damascus and in Jerusalem (Ac 26, 19–23). In both cases the reason for opposition from the Jews was the kerygma that he proclaimed regarding Jesus of Nazareth, the Resurrected Messiah. The extensive narrative concerning Paul’s biography (that corresponds to the similar accounts in Ac 22, 3–21 and Ac 9, 1–30) becomes at the end of the speech a direct attempt to proclaim the kerygma regarding the Resurrected Messiah to the king Agrippa (Ac 26, 25–29). Although unsuccessful in terms of effect, Paul’s speech before the king is another example of his using himself as an example in proof of God’s intervention in history of Israel (Ac 26, 6–8. 15–18. 22). This shows the most important characteristic of Paul as the witness to the Resurrected Messiah: his conversion from being the opponent to be the apostle was God’s will, and this divine will is the same for each member of the chosen nation. Paul’s case is the most spectacular witness to the power of the Resurrected Messiah.

Summing up

The narrative regarding Paul’s imprisonment shows his use of self-example to be most prominent way to give witness to the Resurrected Messiah. Forced by circumstances (to defend himself against accusations) and robbed of the possibility for mission journey, Paul uses the opportunity to give witness to Jews, to Roman officials, and finally to the king of the Jews. The form of witness is determined by the circumstances, but the kerygma contained in his witness remains unchanged. The kerygma was exemplified by Paul’s life in service of the Lord, which in great part was marked with constant persecution.

Bibliography of part I and part II


This plan means that Paul will proclaim the kerygma to Gentiles (Ac 13–21), to the kings and to the Jewish nation (Ac 22, 3–21).


\[\text{The encounter with the Resurrected Messiah had the greatest impact on Paul’s life, since it put an end to his activity as persecutor of those who believed in the Resurrected Messiah (Ac 26, 8–9), and it makes him to be a subject of persecution when he himself started to proclaim the Resurrected Messiah (Ac 26, 22–23).}\]

\[\text{H. Keener, Acts, vol. 4, p. 3490.}\]


