

THE WAY, SESSION 14

And So We Came to Rome

The Acts of the Apostles 24:1-28:31, The Storm, the City, the Sealed Guesses, and the Last Word of the Book

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. Tonight everything lands. Participants hear Paul confess the study's title before a Roman governor, "according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers" (24:14); they ride the great storm and discover a reverse Jonah and a meal painted in Eucharistic colors; they open the sealed guesses written fourteen weeks ago and measure them against Luke's actual ending; and they discover the secret the title has been keeping all study long: the final word of the book of Acts, in Luke's Greek, is a single adverb, *akōlytōs*, unhindered. The book does not end. It stops mid-stride, because its true subject is not Paul but the Word, and the Word is still running, through this room.

Catholic Touchstone. The Church of Rome, sealed in the blood of Peter and Paul. Luke ends his book with Paul preaching in Rome; the Church's earliest voices, St. Clement within one generation remembering Peter and Paul as the martyred examples of his own age, St. Ignatius within two assuming their authority over the Roman church, St. Irenaeus within three naming Rome the church founded and organized by the two most glorious apostles (Against Heresies III.3.2), converge on Rome as the place both crowned their witness, and that the church founded at Rome by the two most glorious apostles holds a preeminence with which every church must agree (Irenaeus, Against Heresies III.3.2; CCC 834). The steelman engages the sharpest objection honestly: Acts never places Peter in Rome, and the answer, drawn from Tradition's earliest and unanimous testimony, becomes the study's final full-circle lesson: Scripture and Tradition were never rivals, and the book that ends unhindered hands the reader to the living Church that carries it.

What You Need to Know

The trial chapters (24-26) can be surveyed rather than trudged; give your group the through-line. Before Felix, the professional orator Tertullus indicts Paul as "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes," and Paul answers with the confession that crowns our master thread: "this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets" (24:14). Weigh that sentence with the group: the Way is not a breakaway sect but Israel's own faith arrived at its promised destination, the hope of the resurrection (24:15). Felix, remarkably, "had a rather accurate knowledge of the Way" (24:22), the thread's final sighting, and trembles under Paul's preaching on justice, self-control, and judgment, then delays two years hoping for a bribe: the tragedy of the almost-moved. Festus inherits the case; Paul, facing a rigged change of venue, plays the citizen's ace: "I appeal to Caesar" (25:11), and the divine necessity of 23:11 acquires legal machinery. Before Agrippa, Paul retells Damascus a third time, aims the Gospel directly at the king, "do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe," and receives history's most famous almost: "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" (26:28). Agrippa's verdict, "this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (26:32), is Luke's legal exoneration of the Way, and heaven's irony: Paul's chains are the ticket God booked him to Rome.

The voyage and shipwreck (27) is the longest single narrative in Acts, a we-passage of stunning nautical precision, and it is theology in the form of a sea story. Give your group the inverse-Jonah key and let them find it: in Session 8 we discovered Peter as the son of Jonah who, unlike Jonah, obeyed. Tonight the pattern completes: Jonah, the prophet fleeing God's call, brought the storm upon his ship and had to be thrown out for the crew to live; Paul, the prophet obeying God's call, is the reason the whole ship lives: "God has granted you all those who sail with you" (27:24). One prophet's disobedience sank a ship; one prophet's obedience becomes salvation for 276 souls. And in the storm's fourteenth night, mark the meal (27:33-36): Paul "took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat," took, gave thanks, broke, ate: verbs every reader of Luke knows from the Last Supper and Emmaus, colors deliberately close even where the scenes differ. Handle it with our honest hedge: this is not a Mass, celebrated among pagan sailors, and Luke knows it;

but Luke chose these verbs, and he had charged them for two volumes. It is the Breaking of the Bread thread's soft coda: hope served at table in the middle of the storm, and "then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves." Every detail preaches: the anchors, the daybreak, not a hair perishing (27:34, the Lord's own promise, Luke 21:18), all souls saved on planks and pieces of the ship.

Malta (28:1-10) gives the viper that cannot harm and the healing of Publius's father, and then the arrival: brethren from Rome walk out thirty and forty miles along the Appian Way to meet Paul at the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns, "and Paul thanked God and took courage" (28:15). The apostle who has survived stoning, shipwreck, and five trials takes courage from a welcoming committee; even Paul ran on the encouragement of ordinary believers. Then Rome: two years in his own hired dwelling, welcoming all, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered" (28:30-31). And there Luke stops. No verdict, no martyrdom, no ending, and the final word of the Greek text is the adverb *akōlytōs*, unhindered. Structure the evening so the sealed guesses are opened BEFORE you study 28:30-31; the leader instructions in the Thread Watch give the ritual. The payoff of the whole study lives in that last word, and in why Luke chose to stop mid-stride: because the story he is telling has no ending yet. The reader is in it.

One honest preparation note: Paul's final scene quotes Isaiah 6:9-10, the hardening text, over the divided response of Rome's Jewish leaders, and adds that this salvation has been sent to the Gentiles (28:25-28). Teach it with the balance Paul himself keeps: some were convinced (28:24), the quotation is Israel's own prophet diagnosing a recurring blindness, not a verdict on a race, and Paul, who had written only a few years before this that all Israel will be saved and that God's gifts and call are irrevocable (Romans 11:26-29), never stopped going to the synagogue first. The door Israel's leaders closed in city after city is a door God has never closed.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Jonah 1:4-15, completing Session 8's discovery. The disobedient prophet endangers his ship; the sea is stilled only when he is cast out. Paul is Jonah reversed: the obedient prophet aboard whose ship all are spared for his sake. The study's Jonah frame closes: from the son of Jonah at Joppa to the anti-Jonah in the storm, Acts is the book of prophets who finally said yes to the Gentiles.

Psalms 107:23-30. Some went down to the sea in ships; they reeled and staggered like drunken men, at their wits' end; then they cried to the Lord, and he brought them to their desired haven. The storm chapter is this psalm narrated, and the desired haven, for this ship, was always Rome.

Isaiah 6:9-10. The commission-and-hardening text Paul quotes over Rome's divided synagogue leaders, as Jesus quoted it before him (Luke 8:10). Israel's own prophet, diagnosing Israel's recurring deafness, in the mouth of Israel's most zealous son, who never stopped believing the deafness was temporary (Romans 11).

Isaiah 40:3, one last time. Prepare the way of the Lord. The name the study has carried since a persecutor's paperwork in Session 7 was always Isaiah's road-building cry. The Way that began as a wilderness highway for God's arrival has become, by the book's end, a Roman road running out of the capital to every nation on earth, with no ending punctuation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Clement of Rome, Letter to the Corinthians, 5 (written around AD 96)

Writing from Rome within living memory, Clement holds up "the greatest and most righteous pillars" of the generation just past: Peter, who after many labors thus bore his witness and went to his appointed place of glory, and Paul, who taught righteousness to the whole world, reached the limits of the West, and bore his witness before the rulers. Clement holds them up as the great examples of his own generation, witnesses whose

deaths the Roman church remembered as her own; his letter is the earliest thread in the tradition that both apostles crowned their witness at Rome.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, Book III, 3.2 (2nd century)

St. Irenaeus points every seeker of the true faith to "the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul," whose faith comes down through the succession of her bishops, whom he then lists by name from the apostles to his own day. With this church, on account of its preeminent authority, every church must agree. The book of Acts ends at Rome; Irenaeus explains what God had planted there.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, the final homily (4th century)

Preaching on the abrupt ending, Chrysostom says the author brings his narrative to this point and leaves the hearer thirsting, so that thereafter he supplies the rest by himself; for what needed to be shown was shown, that the word of God was not bound. The ending, for Chrysostom, is not missing; it is delegated. Luke stops writing so that the Church, and the reader, may continue doing.

Catechism Connection

CCC 834. Particular churches are fully catholic through communion with the Church of Rome, "which presides in charity," in St. Ignatius of Antioch's phrase; for with this church, by reason of its preeminence, the whole Church must be in agreement, quoting St. Irenaeus.

CCC 302-303. Creation has its own goodness but did not spring forth complete; God guides it toward its perfection by His providence, the dispositions by which He conducts all things with wisdom and love, down to a shipwreck's planks and a viper's harmless bite. The solicitude of providence is concrete and immediate; the storm chapter is its case study.

CCC 2, in closing. Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call have been impelled in every age to hand on the faith, so that the Church, going forth to the ends of the earth, might do what the apostles did. The Catechism's second paragraph is Acts 29, and it has your group's names in it.

Thread Watch and the Rituals of the Final Night

THREAD WATCH

THE SEALED GUESSES: open them at the marked moment, question 6, BEFORE studying 28:30-31. Have everyone bring Take-Home 1. Go around the table: each person reads their fourteen-week-old guess aloud, unedited, about where and how Luke would end the story. Enjoy them; honor the good ones. Most will have guessed Rome; almost none will have guessed the actual shape of the ending, no verdict, no death, no ending at all. Then, and only then, read 28:30-31 together and open the akōlytōs discovery in question 7. The gap between every guess and Luke's choice IS the lesson.

Thread 1, The Name: final resolution. Two last sightings tonight, 24:14 (Paul's great confession, "according to the Way... I worship the God of our fathers") and 24:22 (Felix's accurate knowledge). After the akōlytōs discovery, close the thread with the full arc: nameless movement (Sessions 1-6), named by a persecutor's

warrant (Session 7), doubled at Antioch (Session 8), confessed before governors (tonight), and finally revealed as a road with no final period, because a way, unlike a wall, goes on. The study's title was always the book's thesis.

Thread 2, The Map: resolution. Jerusalem (1-7), Judea and Samaria (8-12), the end of the earth (13-28), and the group should see the last irony: Rome is not the end of the earth; Rome is where all roads BEGIN. Paul intends Spain (Romans 15:24). Acts 1:8 remains an unfinished sentence, on purpose.

Thread 4, The Breaking of the Bread: soft coda. The storm meal (27:35), the fourfold action among pagans, hope served at table. Mark it, hedge it honestly, and let it glow.

Callbacks to land tonight: Gamaliel's test from Session 4 ("if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them") receives its verdict in the word *akōlytōs*; and Stephen's prayer from Session 5 finishes its work with Paul preaching in Rome.

Session Goals

1. Participants can articulate Paul's confession of the Way as Israel's own faith fulfilled, and trace the master thread's full arc.
2. Participants discover the reverse-Jonah pattern and the Eucharistic colors of the storm meal, with honest hedging.
3. Participants can engage the strongest objection to Peter's Roman ministry and answer it from the earliest Tradition, articulating the Scripture-and-Tradition lesson it teaches.
4. Participants open their sealed guesses, discover the *akōlytōs* ending, and can explain why Luke ends mid-stride.
5. Participants each write their own Acts 29 sentence and commit to a concrete next step beyond this study.

Time Note

Planned for 90 minutes, and the final night runs long by nature; protect the ending. Win 10, Build 55, the sealed-guess ritual and *akōlytōs* 10 of those, Send 15, closing commissioning and prayer 10. If running long, cut in this order: (1) the second Win question, (2) the Dig Deeper on the viper, (3) compress questions 1 and 2 (the trials) into a single guided retelling. Cut NOTHING from question 5 onward; the last thirty minutes are the study's destination.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you told your servant by night, you must bear witness also at Rome, and neither storm nor snake nor Caesar could amend the sentence. We began this study fourteen weeks ago as watchers of your Way; bring us tonight to its unfinished ending, and write us into it. Open what we sealed, resolve what you planted, and send us out unhindered. Amen.

Win (10 minutes)

1. Fourteen weeks ago you wrote a sealed guess about how this story ends. Without opening it yet: do you remember what you wrote, and would you still bet on it?
2. What is the best non-ending you know, a story, a series, a life chapter, that stopped without resolving, and why did it work?

Build (55 minutes)

1. Read Acts 24:10-16, Paul before Governor Felix, listening hard at verse 14 for a phrase this study has been tracking since a persecutor's arrest warrants. What does Paul admit, what does he deny, and what is he claiming about the relationship between the Way and Israel's faith? Then read 24:22 and 24:24-27 for Felix's tragedy.

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The prosecution calls it "the sect of the Nazarenes"; Paul answers: "this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets," with hope in the resurrection. The Way's final confessions, here and in Felix's own "rather accurate knowledge of the Way" (24:22), stake the claim the whole book has argued: the Way is not a breakaway sect but Israel's own faith arrived at its destination, the tent of David rebuilt, exactly as the council found in Session 10. And Felix: he trembles as Paul argues justice, self-control, and coming judgment, and answers with the saddest sentence in the trials: "Go away for the present; when I have an opportunity I will summon you," hoping meanwhile for a bribe, for two years. Alarm without surrender: the tragedy of the almost-moved, and a mirror worth a moment of honest silence at any table.

2. Survey Acts 25:9-12 and 26:24-32: the appeal to Caesar, and the scene before King Agrippa. What legal move does Paul make and why, what does he aim directly at the king, and what double verdict closes the hearings, Agrippa's about Paul, and heaven's about Rome?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Facing Festus's offer of a rigged venue change to Jerusalem, the road that had already bred one forty-man ambush plot (23:12-15), Paul plays the citizen's ace: "I appeal to Caesar," and the divine necessity of 23:11, you must witness at Rome, acquires imperial machinery; God routes His decree through Roman law. Before Agrippa, Paul retells Damascus a third time and then aims point-blank: "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe," and receives history's most famous almost: "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" Festus calls Paul mad; Paul answers with sober courtesy and a wish that everyone hearing him were as he is, "except for these chains." And the double verdict: Agrippa rules that "this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar", Luke's formal legal exoneration of the Way, innocent before every tribunal, and heaven's quieter verdict beneath it: the chains Paul could have escaped are the ticket

God booked him to Rome. Providence sometimes travels as an unfavorable procedural outcome.

3. Read Acts 27:13-26, the storm at its worst, and then the live discovery that completes a find from Session 8. Read Jonah 1:4-15 beside it. In Session 8 we found Peter, the son of Jonah, obeying at Jonah's own port. What is the relationship between Jonah's ship and Paul's, and what does the completed pattern say about the whole book of Acts?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jonah, the prophet fleeing God's call to the Gentiles, brought the storm upon his ship, and the sea was stilled only when he was thrown out of it; one man's disobedience nearly drowned the crew. Paul is Jonah inverted: the prophet obeying God's call to the Gentiles, aboard whose doomed ship an angel speaks the reversal: "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and lo, God has granted you all those who sail with you." The disobedient prophet had to leave the ship for the sailors to live; the obedient prophet's presence is why all 276 live. And the completed frame reads the whole book: Acts opened its Gentile mission with the son of Jonah saying yes at Joppa, and closes its travels with the anti-Jonah whose yes becomes salvation for everyone aboard. Acts is the book of Jonah run in reverse: the prophets of the new Israel finally said yes to the nations, and the ship of the Church has been carrying pagans safely through storms ever since.

4. Read Acts 27:33-38, the meal in the storm's fourteenth night, and listen to the verbs with two volumes of Luke in your ears. What exactly does Paul do with the bread, where has Luke used this sequence before, what happens to the 276 aboard, and, honestly now, what is this scene and what is it not?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Before dawn, after fourteen foodless days of terror, Paul urges them all to eat, promises that not a hair will perish from any head (his Master's own promise, Luke 21:18), and then: he "took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat." Took, gave thanks, broke: the sequence every reader of Luke knows from the Last Supper (22:19) and Emmaus (24:30); the wording varies scene to scene, but the family resemblance is unmistakable. "Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves," and every soul is saved. Now the honest hedge our study always keeps: this is not a Mass; it is an ordinary meal among pagan sailors and soldiers, and Luke knows the difference, which is precisely why his verb choice matters. The colors are Eucharistic, and after two volumes of charging those verbs Luke is unlikely to have reached for them by accident: hope served at table in the middle of the storm, courage entering through bread broken with thanksgiving, all aboard saved by dawn. It is the Breaking of the Bread thread's soft coda, and a portrait every Catholic recognizes: what the Church does in every storm is exactly this, and at her altar, the colors are not borrowed.

5. Read Acts 28:11-16, the arrival. Who comes out to meet Paul, how far do they walk, and what is the effect on the apostle? Then read Luke's quiet sentence at 28:14 aloud and let it land: how long has this book been walking toward those six words?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The brethren of Rome, hearing he is coming, walk out along the Appian Way to meet him, some forty miles to the Forum of Appius, others thirty to Three Taverns, "and on seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage." The man who has out-argued philosophers, survived stoning and shipwreck, and stared down governors, is refueled by a welcoming committee of ordinary Christians who walked two days to hug him. Even apostles run

on encouragement; never underestimate the ministry of showing up. And then Luke's six quiet words, twenty-eight chapters in the making: "And so we came to Rome." The decree of 23:11 has landed; the third circle of Acts 1:8 has its beachhead in the capital of the world.

Build the steelman, our last one, and it is the sharpest arrow in the anti-Roman quiver. Acts ends in Rome, and Peter is nowhere in it. Luke never places Peter in Rome; no verse of Scripture does. Paul writes his letter TO Rome greeting twenty-six people by name, and never mentions Peter, unthinkable if Peter were the city's bishop; and Paul states his policy of not building on another man's foundation (Romans 15:20), yet plans to visit Rome. If the papacy's cornerstone claim, Peter's ministry and martyrdom at Rome, were true, Scripture had a dozen opportunities to say so and says nothing. The Roman primacy, the objection concludes, rests on later legend, not on the Word of God. Let it stand at its full height; it deserves a real answer, and the answer will teach the study's final lesson.

6. **PAUSE THE PRESS.** Before answering the steelman, the table has an appointment fourteen weeks old. Bring out Take-Home 1 and open the sealed guesses: each person reads aloud, unedited, where and how they predicted Luke would end this story. Honor the near-hits. Then, together, read the actual ending, Acts 28:30-31, and sit in the gap. What did Luke give us, and what did he conspicuously refuse to give us?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Two whole years, his own hired dwelling, welcoming all who came, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered." And that is all. No trial before Nero, no verdict, no martyrdom, no death scene for the book's hero, no ending. Most guesses tonight said Rome, and Rome was right; almost no one guessed that Luke, with the greatest ending in the world available to him, Paul's glorious martyrdom, would end without writing an ending at all. The refusal is the message, and one more discovery will unlock it.

7. The last discovery of the study, and the secret your booklet's cover has kept for fourteen weeks. In Luke's Greek, the very last word of the book of Acts, the word on which two volumes and fifty-two chapters come to rest, is the adverb *akōlytōs*: unhindered. Weigh everything against it: Paul wears his chain (28:20) as the word is written. Who, then, is unhindered? What is the book of Acts actually about, and why is there no ending?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Paul is hindered: in Roman custody, wearing "this chain" (28:20), his appeal pending before Caesar. The Word is not. "The word of God is not fettered," Paul himself wrote from a later chain (2 Timothy 2:9), and Luke ends his book on the adverb that proves it: unhindered. The hero of Acts was never Peter, and never Paul; from the first verse it was the risen Christ, acting by His Spirit through His Body, and His action has no final chapter to report because it had not ended when Luke's ink ran out, and it has not ended now. Gamaliel's test from Session 4 receives its one-word verdict: if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it: *akōlytōs*. Stephen's prayer from Session 5 finishes its work in a hired house in Rome. And the title of the movement tells you why there is no ending: a wall has an end; a Way goes on. Luke stops mid-stride because the reader is standing on the road: Acts 29 is not missing; it is the history of the Church, and it has been in progress for twenty centuries, and it includes, as of fourteen weeks ago, this table. The book ends unhindered because it hands you the pen.

8. Now the steelman's answer, and the study's final full-circle lesson. Scripture never places Peter in Rome. What does the earliest Tradition say, how early, and how unanimously? Weigh 1 Peter 5:13 and Romans 15:20 honestly on the way. And why is this question the perfect ending for THIS study?

ANSWER, SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Take the evidence in order. Scripture whispers: Peter exits Acts "to another place" (12:17), unnamed, and writes his first letter from "she who is at Babylon" (1 Peter 5:13), Babylon, which interpreters ancient and modern overwhelmingly read as Rome (Revelation 17-18 trades in the same code), with Mark, whom Tradition places at Rome writing Peter's preaching, at his side. And Romans 15:20 at least blunts the objection, circumstantially: Paul's policy of not building on another man's foundation is precisely why he had only written to Rome and not planted it; someone else's foundation was already there, and Romans never names its founder while greeting twenty-six residents, an odd silence if the church had simply self-assembled; this is circumstantial rather than proof, and the real weight rests on Tradition. Then Tradition speaks, early and local, and antiquity preserves no rival claim: Clement of Rome, writing from that church about AD 96, within one generation, sets Peter and Paul before his readers as the greatest and most righteous pillars of the generation just past, apostles who bore their witness and contended unto death, and then joins to them a great multitude of the elect who suffered, in his words, among us; Clement never names the city for the apostles, but the letter is Rome's own, and the generation whose sufferings it recounts is Rome's own; Ignatius, about 107, writes to the Romans, "I do not command you as Peter and Paul did," a sentence with no meaning unless both had exercised authority there; Irenaeus, about 180, names the Roman church as founded by Peter and Paul and lists her bishops from them to his day; and beneath St. Peter's Basilica, excavation uncovered the early memorial (the tropaion the priest Gaius mentioned around AD 200) at the spot the Roman church venerated as his grave. No other city ever claimed Peter's tomb, and no ancient writer records a competing tradition. Now the final lesson, and it is the whole study in one question: how do we know Peter died at Rome? The same way we know which four Gospels are Gospels, the same way the eunuch understood Isaiah, the same way the council settled circumcision, and the same way the agraphon of Miletus reached us: Scripture and Tradition, one deposit in two channels, carried by the living apostolic Church (Dei Verbum 9-10; CCC 834). The objection assumes the very thing Acts spent twenty-eight chapters correcting, that the written word travels alone. It never has. It travels on the Way, in the Church, unhindered.

DIG DEEPER: THE VIPER OF MALTA

Shipwrecked, soaked, and gathering firewood, Paul is struck by a viper; the islanders wait for him to swell up and drop, conclude first that he is a murderer pursued by Justice, then, when nothing happens, that he is a god (28:3-6), the Lystra whiplash replayed in miniature. Luke's dry comedy carries an echo readers have always heard: the Lord's word about treading on serpents unharmed (Luke 10:19), and a lesson about crowds that our study has met three times: public opinion is a weathervane, not a verdict. Paul shakes the snake into the fire and goes on to heal the island. So should we all.

DIG DEEPER: WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

The Church's tradition completes what Luke declined to write: Ancient tradition holds that Paul, released after these two years, traveled again (the Pastoral Letters presume it, and Clement says he reached "the limits of the West," perhaps his intended Spain, Romans 15:24), that he was rearrested in Nero's persecution and beheaded at Rome, as a citizen, around AD 67 by traditional reckoning, near the date of Peter's crucifixion, head-down by ancient account, on the Vatican hill. The Church keeps their one feast together on June 29, and their two basilicas anchor the city. If Luke wrote after these events, he knew the outline and left it out anyway; if before, Providence arranged the same lesson: the book was never about how the messengers died, but about how the

message did not.

Send (15 minutes)

1. Fourteen weeks. Fourteen sessions. One question to answer aloud, each of you: what is the single discovery from this study that you will still be carrying a year from now, and why that one?
2. Acts 29 is unwritten and you are in it. Complete this sentence, honestly and concretely, and be ready to say it aloud at the commissioning: "I believe the Spirit is sending me to ____." A person, a ministry, a change, a next study, a vocation question. Write it before you speak it.

Live It This Week, and Beyond

Four final assignments, the study's commissioning. First, finish before the Lord: sometime in the next seven days, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, alone, and thank Him for fourteen weeks on the Way, bringing your Acts 29 sentence with you and saying it to Him; the study that began in an upper room waiting for the Spirit should end before the tabernacle where the unhindered Word keeps His address. Second, give the study away: choose one discovery, the three thousand, the son of Jonah, the last word of Acts, whichever one lit you up, and tell it to one person outside this group within the week; the Way spreads at the speed of one told story. Third, keep Sunday as Troas kept it, permanently (CCC 2177-2178); that resolution should not end with the study. Fourth, do not scatter: agree tonight, as a group, on what comes next, another study, a service commitment, a monthly reunion at someone's table, because the believers of Acts devoted themselves to the fellowship, and fourteen weeks have made this table one. The book has no ending. Neither should this.

Closing Commissioning and Prayer

Leader: have the group stand. Each person speaks their Acts 29 sentence aloud: "I believe the Spirit is sending me to..." After each, the group responds together: "The will of the Lord be done." When all have spoken, pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Way, and by your mercy we belong to you. Fourteen weeks ago we sealed our guesses about how your story ends, and tonight you have shown us the truth: it has not ended, and we are in it. Send us as you sent them: from the upper room, through the water, to the breaking of the bread, out every gate the Spirit opens, past every hindrance. Saint Peter, hold the keys for us. Saint Paul, teach us to run. Saint Stephen, pray for our enemies until they are our brothers. Mary, Queen of Apostles, stay in the upper room with us always. And may the word of God, in this room and from it, grow, and multiply, and run to the end of the earth, openly, and unhindered. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

"...preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered." (Acts 28:31)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 14, in order of appearance. Flag these before the session.

PRIMARY TEXT

1. Acts 24:10-16, 22-27 (Felix; the Way's confession and final sighting)
2. Acts 25:9-12 (the appeal to Caesar)
3. Acts 26:24-32 (Agrippa; the almost)
4. Acts 27:13-26 (the storm; the angel's word)
5. Acts 27:33-38 (the meal in the storm)
6. Acts 28:1-10 (Malta; the viper)
7. Acts 28:11-16 (the Appian Way; and so we came to Rome)
8. Acts 28:17-28 (the synagogue leaders; Isaiah 6)
9. Acts 28:30-31 (the ending; akōlytōs)

OLD TESTAMENT DISCOVERY PASSAGES

10. Jonah 1:4-15 (the reverse-Jonah discovery)
11. Psalm 107:23-30 (the storm psalm)
12. Isaiah 6:9-10 (the hardening text)
13. Isaiah 40:3 (prepare the way, the title's root)

NEW TESTAMENT CROSS REFERENCES

14. Luke 21:18 (not a hair); Luke 22:19; 24:30 (the fourfold action); Luke 10:19 (serpents)
15. Acts 12:17 (another place); 1 Peter 5:13 (Babylon); Revelation 17-18 (the code)
16. Romans 15:20, 24; Romans 11:26-29 (another's foundation; Spain; irrevocable gifts)
17. 2 Timothy 2:9 (the word is not fettered)
18. Acts 1:8; Acts 23:11 (the map; the decree)

CHURCH DOCUMENTS

19. CCC 834; CCC 302-303; CCC 2; Dei Verbum 9-10