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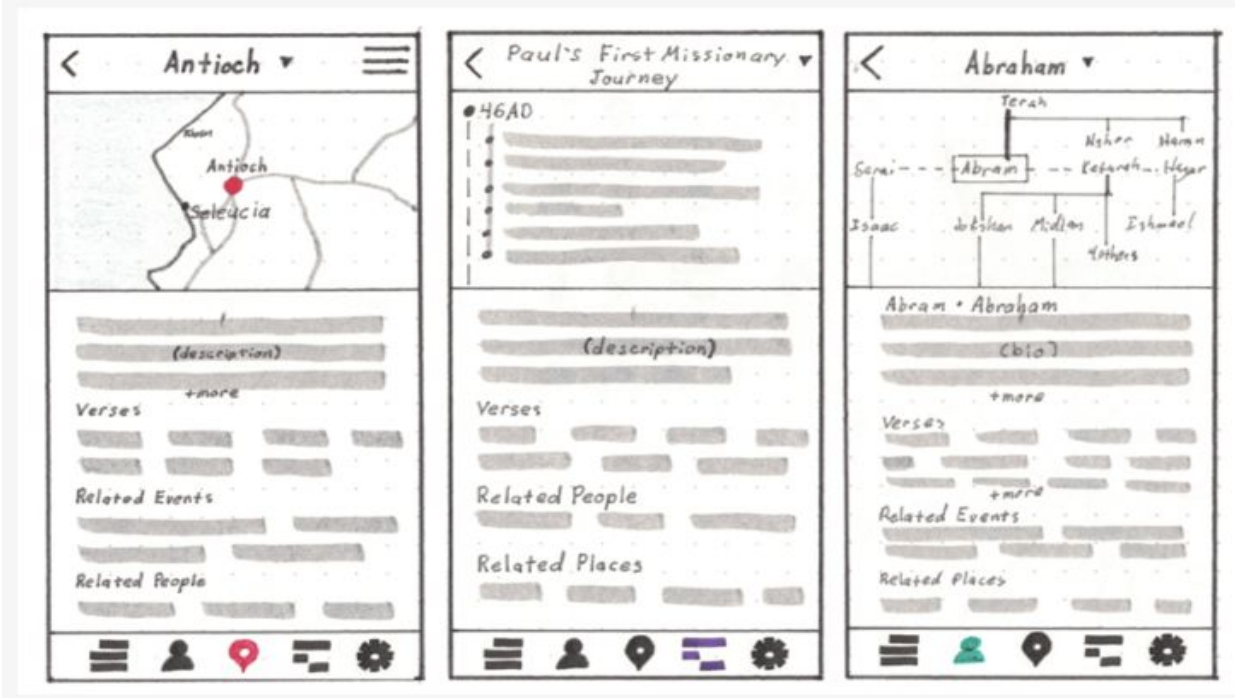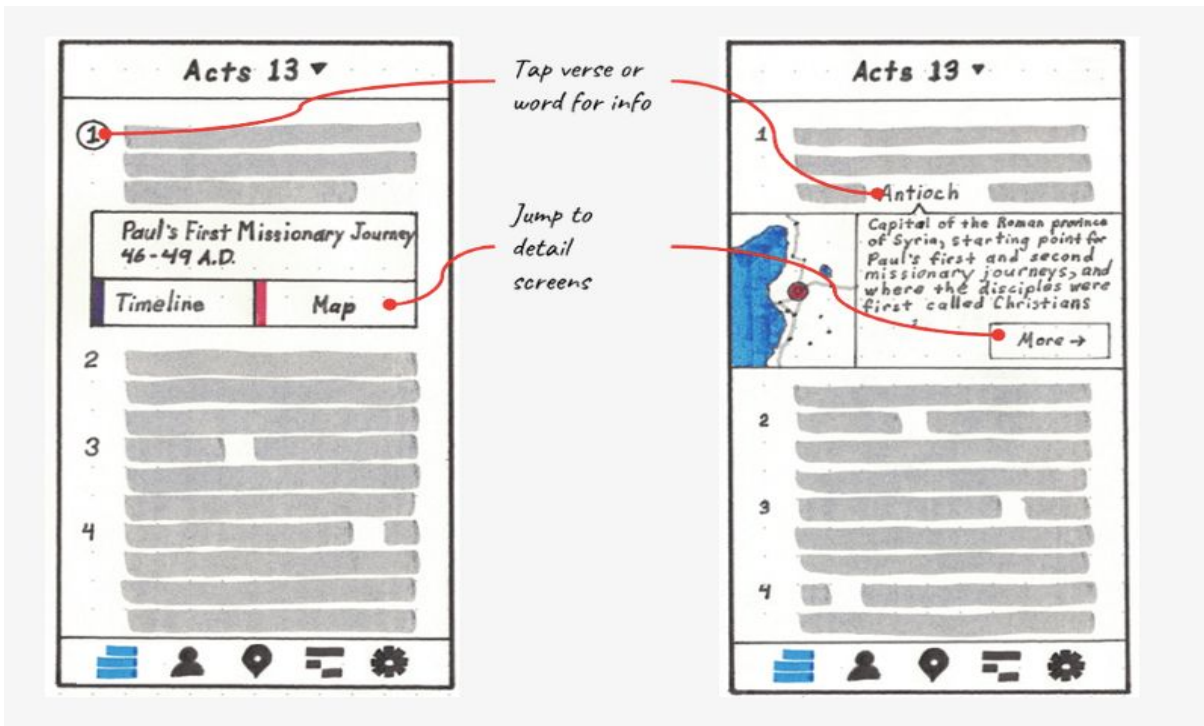
DGHM 150 CM

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<u>Part 2 Assignment 1 Rough Draft</u>

The project, <u>"Paul's Missionary Journeys"</u> is one of Robert Rouse's subprojects on his website featuring a collection of bible data visualization projects. The website has a blog post describing the intent and ambitions for his interactive map (this blog post can be accessed from the map). Rouse's general objective in his data visulatization projects is to gather all information that would help contextualize the bible into a user friendly application. For Paul's Journey's, he envisions a encyclopedic amount of information that could be accessed from Paul's Letters (Romans, Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, Hebrews, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, and Philemon). He aims to have geographic, bibliographic, historical, and sociological informational organized in a timeline, map and other visual representations, stored within his application.

Taken from Rouse's blogpost "Envisioning the Next Phase of Bible Applications"

Sketches on Rouse's blog post about what he would like the project to look like. This sketch shows details of the verses Paul's journeys are mentioned in, like the people mentioned in the verses, and events related to the verse. He explains his ideal project would have more than a

map, and would include full chapters from the Bible pertaining to Paul's movement which would be interactive, hyperlinked similar to a Wikipedia entry, but all of the information would be contained in the same space. Clicking on something would not open a new window, rather more information of that given thing would expand in that same screen.

The current function of "Paul's Missionary Journey" is to have an interactive map which lays out the movement of The Apostle paul from Jerusalem throughout the Roman Empire. The project has a brief About Section which appears on the left hand sidebar of the project's website. The blurb states "The Apostle Paul and his companions crossed the Roman Empire to spread the Gospel and strengthen the churches they founded. This map overlays their journeys onto an interactive view of Roman provinces, settlements, and the all-important road network. It shows the *likely* paths over land and sea, drawing from the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire and other research listed below. Click here for more details." The project's aim is thus not to explicitly persuade the visitor of the site of Paul's historical and academic value, rather, the author assumes the user has an established curiosity about Paul's movement. Rouse claims his project has the potential to be the most comprehensive study tool for Christians, "Every Christian should be able to discover more about a story as easily as we do with familiar social media and search engines. It shouldn't take hours of research or software training to follow a chain of inquiry."[1] His intended audience, is thus a Christian seeking to understand Paul's letters. This is noteworthy, because it impacts the level of neutrality that the project will portray in later iterations that are closer to his ideal version of the project, one that "No matter where you look, it would be possible to follow connections to all aspects of a story. Unlike searching a library of resources, it

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[1] https://viz.bible/bible-app-vision/

would be smart enough to know that when you look for "Paul" it should also find places that call him "Saul," before his name changed. It would know that the "Antioch" in Acts 14:21 is different than the one in Acts 14:26 so it automatically leads to the correct spot on a map."

The first thing one notices when visiting Paul's Missionary Journeys, are the various colored lines. The vividness of the lines compels the site visitor to click on in, but clicking just anywhere on it does not provide information about what one is looking at. If one clicks exactly on a black on the line, the following information is provided: the biblical verse that points to Paul being there, which Journey that verse takes place in, the hyperlink dare.ht.lu.se that is modified to the specific location. The simplicity of the information which appears when clicking a black dot is likely a deliberate choice. The author might not have wanted to overwhelm the user with information about that location and chose instead to hyperlink the information about where one can look up more information about Paul's interactions with that location. The downside of the box of information, is that the hyperlink that follows "more:" is untitled and is the raw link, using a the title "Geographic Information about the location from the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire," would increase the author's transparency and efficiency in data visualization.

The map itself is aesthetically appropriate, the color scheme and fonts work well together. In the bottom right hand corner of the map, the different softwares he used are listed: AWMC, KlokanTech, DARE, Mapbox, and OpenStreetMap. At the end of the list are the words "Improve this map". Clicking it leads to a feedback menu through the application mapbox with the options "add a place," "fix a location," "rename a place," "fix a satellite map" "remove a place" and "it's something else." However, neither clicking on the symbol nor on the words themselves open a different page. This avenue to provide feedback appears to be broken. That

said, the sidebar which appears to the left of the map, centrally and clearly lists the social media

of the project. Twitter is a popular method the public uses in interacting with

individuals/institutions etc, and clicking the twitter link takes one to Rouse's personal Twitter

which is active and has a substantial (two thousand five hundred) followers. The alternative then

to using Mapbox's feedback would be to tweet at Rouse, or to comment on one of his blog posts

on his main website viz.bible, which people do.

     As far as credibility of data and sources used, Rouse lists eleven sources in the sidebar of
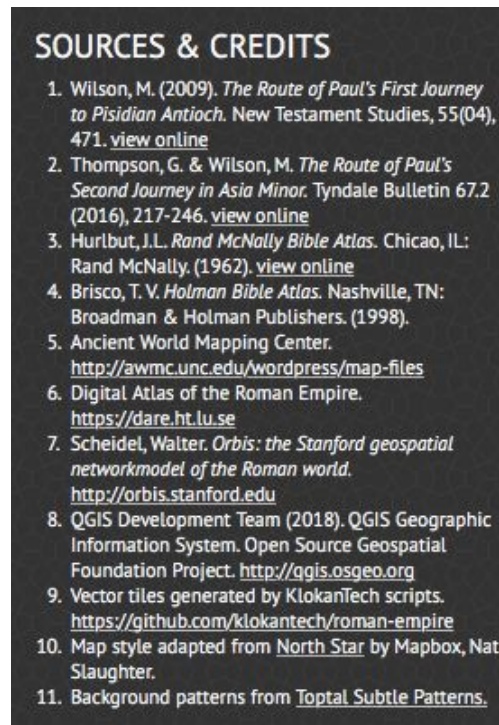
the project.

SOURCES & CREDITS

1. Wilson, M. (2009). *The Route of Paul's First Journey to Pisidian Antioch.* New Testament Studies, 55(04), 471. view online
2. Thompson, G. & Wilson, M. *The Route of Paul's Second Journey in Asia Minor.* Tyndale Bulletin 67.2 (2016), 217-246. view online
3. Hurlbut, J.L. *Rand McNally Bible Atlas.* Chicao, IL: Rand McNally. (1962). view online
4. Brisco, T. V. *Holman Bible Atlas.* Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers. (1998).
5. Ancient World Mapping Center. http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/map-files
6. Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire. https://dare.ht.lu.se
7. Scheidel, Walter. *Orbis: the Stanford geospatial networkmodel of the Roman world.* http://orbis.stanford.edu
8. QGIS Development Team (2018). QGIS Geographic Information System. Open Source Geospatial Foundation Project. http://qgis.osgeo.org
9. Vector tiles generated by KlokanTech scripts. https://github.com/klokantech/roman-empire
10. Map style adapted from North Star by Mapbox, Nat Slaughter.
11. Background patterns from Toptal Subtle Patterns.

Image taken from https://viz.bible/journeys/, located at the bottom of the sidebar

It would be beneficial for Rouse to add a seperate page where he discusses the use of each of the eleven sources and defends their academic credibility. He does have a blog post linked in the "About This Project" subsection in the sidebar, but the blog post only covers a handful of the sources cited. It would increase the credibility of his long term goal of creating a legitimate database on all things pertaining to Paul's Journey by going through each of his sources. Additionally, his main website that displays his eight projects shows that he is funded through Patreon, a website where "content creators" can post content and be compensated directly from supporters. It might be to his benefit however, to find support through an academic institution, although his decision to remain independent may be out of principle which is understandable but comes with the trade-off of his work being more vulnerable to inaccuracies in data.

Rouse's project allows an individual studying Paul's letters to get a better idea of the apostle's movement. This is helpful when thinking about the cultural norms which Paul came across in his journey's. Knowing exactly where Paul was when he wrote different evangelizing text helps situate the context of his words. Rouse assumes knowing this context will be helpful to Christians pursuing a close reading of his texts, but his audience could potentially be bigger than that. Paul's had a significant impact in institutionalizing Christianity and setting the very first agenda of the Church. His philosophy and true intentions behind his call for institutionalization and agenda setting have been contested. There continues to be debate about the impact his letters

have had in creating new theocratic, temporal, and political realities and philosophies. Rouse, in developing his project, should seek out input from non Christian scholars of Paul, to discern what other details he could include in his labyrinthine encyclopedic repertoire of Paul. Although his project deals with Primary sources (the textual evidence of where Paul went), Rouse should consider including potential analyses of the information presented. It would be best if each location one clicked on on the map, had all of the information of the Primary source, and also analyses of the text pointed to by both secular and non-secular scholars. Rouse should not neglect the fact that Paul exists as more than a religious figure, and played an important role in arguing for institutions of power (Government, Church) within a state to take on responsibility for the wellbeing of individuals impacted by the institution of power. His map could be useful to religious and non religious researchers and enthusiasts in visualizing and creating further connections between Paul's letters and the world in which he lived.