

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

ACTS

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**GOSPEL
BROADCASTING
NETWORK**

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Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven member of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs and Henry Simmons. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, Ray Hawk and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections. Our grasp of the infinite will of God is not absolute, despite the diligence of our efforts; there is always more to learn.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The notes were put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over much time. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people. "Outlined" does not imply skimpy—these are full-length books.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we barely cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge to the recipients. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad!

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

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INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

A. Introduction.

1. The book under consideration bears no original title given by the inspired writer. There was no need for a title since it was essentially a letter written by a friend to a friend; from one Christian to another of like precious faith. The recipient knew who wrote the letter, and as he passed it on to others for their instruction and edification, the name of the author and the nature of the contents would have been obvious. Its contents show that it is a record of some of the acts of some of the apostles, primarily of Peter and Paul. Hence, it may be properly styled, "Acts of Apostles," or more simply, "Acts."
2. The book of Acts is often misunderstood, as well as grossly perverted and ignored. This neglect and misuse of the book has led to many false doctrines. Chrysostom is quoted as saying, "There are many who do not even know that this book is in existence, or who can state the name of the author" (McGarvey, NC, p.vii). So misguided are some of our day that they are as apt to try to find the plan of salvation in Psalms as in the book of Acts.
3. Before studying any book of the Bible it is important to understand certain facts about the book. If we know who the author was, to whom it was originally written, the time of its composition, the background of the author and recipients, and the purpose the book was intended to fulfill, our ability to understand its contents will be enhanced.

B. The Author of Acts.

1. We must understand that it is a book which was inspired by the Holy Spirit or else its significance will be diminished and its authority destroyed. The book of Acts meets all the requirements of inspiration. No contradiction can be established within itself or with any other part of the inspired record. It claims to be an inspired record. There are certain references in the book that were beyond the knowledge of uninspired writers. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, guiding the human writer, is the real Author of the book.
2. Although the human writer is not directly identified in the book, his identity may be reached by logical deduction. The following information leads to the conclusion that Luke, the beloved physician, was responsible for the writing of the book:
 - a. The same writer penned both Luke and Acts: "...It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou has been instructed" (Lk. 1:1-4). "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).
 - 1) The writer of Acts, speaking in reference to the book of Luke, states that he authored both books. The same writer penned both books, addressing each to the same individual. The evidence pointing to Luke's authorship of the book of Luke, therefore, also shows that this same Luke wrote Acts (and vice-versa).
 - 2) Christian writers of the second century identify Luke as the writer of the gospel account which bears his name. "The first writers who definitely name Luke as the author of the third Gospel belong to the end of the second century. They are the canon of Muratori (possibly by Hippolytus), Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria" ("The Gospel of Luke," *ISBE*, 1955 edition, Vol. 3, p.1937).
 - 3) There is a closeness of style and vocabulary between Luke and Acts which further gives evidence that both were written by the same author. Fifty words are used by the two books, words which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament.
 - 4) There is also a natural connection between the ending of Luke and the beginning of Acts.
 - b. The writer of Acts uses pronouns which indicate that he was present during some of the events being described, and absent during others.
 - 1) In Acts 16:1-9, the writer uses the pronouns "he" and "they" in reference to Paul and his company. But beginning with verse ten, the writer uses the pronoun "we," thus including himself with the company.
 - 2) Acts 20:5—21:18 contains other "we" references, indicating again that the writer was present in Paul's company.
 - 3) Acts 28:16 shows that Luke was with Paul in Rome when the apostle was under arrest there, awaiting trial before Caesar. Colossians 4:14 also places him in Rome with Paul at that time. (2 Timothy 4:11 reports that Luke was with Paul in Rome on the occasion which may or may not be

the same imprisonment). Luke was with Paul in Rome when the book of Philemon was written (Phile. 23-24).

- 4) The author "...is distinguished in the account of the company which started with Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem (20:4-6); for there Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus, are mentioned as going before Paul to Troas, and there waiting for 'us,' meaning the writer and Paul. As then the writer was none of these, and yet he journeyed with Paul on this visit to Jerusalem, and thence to Rome, we can identify him with no other than Luke. True, some others besides Luke were with Paul when the two epistles just mentioned were written, but none of these journeyed with Paul as did the author" (McGarvey, NC, p.ix).
 - c. Early uninspired writers affirm that Luke was the author of Acts. Irenaeus who died toward the end of the second century, and who knew Polycarp, who knew the apostles, stated that Luke was the author. The writer of the Muratorian Canon likewise said that Luke wrote Acts (Curtis Cates, *Studies In Acts*, p.19). Eusebius, who lived about A.D. 325, says, "Luke, a native of Antioch, by profession a physician, was mostly Paul's companion, though he associated not a little with the apostles. He has left us examples of the art of healing souls, which he acquired from the apostles, in two divinely inspired books; first in the gospel, which he testifies to have written according to what eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered to him from the beginning, all of which also he says that he investigated from the first; and secondly, in the Acts of the Apostles, which he composed not from report, as in the other case, but according to his own personal observation" (Coffman, p.12).
 - d. Luke is said to be a physician (Col. 4:14). The books of Luke and Acts have many medical references and terms which supply another implication that the writer was familiar with such language.
3. With this strong evidence pointing toward Luke as the author, and in the absence of evidence of some other person being the writer, we conclude that Luke, the beloved physician, was the author of the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

C. The Date of the Writing of Acts.

1. The book carries no express mention of a date when it was written, but there is enough internal evidence available to narrow down that time to about the year 63 A.D. This being so, the information contained in the book embraces about thirty years of time, from the ascension of Christ in A.D. 33 to the time Paul had been imprisoned in Rome for two years.
2. If the fall of Jerusalem had occurred prior to the writing of the book, Luke would have doubtless included at least some reference to that momentous event. But there is not a breath of an indication that it had occurred. In fact, Luke places Paul in Jerusalem about two years before his deportation to Rome; the large part of a year was required for the journey to appear before Caesar; he had been in Rome for two years when Acts is brought to a close. Other evidence indicates that Paul was executed in Rome prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The book closes without reporting the outcome of Paul's defense before Caesar, which is clear evidence that his liberation or execution had not taken place at that time; and further, since nothing is said about Jerusalem's fall, it is obvious that it still was standing.
3. Commenting on these matters, McGarvey states: "This proof is greatly strengthened when we consider it in connection with the course of the narrative in the last four chapters. In chapter 25, the writer gives the account of Paul's appeal to Caesar, which broke off his trial before Festus, and which led to all the subsequent proceedings....Now, if his trial before Caesar had taken place when this book was completed, whether it resulted in acquittal or conviction, it is unaccountable that the book was closed without a word on the subject. This would have been, not a mere omission like many others which we know to have occurred in the course of the narrative—the omission of matters the mention of which was not required by the historical context—but the omission of the culminating fact to which a long series of events previously mentioned led forward, and concerning which the writer had deliberately awakened the curiosity of his reader" (NC, pp.xxiv, xxv). It is both obvious and natural that the date of the writing is to be placed at the time of the last recorded reference in the book. Since the last location identified in Acts is Rome, it must have been in this city that the book was written by Luke.
4. It has been established that Festus was sent to be ruler in Judea in the year 60 A.D. Paul appeared before him soon after his taking office. He had been arrested two years earlier (A.D. 58), and was sent on to Rome in the fall after appearing before Festus. He arrived in Rome the following spring (A.D. 61), and remained there in his own hired house for two full years (Acts 28:30), until the year 63 A.D. Hence, the book was very logically written in 63 or 64 A.D. See McGarvey, NC, pp.xxvi-xxxiv.

D. What Acts Reveals.

1. Acts reveals the fulfillment of the promise and prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The prophecy was given in Joel 2:28. The promises are found in Matthew 3:11, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8, and John 14-16.
 - a. The Administrator of Holy Spirit baptism was Christ: John 1:33.
 - b. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was limited to the apostles to equip them for the great work they were given to do: John 14:16-17; 16:13-14; Acts 1:26—2:4.
 2. Acts gives the record of the establishment of the church.
 - a. Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44.
 - b. Jerusalem was to be the place: Zechariah 1:16; Isaiah 2:3; cf. Luke 24:49.
 - c. The promise Christ made to build the church (Matt. 16:13-19) was fulfilled: Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 47.
 - d. Spiritual blessings are located in Christ (Eph. 1:3); to be in Christ is to be in his church (Col. 1:13-14, 18-24; Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:12-30); salvation is in the church (Acts 2:41-47; Eph. 5:23,25).
 3. Acts gives details concerning the organization of the church.
 - a. Christ is the universal Head: Acts 2:29-36; Ephesians 1:21-23.
 - b. Local congregations had elders over each: Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5.
 - c. Each congregation was served by deacons—a special class of servants: Acts 6:1-6.
 4. Acts gives details about the work and worship of the church.
 - a. The work (cf. Eph. 4:12).
 - 1) Evangelization: Acts 1:8; 8:1-4.
 - 2) Edification: Acts 20:28-32; 16:5.
 - 3) Benevolence: Acts 6:1-6; 4:34-35; 20:35; 11:27-30; cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:10; 9:1-2.
 - b. The worship.
 - 1) The time—first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; cf. Luke 24:1-46).
 - 2) Avenues (Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; I Cor. 16:1-2).
 5. Acts reveals when and where the divine name was given.
 - a. Prophecies (Isa. 56:5; 62:2).
 - b. Fulfillment (Acts 9:15; 11:22-26). The Greek word for "called" (Acts 11:26) means "to utter an oracle; to declare by an oracle." Thus, it was something that was divinely done. The word is used elsewhere (Matthew 2:12; 2:22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; 11:26; Romans 7:3; Hebrews 8:9; 11:7; 12:25). God was the source of each action identified.
 6. Details of the execution of the Great Commission are given in Acts, beginning on the Pentecost Day of chapter two.
 - a. Acts gives several accounts of conversions (and non-conversions) which show what was required of men to be saved. Acts 16:31; 2:37; 2:38; 8:37; 22:16.
 - b. There are several specific cases of conversion, which identifies how and when one becomes a member of the Lord's church: 2:22-47.
 - 1) The 3,000 on Pentecost day: Acts 2.
 - 2) The Samaritans, including Simon: Acts 8:1-13.
 - 3) The man from Ethiopia: Acts 8:26-40.
 - 4) Saul of Tarsus: Acts 9, 22, 26.
 - 5) Cornelius and his household: Acts 10, 11.
 - 6) Lydia: Acts 16:12-15.
 - 7) The Jailor: Acts 16:16-40.
 - 8) The Corinthians: Acts 18:1-8.
 - 9) The Ephesians: Acts 19:1ff.
 - c. There are also non-specific cases of conversion: Acts 4:4; 11:24; 17:34.
 7. Acts shows that the "executors" (the apostles) enforced Christ's will (John 16:7-8; Acts 2:36ff; Heb. 9:15-17; 2 Thess. 2:15; Gal. 1:6-12; 2 Tim. 4:1-4).
 8. Acts presents reports of persecutions brought to bear upon the church at Jerusalem, the apostles, and on other individual saints.
 - a. Upon the whole church at Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4).
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- b. Upon the apostles (Acts 3, 4); Paul (Acts 21-28).
 - c. In the cases of the martyrdom of Stephen and James (Acts 7, 12).
 - 9. Acts describes the motivating spirit the Lord's church possessed.
 - a. They had a burning spirit of evangelism.
 - 1) They accepted the Great Commission as a personal responsibility (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - 2) Individual Christians were involved in the teaching of the gospel (Acts 5:42; 8:4).
 - 3) They taught even in the face of severe opposition (Acts 5:28-29; 6:9; 7:60; cf. 2 Tim. 4:6-8; 3:12).
 - b. They had a sincere concern for one another which was appreciated by outsiders.
 - 1) Many of them sold their possessions to provide for the necessities of those who were in need (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37).
 - 2) They cared for their widows (Acts 6:1-8). When a deficiency was reported, the proper remedy was quickly implemented.
 - 3) Churches distributed to the poor saints in Judea (Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:26; I Cor. 16:1-3).
 - c. They accomplished this because of the spirit of sacrifice they had adopted.
 - 1) They first gave themselves (2 Cor. 8:1-5; Rom. 12:1-2).
 - 2) They sacrificed what they had (Acts 4:34)
 - 3) They sacrificed what they could have had (Phil. 3:4-8).
 - d. The church today will have this same degree of dedication and love only when the members develop in their hearts this same sacrificial spirit.
 - E. Acts Surveys the Spread of the Gospel to the Known World.
 - 1. Acts 1-7 shows how the gospel permeated Jerusalem and Judea.
 - a. The church began in Jerusalem: Acts 2.
 - b. The word was accepted by many there: Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; cf. 5:28.
 - c. Internal problems broke out: Acts 5:1-11; 6:1-7. These difficulties were handled quickly and properly.
 - 2. Acts 8-12 shows the gospel was carried to Samaria, Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch.
 - a. This expansion of the scope of the work was hastened by the great persecution which arose in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1,4).
 - b. Philip carried the gospel to the Samaritans and to the man from Ethiopia (Acts 8).
 - c. Paul was converted by Ananias at Damascus (Acts 9).
 - d. Peter first preached to the Gentiles (Acts 10, 11).
 - e. Others carried the gospel to Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching only to the Jews (Acts 11:19).
 - f. Some of those who preached in these places were from Cyprus and Cyrene, and upon entering Antioch, preached also to the Grecians (Acts 11:20-21).
 - g. Barnabas and Saul worked in Antioch for a year, resulting in the conversion of many.
 - 3. Acts 13-28 shows the spread of the gospel throughout the far-flung Roman Empire.
 - a. On the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas took the gospel to Asia Minor (Acts 13,14).
 - b. A problem with false teachers was handled in Acts 15.
 - c. The second missionary journey has Paul and Silas going as far as Europe: Acts 16-18.
 - d. The third missionary journey plants the gospel in Ephesus: Acts 18-21.
 - e. Paul returns to Jerusalem, is arrested and tried: Acts 21-27.
 - f. Paul journeys to Rome and spreads the gospel the whole way: Acts 28.
 - F. Acts: Conversion Demonstrated.
 - 1. The aim of any book must be kept in mind if we are to use it properly.
 - a. This is true of books written by men. Some are written merely to entertain, and are not to be taken as a rule of life [e.g., Cf. Louis LaMour westerns; Agatha Christie mysteries]. Some are designed to show us how to do certain things; in their field, these are authoritative [e.g., Chilton's Auto Repair Manuals]. If we don't know the aim of a book, we might misunderstand it and misuse it. A Nissan automobile manual is not likely to help you repair your John Deere tractor.
 - b. We must likewise consider the aim of the Bible. The Bible shows God's dealings with man through the ages. It reveals man's origin, purpose, condition, eternal destiny, and needs. It is designed primarily to show man how to live here so as to be prepared for eternity; to avoid torment and gain heaven. It is not designed to be a book of science or history, although it contains accurate scientific and historical statements.
 - c. We must also keep in mind the aim of each of the books which comprise the Bible if we are to
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- understand them and be fully profited by a study of them.
2. Acts is one of the most significant books in the Bible.
 - a. Acts 2 is properly called "The Hub of the Bible." The hub of a wheel is, of course, the center about which the rest of the wheel rotates. The focal point of the entire instrument is the hub; it is its practical center. Acts 2 marks the practical turning point in the Bible, the transition from Judaism to Christianity. It marks the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:2; Dan. 2:44; Joel 2:28: the establishment of the church/kingdom and the giving of the Spirit). Things before Acts 2 point to that Pentecost Day; things after Acts 2 point back to that Pentecost Day.
 - b. Acts 2 is the beginning point of several important things. On that occasion, the gospel was preached in its completeness for the first time; the full plan of salvation was publicly presented for the first time. New Testament worship began then (Matt. 15:9; John 4:23f; Acts 2:42). Unlimited remission of sins was offered for the first time to all (Acts 2:38f). People began to be added to the church (Ac. 2:41,47).
 - c. It fulfills the expectancy of the first 4 books and connects them with the epistles.
 - d. Acts is significant also because it gives many examples of conversion to Christ.
 3. Acts gives many examples of conversions, thus this is its primary aim.
 - a. It shows the importance of conversion. We cannot enter heaven without being converted (John 3:3,5; Matt. 18:2-3; Acts 3:19; 13:46; 22:16). Acts gives practical demonstrations of conversion (18:8; 22:16; 2:38; 8:26-40). Many who are unfamiliar with the purpose of Acts are as apt to go to the book of Psalms to find the plan of salvation as to the book of Acts. Acts gives clear, concrete, practical examples of conversions which demonstrate the conversion process in a manner that cannot be missed by the perceptive eye.
 - b. Acts shows the power of example. It is much easier to teach by example than by precept; the human mind is more attuned to the practical than to the theoretical (we can understand better how to drive a car or operate a computer after seeing those activities demonstrated). God gives clear pictures of how to be converted in the book of Acts.
 - c. Acts shows the importance of being sure of our conversion (2 Pet. 1:10). There is only one way to heaven (John 14:6; Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 4:4-6; 5:23, 25-27). There is the gravest danger if we are wrong about our conversion (Prov. 14:12; Matt. 15:14; 2 Thess. 1:9; cf. Rev. 14:11).
 - d. Acts shows the superiority of these examples over supposed examples. Sectarian preachers lean heavily on personal testimonies and experiences. But these are subjective, uncertain, and unreliable; they are given by fallible men. "The Lord spoke to me and told me I was saved." "I had this experience..." Personal testimonies are products of the mind, and are unreliable (Jer. 17:9). If we follow such feelings and experiences we will be misled. The Holy Spirit inspired the conversion accounts in Acts; each case is described clearly; the results are plainly stated. If we follow these examples we can be sure about our conversion (Jer. 10:23; Ps. 119:105; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). But if we follow a spiritually blind, fallible man we will fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14).
 - e. Acts furnishes a pattern for the entirety of the Christian Age. A pattern for the tabernacle was given to Moses for Israel (Heb. 8:5; Ex. 40:16). But Israel did not know the real meaning of the holy and most holy parts of the tabernacle, or the real significance of animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:16-17). Hebrews 8-10 gives the meaning of these things. The holy place represented the church; the most holy pictured heaven (8:1-2; 9:11-24). Those Old Testament bloody sacrifices prefigured the sacrifice of Christ. For the first time in history, a Jewish father who was converted to Christ, could explain this to his son. Since God was very particular over the pattern for the tabernacle, how much more with the New Testament pattern! (Heb. 2:1-4; 10:28-29). The substance is vastly more important than the shadow. If Acts is not the pattern for conversion, we can never know we are converted or how to be converted.
 4. Our conversion is right only if it is in accordance with the examples in Acts.
 - a. What was the pattern for their conversion?
 - 1) They believed: Acts 2:37; 16:30-31.
 - 2) They repented: Acts 2:38; 3:19.
 - 3) They confessed Christ: Acts 8:37.
 - 4) They were baptized for the remission of sins: Acts 2:38,41,47; 22:16.
 - b. At the point of baptism they received remission of sins, salvation (Acts 2:38,47).
 - c. We are not converted if we followed another pattern; if we can be converted by some other plan, how
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do we know it? Why the difference? Who invented it? How can we explain these matters?

5. Some things are done out of necessity. We pay income tax and sales tax because they are required, not because they are optional. We are converted IAW [in accordance with] God's pattern because he requires it. We are converted or we will be barred from the kingdom and heaven (Matt. 18:3).
 6. God will measure our world by the gospel of Christ. This Judgment will be done individually (Rom. 14:10-12). The standard will be the word of God (John 12:48; Rev. 20:12; Acts 17:30-31; Ps. 119:172).
- G. The Chronology of Events in Acts. (Adapted from Boles, p.16; McGarvey, NC, p.xxxiii,xxxiv):

YEAR	EVENT	ROMAN EMPEROR
33	Day of Pentecost	Tiberius (A.D. 14-37)
36	Martyrdom of Stephen	
37	Conversion of Paul	Caligula (A.D. 37-41)
40	Paul Goes to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:15-19)	
41	Conversion of Cornelius	Claudius (A.D. 41-54)
42	Church in Antioch Began	
43	Barnabas and Saul in Antioch (Acts 11:22-26)	
44	Martyrdom of James	
44-49	1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13,14)	
50 or 51	Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1f)	
51-53	2nd Missionary Journey	
54-58	3rd Missionary Journey	Nero (A.D.54-68)
58	Paul Arrested in Jerusalem	
58-60	Paul's Imprisonment in Caesarea	
61	Paul's Journey to Rome	
61-63	Paul's Imprisonment in Rome	
63 or 64	Luke Wrote Acts in Rome	

OUTLINE OF ACTS

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM: Acts 1:1—8:4

- A. Introductory Statements: 1:1-26.
 1. Starting point of the narrative: 1:1-5.
 2. Promise of the Holy Spirit: 1:6-8.
 3. The account of the ascension repeated: 1:9-11.
 4. Names and lodging place of the apostles: 1:12-14.
 5. The place of Judas filled: 1:15-26.
- B. The Church in Jerusalem Established: 2:1-47.
 1. The apostles are filled with the Holy Spirit: 2:1-4.
 2. The effect on the multitude: 2:5-13.

3. The miracle explained: 2:14-21.
4. Jesus proclaimed as Christ and Lord: 2:22-32.
 - a. His resurrection declared: 22-24.
 - b. Resurrection of Christ predicted by David: 25-31.
 - c. Resurrection of Jesus attested by the twelve: 32.
 - d. Jesus exalted to the throne of God: 33-35.
 - e. Logical conclusion: 36.
5. Exhortation to save themselves: 2:37-40.
6. Effect of the sermon, and progress of the church: 2:41-47.
- C. The First Persecution of the Church: 3:1—4:31.
 1. A lame man healed by Peter and John: 3:1-10.
 2. Peter's second sermon: 3:11-21.
 - a. Introduction; the miracle explained: 11-16.
 - b. Forgiveness of sins offered through Christ: 17-21.
 3. These things foretold by Moses and the Prophets, and promised to Abraham: 3:22-26.
 4. Peter and John arrested: 4:1-4.
 5. Peter's defense: 4:5-12.
 6. A private consultation: 4:13-17.
 7. More preaching forbidden: 4:18-22.
 8. Report of the two apostles and prayer of the twelve: 4:23-31.
- D. Progress of the Church, and Second Persecution: 4:32—5:42.
 1. Unity and liberality of the church: 4:32-37.
 2. A case of discipline: 5:1-11.
 3. Prosperity of the church increased: 5:12-16.
 4. The apostles imprisoned and released: 5:17-21.
 5. They are brought into court: 5:21-27.
 6. Accusation and defense: 5:27-32.
 7. They are saved from death by Gamaliel: 5:33-42.
- E. Further Progress of the Church and Third Persecution: 6:1—8:4.
 1. Seven men appointed to serve tables: 6:1-7.
 2. Stephen arrested and falsely accused: 6:8-15.
 3. Stephen's speech.
 - a. The introduction: 7:1-8.
 - b. A series of deliverers persecuted by Israel: 7:9-43.
 - 1) The case of Joseph: 7:9-16.
 - 2) The case of Moses in Egypt: 7:17-36.
 - 3) The case of Moses in the Wilderness: 7:37-41.
 - 4) God's final rejection of Israel: 7:42-43.
 - 5) The Tabernacle and the Temple: 7:44-50.
 - a) The Tabernacle supplanted by a House: 44-47.
 - b) The Temple not God's real dwelling: 48-50.
 - 6) Application: 7:51-53.
 4. The death of Stephen and the great persecution which scatters the church: 7:54—8:4.

THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL IN JUDEA AND ADJACENT COUNTRIES: Acts 8:5—12:25

- A. The Labors of Philip: 8:5-40.
 1. He establishes the church in the city of Samaria: 8:5-13.
 2. Mission of Peter and John to Samaria: 8:14-17.
 3. A wicked proposal by Simon: 8:18-24.
 4. Other labors of Peter and John, and their return: 8:25.
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5. Philip is sent to an Ethiopian Eunuch: 8:26-31.
6. Philip preaches to the Eunuch, baptizes him, and then preaches in Philistia: 8:31-40.
- B. The Conversion and Early Labors of Saul: 9:1-31.
 1. The journey to Damascus: 9:1-9.
 2. His baptism by Ananias: 9:10-19.
 3. He preaches Jesus in Damascus: 9:20-22.
 4. He flees for his life: 9:23-25.
 5. He is persecuted in Jerusalem, and sent to Tarsus: 9:26-30.
- C. The Baptism of Gentiles by Peter: 9:31—11:18.
 1. The church enjoys peace and prosperity: 9:31.
 2. Peter, evangelizing, comes to Lydda: 9:32-35.
 3. He is called to Joppa, and raises Tabitha: 9:36-43.
 4. Cornelius, a Gentile, is directed to send for Peter: 10:1-8.
 5. Peter directed to go to Cornelius: 10:9-23.
 6. The meeting of Peter and Cornelius: 10:24-33.
 7. Peter's sermon to the uncircumcised: 10:34-43.
 8. The uncircumcised receive the Holy Spirit and are baptized: 10:44-48.
 9. Peter's defense for these proceedings: 11:1-18.
- D. A Congregation is Established in Antioch, and Another Persecution Strikes in Jerusalem: 11:19—12:25.
 1. Beginning of the work in Antioch: 11:19-21.
 2. Barnabas sent to Antioch: 11:22-24.
 3. Barnabas brings Saul to Antioch: 11:25-26.
 4. Barnabas and Saul sent to Judea: 11:27-30.
 5. James is beheaded and Peter is imprisoned: 12:1-11.
 6. Peter leaves the city, and the guards are slain: 12:12-19.
 7. The death of Herod, and the return of Barnabas and Saul: 12:20-25.

PAUL'S TOURS AMONG THE GENTILES: Acts 13-21

- A. The First Tour: 13-14.
 1. Barnabas and Saul set apart to the work: 13:1-3.
 2. Their labors in Cyprus: 13:4-12.
 3. Their journey from Paphos to Antioch of Pisidia: 13:13-15.
 4. Paul's sermon in Antioch: 13:16-41.
 - a. The introduction: 13:16-22.
 - b. Jesus preached as Savior: 13:23-29.
 - 1) The proposition: 23-24.
 - 2) John's testimony: 25.
 - 3) Voices of the prophets fulfilled in his death: 26-29.
 - 4) The resurrection of Jesus: 30-37.
 - 5) Remission of sins proclaimed through him: 38-39.
 - c. A warning: 13:40-41.
 5. Immediate effect of the sermon: 13:42-43.
 6. Results on the second Sabbath: 13:44-49.
 7. They are persecuted, and depart to Iconium: 13:50-52.
 8. Events in Iconium: 14:1-7.
 9. Labors and results in Lystra: 14:8-20.
 10. The return to Antioch of Syria: 14:21-28.
 - B. A Controversy on Circumcision: Chapter 15.
 1. The beginning of the controversy: 15:1-5.
 2. Meeting of apostles and elders, and a speech by Peter: 15:6-11.
 3. Speeches by Barnabas and Paul: 15:12-13.
 4. A speech by James: 15:13-21.
 5. Decision of the apostles and elders: 15:22-29.
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6. Peace restored in Antioch: 15:30-35.
 - C. Paul's Second Tour: 15:36—16:40.
 1. Change of companions, and beginning of the tour: 15:36-41.
 2. The churches of the first tour revisited: 16:1-5.
 3. Preaching in Phrygia and Galatia, and a call to Macedonia: 16:6-10.
 4. Paul reaches Philippi, and baptizes Lydia and her household: 16:11-15.
 5. Paul and Silas scourged and imprisoned: 16:16-24.
 6. The jailor and his family are baptized: 16:25-34.
 7. Paul and Silas are released from prison: 16:35-40.
 - D. Other Labors in Macedonia and in Greece: 17:1—18:22.
 1. Journey to Thessalonica, and preaching in the synagogue: 17:1-4.
 2. A persecution in Thessalonica: 17:5-9.
 3. Paul flees to Berea, and is sent thence to Athens: 17:10-15.
 4. Paul begins the work in Athens: 17:16-21.
 5. Paul's discourse on the "Unknown God": 17:22-31.
 - a. The introduction: 17:22-23.
 - b. The unknown God set forth: 24-29.
 - 1) As not dwelling in temples: 24.
 - 2) As not needing the service of men: 25.
 - 3) As maker and ruler of all nations: 26-28.
 - 4) Logical conclusion: 29.
 - c. A call to repentance: 17:30-31.
 6. The immediate effects of the speech: 17:32-34.
 7. Paul begins the work in Corinth: 18:1-4.
 8. Arrival of Silas and Timothy, and breach with the Jews: 18:5-11.
 9. Paul is arraigned before Gallio: 18:12-17.
 10. Epistles written during the stay in Corinth.
 - a. First Thessalonians (Historical items in this epistle).
 - b. Second Thessalonians (Historical items in this epistle).
 11. Paul's return to Antioch of Syria: 18:18-22.
 - E. Paul's Third Tour: 18:23—21:16.
 1. Second visit to Galatia and Phrygia: 18:23.
 2. Apollos in Ephesus and Achaia: 18:24-28.
 3. Paul reaches Ephesus, and baptizes a dozen men: 19:1-7.
 4. Preaching in the Synagogue, and in the School of Tyrannus: 19:8-12.
 5. Exorcists exposed, and books of magic destroyed: 19:13-20.
 6. Paul forms a plan for future journeys: 19:21-22.
 - a. Writing of First Corinthians.
 - b. Written in Ephesus: 1 Corinthians 16:8,9.
 - c. Written when "a great door was open."
 7. The mob of the silversmiths: 19:23-34.
 8. The mob dispersed by the Town Clerk: 19:35-41.
 9. Paul's second visit to Macedonia and Greece: 20:1-3.
 10. Writing of Second Corinthians (Historical items in the epistle).
 11. Writing of the epistle to the Romans (Historical items in the epistle).
 12. Writing of the epistle to the Galatians (Historical items in the epistle).
 13. Paul's journey from Corinth back to Troas: 20:4-6.
 14. A Lord's Day meeting in Troas: 20:7-12.
 15. The voyage from Troas to Miletus: 20:13-16.
 16. Address to the Ephesian elders: 20:17-38.
 - a. Review of his labors in Ephesus: 20:17-21.
 - b. His own future: 20:22-27.
 - c. The future of the elders and the church: 20:28-35.
 17. Parting from the elders: 20:36-38.

18. The journey from Miletus to Caesarea: 21:1-9.
19. Agabus prophesies the imprisonment of Paul: 21:10-14.
20. The journey from Caesarea to Jerusalem: 21:15-16.

PAUL'S FOUR YEARS' IMPRISONMENT: Acts 21:17-28:31

- A. His imprisonment in Jerusalem: 21:17—23:35.
 1. His reception and the advice of the elders: 21:17-25.
 2. Paul is assailed by the mob and arrested by the Chief Captain: 21:26-36.
 3. Paul obtains permission to address the mob: 21:37-40.
 4. Paul's speech to the mob: 22:1-21.
 - a. An account of himself before his conversion: 22:1-5.
 - b. An account of his conversion: 22:6-16.
 - c. His mission to the Gentiles: 22:17-21.
 5. The immediate effects of the speech: 22:22-29.
 6. Paul is brought before the Sanhedrin: 22:30—23:10.
 7. He is encouraged by a vision: 23:11.
 8. A conspiracy formed and exposed: 23:12-22.
 9. Paul is removed to Caesarea: 23:23-35.
 - B. Paul's Imprisonment in Caesarea: 24:1—26:32.
 1. He is accused before Felix: 24:1-9.
 2. Paul's defense: 24:10-21.
 3. Present decision of Felix: 24:22-23.
 4. Paul preaches to Felix and Drusilla: 24:24-27.
 5. Paul's trial before Festus: 25:1-12.
 6. Paul's case stated to King Agrippa: 25:12-22.
 7. The case publicly stated: 24:23-27.
 8. Paul's defense before Agrippa: 26:1-29.
 - a. His introduction: 26:1-3.
 - b. His position toward Jewish parties: 26:4-8.
 - c. His former position toward Jesus: 26:9-11.
 - d. His vision on the way to Damascus: 26:12-18.
 - e. How he executed his commission: 26:19-23.
 - f. An interruption and the conclusion: 26:24-29.
 9. Immediate results of the speech: 26:30-32.
 - C. Paul's Voyage to Rome: 27:1—28:16.
 1. The company, the ship, and the route: 27:1-2.
 2. The voyage from Caesarea to Fair Havens: 27:3-8.
 3. Discussion about continuing the voyage: 27:9-12.
 4. A vain attempt to reach Phenice: 27:13-20.
 5. Paul predicts the safety of all: 27:21-26.
 6. The sailors cast anchor, and the attempt to abandon the ship: 27:27-32.
 7. Paul comforts the crew, and the ship is lightened: 27:33-38.
 8. The ship is wrecked, but everyone escapes: 27:39-44.
 9. Kindness of the islanders, and bite of a viper: 28:1-6.
 10. Paul's usefulness in Melita: 28:7-10.
 11. The voyage completed: 28:11-16.
 - D. Paul's prison Labors in Rome: 28:17-31.
 1. He obtains an interview with the leading Jews: 28:17-22.
 2. A second interview with the Jews: 28:23-28.
 3. Duration of the imprisonment, and continued labors: 28:30-31.
 4. Paul writes Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.
 - a. Ephesians and Colossians were borne by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21,22; Col. 4:7,8).
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- b. Philemon borne by Onesimus (Phile. 10-12).
 - c. The two messengers traveled together (Col. 4:9).
 - d. Paul a prisoner at the time (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Col. 4:18; Phile. 1).
 - e. His only imprisonments long enough for such writing those at Caesarea and Rome.
5. Historical items in these epistles.
- a. Paul was solicitous for means of utterance and the necessary boldness (Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4).
 - b. He had converted Onesimus, sent him back to his master, and promises to pay his debts (Phile. 10-19).
 - c. Paul's companions and their salutations (Col. 4:10-14; Phile. 23-24).
6. Paul writes Philippians
- a. Written while a prisoner at Rome (Phil. 1:12-14; 4:22).
 - b. Paul expected to be released and to visit Philippi (Phil. 1:23-25; 2:24).
 - c. Intended to send Timothy and gives an estimate of this young preacher (Phil. 2:20-24).
 - d. Sickness of Epaphroditus, and his return to Philippi (Phil. 2:25-30).
7. Paul writes Hebrews.
- a. It was written in Italy (Heb. 13:24).
 - b. The writer was under restraint, but sure of release (Heb. 13:18,19,23).
 - c. The writer was intimately associated with Timothy (Heb. 13:23).
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ACTS 1

A. Acts 1:1-11: Christ's Final Instructions to the Apostles Prior to His Ascension.

1. Verse 1: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."
 - a. Introduction of what is to follow is given to Theophilus. The fact the material is addressed to Theophilus shows that Luke was writing a two-part message: the first had to do with what Jesus did and said in his public ministry and the second with what was done afterward. Acts is, therefore, a continuation of the inspired history begun in the book of Luke.
 - b. *Treatise* is from *logos*, and means "a word, a written narrative" (Vine, p.152).
 - c. "Theophilus" is a Greek name, and presumably he was of a Grecian background. The name means "lover of God" or "friend of God." A different form of the same Greek words are used of Abraham in James 2:23. Some have postulated that the term is used by Luke in reference to all those who love God, and was not intended for any one person. But "Theophilus" was a common personal name, being used from the third century B.C. onward (Bruce, quoted by Coffman, p.13). There is good reason to believe that a particular individual named Theophilus is addressed. In the absence of information to the contrary, we are to accept the statement at face value.
 - d. Contained in the former treatise were details of what Jesus had begun to do and teach until his ascension. The order of the verbs is significant: Jesus did and taught. A teacher must practice what he teaches. The statement is not intended to say that the writer had included *all* that Jesus did and taught (cf. John 21:25). The word *all* is used in reference to the most important matters (cf. Acts 13:10; I Tim. 1:16). Luke included in the former narrative the most significant parts of the Lord's actions and words. Many volumes would be required to record all that he did and said.
 - e. The former work related to what Jesus had *begun* to do and teach. The many aspects of his works and teachings which could be done in his public ministry were concluded at his death on the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30). He had fulfilled the Law, the sacrifice for sin had been offered, all the instructions the apostles had been able to bear had been given to them (John 16:12), all of the Old Testament prophecies that pertained to his personal ministry had been fulfilled, and all the necessary evidence and confirmation of his divinity and message had been given. Indeed, the foundation of the great plan of salvation had been completed; it only needed to be presented to the lost, together with confirmatory miracles to the first auditors, and recorded, in order to be finalized. It is true that the Lord continues to operate in heaven as Mediator, King, Priest and Savior. However, the word translated "begun" is also used idiomatically: Luke 8:3; 11:29; 13:25; 14:9,29. What Jesus began, the apostles continued; and our efforts are likewise to continue the Lord's work (2 Tim. 2:2).
2. Verse 2: "Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen."
 - a. The book of Luke covered the subject up to the time of the Lord's ascension. But before leaving the earth, the Lord gave commandment to the apostles. Verse two is only part of a long, multifaceted sentence which covers verses 1-4. There is not an idle word in this powerful statement.
 - b. The commandment referred to is not identified in the four verses, but scarcely needs any effort to be perceived. The closing verses of Luke report the Great Commission, which is immediately followed by a brief statement about the Lord's ascension. The commandment of the present study is obviously this grand, world-wide endeavor of preaching the gospel (Luke 24:47ff; Mark 16:15f; Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:21-23).
 - c. "During the personal ministry of Jesus, he authorized no human being to announce his Messiahship. On the contrary, whenever he discovered a disposition to do so, he uniformly forbade it, and this not only to various recipients of his healing power, but to the apostles themselves. When Peter made the memorable confession ... we are told that, at the close of the conversation, 'he charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ' [Matt. 16:20] ... Even when Peter, James, and John had witnessed his transfiguration, and heard God himself proclaim him as his Son, as they came down from the mount, 'Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man is risen from the dead'" [Matt. 17:9] (McGarvey, p.9). The Lord placed this limitation because to announce it prematurely would have fomented too much untimely political opposition and turmoil. As it was, many tried on one occasion to force him to take over the government (John 6:15). The disciples were not ready to accept such a mission due to their materialistic views of his purposes. They

- were still expecting a worldly kingdom.
- d. But now the time was almost upon them when they were to take this message of Christ to the whole world. They would soon be fully equipped to complete this universal work. Verse eight is a restatement of the Great Commission, using different words.
 - e. The information contained in this context applies to the apostles whom he had chosen. These were personally picked by the Lord, and specially prepared through about three years of intimate instruction by Christ. Information is given in the latter part of the chapter which outlines the qualifications of an apostle. There are no apostles on earth today. Further, the verses which follow contain several pronouns which take the place of "apostles" in this verse. None of the promises the Lord gave those men on that occasion apply to us today.
 - f. Another thought injected into the verse is that the commandment was given to them by Christ *through the Holy Ghost*. God had anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38); he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1); he had the Spirit without measure, i.e., without limitation (John 3:34). On this latter verse, Vine says that the italicized words ("unto him") detract from the thought. The phrase is omitted by the ASV. Thus, the statement may not especially be made of Christ, but of all who are inspired—no inspired person was only partially inspired. Woods says that the context bears out the KJV rendering which applies the statement to Christ; he states that the Spirit was given in measures: the baptism of the Spirit received by these apostles was greater than the spiritual gifts given to many of the first century saints (*Commentary on John*, pp.73f). Regardless of the meaning of the statement, John's obvious point is that God was speaking through his Son; and Acts 1:2 has the Holy Spirit also involved in the Son's ministry.
3. Verse 3: "To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."
- a. The Lord showed himself to *them* (the apostles) following his resurrection. These appearances were not subject to misinterpretation or deception. They were infallible proofs that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The word "infallible" does not have a corresponding word in the Greek, but scholars report that the idea of infallibility was incorporated in the word used. "In Greek authors it denotes an infallible sign or argument by which anything can be certainly known (Schleusner). Here it means the same—evidence that he was alive which could not deceive, or in which they could not be mistaken" (Barnes, p.2). His "passion" is a reference to his "sufferings" (Col. 1:24).
 - b. The appearances to his disciples were under the best circumstances to create faith in the risen Lord. They were at first unbelieving; following his death, they gave up their faith in him (Lk. 24:21); it seems the announcements he made to them about his forthcoming death and resurrection made no lasting impression on them. If they had fervently believed in his resurrection prior to its occurrence, their testimony would not have been as strong in the eyes of others. Their skepticism might seem justifiable. But the appearances of the Lord forever dissipated the apostles' doubts.
 - c. Why did the Lord only appear to those who knew him? Why did he not appear before his enemies? Critics who bring this up have in mind the supposition that if his enemies had seen him after his resurrection, they would have believed on him; and if they had thus believed, faith in him would have been enhanced for many others. But would his enemies have believed in him? Their history indicates they would not have believed! They heard the reports of the soldiers guarding his tomb; they had seen various miracles he wrought; and they remained in their unbelief. Further, the strength of testimony depends on the character of the witness; his enemies were not known for their strong character! The testimony of those who knew him best would be the strongest testimony. Their honesty and accuracy were placed beyond reproach when they demonstrated their willingness to make the supreme sacrifices in defense of their testimony, with nothing of a mundane nature to be gained. The character, intelligence, integrity, and number make their report believable to every fair-minded investigation. The witnesses heard, saw, and touched the Lord as he appeared to them (cf. I John 1; John 20:26-31).
 - d. "As our author is about to present the apostles testifying to the resurrection of Jesus, he sees proper, in his introduction, to state briefly the ground of their qualification for this testimony" (McGarvey, p.11).
 - e. The Lord was with his disciples for a period of forty days following his resurrection from the dead. This does not mean that he spent the entirety of that time with them, but that he appeared to them and discussed many things with them during that time. This is the only reference to the amount of time
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between his resurrection and ascension. Moses was on Sinai for 40 days; he fasted twice for that length of time; Elijah and Jesus also fasted for that same period of time; it is noteworthy that only these three were in the transfiguration scene. There are about ten or more separate appearances of the Lord mentioned in the scriptures for those forty days prior to his ascension. Undoubtedly, he appeared to the apostles many more times than the cases made part of the holy record. There were 50 days between the Passover and Pentecost; Pentecost always fell on Sunday (Lev. 23:15-16). The time between his ascension and Pentecost was a period of ten days.

- f. Among the things he discussed with the apostles were the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. The Bible teaches in several places that the church and kingdom are identical. It is more than passing strange that men today downplay the importance of the church. Many in the world are interested in Jesus but have no interest in his church: "Jesus yes, the church, no!" was once their cry. Members of manmade churches have no interest in his church, and deny the importance of the church, because in order to have their church, they must deny certain scriptures (Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 5:23-27; 1:22-22; Col. 1:13, 18-24). But the Lord saw fit to discuss the church.

B. Acts 1:4-8: The Lord Gives them the Promise of the Holy Spirit.

1. Verse 4: "And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me."
 - a. According to the margin, the word "assembled" means "eating together" with them. Evidently they came together on the occasion described for the purpose of eating (cf. Acts 10:41; John 21).
 - b. In this meeting, he commanded them to remain in Jerusalem. There are several reasons for this, one being that if they returned to their home territory of Galilee, they might not be as willing to pursue the Lord's great work. Also, it was predicted in the prophets that the gospel would go forth first from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3). The first enemy the gospel had to face was defunct Judaism; it was better to meet this enemy in its own citadel and defeat it there. If it could be victorious in this stronghold, it would also win in other places against this and other enemies.
 - c. They were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the promise of God which Christ had made to them. This is a reference to the promises made on the eve of his betrayal when he spoke at length about the power the Holy Spirit would give them. John 14-16.
2. Verse 5: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."
 - a. This statement reveals the promise the Lord meant. As John had baptized with water, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in the very near future. John had given a promise of this baptism in Matthew 3:11: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire." This statement did not mean that everyone present would receive Holy Spirit baptism any more than it meant they would all be baptized with fire (punished in hell). It was a general statement giving a general promise to a general audience; some in the audience would receive Holy Spirit baptism (later passages limit that promise to the apostles); and some in that audience would be lost in torment (baptism of fire).
 - b. It appears that all the apostles had received John's baptism. No mention is made about any of them being baptized on Pentecost day. There is no record of anyone being baptized by John's baptism prior to Acts 2 who had to be re-immersed. His baptism was valid baptism prior to the death of Christ (Acts 19:1-7). Notice that the promise the Lord made here was limited to the apostles; follow the pronouns back to their antecedent (apostles) in verse two.
3. Verse 6: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"
 - a. While this assembly was taking place, the apostles asked Christ whether he would at this time restore the kingdom to Israel. God never intended for ancient Israel ever to have a king; they demanded it, and God allowed them to have one to their own hurt: "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath" (Hos. 13:11; 1 Sam. 8). The nation had become so materialistic through the years that their concept of the Messiah was materialistic. They could envision only a return to the old worldly kingdom of David and Solomon, something that God never planned. Even the apostles, who had heard the Lord's teachings, retained the same faulty expectation.
 - b. Their question was, "Will you now restore the kingdom to Israel?" They were wanting and expecting

- such a kingdom. Error is difficult to uproot. Oftentimes, religious error is implanted into young minds by false teachers or misled parents; before we can plant the truth in these hearts, the error must be destroyed. But many times in so doing, anger and prejudice are aroused, and the truth is rejected. This is one reason the Lord stresses our need to love the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-12).
- c. One thing very evident by their question: the kingdom (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 3:2) had not yet been set up. If it had been, they would have known. This fact destroys the idea that the church began in the days of Abraham or in the days of John the Baptizer, since the kingdom and the church are the same.
4. Verse 7: "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."
 - a. The Lord did not deign to reply to their question, at least not in the record. In a few days they would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit which would give them the full information regarding the kingdom and its nature. Never again would they have the foolish concept that the kingdom is of this world.
 - b. There are some things which God chooses to keep secret. He kept the gospel plan of salvation secret throughout the long ages of the Old Testament. He never revealed the time when the kingdom would be established, except in general terms. Even now, the time of Christ's second coming is a closely-guarded secret (cf. Deut. 29:29; Mark 13:32-33).
 - c. If men knew the time of the establishment of the kingdom, they would have impeded its coming by their curiosity. If men could know when the end of the world will be, they would live in sin until that time drew near. It is not in our best interest to know some things. Panic would result if we knew what would happen ahead of time!
 - d. Barnes says that the difference between "times" and "seasons" is "that the former denotes any time or period that is indefinite or uncertain; the latter denotes a fixed, definite, or appropriate time" (p.5).
 5. Verse 8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - a. This is equivalent to the Great Commission. Notice again that the pronoun "ye" has as its antecedent the word "apostles" back in verse two. The commandment of verse two was given to the apostles; the infallible proofs were demonstrated to the apostles; it was the apostles who assembled with the Lord in verse four; it was to these same apostles the promise of Holy Spirit was given in verse five; it was these apostles who asked the question of verse six; it was to the apostles that the Lord made the remark in verse seven; and again, it was to these same men that the statement of verse eight was directed.
 - 1) John 15:26: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."
 - 2) Acts 2:14: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words."
 - 3) Acts 2:40: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."
 - b. These men were to be the Lord's witnesses. "Him [Christ] God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41). It was the apostles who gave witness in Acts 4:33. The thing they were to bear witness to was the resurrection of Christ. We have not seen the risen Lord; no one on earth today has seen him; therefore, no one today can be a witness of the Savior. There is no such thing as a substitute witness; we either saw the thing we are to testify about or we did not see it. Many have the foolish idea that we can bear witness today, but what they have in mind is to relate "what the Lord has done for me." This is purely subjective; it is grossly unreliable! How can one prove what the Lord has done for him? For all he knows, it might very well be the devil, or ordinary circumstances of life. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).
 - c. Christianity is based on truth, not supposition; it is founded on verified realities, not subjectivity. God selected good witnesses to testify to the world that Jesus was indeed raised from the dead. They devoted their lives, and even forfeited them, in proclamation of this truth.
 - d. Their work was to be done first in Jerusalem, which they did with great results. It was sensible to begin here where the first great enemy of the gospel was entrenched. Then they were to extend their labors to Judea, Samaria, and to the most distant lands where men dwelled.
 - e. "It is not to be imagined that this arrangement of their labors was dictated by partiality for the Jews,

or was merely designed to fulfill prophesy. It was rather foretold through the prophets, because there were good reasons why it should be so. One reason, suggested by the commentators generally, for the beginning in Jerusalem, was the propriety of first vindicating the claims of Jesus in the same city in which he was condemned. But the controlling reason was doubtless this: the most devout portion of the Jewish people, that portion who had been most influenced by the preparatory preaching of John and of Jesus, were always collected at the great annual festivals, and hence the most *successful* beginning could there be made. Next to these, the inhabitants of the rural districts of Judea were best prepared, by the same influences, for the gospel; then the Samaritans, who had seen some of the miracles of Jesus; and, last of all, the Gentiles. Thus the rule of *success* was made their guide from place to place, and it became the custom of the apostles, even in heathen lands, to preach the gospel 'first to the Jew' and 'then to the Gentile.' The result fully justified the rule; for the most signal triumph of the gospel was in Judea, and the most successful approach to the Gentiles of every region was through the Jewish synagogue" (McGarvey, p.17).

- f. But before the apostles could begin this great work, indeed before they were *able* to do it, they must receive the miraculous power which the Holy Spirit would provide. "...Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The source of this power was heaven, specifically through the coming of the Holy Spirit. According to Mark 9:1, the kingdom was to come with power; the power was to be given to the apostles in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5); the power would be received when the Holy Spirit came upon them; the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Pentecost day of Acts 2 (1-4). From these facts, the following deduction can be made with certainty: the kingdom came on the Pentecost day of Acts 2. This is so because God implied it by the facts he gave in the divine Record, not because we inferred it!

C. Acts 1:9-11: The Ascension of Christ.

1. Verse 9: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."
 - a. As he ended these instructions, even as they watched, he began to ascend up into the sky until a cloud received him out of their sight. (Again, notice the pronouns). "Note how artlessly simple is the account of the ascension. Nowhere does an inspired writer make an attempt to describe the most sacred scenes in the life of Christ. They are stated as facts to be expected of such a person as Jesus. The natural bent of the mind is to explain the mysterious and describe the difficult. No New Testament writer tries this anywhere. All content themselves with a plain, straightforward statement of what actually happened. It is not in human nature to write thus. The very method of recording miracles by these writers is strongly suggestive of their Spirit guidance" (Walker, p.11).
 - b. Luke 24:51 and Mark 16:19 also give brief statements about the ascension. Matthew and John, both of whom were apostles and witnessed the ascension personally, do not give direct reports of it. Their silence on this matter has caused some critics to question the ascension, since the direct accounts of it were given by men who did not see it. The answer is to be found, in part, by the nature of the narratives. To speak of the ascension fitted the intent of Mark and Luke; it did not fit that of Matthew and John. There was no need for all of the writers to mention it; if only one had done so, that would have been sufficient to establish it as a Bible truth. But John 6:62, John 14:1-6, 18-19, 28-29, 16:5-10, 16-19, 28, and 20:17 imply the ascension.
 - c. Others had been resurrected prior to the Lord's. What happened to their bodies? They doubtless died again. What was to happen to the Lord's body? The alternatives are that it returned to the grave or ascended into heaven. Even if the inspired record carried no reference to the disposition of his body, we would be forced to conclude that such an event as the ascension occurred, for it is unreasonable to think that his body returned to the grave.
2. Verse 10: "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel."
 - a. While they continued to stare into the sky, two men stood by them, dressed in white apparel. That these were angels, and not mere mortals, is seen by other accounts in which angels took on the form of men in order to converse with men. Luke describes the two beings at the Lord's tomb as men, while John plainly identifies them as angels (Luke 24:4; John 20:11-12).
 - b. It is also seen in the promise that Jesus would return: no mortal could have known this truth. Also, these angels appeared without the apostles seeing their approach.

3. Verse 11: "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
 - a. The angels gave a mild rebuke to the apostles by asking them why they stood there gazing up into the sky. We should not understand the statement that they were looking into heaven as meaning they were actually seeing heaven where God's throne is. In point of fact, the cloud in which Jesus disappeared would have hindered their view, and it is impossible for any mortal to see heaven with his natural sight. It may be that they were expecting the Lord to reappear quickly; if so they were wasting their time. And there were preparations to be made: a successor to Judas must be found.
 - b. The apostles are described as "men of Galilee." All of them were from that province in northern Israel, several of them from the same city (Bethsaida). This helps us to identify those who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, since some in the audience stated that all of those who were thus endowed were Galileans (2:7).
 - c. This same Jesus would return, but the time was unknown to the angels (Mark 13:32-33). His return will be with clouds, accompanied by the sounding of the trumpet (I Thess. 4:16; Rev. 1:7). His return will be audible and visible, and known immediately by all of the earth (Matt. 24:27).
 4. The ascension of Christ is of great importance. If the Lord had simply vanished from the earth during the night, or from some place or time when his departure was unobserved, his followers would have been confounded and the world would have thought them to be deceived. But when they saw him rise up from the earth, there was no doubt whatsoever about Christ, and their preaching was the more zealous and their faith the more fervent for it.
 - a. It was a confirmation of the truthfulness of Christianity. Our faith is on sound footing; we have not followed cunningly devised fables (2 Pet. 1:16). The apostles could state from firsthand knowledge where the ascension took place, describe the scene clearly, and report the words of the angels.
 - b. Since the King is in heaven, the nature of his kingdom is established. If it were an earthly kingdom, he would be ruling it directly from an earthly throne and palace.
 5. Luke 24:50-53 reports that the ascension took place near Bethany, and that it was while he was blessing them, that he began to ascend from the earth. Acts 1:12 states that they returned to Jerusalem from the ascension site which was about a Sabbath Day's journey (estimated to be about seven-eighths of a mile). "A 'sabbath day's journey,' according to Jewish tradition, was based on Josh. 3:4. The Israelites were required to march about two thousand cubits (approximately three quarters of a mile) behind the ark, and from this came the belief that the tabernacle was that distance from the camp of Israel; and since the people were allowed to go to the tabernacle on the sabbath (cf. Num. 28:1-10), two thousand cubits became the distance allowed for a sabbath day's journey" (ALC, 1962, pp.78f). Luke 24:52-53 tells that they returned to the city with great joy, and continually in the temple they praised and blessed God.
 6. Other Facts Regarding the Ascension:
 - a. It was foretold by Old Testament prophets.
 - 1) Psalm 68:18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men..." The fulfillment is stated in Ephesians 4:8-10.
 - 2) Psalm 110:1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." See Acts 2:33-36 for the fulfillment.
 - b. Even before his death, Christ taught that he would ascend back to heaven.
 - 1) John 6:62: "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"
 - 2) John 7:33: "...Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me."
 - 3) John 14:2,12: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you....I go unto my Father."
 - 4) John 16:28: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."
 - 5) John 17:5: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."
 - c. It was preached by the apostles. I Peter 3:22; Acts 2:33-36.
 - d. Psalm 24:7-10 gave a prophetic picture of his approaching heaven's gate as he came back to his eternal home.
 - e. Daniel 7:13-14 gave a prophetic description of his approaching the Ancient of Days.
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7. Eight Things Christ Accomplished Following His Ascension:
 - a. He resumed his pre-incarnate state: John 17:4-5.
 - 1) He was intended to dwell on earth in a fleshly body only for a little while (Ph. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:9; 10:5; John 7:33).
 - 2) When his earthly mission was completed, he ascended back to glory, and because flesh and blood cannot exist in heaven (I Cor. 15:50), he re-acquired his eternal body in which he now lives (Matt. 17:2; Heb 1:3; Ph. 3:21; I John 3:2).
 - b. He completed the atonement for our sins.
 - 1) Old Testament high priests offered the atonement sacrifice at the altar, then took the blood of the sacrifice into the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle [or temple] and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat where God's presence was manifested. Leviticus 16.
 - 2) Christ, being both the sacrifice and High Priest, entered Heaven and offered his blood at that great spiritual mercy seat which is God's throne (Heb. 9:11-12, 24-28).
 - c. He gave Christianity a universal and spiritual quality by his ascension.
 - 1) If he had remained on earth, worship would have been limited to the place where Jesus was physically located. Everyone would want to be where he was.
 - 2) If he had remained on earth, physical considerations would have been exalted, and the spiritual qualities would have lost their importance in our esteem. Man would have been overly concerned in "relics," and would be walking by sight; his interests would have been entirely materialistic.
 - 3) But by ascending to heaven, all men where ever they may be, can see Jesus with an eye of faith; they are as close to him as prayer, and his word, and the worship assemblies (Matt. 18:20). John 4:20-24; 1 Peter 2:5.
 - 4) His ascension draws our attention to heaven, and establishes our affection on heaven and spiritual considerations (Col. 3:1-4).
 - d. His Lordship was established following his ascension.
 - 1) Acts 2:33-36. His return to heaven was necessary before he could be made both Lord and Christ.
 - 2) His enemies would be subdued under his feet only if he returned to his eternal home (Ps. 110:1-6; Acts 2:33).
 - 3) It was in God's eternal plan for the enemy to crucify Christ on earth; but where are his enemies now? And where will they all be following the Judgment?
 - e. He established his spiritual kingdom following his ascension to heaven.
 - 1) God gave him the throne of the kingdom at that time. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom...shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13-14).
 - 2) The kingdom which had been prophesied by Daniel (2:44) was established on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2, which was ten days after his ascension.
 - a) Eighty-four preachers announced that the kingdom was at hand: John (Mt. 3:2); Jesus (Mt. 4:17); the twelve (Mt. 10:7); the seventy (Lk. 10:9).
 - b) The kingdom was spoken of in the future prior to Acts 2, but as being present following Acts Two (Col. 1:13f; Heb. 12:28f; Rev. 1:9).
 - c) The kingdom was to come with power (Mark 9:1); the power was to come when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (Acts 1:8); the Spirit gave that power to the apostles in Acts two (2:1ff); therefore, the kingdom was established on the Pentecost Day of Acts two.
 - 3) It was after his ascension to heaven that his kingdom was established. The Lord appeared to the apostles and others over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3); and since Pentecost came fifty days after the Passover, the occasion of the Lord's crucifixion, his ascension took place ten days prior to Acts two.
 - f. He became head of the church, which is his spiritual body, following the ascension.
 - 1) God set Christ at his own right hand by his infinite power (Eph. 1:19-20).
 - 2) This position is above all principality and power (Eph. 1:21). This verse makes the same point as does Daniel 7:14; since Daniel gives this status to Christ in describing his unending kingdom, and Paul here describes it in connection with Christ's church, then the kingdom and the church are

equivalent!

- 3) God gave Christ to be head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Christ had promised to establish his church (Matt. 16:18); prior to Acts two the church is spoken of in the future tense, but following Acts two it is spoken of in the present tense (Acts 2:47; 8:3). The church came into existence on the Pentecost Day of Acts two, as was shown with regards to the establishment of the kingdom.
- 4) Christ is head over all things **to** the church. This means more than being head **of** the church. It is one thing to be the mother **of** a child and to be mother **to** a child. And as the head is the ruler of the physical body, so Christ is ruler over the spiritual body, the church. His authority governs it (Col. 3:17).
- g. He sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles following his ascension.
 - 1) He promised them the power and guidance which the Spirit would provide (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13).
 - 2) But the Spirit could not come unless Christ ascended: "Nevertheless it tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).
 - 3) The Spirit brought back to the apostles full remembrance of the things Jesus had taught them personally; he showed them things to come; he guided them into the full revelation of truth; he empowered them to be ambassadors for Christ; he gave them power to perform various signs and wonders by which the veracity of their message would be confirmed for all time (Mark 16:15-20; Heb. 2:1-4).
 - 4) As a direct consequence of the ascension of Christ, therefore, the New Testament was given. His ascension is important to us!
- h. He ascended to become our High Priest.
 - 1) The work of the Old Testament high priest was to offer the atonement sacrifice; this was the greatest work he performed, which was done once each year.
 - 2) Jesus could not be a high priest on earth (Heb. 8:4; 7:14).
 - 3) He ascended into heaven to become our High Priest (Heb. 4:14; 7:25f; 9:24-25; Rom. 8:34; Zech. 6:13). As High Priest, he is able to deliver man from past sins, and as we walk in the light, he offers continual cleansing (I John 1:7).

D. Acts 1:12-14: The Apostles and Other Disciples in Jerusalem.

1. Verse 12: "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey."
 - a. Being mildly rebuked by the angels in the previous verse, the apostles joyfully return to Jerusalem (Luke 24:50-53). The place of the ascension was the Mount of Olives (called Olivet); the exact location of the ascension is unstated. Olivet lay between Jerusalem and Bethany, and was a sabbath day's journey (about three-fourths of a mile) from the city.
 - b. Luke 24 reports that they were "continually in the temple," an expression which indicates that they frequently resorted in the temple. Before leaving the ascension site, they worshipped; and after returning to Jerusalem, they praised and blessed God.
2. Verse 13: "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James."
 - a. In the city, they entered into an upper room where the apostles stayed as they awaited the fulfillment of the Lord's promise (vs. 4). "The enumeration of the apostles very appropriately finds place here, showing that all of those to whom the commission was given were at their post, ready to begin their work, and waiting for the promised power from on high" (McGarvey, p.19).
 - b. The lists of the apostles given in the New Testament are as follows:

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James, Son of Zebedee	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus	James	James	James
Lebbeus, Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon Zelotes	Simon Zelotes
Simon the Canaanite	Simon	Judas, son of James	Judas, son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot

- c. Peter is listed first in each passage, but not because he was superior to the others. He did not possess any more authority than the other apostles (2 Cor. 12:12f; Matt. 16:18; 18:18; Acts 2:1-4). He was simply living up to the name which the Lord had given him—Cephas (John 1:42).
 - d. Matthew and Mark list Thaddeus while Luke in his two lists gives Judas the son of James. Thaddeus, also called Lebbaeus by Matthew, is likely the same as this Judas.
 - e. Matthew and Mark list Simon the Canaanite while in Luke's accounts he is called Simon Zelotes (Simon the Zealot). *Zealot* is a translation from the Greek term of the Aramaic term *Cananaean*. The common view is that this is in reference to the name of a political party among the Jews which stood for the recovery of Jewish freedoms. But Coffman asserts that all that is meant is that he was a man of Canaan, and that he was not a revolutionary (pp.23f). He is not mentioned by name outside these four lists, so very little is known about his background and personal life.
 - f. The upper room may have been the very one in which the disciples had met with the Lord for the Passover feast. "This was in a private house, as is indicated in Luke 22:11; and not in the temple, as is indicated in Luke 24:53. 'The upper chamber' is a phrase which suggests a well-known place, and this is as definite as we can make it" (Boles, p.25). "Such a room as that here referred to was a part of every house, especially in Jerusalem; and the disciples probably selected one where they might be together, and yet so retired that they might be safe from the Jews" (Barnes, p.10).
3. Verse 14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."
 - a. These continued with *one accord* in prayer and supplication. They chose to spend their time in the best and most needful activity: prayer. If there was ever a time when prayer was needed, it was now, when they stood on the very threshold of the Christian Age. The word translated "one accord" (*homothumadon*) "denotes the entire harmony of their views and feelings. There were no schisms, no divided interests, no discordant purposes. This is a beautiful picture of devotion, and a specimen of what social worship ought now to be, and a beautiful illustration of Ps. 133" (Barnes, p.10). It depicts the oneness demanded in I Corinthians 1:10 (cf. John 17:20-21). The word appears eleven times in the New Testament, ten of which in Acts (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29, plus Rom. 15:6) [Vine, p.23].
 - b. The company was comprised partly of the women, including Mary, the Lord's mother. This is the last mention of her, and appropriately, she last appears in the sacred record engaged in prayer. Peter and

others among the apostles were married, and conceivably, some of their families were among the number (cf. I Cor. 9:5; Matt. 8:14). It appears that John was keeping the charge he had received of the Lord to care for Mary (John 19:26-27). The women no doubt included some of those named in Luke 8:1-3 and 24:10. There is nothing in this last mention of Mary to support the later false view that she is to be venerated and has special influence in heaven.

- c. The Lord's half-brothers were also present. They are identified in Matthew 13:55, and in the last previous reference in the record, they were not believers (John 7:5). But something had been done in the meanwhile to change them. I Corinthians 15:7 says that James saw the risen Lord; this James very likely was the Lord's half-brother, since he is mentioned separate from the apostles (cf. Gal. 1:19). If Jesus appeared to his brother James and convinced him so that he became a believer, it is easy to conceive that his testimony and that of their mother and the other women and the apostles converted the other brothers.

E. Acts 1:15-26: The Selection of Matthias to Fill Judas' Place Among the Apostles.

1. Verse 15: "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty)."
 - a. During the ten day period preceding Pentecost, the company was gathered together when Peter broached the subject of selecting someone to fill Judas' place as an apostle. Luke includes a parenthetical statement regarding the number of the disciples which he puts at about 120, including the apostles.
 - b. This does not mean that the Lord only had these who were still loyal, because shortly before this time, more than 500 brethren had seen the Lord on one occasion (I Cor. 15:5). But these were the ones in Jerusalem, with perhaps several times that number in Galilee. The upper room was sufficiently large for this number [120] to congregate.
2. Verse 16: "Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."
 - a. Peter first calls attention to an Old Testament scripture which had reference to Judas. The scripture is cited in verse twenty. He states that the scripture "must needs be fulfilled" (it must certainly be fulfilled). Notice that it was not David that made the statement, but the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of David. "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2; cf. Matt. 22:43; 2 Pet. 1:21).
 - b. The original statements seem to have application to David's enemies, but Peter quite properly applies them to Judas. David was a type of Christ, and the enemies of David are representative of the enemies of Christ. Another passage, although not specified but which perfectly fits the situation Peter describes, is Psalm 41:9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." 2 Samuel 15:12,31 shows that Ahithophel, David's counsellor, betrayed the king. But John 13:18 reveals that Judas was the New Testament counterpart to Ahithophel. Peter makes the same use of the passages he uses (Acts 1:20). This Judas was guide to them who arrested the Lord.
 - c. The reference to "brethren" has been used by some to try to prove that the church was in existence already. But Luke wrote Acts some thirty years after the events he is here describing, at a time when "brethren" was a well-used expression. But the use here was an accurate description of their relationship to each other as believers in the same Lord, a term which aptly fit the case before Pentecost as after. None of the apostles had reason to believe the kingdom was present; they were waiting until the coming of the power of the Holy Spirit which would usher in the kingdom (church).
3. Verse 17: "For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry."
 - a. This is still part of Peter's remarks. Judas was numbered with *us*, the apostles, and because of that, he partook of the ministry to which the Lord had called them. Mr. Barnes, a Calvinist, denies that Judas was "a true Christian" (p.11).
 - b. Judas is clearly numbered among the twelve (John 6:70-71), and if he had not received baptism (from John or the Lord—John 3:23; 4:1-2; Mark 1:4), then the Lord chose someone as his follower and proclaimer of his word who had "rejected the counsel of God" (Luke 7:29-30). Judas had been empowered to work certain miracles (Matt. 10:1-8), but he did not live long enough to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4).
4. Verses 18-19: "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst

asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood."

- a. From the details of these two verses, it is obvious that these are parenthetical remarks inserted by Luke as he wrote the narrative. It is unlikely that Peter, in his speech to this group of Jewish believers, would have given the translation of the term "Aceldama." But whether "the words are Peter's or Luke's, it must be admitted that a reader unacquainted with the facts in the case would be misled by them. Luke, however, presumed upon the information of his first readers, and that knowledge of the facts which they possessed has been transmitted to us by Matthew, so that we have as little difficulty as they did in discovering the true meaning of the remark" (McGarvey, p.21).
 - b. A contradiction is alleged by Bible critics to exist between the accounts of the death of Judas as given by Matthew and Luke. First, it is claimed that there is a difference in who purchased the field: Matthew 27:3-8 says the Jewish leaders bought the property, while Luke attributes the purchase to Judas. But the field was bought by money belonging to Judas, and what one does through an agent, he is responsible for doing himself. We speak of generals fighting an enemy, but a general only directs the battle; his troops actually do the fighting. The word "purchased" is translated as "obtained" in the ASV. Legally, the field purchased (obtained) by his money belonged to his heirs. It was the chief priests who arranged the transaction, but Judas' money was used. Both Matthew and Luke are correct (cf. Mt. 27:60; Jn. 4:1-2).
 - c. A second contradiction is alleged in the descriptions given of his death. Matthew reports that he hanged himself; but Luke says that he fell headlong and burst asunder in the midst (of the field). "...The two accounts are in perfect harmony: for if he hung himself, he was either taken down, or he fell; and Luke says he fell. If he fell and burst asunder, he must have fallen a considerable distance; or when he fell his abdomen must have been in a somewhat decayed condition; or both may have been true. His hanging himself, and remaining suspended till he fell, supplies both conditions, and fully accounts for his bursting asunder. Furthermore, if we attempt to account for his bursting asunder on any other hypothesis, we find it very difficult to imagine one that is adequate. The two accounts, then, are not only harmonious, but Luke's is supported by Matthew's" (McGarvey, NC, p.13).
 - d. The third difficulty charged against the accounts is in regards to the reason the field was called "The Field of Blood." Matthew's account indicates it was so-named because the money used in its purchase was "blood money." Luke's account here says it was so-named because Judas' body burst asunder in it. McGarvey states that "if the field was bought with the blood money, or if Judas fell there and burst asunder, the field could have derived its name from either circumstance, and much more might it have derived it from both. The probability is that the piece of land had been rendered comparatively worthless by the excavations which the potter had made in search of potter's clay; and when, in addition to this, it was found spattered with the contents of the putrefied bowels of a traitor who had hanged himself there, it was so horrible a place that the owner was glad to sell it for a trifle, and this enabled the priests to buy it for the thirty pieces of silver, amounting probably to about sixteen dollars. No other piece of land large enough for a small burying ground could have been purchased near the wall of Jerusalem for so small a sum" (ibid., pp.13f).
 - e. Even after about thirty years, the citizens of Jerusalem still called (*is called*) it "Aceldama." The "proper tongue" was Aramaic, a corrupted form of Hebrew.
 - f. "Let it be observed that neither Peter nor Luke was hesitant to state the truth about Judas. Furthermore, Luke wrote it down for all succeeding generations to read. Were Peter or Luke to stand in many of our pulpits and use such plain language today, they would most certainly be chastised as unkind, disrespectful of the dead...I once happened to preach on the general subject of 'hell' on 'Mothers' Day' some time ago and it so upset the super-sophisticated sensitivities of some of the brethren that they left and loudly explained why. And I did not call the name in my sermon of any dead brother and say he had gone to hell, as Peter did in his! Brethren, it is not wrong to call the name of a brother (or an institution) and tell the truth about him (it). Neither is it wrong in itself to put the name of a wicked brother or institution in print for others to read. The major drift of the church from her moorings in the past 25 years coincides with the rise of an attitude of pseudo-sweetness and kindness that fears to mention any name or expose any false doctrine lest someone be offended thereby. The apostles did not worry about such matters and neither should we" (McClish, p.57).
5. Verse 20: "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell

- therein: and his bishopric let another take."
- a. The quotations from David's Psalms are here given (from Psalms 69:25 and 109:8). Luke begins again with Peter's speech at this point, having interjected some explanatory information about Judas.
 - b. The apostle appeals to what David had written long ago as the necessary authority for the proposal to replace Judas. We are not told what all the Lord had discussed with the apostles during the forty days he spent with them (1:3). It is possible that he gave them instructions regarding Peter's present proposal. It was certainly the proper thing to do, and what was done on this occasion was not rescinded after they were "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-4). The Lord had called 12 men into the apostleship, and obviously that was the number still required. So Peter appeals to the writings of David as authority for replacing Judas.
 - c. "These two passages from the Psalms, when read in their original context, seem to apply to the wicked in general, and there is not the slightest indication that David had Judas in prophetic view when he uttered them. This is an instance, therefore, of the particular application of a general prophetic sentiment" (McGarvey, p.21).
 - d. The proposal was that someone else fill the place formerly occupied by Judas. What is in view is not a successor to Judas, but a replacement. There is no authority here for the continuation of the office of apostle in the church, as shall be shown.
 - e. "If it is proper that the habitation of a wicked man should become desolate, and that whatever office he held should be given to another, then it was pre-eminently proper that such a crime as that of Judas should be thus punished, and that so important an *office* as that of Judas should be filled by a worthy successor" (ibid.). Bishoprick is from *episkope* and means "office" (Vine, p.129; cf. I Tim. 3:1).
6. Verses 21-22: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."
- a. The proposal is made that someone among the company (meeting the qualifications he named) be selected.
 - b. Two conditions are given:
 - 1) He must have been in the company with the other apostles during the time Jesus "went in and out among us" from the baptism of John unto the "day he was taken up from us." Cf. John 15:27. This means, that the candidate must have been around the Lord to have known him intimately, so as to be able to identify him with certainty following the resurrection. It would be far less likely for one who knew the Lord well during his ministry to be mistaken or deceived when seeing him after he was raised from the dead.
 - 2) He must have seen the resurrected Lord so that he could give witness to that fact. If one had not seen him after the resurrection, he could not bear witness to that great fact of the gospel. There is no such thing as a *substitute witness*.
 - c. "There being no other instance in the New Testament of the selection of a successor to an apostle, this is our only scriptural guide upon the subject, and, therefore, it is unscriptural for any man to lay claim to the office who has not been a companion of Jesus, and a witness of his resurrection....Peter, here, like Paul in 1 Cor. 15, makes the whole value of apostolic testimony depend upon ability to prove the resurrection of Jesus" (McGarvey, p.22).
 - d. Saul of Tarsus later was selected directly by Christ to be an apostle in a supernatural encounter on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1ff; 22:1-16; 26:9-19). He saw Christ, but he was not with him during his personal ministry. However, his appearance was so certain that Paul was made a witness of the resurrection unsurpassed by any of the other apostles (I Cor. 15:8-9; 2 Cor. 12:12-13). His was a special work: to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18). He speaks of his apostleship as "of one born out of due time."
7. Verse 23: "And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias."
- a. Two men were set forth as meeting the necessary qualifications: Joseph (also known as Barsabas and Justus) and Matthias. It was obvious to those who knew the facts that these two men met the qualifications. We are not told who it was who made that determination, but certainly the apostles themselves would know who was qualified. It appears then that it was the apostles who made that decision. The preceding comments concern the apostles, and "they" in verse 23 has more of a connection with the apostles than to the company as a whole. There is no evidence of a body of disciples other than
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- the twelve from the beginning of his ministry.
- b. But all that was done in this operation was to identify those who met the qualifications, not to make the selection. Selecting the individual was to be left up to the Lord, as the following verses show. It is very apparent that only the two men mentioned met the qualifications. These men are not mentioned by name from this passage onward.
8. Verses 24-25: "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."
 - a. The apostles prayed that the one the Lord chose would be identified. As far as they could determine, the two men were equally qualified for the work, but only the Lord could know the heart (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7). Had Samuel made the choice of which son of Jesse was to succeed Saul as king, he likely would have chosen one of the older sons. But God had selected David. With that episode likely in mind, the apostles followed a safe course of action by asking the Lord, who is described as the "Heart-Knower," to reveal his selection.
 - b. Some have thought that the way this prayer is commenced gives us authority to address our prayers to Christ. But the word "Lord" applies equally to God and Christ. The Lord is described as the one who knows the hearts of all men (*kardiognosta*). This term is only used one other time, and then in reference to the Father (Acts 15:8). Christ's instructions in the model prayer requires that we address our prayers to God the Father (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:1-2; cf. John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23-24). Both the Father and the Son can know the hearts of men (I Sam. 16:7; Matt. 9:4), but our prayers are directed to the Father, through the Son (I Tim. 2:5).
 - c. "They do not pray, Show which thou *wilt* choose or *dost* choose, as though there was need of reflection with the Lord before the choice; but, 'show which one of these two thou *hast* chosen'" (McGarvey, pp.22f).
 - d. The office to be filled is "this ministry and apostleship" from which Judas fell by **transgression**. "The Greek word *parabaino*, which means 'transgression,' is in the Greek text; and it should most certainly appear in the English, thus making it crystal clear that sin resulted in the fall of Judas from a spiritual condition and from an office, both of which he once possessed" (Coffman, p.29). Judas was a "devil" (John 6:70-71), but he was not such from the beginning (Luke 22:3; John 13:27). Sin is the transgression of God's law (I John 3:4; 5:17); Judas fell by transgression; thus, Judas fell by committing sin. One cannot fall from some state unless he was in that state.
 - e. By transgressing God's law Judas fell "that he might go to his own place." He had been selected to do a wonderful work as an apostle. It was not foreordained that he commit sin and lose that position; but the Lord knowing the kind of man that Judas was and which he would become, and knowing the future better than any man can know the past, knew what Judas would do under certain circumstances. Judas decided the course of action he would take; upon him only rested the guilt of his evil choices. The guilt which he chose to do is his own, and the "reward" he earned is his own. He went to his own place—the place where all sinful men go after death. There is no hatred in Peter's words; he merely states in an unadorned manner the awful fate of this man. It was his own place for he had prepared himself for it. That the eternal fate of Judas is meant is seen from (1) the fact that this is the obvious and natural meaning of the words; (2) it fits the crimes of Judas; and (3) the expression is used of ancient writers in reference to eternal destiny (cf. Barnes, pp.16f).
 9. Verse 26: "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."
 - a. They gave forth their lots and Matthias was indicated. This procedure was used in dividing Canaan (Num. 26:55); in identifying Achan as the guilty party at Jericho (Josh. 7:14); in selecting Saul as king (I Sam. 10:20-21); and in determining which animal would be the scapegoat (Lev. 16:8). Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."
 - b. In these biblical cases, God's hand was obviously directing the outcome. See Barnes (p.18) for a description of how the lots may have been cast. The Lord made known his choice, and Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles. He was accepted by the other apostles and by the brethren.
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ACTS 2

A. Introduction.

1. This Day of Pentecost was a very special occasion.
 - a. It marked the practical beginning of the New Covenant: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:16-17).
 - b. It was the first occasion when Christ was preached as Lord and King: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:29-32).
 - c. Repentance and remission of sin was first proclaimed in his name on this day.
 - 1) Luke 24:47: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 - 2) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - d. Baptism in the name of Christ was initially preached then (Acts 2:38).
 - e. The Holy Spirit began his great work through the apostles on this occasion (Acts 2:1-4).
 - f. The apostles used the keys of the kingdom for the first time.
 - 1) Matthew 16:19: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - 2) Matthew 18:18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - 3) John 20:21-23: "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained."
 - 4) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - g. The church (kingdom) was established:
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-2: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 - 2) Joel 2:28: "And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."
 - 3) Acts 2:17: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."
 - 4) Mark 9:1: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."
 - 5) Luke 24:49: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - 6) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 7) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one

place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

- h. The first additions to the church were made: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls....Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41, 47).
 - i. This was the first occasion Jesus was heard from since his ascension.
 - j. It marked the beginning of the fulfillment of key Old Testament prophecies (Joel 2:28; Isa. 2:2-4).
 2. Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week, a day of unusual happenings.
 - a. Christ arose from the dead on Sunday (Mark 16:1,9; Luke 24:1,7,13,21,46).
 - b. Christ was proclaimed to be God's Son on the first day of week (Acts 13:22f, 32-33).
 - c. Christ became King on that day (Zech. 6:13; Acts 2:29-36).
 - d. The Holy Spirit was sent upon the apostles on the first day of week (Acts 2:1-4; Lev. 23:15-16; John 7:39; Luke 24:26).
 - e. The Lord's Supper is to be eaten on the first day of week (Acts 20:7; cf. 1 Cor. 11:20; 16:1-2).
 3. There were weighty reasons why God chose this Pentecost Day for the beginning of the church. (See Coffman, pp.36f):
 - a. Since Jesus was crucified at a great Jewish festival (Passover), it was appropriate that he should have been glorified at another (Pentecost was the next such feast).
 - b. It was the anniversary of the giving of the Law of Moses (according to Jewish views); if this was so, it was fitting that the New Covenant should also begin on that occasion.
 - c. Israel offered the firstfruits of their harvests on Pentecost; it was fitting that the firstfruits of the gospel should be on this "feast of harvests."
 - d. Millions of people were at Jerusalem for the occasion.
 - e. "Most importantly of all, perhaps, by its falling upon the first day of the week, it coincided in that particular with the resurrection of Christ, and was thus of major importance in certifying Sunday as the day of the Christian assemblies" (Coffman, p.37).
 4. There are many great things associated with the Pentecost Day of Acts 2.
 - a. The day itself was great because of its religious and historical significance to the Jews. It commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 16:11-12) and was a time of thanksgiving to God for the harvests just begun.
 - b. A great event occurred on that day: the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the chosen witnesses (Acts 2:2-4; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:3-8; Joel 2:28).
 - c. A great city was the location of its celebration: Jerusalem (Acts 2:5; 1:4-12; Isa. 2:2-3; Luke 24:46-49).
 - d. A great crowd assembled, especially from Jewish settlements throughout the Roman Empire (Acts 2:5-13; cf. Rev. 7:9-10).
 - e. A great sermon was preached (Acts 2:14-40). It included an explanation of the miraculous activities just witnessed (14-21); proclaimed Christ as Lord (22-36); affirmed the Lord's resurrection (22-24); showed the fulfillment of prophecies given by David (25-31); contained the apostles' testimony about the Lord's resurrection (32-36); told that Jesus had been exalted to the Father's throne (33-36; cf. Heb.1:3; Ps. 110:1-4); proclaimed that Jesus is Christ and Lord (36); and exhorted the audience to obey the gospel (37-41).
 - f. It contained a great question: What to do to be saved? (2:37).
 - g. A great answer was provided for the question (2:38).
 - h. There was a great result of the preaching (2:41).
 - i. It was a great beginning for the Christian Age (2:42-47).
 - j. It is a great example of conversion for today (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21).
- B. Acts 2:1-4: The Apostles Are Endued With The Power From On High.
1. Verse 1: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."
 - a. Luke has given the proper background by which to prepare his auditors for the information beginning in this chapter. He has reviewed the ascension of Christ, named the eleven remaining apostles, shown

- how the twelfth was appointed, and briefly stated the qualification of an apostle. The stage is now perfectly set for the fulfillment of the Lord's promises cited at the beginning of chapter one.
- b. As asserted above, Pentecost always fell on Sunday, the first day of the week. "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord" (Lev. 23:15-16). The day after the sabbath is, of course, the first day of the week.
 - 1) "Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from *such time as* thou beginnest *to put* the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give *unto the LORD thy God*, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee" (Deut. 16:9-10).
 - 2) "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall there be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah" (Lev. 23:15-16, ASV).
 - 3) "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD" (Lev. 23:15-16, NKJ).
 - c. This feast day is given four different names in the scriptures.
 - 1) It is called the "Feast of Harvest" (Ex. 23:16). This name was used because it marked the beginning of the wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22).
 - 2) It is called the "Feast of Weeks" (Ex. 34:22; Dt. 16:10). This name is given because it came seven weeks after the Passover.
 - 3) It is called the "Feast of Firstfruits" (Lev. 23:17; Num. 28:26). Israel gave an offering to the Lord of the firstfruits of their harvest on this occasion.
 - 4) It is called "Pentecost" in the New Testament, a Greek term meaning "fiftieth." This name is not applied to it in the Old Testament.
 - d. The chapter division is unfortunate since we must go back to the previous chapter to ascertain the identity of the subject of this passage. The direct connection between the two chapters is seen in the use of the word "and" at the start of chapter two. The antecedent of the pronoun "they" is the noun "apostles" of 1:26. Otherwise, one would have to go back to verse 15 to find the next possible antecedent. The evidence presented shows plainly that only the 12 apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit detailed in the text. The evidence includes:
 - 1) The fact that the antecedent of the pronouns of the text is unquestionably the noun "apostles" of 1:26.
 - 2) The promise of Holy Spirit baptism was given only to the apostles (John 14-16; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5,8). This special endowment was not intended for the world or the other disciples (John 14:16-17).
 - 3) The 120 disciples included women, but only *men* received this power (2:13).
 - 4) The 120 disciples undoubtedly included people from other provinces of Palestine other than Galilee, but only men of Galilee received the special power (2:7).
 - 5) Peter defends only the 12 apostles, not the 120 disciples (2:14).
 - 6) Only the twelve stood up to speak (2:14).
 - 7) Those who asked the question in verse 37, directed it to the apostles, not to the 120 disciples.
 - 8) Those who obeyed the gospel that day continued in the apostles' doctrine, not in the doctrine of the 120 disciples.
 - 9) Peter identifies those who had received this power as the official witnesses of the Lord's resurrection (2:32; cf. 4:33; 10:38-41; 1:21-22).
 - e. The events which follow occurred only after the day of Pentecost was *fully come*. According to Jewish reckoning, each day began at six p.m. (or sundown). Hence, the day itself did not come until the following morning at six a.m. (or sunrise). Even though the day of Pentecost began several hours earlier, Luke discusses events that took place after the day-time period of Pentecost had arrived (cf. 2:15). The day did not fully come until daybreak.
 - f. They were all together with one accord in one place. We are not told where this place was. It may
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- have been the upper room where they had eaten the last supper; some have supposed that it was in one of the upper chambers of the temple. If it was important for us to know where they were, Luke would have told us. The most likely place was the location where the apostles had met with the other disciples a few days earlier (1:13).
2. Verses 2-3: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."
 - a. Suddenly, without any advance notice, a miraculous sound was heard; it came from heaven; it resembled a rushing, mighty wind; it (the sound) filled all the house where the apostles were sitting. This was an audible manifestation of the arrival of the power of the Holy Spirit. The picture Luke gives of the sound leads us to think that the sound was very loud and awesome, focusing attention on the apostles. There was only the sound of a mighty wind; there was no wind present. The sound is said to have filled the house; we are not told that it was heard throughout the city, but it may have been. This would have been a very astounding sign to those who heard it. This does not give us the right to use devices to attract attention to the church today. This was no gimmick designed merely to attract attention; it was a miraculous demonstration that confirmed the message spoken by the apostles.
 - b. There was also the visible manifestation of "cloven tongues like as of fire" which sat upon each of the apostles. At the giving of Moses' Law at Sinai, there were also certain miraculous sights and sounds (Ex. 19:16-17). One thing indicated by these matters is the fact that the God of nature is also the God of religion. These tongues merely resembled tongues of fire, and were not made of fire. Misguided souls often relate this to the "baptism of fire" of Matthew 3:11. But the context there shows that the baptism of fire is a reference to the awful punishment to come upon the wicked in eternity.
 - c. We are not told why these miraculous signs were given, but the effect they wrought helps us to arrive at the reason. It was important that some miraculous sign be given which would not only draw the multitude together, but also be able to verify the words soon to be spoken by the apostles. News of this event soon spread about the city, causing a great crowd of people to assemble.
 - d. If there had been some kind of miraculous display in the sky above, there would not have been any clear connection between it and the apostles. If they had raised up some dead person, or given sight to a blind man, or shown forth some other such sign, it would not have been visible or audible to such a great multitude. Only those close by the apostles would have received the full benefit of that kind of miracle. How then was God going to be able to confirm the apostles' message to the full benefit of the whole multitude? He did so by sending an audible sign (the sound of a rushing mighty wind) and a visible sign (the tongues like as of fire). Thus, the multitude could both hear and see the signs, and when the apostles gave the explanation of the miracles, together with the gospel message, the audience had the information at hand confidently to accept the message presented. God was truly speaking through these men! There was no other explanation.
 3. Verse 4: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - a. This verse gives the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to the apostles of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5,8; Luke 24:49). The word "baptize" has as its metaphorical meaning, "to overwhelm." No action of literally immersing the apostles was intended; and Joel did not mean that the Spirit would literally be "poured" upon the apostles (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). What was "poured out" was the power. The same Greek word (*ekcheo*) is used in Acts 2:33 ("shed forth"). The word is used to describe the action of God in bringing punishment upon certain people (Rev. 16:1-4,8,10,12,17); and to describe the shedding of the blood of the saints (Rev. 16:6). There is no support for the practice of affusion (the application of water by sprinkling or pouring) as baptism in this passage.
 - b. The apostles were "filled" with the Holy Spirit; that is, the Holy Spirit took control of their faculties, giving them the message and enabling them to express it in the various languages used on that occasion. "Despite the insistence of some that this has reference to ecstatic utterances like those of so-called 'tongues' today, such a view is refuted, absolutely, by the fact that men of many nations *understood* every word in their native languages" (Coffman, p.39). At the Tower of Babel, God confused the languages of men so they could not understand each other; in Acts two he did the same thing in reverse. The event at Babel was never repeated; and the actions which transpired in Acts 2 were never duplicated. What happened at the house of Cornelius did not give that good man the same
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powers the Twelve received.

- c. The apostles spoke in languages which they never had studied. We may be sure that they did not stutter, speak in broken sentences, or make any grammatical errors. What they spoke was an inspired, inerrant, perfect message given by the Holy Spirit.
- d. The effect on the apostles was inward, not outward; it was not intended to give them moral excellence. It was not meant to make the apostles purer in heart or life; it was intended to give them supernatural powers to receive, communicate, and confirm the message of the Spirit (cf. I Cor. 1:9-13; Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). For the inspired person to be benefitted by the message revealed through him, he had to make personal application of the truths just as does everyone else.
- e. What happened to the apostles in the text is elsewhere called the baptism of the Holy Spirit in that the Spirit overwhelmed them, taking the control described, and furnishing them with the powers related. [An outline on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is included at the end of this chapter].

C. Acts 2:5-13: The Effect on the Multitude.

1. Verse 5: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven."
 - a. Abiding at Jerusalem during this holiday season were many Jewish people from all over the Roman Empire. These were devout men because only such as were very dedicated would make the long, dangerous, and expensive trip to be at the temple for the religious season.
 - b. The Law specified three feast days in which the men of Israel were expected to be present: the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Ex. 34:22-24; 23:14-19). Since the Passover and Pentecost were only seven weeks apart, many would remain in Jerusalem for both of these feasts.
 - c. Josephus estimated that there were nearly three million Jews at Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when the Roman army arrived (p.588). This was during the same season of the year. The Lord's timing of the establishment of the kingdom was made with this in mind, that there would a great host of devout Jews present.
2. Verse 6: "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language."
 - a. When the sound [of the great wind or of the apostles speaking in other languages], or when the news about the visible and audible signs, together with the report about the apostles speaking in other languages, was learned, the multitude assembled. In verse thirty-three, the apostles spoke of the miraculous signs that were present as being audible and visible; the multitude could hear the apostles speaking tongues they had never studied; they could see the cloven tongues which had the appearance of fire (which sat upon each of the speakers); and likely they could have heard the great sound that was like the noise of a rushing, mighty wind.
 - b. Thayer defines "sound" (*phônê*) as a "sound, tone" (pp.661f). He shows that it was used of the sound made by inanimate objects (musical instruments; wind; thunder, etc.); the sound of a voice; the sound of speech. So the reference in verse six could be to either (1) the noise that sounded like a mighty wind, or (2) the sound of the apostles speaking in other languages. If the KJV has the proper rendering in "noised abroad," the reference indicates the report of the information and signs of verses 1-4.
 - a. Several strong words are used to describe the surprise of the multitude: they were confounded (troubled in mind); they were amazed; they marveled. (See verse 7).
 - b. Robertson: "When this sound was heard} (|genomenês tês phônês tautês). Genitive absolute with aorist middle participle. Note |phônê| this time, not |êcho| as in verse #1. |Phônê| originally meant sound as of the wind (#Joh 3:8) or an instrument (#1Co 14:7,8,10), then voice of men. The meaning seems to be that the excited 'other tongues' of verse #Ac 2:4 were so loud that the noise drew the crowd together. The house where the 120 were may have been (Hackett) on one of the avenues leading to the temple. {Were confounded}(|sunechuthê|). First aorist passive indicative of |sunchêô| or |sunchunô|, to pour together precisely like the Latin *_confundo_*, to confound. The Vulgate has it *_mente confusa est_*. It is an old verb, but in the N.T. only in Acts five times (#2:6; 9:22; 19:32; 21:27,31). {In his own language}(|têi idiâi dialektôi|). Locative case. Each one could understand his own language when he heard that. Every one that came heard somebody speaking in his native tongue" (PC Online Bible).
2. Verses 7-8: "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"
 - a. The amazement of the people is profound; the miraculous demonstrations had their intended effect. They could not explain or understand how these men from Galilee could speak in all these various

- languages. Notice that they identified the speakers as all being *men* of *Galilee*. There was not a woman among the speakers; none of the speakers was from some other province other than Galilee.
- b. What they were speaking was expressed in human, sensible languages, the native tongues of the various nationalities represented. These were all Jews, although some of them were proselytes. Many of those present lived in the land of Palestine, but perhaps a greater number were from afar. Greek was a common language in many parts of the empire of Rome, and the native Jews spoke Aramaic. Some of those present spoke more than one language. The native tongue of each was the language commonly spoken in the region where they were born and reared.
 - c. There were no schools of higher learning in Galilee where the apostles could have learned the languages they were speaking. There was no way to explain logically what was happening, except to attribute it to supernatural power!
3. Verses 9-11: "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."
- a. The different nationalities are identified, numbering about fifteen. By consulting a good map of that ancient time one can readily see how widely scattered were these people, and how far they had traveled to be at Jerusalem during this holy season.
 - b. Notice that they understood what the apostles were speaking: the wonderful works of God. Anyone with a casual eye can see that these were real languages, not some kind of gibberish or jargon, which was being spoken by the apostles. There is no such thing in the Bible as an "ecstatic utterance."
4. Verses 12-13: "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."
- a. The effect was almost completely the same throughout the audience: they were amazed and perplexed. The stage had been perfectly prepared by the all-wise and powerful God of heaven for the successful establishment of his kingdom.
 - b. There are always some who will try to explain away an unpleasant truth by senseless charges. The charge by some was that these *men* were drunk on new wine. The term used for new wine is "*gleukous*," which means "sweet wine." It was considered to be highly intoxicating (especially if it had been kept a year). (See Boles, pp.36f). Others allege that this wine was without an intoxicating effect.
 - c. "[New wine] *gleukous* (NT:1098). This word properly means the juice of the grape which distils before a pressure is applied, and called must. It was sweet wine, and hence, the word in Greek meaning 'sweet' was given to it. The ancients, it is said, had the art of preserving their new wine with the special flavor before fermentation for a considerable time, and were in the habit of drinking it in the morning. See Horace, Sat., b. 2:iv. One of the methods in use among the Greeks and Romans of doing this was the following: An amphora or jar was taken and coated with pitch within and without, and was then filled with the juice which flowed from the grapes before they had been fully trodden, and was then corked so as to be air-tight. It was then immersed in a tank of cold water or buried in the sand, and allowed to remain six weeks or two months. The contents after this process were found to remain unchanged for a year, and hence, the name *aei* (NT:104) *gleukos* (NT:1098)—always sweet. The process was not much unlike what is so common now of preserving fruits and vegetables. Sweet wine, which was probably the same as that mentioned here, is also mentioned in the Old Testament, Isa 49:26; Amos 9:13" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
 - d. "To account for the strange fact that unlettered Galileans, without previous study, could speak a multitude of languages, the mockers implied they were drunk, and that it was caused by *new wine* (*gleukos*). Here are two improbabilities. The first is, that drinking alcoholic wine could teach men languages. We know that such wines make men talkative and garrulous; and we also know that their talk is very silly and offensive. In all the ages, and with the intensest desire to discover a royal way to knowledge, no one but these mockers has hit upon alcohol as an immediate and successful teacher of languages. The second improbability is, that *gleukos*, new wine, would intoxicate. This is the only place in the New Testament where this word occurs. Donnegan's *Lexicon* renders *gleukos*, 'new, unfermented wine—must.' From '*gleukos*, sweet, agreeable to the taste;' where *oinos* is understood, 'sweet wine made by boiling grapes'Science teaches that, when by fermentation the sugar is turned
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into alcohol, the sweetness of the juice is gone. Thus, sweet means, as the lexicons state, unfermented wine....It was, indeed, the most consummate irony and effrontery for those mockers to say that the apostles were drunk on *gleukos*, new wine, and full as reliable was the statement that, being thus drunk, they could intelligently and coherently speak in a number of languages of which, up to that day, they had been ignorant. Peter denies the charge, and fortifies his denial by the fact that it was only the third hour of the day, answering to our nine A.M. This was the hour for the morning sacrifice. It was not usual for men to be drunk thus early (1 Thess. 5:7). It was a well-known practice of the Jews not to eat or drink until after the third hour of the day. As distilled spirits were not known until the ninth century, it was altogether an improbable thing that they could have thus early been drunk on the weak wines of Palestine. As the evidence, both ancient and modern, is that *gleukos*, new wine, was unfermented, and therefore not intoxicating, this passage testifies in favor of two kinds of wine" (William Patton, *Bible Wines*, Star Bible and Tract Corp., Fort Worth, TX, 1976, pp.93-95).

5. "In order that we may discriminate accurately concerning the effects of this phenomenon, we must observe that the only effects thus far produced upon the multitude, are perplexity and amazement among the greater part, and merriment among the few. It was impossible that any of them, without an explanation, could understand the phenomenon; and without being understood, it could have no *moral* or *religious* effect upon them. It was, indeed, quite natural, that some of the audience...who were of too trivial a disposition to inquire further into the matter, should exclaim that the apostles were *drunk*" (McGarvey, pp.27f).
 6. It is most likely that each of the apostles spoke in a certain language. To those who did not understand a particular tongue being spoken in their vicinity, what was being said might have sounded unintelligible. But as the crowd surged to and fro, sooner or later, the native tongue of each groups would be heard. Naturally, those who understood what Thomas, or James, et al, was speaking, would gravitate to where they could hear him. We are not told what the practical arrangement of the apostles was; it seems likely that they were spread out among the great throng of people, and that each spoke one certain language. Although there are about fifteen different nationalities named, it is likely that one or more spoke a common language. It is certainly possible the twelve languages could have covered the entire multitude.
- B. Acts 2:14-21: Peter Explains the Miracle to the Multitude.
1. Verse 14: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words."
 - a. The multitude was greatly confused concerning the significance of what they were seeing and hearing. They asked among themselves, "What meaneth this?" Without the explanation which Peter begins here, there was no way that they could have come to understand its true meaning. What was a perplexing question to the many, was a source of merriment to a few. It was essential that the puzzlement be solved and the charge of drunkenness be exposed as false. What was being said would at first have been unintelligible to those who heard a language they did not understand. But when a man found the apostle speaking in his language, he could then say with the others, "We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (vs. 11).
 - b. Peter stood up with the eleven other apostles to give answer. It is not stated that the other eleven spoke, but since several different languages would be required for everyone to hear the sermon in their native languages, it follows that each of the apostles presented the information, each in a different tongue. It was Peter's message that is recorded, but it doubtless was duplicated exactly in the other languages by the rest of the apostles. The Lord had promised to Peter that he would use the "keys of the kingdom" (Matt. 16:16-19), a promise extended in Matthew 18:18 to include all the apostles. Peter is using these "keys" here to open the kingdom to the Jews, and he used them in Acts ten to admit the first Gentiles. Also, notice that only the twelve apostles were involved; Peter stood up with the eleven other apostles, not with the one hundred and twenty disciples.
 - c. Peter "lifted up his voice," that is, he spoke loudly so that all who could understand could hear. It was through a message of words that the meaning of the phenomenon was to be comprehended. It was through this same message that the greatest question was answered (2:37,38).
 - d. He addressed these remarks to an audience comprised of "men of Judea" and "all that dwell at Jerusalem." This shows that in the audience were people whose homes were in Judea and many others who were merely abiding at Jerusalem. This latter class includes those devout Jews from all over the Roman Empire (vs. 5).

- e. He calls on them to understand and know the things which he was about to present. The message was of such character that all who listened could understand. There was no need for a "priest" or other "holy man" to explain Peter's words; to hear them with a thoughtful mind was to understand their import. So it is with all Bible preaching and teaching today: if the truth is set forth plainly, anyone can grasp its meaning. People are able to follow, by using their intelligence, television and movie stories even though the plots may be intricate, involved, and complicated. Many, even of less than average intelligence and education, can keep up with all the meanderings of "soap operas," but sometimes complain that they cannot understand plain Bible teaching and preaching.
 - f. What follows is a true masterpiece of inductive reasoning and logic, leading unerringly to the conclusion of verse 36. "Never did mortal lips pronounce, in so brief a space, so many thoughts of so terrific import to the hearers. We might challenge the world to find a parallel to it in the speeches of all her orators, or the songs of all her poets. There is not, indeed, such a thunderbolt in the burdens of all the prophets of Israel, not among the mighty voices which echo through the pages of the Apocalypse. It is the first announcement to the world of a risen and glorified Redeemer" (McGarvey, pp.33f).
2. Verse 15: "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day."
 - a. Peter plainly states that these [men] are not drunken since it is only the third hour of the day (9:00 a.m.). The statement does not infallibly prove they were sober since it is possible that one could be drunk that early in the day. However, it would have been highly unusual for this so to be. Further, this was a great and important religious day to the Jews; few if any would imbibe strong drink on such an occasion.
 - b. But as the presentation continued, the greatest proof of their sobriety was in evidence: those who are drunken cannot speak with such clarity of speech and logic as were used by the apostles. The charge was as foolish as the charge leveled against the Lord in Matthew 12:24-32. A little intelligent thought would have precluded these charges.
 3. Verse 16: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."
 - a. Speedily entering into the more important matters, Peter announces that what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. They had asked, "What meaneth this?" Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." He stated in verse 33 that Jesus "hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Anyone who believes the Bible will readily admit that there is such a thing as fulfilled prophecy. If one does not believe Peter's statement in this verse, he cannot consistently believe any other portion of the Bible.
 - b. Jesus and the apostles knew that Bible prophecies are real, and often cited instances:
 - 1) Matthew 1:22-25: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."
 - 2) Luke 24:47: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 - 3) John 13:18-19: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*."
 - 4) Acts 1:16,20: "Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus....For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take."
 4. Verse 17: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."
 - a. Joel predicted that some marvelous events would transpire "in the last days." Some attribute these last days to the closing period of the Mosaic Age. God's miraculous dealings of that era began with the birth and ministry of Christ. The Mosaic Age ended with the crucifixion of the Lord, but Joel's prediction had to do with the events beginning on Pentecost Day (Acts 2).
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- 1) This last great demonstration of supernatural powers (excepting those associated with the return of Christ at the end of time) was predicted by Joel. Micah 7:15 also contains a reference to these "marvelous" powers, stating that they would last for a time period equivalent to the journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan (forty years). It is unlikely that the closing years of Jewish history from Pentecost to 70 A.D. would have been designated at the "last days."
 - 2) In view of other references, including the present passage (2:16-17), it is clear that the *last days* is a reference to the last dispensation of time, the Christian Age (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:1f; Jude 3). It is during this last age that Christ reigns on his throne at God's right hand (Acts 2:33-36; Zech. 6:12-13).
 - b. The prophesy stated that God would "pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." The *all flesh* is a reference to both Jew and Gentile, and does not comprehend animal flesh. This is seen from the overall context of the subject in the New Testament, as well as the fact that only selected ones would receive these miraculous outpourings of supernatural abilities. The twelve apostles received these gifts on the day of Pentecost; other saints received these gifts as the apostles laid hands on certain individuals (Acts 8:14-19; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6). The Gentiles received it for the first time in Acts 10. Hence, all flesh (some Jews and some Gentiles) received the gifts just as was predicted.
 - c. Pedo-baptists think they have found a strong argument for sprinkling as baptism in this passage. What the apostles received is styled the *baptism* of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This verse describes the transaction as a "pouring" out of the Holy Spirit. Thus, they argue, the action of *pouring* constitutes baptism, for this act, and also in the application of water baptism (Acts 10:47-48).
 - 1) In the present instance the outpouring is not of the Person (the Holy Spirit), but of the miraculous gifts provided by the Spirit. A person cannot be "poured out." The word "baptism" means in its literal definition, "to dip, plunge, immerse," and its metaphorical meaning is "to overwhelm."
 - 2) The Lord could aptly call what the apostles received a baptism of the Spirit because the Spirit "overwhelmed" them; and this process could also be called an "outpouring" of the Spirit because the gifts of the Spirit came upon them in the fashion described.
 - 3) A literal pouring is not in view any more than a literal pouring was intended by the statement in Isaiah 53:12 that Christ would pour out his soul unto death.
 - d. "Your daughters shall prophesy." This gives no support to the modern claims that women may preach publicly in the presence of men, for it cannot be shown from the New Testament Scriptures that any woman ever did this. In fact, the Bible plainly denies women this right (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15). Therefore, although the four daughters of Philip had the gift of prophesy (Acts 21:8-9), they did not exercise their gift in violation of divinely-given directions. To prophesy was to speak God's will by inspiration.
 - e. Young men would see visions and old men would dream dreams. These were some of the means God used in revealing his will to humanity through the ages.
5. Verse 18: "And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."
- a. Those who would receive the power of the Spirit would include God's servants and handmaidens. The ability to prophesy would be one of the gifts provided them. As noted earlier, to prophesy means to speak for God. But the only way one can speak a new revelation from God is by the inspiration God provides through the Holy Spirit.
 - b. And this revelation might have to do with the past, or the present, or the future. It is not limited to only predicting the future. The gift of prophesy was one of the nine gifts provided for the early church (1 Cor. 12:8-10).
6. Verses 19-20: "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come."
- a. This is one of the most difficult parts of the chapter. The difficulty lies in determining the time and nature of the fulfillment of the things specified.
 - b. McGarvey's explanation gets to the heart of the matter:
 - 1) "It is quite evident that there was nothing transpiring at the time of Peter's speech to which the multitude could look as the fulfillment of these words; hence the remark with which he introduces the quotations, '*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,*' is to be understood only of the
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manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The remainder of the prediction must have still looked to the future for its fulfillment. How far in the future is not indicated, except that the events mentioned were to take place *before* that great and illustrious day of the Lord.' The interpretation of the whole passage, therefore, depends upon determining what is meant by that day. Is it the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, or of the final judgment? The best way to settle this question is to examine the use of the phrase, 'day of the Lord,' in both Old Testament and New.

- 2) "In the first eleven verses of the second chapter of Joel, the phrase 'day of the Lord' occurs three times, and designates a time when the land should be desolated by locusts, insects, and drought. But with the passage now under consideration, in the latter part of the same chapter, the prophet begins a new theme, and therefore speaks of some other great and terrible day. Throughout the prophesies of Joel, and of all the Old Testament prophets, this phrase is used invariable to designate a day of disaster. Isaiah calls the time in which Babylon was to be destroyed, 'the day of the Lord,' and says of it, 'The stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine (13:9-11).' Ezekiel, in like manner, foretelling the desolation of Egypt, says, 'The day of the Lord is near; a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen (30:3).' Obadiah uses the same phrase in reference to the destruction of Edom (vs. 15); Amos, in reference to the captivity of Israel (5:18); and Zechariah, in reference to the final siege of Jerusalem (14:1). An induction of these passages establishes the conclusion that 'the day of the Lord,' with the prophets, is always a day of calamity, the precise nature of which is to be determined in each case by the context....
 - 3) "It is evident from Peter's application of the first part of the quotation to the advent of the Spirit, that the latter part, which is contemplated as still future, was to be fulfilled after the scene then transpiring. Now, if the dangers of the day, as indicated by the words employed, were such as concerned the Jews alone, there would be good ground to suppose that reference was had to the destruction of Jerusalem. But the parties contemplated in the prophesy are '*all flesh*;' therefore, all classes of men are embraced in the prophetic view, and the 'day of the Lord' must, according to Old Testament usage, be a day of terror in which all are interested. But in the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews alone had any thing to dread; hence this can not be the reference. It must, then, be the day of judgment; for this is the only day of pre-eminent terror yet awaiting all mankind.
 - 4) "This conclusion is confirmed by the invariable usage of New Testament writers...There was another and far different day, in their future, to which they gave the appellation, 'the day of the Lord.' Paul says, 'Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the *day of the Lord Jesus*' (I Cor. 5:5). 'We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the *day of the Lord Jesus*' (2 Cor. 1:14). 'Yourselves know perfectly that the *day of the Lord* so comes as a thief in the night' (I Thess. 5:2). 'But the *day of the Lord* will come as a thief in the night' (2 Peter 3:10). These are all the occurrences of this expression in the New Testament, and they show conclusively that 'the day of the Lord, with the apostles, was the day of judgment.
 - 5) "The great and illustrious day must not be confounded with the '*signs and wonders*' mentioned by the prophet; for these are to occur *before* that day. Whatever may be the exact symbolic meaning of the 'blood and fire, and smoke vapor,' and the darkening of the sun and moon, they represent events which are to take place *before* the day of judgment." (McGarvey, pp.30-32).
 - c. Figuratively, these symbols could point to the destruction of Jerusalem. Similar language was used by the Lord to describe what the Romans did in Palestine in 70 A.D. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. 24:29-31). Josephus says that 1,100,000 Jews perished at Jerusalem during the Roman invasion. No nation or empire can experience such a great disaster and not be adversely affected in various ways. Even the Roman Empire could not endure the loss of more than a million of its citizens without suffering a significant effect. All that the nation of the Jews had been contributing to the empire of Rome would be lost when Israel was destroyed as a nation.
7. Verse 21: "And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

- a. This statement has been grossly perverted to teach that salvation for an alien sinner is obtained by merely "calling out to the Lord" and asking for it. But this is not a mere vocal call as can be seen by simply reading Matthew 7:21-23 and Luke 6:46. Salvation is dependent upon the individual's obedience to God's will (Heb. 5:8-9).
 - 1) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23).
 - 2) "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).
 - b. This obedience must be sincere (from the heart).
 - 1) "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:16-18).
 - 2) Romans 1:9: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."
 - c. Up to this point, Peter has been explaining the meaning of the miraculous signs being presented through the apostles, showing that they were speaking by the inspiration of the Spirit. He had to do this before he could address the primary subject, the resurrection of Jesus and what this means to mankind. His explanation was satisfactory to the audience; it made sense and was verified by the miracles.
 - d. If he had closed the sermon at this point, there would have been no point: the people would still have been lost in sin. What Peter stated in this verse, he explained in practical terms in verse 38.
 - e. See the outline at the end of this chapter entitled "How Does One Call on the Name of the Lord?"
- C. Acts 2:22-28: Jesus Was Crucified According to the Will of God.
1. The apostle followed a 4-point outline in presenting the sermon.
 - a. Point One was an explanation of the miraculous demonstrations being done: 2:14-21.
 - b. Point Two shows that Jesus was slain IAW the determined will of God: 2:22-28.
 - c. Point Three sets forth proof that Jesus is the Christ: 2:29-39.
 - d. Point Four was the exhortation to encourage obedience: 2:40.
 2. Verse 22: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."
 - a. Peter had shown them what the miraculous demonstrations meant: the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28. There was no need for minute proof of his affirmations since the very miracles they were beholding proved those matters. He will set forth scriptural arguments to show that the Jesus they crucified is the Christ, and that God has made him Lord and Christ. He here calls attention to Jesus of Nazareth and reminds them of his miracles. "Here [in verses 22-24] is a complete epitome of the four gospels, condensed into one short sentence" (McGarvey, p.33)
 - b. He is referred to as Jesus of Nazareth to distinguish him from any other prominent person bearing the name "Jesus" (which is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament name "Joshua"). Some rejected the idea of a prophet coming from Nazareth (John 1:45-46); others shunned the notion that the Messiah should spring from Galilee (John 7:40-44). Neither the Lord nor the twelve was ashamed of his hometown (cf. Matt. 2:23; Judg. 13:5; I Sam. 1:11; Acts 2:22).
 - c. He described the Lord as a **man**, using the Greek term **aner** (a man as opposed to a woman or boy); in other places *anthropos* (man, human being) is used (1 Tim. 2:5). John 1:30 and Acts 17:31 also use *aner*. He was as much a man as anyone, but as much deity as is the Father.
 - d. Peter declared that Jesus was approved of God. The proof of this claim had already been given—in the miracles the Lord wrought during his earthly ministry. He was "proved" by God—that is, he was demonstrated to be the Messiah by his miracles. He was also "approved of God" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28-30).
 - 1) Acts 6:8: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."
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- 2) Romans 15:19: "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."
- 3) Hebrews 2:4: "God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
- e. The miracles the Lord did were accomplished by the power of the Father. These supernatural works are classified as miracles, wonders, and signs. But all were of a supernatural, miraculous nature.
 - 1) Miracles: A miracle is "an extraordinary manifestation of Divine power, operating either independently of the laws and forces of nature, as in the original creation, or in opposition to them, as in the separation of the waters of the Red Sea, or in harmony with them, as in the Noahic deluge" (Robert Milligan, *The Scheme of Redemption*, p.263). Our English word "miracle" comes from the Latin *miraculum*, which means "a wonder." The Greek word is translated "mighty deeds," "mighty works," and "miracles" (2 Cor. 12:12; Matt. 11:20; Acts 2:22). The emphasis of this term is on the power of him who is the source of these supernatural works.
 - 2) Wonders: This term emphasizes the effect supernatural works were intended to produce in the witnesses. Cf. Mark 2:11-12; Acts 14:8-18.
 - 3) Signs: As a sign, a miracle was a token of the near presence and working of God; these signs indicated that the source was the Almighty, and established the one through whom the miracle was wrought as a spokesperson for him.
- f. The people in Peter's audience knew quite well about the miracles of Christ; it was obvious to any who beheld them that he truly was the Messiah, because he claimed to be from God and proved his claims by miraculous demonstrations. Even the enemies of the Lord did not deny his miracles (John 11:47-48; 12:19); they tried vainly to explain them away by attributing their source to Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24-32). These miracles had been wrought in the very midst of Israel; they were undeniably supernatural acts; there was nothing shady about them; they were of every kind, and proved to every fair-minded observer that Jesus was authentic.
 - 1) John 5:36: "But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."
 - 2) John 11:37-38: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him."
 - 3) Luke 7:19-23: "And John calling *unto him* two of his disciples sent *them* to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many *that were* blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me."
3. Verse 23: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."
 - a. Here the apostle accuses his audience of participating in the crucifixion of Jesus, the very man he is about to prove is the Messiah. Peter shows that their mistreatment of Jesus was not due to any weakness on his part: they were able to slay him only because it was in accordance with God's predetermined plan. The magnitude of his murder was heightened by the fact that he had voluntarily submitted to it (John 10:17-18). The method used in killing him was cruel indeed, a means of execution usually reserved for felons and slaves.
 - b. Their complicity in his murder is boldly announced—publicly! It is impossible for anyone to repent (2 Cor. 7:10) unless he understands his guilt. One who is not impressed with his guilt will not (and cannot) repent because there is no godly sorrow present. Preachers who endeavor to make their hearers feel good about themselves do not present the truths necessary to produce godly sorrow (Jas. 3:1; Tit. 1:13; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). Weak, unlearned brethren often insist that nothing negative be preached, that sectarians not be exposed, that we only preach positive, pleasant things which will attract people. Peter did not think so! See also Acts 3:14-15; 5:30.
 - c. God had planned from the beginning for Christ to die for the sins of the world (Rev. 13:8; Luke 22:22; John 3:16; Isa. 53; cf. Ps. 41:9; Acts 1:16). Premillennialists assert that Christ came to set up an earthly

kingdom, but when the Jews refused his reign, God decided to substitute the church in the place of the kingdom. In order for the church-system to be inaugurated, the death of Christ was required, an event not necessary for the earthly kingdom (in the premillennial view). But if the kingdom (as they view it) had been established, the plans and prophecies concerning the death of Christ would have come to nought! But the scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35). It is plain, therefore, that God fully intended for his Son to die on the cross, and that he prepared for this, and predicted it, from the beginning of time (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 13:8; Luke 24:44-46; Acts 26:22-23). This means that the premillennial theory is false! The church (kingdom) was always in God's plan.

- d. "The 'wicked hands' are not, as some suppose, the hands of Roman soldiers, who had performed the actual work of his execution, but the hands of wicked Jews. Here, before him, were the very persons who had been assembled but fifty days before at the Passover, and had *taken a hand*, in the proceedings of that awful day. He appeals to their individual consciousness of guilt; and this gives an intensity to the effect of his discourse upon their hearts, which it could not otherwise have possessed" (McGarvey, p.33).
 - 1) "Specifically, Jesus was delivered up by Judas to the chief priests and scribes (Mark 10:33), then by Caiaphas to Pilate (Mark 15:1), by Pilate back to the Jews [Matt. 27:26], and finally by the Jews to the Gentiles (Mark 10:33) to be killed. Though many human beings were implicated in this, as well as Satan behind the scenes (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:3-4), Peter reveals that it was all according to 'the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God'" (Workman, *ADL*, pp.78f).
 - 2) Many wicked hands were involved in his crucifixion. The Jews had foolishly stated, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25; Acts 5:28). What they rashly said in an emotional setting, many of them were now about ready to renounce (Acts 3:17; 1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Thess. 2:14-15). Those who were involved in the Lord's death had to bear responsibility; no so-called "pope" has the right to absolve anyone from this, or any other, sin.
4. Verse 24: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."
 - a. This is one of the major statements in Peter's sermon. His audience knew about the death of Jesus; they had heard rumors about his resurrection; what is now to be presented by Peter is evidence proving that he had been raised from the dead.
 - b. Here the apostle affirms that God raised him up, adding that it was not possible that Christ should be held by death. The Jews had slain Jesus but God had brought him back to life.
5. Verses 25-28: "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance."
 - a. Peter quotes from David, a statement recorded in Psalm 16:8-11. The Jews had no conception of the Messiah being crucified; they conceived of him ruling Israel even as did David and Solomon; and they considered one crucified as cursed, not the blessed, of God (Deut. 21:23). It was necessary, therefore, for Peter to show that his crucifixion was according to God's plan. He needed also to show that Jesus was really resurrected to life. The method chosen by the Holy Spirit by which to establish these truths is seen in what Peter presented.
 - b. "In this Psalm, David spoke in the first person, as if the glorious promises concerned himself; but actually they regarded David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, there having been no fulfillment whatever of these words in the instance of King David himself. It is absolutely certain that this passage from the OT prophesies a resurrection of someone, for it is only by a resurrection that one could descend into the grave (Hades) and not see corruption" (Coffman, pp.49f).
 - c. The Jews believed the Old Testament scriptures, and accepted them as having come from God. Peter affirmed these verses by David were given in reference to Christ. The Holy Spirit had Christ (Jesus of Nazareth) in mind when he revealed these words to David: "For David speaketh concerning *him*...." "These verses are *not* to be understood as originally spoken by David in reference to himself and only applied by Peter to Jesus as an accommodation, for the thrust of Peter's argument in explanation of the quotation (Acts 2:29-32) was that the words *could not* have applied to David. They referred to Jesus and to no one else!" (Workman, *ADL*, p.81).

- d. "The words, 'Thou shalt make known to me the ways of life,' constitute the affirmative assertion of a restoration to life, which had been negatively expressed in the statement, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' The words, 'Thou wilt make me full of joy with thy countenance,' no doubt refer to that joy set before Jesus, for which 'he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God' [Heb. 12:2]" (McGarvey, p.34). The only way these events [the decay of his body and the retention of his spirit in Hades] could be forestalled was in his resurrection. The words spoken by David were from the point of view of Christ: The Father was always before the face of Jesus; he was ever with him as he accomplished his earthly mission; the heart and tongue of Christ rejoiced because he knew that although he must taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9), yet his flesh could rest in the sure and certain hope of being raised again to life on the third day; God would not leave his soul in hades; he would not permit his Holy One's body to experience the normal decay of a dead body; God had made known to him the ways of life, thus assuring him of resurrection.
- e. The word "Hell" in verse 27 is the Greek word "Hades." In the days when the KJV was translated, English had not yet adopted the word *Hades* as an English word; there was no current word available by which the Greek term could be translated, except *Hell*. But this is the same word used to translate "Gehenna" (the place of eternal punishment), thus the term is misleading in those passages such as this where "Hades" is used in the original text. The Greek word "Hades" and the Hebrew word "Sheol" are equivalent words. "Of the 65 times this word occurs in the Old Testament, the KJV rendered it as 'hell' and 'grave' 31 times each, plus 3 times as 'pit'....Sheol *never* means anything but the intermediate state of the soul. It is never translated in the Septuagint by *mnema* (the Greek word for grave or tomb—Acts 2:29), but only by Hades. Nor is the Hebrew word for grave (*qeber*) ever translated as Hades. This demonstrates that, as David indicated, only the soul enters Sheol/Hades. The 'corruption' David spoke of is the normal decay of the body" (Workman, pp.81f).
- 1) Hades means "unseen" and is used in reference to the state of the departed dead; they are in the "unseen state" (Hades). The term is used in the Bible to denote the place of all the dead, the righteous and the unrighteous. Luke 16:19-31.
 - 2) Those who die go into the keeping of God, awaiting the end of time, the return of Christ, the resurrection, and the Judgment. Ecclesiastes 12:7; 3:21; 2 Peter 2:4 (the Greek word here is *tartarus*, a state of punishment in Hades). The word *Paradise* corresponds to *Abraham's bosom* in Luke 16:19-31, and *Tartarus* corresponds to the state of *torments* which the wicked rich man experienced in the same passage. Paradise (in Luke 23:46) is not the "heaven of heavens" where God the Father resides, for after his resurrection, Christ told Mary Magdalene that he had not yet ascended to his Father (John 20:17). But he had been in Paradise as he had promised the penitent thief (Luke 23:46). It follows that Paradise is a state of comfort where the righteous dead rest as they await the resurrection.
 - 3) There is no proof that when Jesus returned to the Father he took with him all the righteous dead, and that the righteous who die since then go directly and immediately into Heaven at death. If this were so, why would there be any need of the resurrection? If we enjoy the pleasures of heaven beginning the instant of our death, why should the Lord interrupt this blissful circumstance to come back to earth and resurrect our old decayed bodies which for most has long since ceased to exist?
 - 4) Some argue that Philippians 1:23 means that Paul believed he would go directly into heaven at his death. But to depart this earth and be with Jesus can be understood as meaning that he would be in the eternal realm where the Lord is, and thus be in his keeping there until he (and the rest) comes back with Christ (1 Thess. 4:14) for the resurrection. [1 Thess. 4:14 may be spoken from God's point of view in heaven; that Christ will bring the righteous dead back with him to heaven following the resurrection]. Further, Paul affirmed (2 Tim. 4:8) that he and all other righteous people will receive the eternal reward at the end of time ["At **that** day"], and not at the moment of death.
- f. Notice the fact that the body and the soul are listed and described separately. This establishes as fact that man is a two-fold being; one part is subject to decay but the other is not; one part goes into the grave at death but the other enters a spiritual realm (hades). Both David and Peter made this distinction. As noted above, hades is the place (state) of the disembodied dead, the unseen world of the dead. McGarvey gives the following:

- 1) "The Greeks were good at giving names to things. When they watched a friend sinking into the arms of death, they could see, by the motion of the frame and the light of the eye, the continued presence of the soul, until at last, the muscles were all motionless, and the eye fixed and leaden. They could still see the body, and after it had been deposited in the grave they could revisit it and see it again. But where is the soul? You see it no longer. There are no signs of its presence. It is gone; and its invisible abode they call *hades*, the *unseen*. That the soul of Jesus entered *hades* is undeniable. That it returned again to the body at the resurrection is asserted by Peter; and it is this return which was predicted by the prophet, and which caused the exultation both of himself and the apostles.
- 2) "The resurrection of Jesus is not appreciated by the religious world now, as it was by the apostles. As respects the return of his soul from *hades*, Protestant writers have fled so far from the justly-aborred purgatory of the Catholic, and the gloomy soul-sleeping of the Materialist, that they have passed beyond the Scripture doctrine, and either ignore altogether the existence of an intermediate state, or deny that the souls of the righteous are short of ultimate happiness during this period. On the other hand, they have so great a tendency to absolute spiritualism in their conceptions of the future state, that they fail to appreciate the necessity for the resurrection of the body of Jesus, or to exult, as the apostles did, in anticipation of the resurrection of their own bodies. As long as men entertain the idea that their spirits enter into final bliss and glory immediately after death, they can never be made to regard the resurrection of the body as a matter of importance.
- 3) "This idea has even produced a general skepticism among the masses, in reference to a resurrection of the body; for men are very apt to doubt the certainty of future events for which they see no necessity. As respects the resurrection of the body of Jesus, the most popular conception of its necessity is no doubt this, that it was merely to comply with the predictions of the prophets and of Jesus himself. It would be far more rational to suppose that it was made a subject of prophesy, because there was some grand necessity that it should occur....
- 4) "When the eternal Word became flesh, he assumed all the limitations and dependencies which belong to men; 'for it behooved him to be made in all things like his brethren' [Heb. 2:17]. One of these limitations was the inability to work without a body; hence, to him, as well as to his brethren, there was a night coming in which he could not work (John 9:4). This night can not be the period after the resurrection, for then he did work. It must, then, be the period of death, while his soul was absent from his body. During this period, he himself asserts, he could do no work, and certainly neither history nor prophesy refer to any work which he then did. It was the Jewish Sabbath among the living, and he observed it with absolute stillness in *hades*.
- 5) "If he had appeared to his disciples, as angels appear to men, convincing them that he was still alive, and could then have gone to heaven in his mere spiritual nature, who could say there was any necessity for a resurrection of that body in which all his sufferings were endured, and through which all temptations had reached him? But this could not be. *Hades* was to him a night of inactivity, as it is to all his disciples, though to neither is it a state of unconsciousness. If it had continued forever, then the further work of redemption, which could only be effected by a mediator in heaven, a Christ on the throne, sending down the Holy Spirit, directing the labors of men and angels, and finally raising the dead to judgment, would have remained undone forever.
- 6) "It was this thought which caused the exultation of the apostles, in view of the recovery of his soul from the inactivity of *hades*, and its reunion with the uncorrupted and now incorruptible body" (McGarvey, pp.35f).

D. Acts 2:29-36: Proof of the Resurrection of Jesus and That He is Christ.

1. Verse 29: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day."
 - a. Peter next turns to answer the only anticipated objection his hearers might offer in rebuttal. Peter spoke freely of the Patriarch David. That is, he spoke with boldness (cf. Acts 4:13; 28:31; 2 Cor. 7:4). He describes David as a patriarch because he had founded a dynasty; he was followed in the kingly office by others of his lineage; Jesus was of this lineage.
 - b. David had spoken in the first person in writing the material just cited by the apostle. If it could be shown that David was not speaking of himself, it would be easy for them to see the only person to whom the statements could apply would be the Messiah. From thence, Peter had only to show

- evidence that Jesus is Christ.
- c. The apostle's evidence that David was not the object of his prediction was in a concrete and undeniable form. The body of the Sweet Psalmist of Israel still resided in its tomb at Jerusalem! David had died (as all would admit); his body was placed in the sepulcher; his sepulcher (and his decayed remains) was even then still known. It is said to have been the only tomb within the walls of Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:10; 2 Sam. 5:7; Neh. 3:16). His sepulcher was well-known to every citizen of Jerusalem. But the body of the Messiah was not to remain in the tomb long enough for decay to take place.
 - d. "With penetrating logic, Peter has now demonstrated that Psalm 16 predicted the resurrection (and, by implication, the death) of Christ. Paul later drew the same conclusion from the same prophecy (Acts 13:35-37)" (Workman, p.85).
2. Verse 30: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne."
 - a. David was a prophet of God; he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him [David] that he would raise up Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One of God) to sit upon his throne.
 - b. "David's own flesh having seen corruption, as they themselves admitted, and his soul being still in hades, there was no alternative but to admit that he spoke of the Messiah. This brief argument not only refuted the supposed objection, but opened the minds of his hearers to an entirely new conception of the prophetic throne of David, and of the Messiah who was to occupy it; showing, that instead of being the ruler of an earthly kingdom, however glorious, he was to sit upon the throne of the whole universe" (McGarvey, p.36).
 - c. The promise God gave to David is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and cited again in Psalm 132:11. It is this latter verse that Peter paraphrases. See also Psalm 89:3-4. The Lord is not referring to Solomon, the son of David, but to the Messiah who would be of the lineage of Abraham, through David and Solomon, *et al* (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:16-18; Gal. 3:8,16; Rev. 22:16).
 3. Verse 31: "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."
 - a. Peter proceeds quickly to point out that David was speaking of the resurrection of Christ. It was the soul of Christ which would not be left in hades; and it was the body of Christ that would not see corruption. "...That **HIS** [Christ's] soul was not left in hades."
 - b. This conclusion naturally followed in the minds of the Jews since it was clear that David was not speaking of himself. The only other person who could be thus described was the Messiah. They knew that he was to be of the lineage of David.
 4. Verse 32: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."
 - a. "Thus far in his argument, the speaker has proved that the Messiah must rise from the dead to ascend his throne; but he has yet to prove that *Jesus* was thus raised, and was, therefore, the Messiah of whom David had spoken. He proves the resurrection by the testimony of himself and the eleven other witnesses standing with him....Here were twelve unimpeached witnesses testifying to a sensible fact, and presenting their testimony with all the authority belonging to miraculously attested messengers from God. This was sufficient, as to the resurrection. But it must also be proved that after he arose he ascended to heaven and sat down upon his throne. It would be unavailing, for this purpose, to urge the fact that the twelve had seen him ascend; for their eyes had followed him no further than the cloud which received him out of sight. But he presents, in proof, this immersion in the Holy Spirit, which the multitude were witnessing, and which could be effected by no one beneath the throne of God" (McGarvey, pp.36f).
 - b. The miraculous demonstrations on that notable day would verify the attestations of the apostles. Furthermore, there was nothing for them to gain materially for their affirmations. All that the apostle presented meshed perfectly with the prophecies and other information furnished by the Old Testament Scriptures.
 - c. Acts 2:40 shows that many other words of testimony and exhortation were offered by which the three thousand were persuaded to obey the gospel.
 - d. The testimony of two or three unimpeachable witnesses was sufficient to establish a contention (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; Matt. 18:15-16). But here were twelve such witnesses! And they were miraculously-endowed! (Acts 10:38-43; John 15:26-27). Even Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was one of the 120 disciples, was not a witness of the Lord's resurrection; we have no record that he even
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- appeared to her. Jesus had spent several years training and preparing men who would be competent and complete witnesses of his resurrection.
- e. This same Jesus, the one introduced in verse 22, had been raised up from the dead by the power of God; the proof of this truth lay in the affirmation of these twelve witnesses through whom the miracles were being wrought.
5. Verse 33: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."
 - a. In fact, this same Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God in heaven, and has sent forth these very miraculous wonders which had brought the multitude running together, asking, "What meaneth this?" They evidently had heard the sound of a mighty wind, saw the tongues like as of fire which sat upon each of the apostles, and were hearing the twelve speak in languages they had not learned in the natural way. Peter called attention to the various miraculous signs then in evidence.
 - b. "What they then saw and heard was both the proof that he who sent it down had ascended the throne of heaven, and the assurance that Peter spoke by divine authority in declaring this fact" (McGarvey, p.37).
 - c. "Some think that the case form of the word *te* should be rendered 'to' or 'at' the right hand of God ...instead of the instrumental 'by' (as in the KJV, ASV). But Peter made a similar statement in a later speech when he said, 'Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour' (Acts 5:31) ...It is true, though, that 'God highly exalted him' (Phil. 2:9) not only 'by' his right hand but also to a position 'on' or 'at' the right hand of God (Acts 2:34; 7:55-56; Mark 16:19; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). Paul later spoke of 'Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God' (Rom. 8:34). Jesus was once 'lifted up' (from *hupsóthen*) on the cross (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32) but now is lifted up or 'exalted' (same word) on high" (Workman, p.87).
 - d. Peter attributes the miracles of that occasion to this same Jesus who had been raised from the dead and exalted to glory. This was an undeniable argument; it fully accounted for all the specifics (Old Testament prophecies and statements, the present miracles, and the life and teachings of Jesus).
 - e. The Lord had told the Sanhedrin that he would be seated at the right hand of the power of God (Luke 22:69). He was on that authoritative throne at this time, and sent forth the supernatural powers to his apostles, thus fulfilling the amazing prophecies of Joel 2:28,29. Evidence of the truthfulness of Peter's claims could be measured by their sight and hearing.
 6. Verses 34-35: "For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool."
 - a. Peter quotes again from David, this time a statement found in Psalm 110:1. "One more point established, not so much in proof of the exaltation of Christ, as to show that it also was a subject of prophecy, and this inimitable argument will be complete....The Pharisees themselves admitted that in this passage David referred to the Messiah, and had been much puzzled by the admission in a memorable conversation with Jesus [Matt. 22:42-48]; but Peter, unwilling to take any thing as granted, which might afterward be made a ground of objection, carefully guards the application, as he had done that of the previous quotation from David, by the remark that David himself had not ascended to heaven; hence he could not, in these words, be speaking of himself. This admitted, it must be granted that he spoke of the Messiah, for certainly David would call no other his Lord" (McGarvey, p.37).
 - b. "Psalm 110:1 was not only quoted by Peter to establish Jesus' present heavenly reign but also alluded to by Paul for the same purpose (1 Cor. 15:24-28). The combination of these two passages completely destroys the premillennial theory. Jesus is to sit at God's right hand in heaven until God causes all of Jesus' enemies to be 'the footstool' or 'under' his feet. For the present, Christ rules in the midst of his enemies (Psa. 110:2) and thus 'we see not yet all things subjected to him' (Heb. 2:8). But the time is coming when 'he shall have abolished all rule and authority and power' (1 Cor. 15:24). And since 'the last enemy that shall be abolished is death' (v.26), Jesus must remain in heaven until death is no more! All premillennialists teach that death will not be abolished until the end of the millennium and dawn of eternity. Therefore, the millennial reign (Rev. 20:4-6) is taking place right now (in heaven) and will be over when Jesus returns. To further substantiate the application of Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians 15 to Jesus' reign at this present time, notice that when Jesus was raised to sit at God's right hand in heaven (Eph. 1:20) he was placed 'far above all rule and authority and power' (v.21; cf. 1 Pet.

3:22)—the very things that must be abolished by the end of his reign (1 Cor. 15:24). This means that since Jesus' ascension God has 'put all things in subjection under his feet' (Eph. 1:22), the very statement made by Paul (1 Cor. 15:27) to explain the abolition of death at the end of Jesus' temporal reign—which all agree takes place at the end of the world. There is therefore no room for any *second* reign, *second* destruction of all his enemies, or *earthly* millennium in between" (Workman, pp.88f).

7. Verse 36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
 - a. This serves as the concluding point: an affirmation that the foregoing truths had proved Jesus of Nazareth had been exalted by God to be both Lord and Christ. If we carefully ponder the points that Peter made, taking into consideration the miracles being wrought and the testimony offered by the apostles that Jesus had been raised up (2:32, 40), the conclusion is inevitable and undeniable!
 - b. By this time, Peter had proclaimed the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, exaltation of Christ as King, and his involvement in the present miracles. His appeal in this verse was for them to accept the deity of Jesus (cf. Rom. 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:15).
 - c. "This was the divinely reached irresistible conclusion, and it was armed with unspeakable terrors for the guilty hearers. To *know assuredly* is to believe with confidence, or more literally, to know beyond the shadow of a doubt" (ALC, 1962, p.88).

E. Acts 2:37-40: The Multitude Asks a Soul-searching Question and Are Given the Answer.

1. Verse 37: "Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"
 - a. On hearing the information Peter presented in his sermon, those who had honest and tender hearts were sorely pained on learning what they had done. Notice that it was when they **heard** the gospel that the pang of conscience was felt.
 - b. "...Up to the moment in which Peter arose to address the audience, although the immersion in the Holy Spirit had occurred, and its effects had been fully witnessed by the people, no change had taken place in their minds in reference to Jesus Christ, neither did they experience any emotion, except confusion and amazement at the phenomenon which they could not comprehend. This fact proves, conclusively, that there was no power in the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit, which they witnessed, in itself alone, to produce in them the desired change. All the power which belonged to this event must have come short of the desired effect, but for a medium distinct from itself, through which it reached the minds and hearts of the people. That medium was the *words* of Peter" (McGarvey, pp.37f). He spoke the message, and when he affirmed the conclusion of his argument, Luke reports the effect the message had on the multitude.
 - c. The question they raised plainly implies that they believed what they had heard; if not, the question would not have been forthcoming. But the words they heard had pierced them to the heart. Such words cannot produce an effect unless they are believed.
 - d. "Since Peter began to speak, therefore, a change has taken place both in their convictions and their feelings. They are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, and they are pierced to the heart with anguish at the thought of having murdered him. In the mean time, not a word is said of any influence at work upon them, except that of the words spoken by Peter; hence we conclude that the change in their minds and hearts has been effected *through* those words. This conclusion was also drawn by Luke himself; for in saying 'when they *heard* this, they were pierced to the heart and cried out,' he evidently attributes their emotions and their outcry to what they *heard*, as the cause of both....Let it be observed, however, that what they had heard concerning Christ, they had heard not as the words of the mere man Peter; for, previous to introducing the name of Jesus, he had clearly demonstrated the *inspiration* of himself and the other apostles. This being established beyond the possibility of a rational doubt, from the moment that he began to speak of Jesus they were listening to him as an inspired man....They do believe, and they believe because the words they hear are recognized as the words of God. Faith, then, comes by hearing the word of God; and he who hears the admitted word of God, must believe, or deny that God speaks the truth. This is true, whether the word is heard from the lips of the inspired men who originally gave it utterance, or is received through other authentic channels" (McGarvey, p.38).
2. Verse 38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - a. The only difficult thing about this verse is the "gift of the Holy Spirit," and that point can be

understood with a little study. But since the plain import of the verse runs counter to the popular religious views of the majority, it is often ignored or perverted. This goes back beyond the creeds and dogmas of men; it is God's answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" (vs. 37; 16:30). [For a detailed discussion of the gift of the Holy Spirit, see the outline at the end of this chapter].

- b. "This is the first time, under the reign of Jesus Christ, that this most important of all questions was ever propounded; and the first time, of course, that it was ever answered. Whatever may have been the true answer under any previous dispensation, or on any previous day in the world's history, the answer given by Peter on this day of Pentecost, in which the reign of Christ on earth began, is the true and infallible answer for all the subjects of his authority in all subsequent time. It deserves our most profound attention; for it announces the conditions of pardon for all men who may be found in the same state of mind with these inquirers" (McGarvey, p.39).
- c. Notice some of the answers that Peter did **not** give.
 - 1) He did not tell them that there was nothing they could do to be saved.
 - 2) He did not say that their salvation was already predestinated by God.
 - 3) He did not tell them that they must "accept Jesus as your personal Savior."
 - 4) He did not say anything about faith or faith only.
 - 5) He did not tell them they were already saved.
 - 6) He did not tell them to pray for salvation.
 - 7) He did not say anything about any direct operation of the Holy Spirit.
- d. Peter told them to repent.
 - 1) The obligation to perform this operation was theirs; it is something that only the individual can do. God does not operate on the heart to make it repent; if he did so, then any who are lost could blame God for their failure to repent (but see Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:30). Hebrews 12:17 is not saying God would not give Esau repentance, but that Isaac would not change his mind regarding the blessing he had pronounced upon Jacob. "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17).
 - 2) Acts 11:18 is a reference to God having granted to the Gentiles the privilege of obeying the gospel (repentance is used as a synecdoche for the entire plan of salvation). "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).
 - 3) Repentance is not fear, prayer, or godly sorrow. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10); it is followed by a reformed life (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). Repentance is simply the firm decision to turn from sin to godliness (cf. Matt. 12:41; Jonah 3:8,10; Matt. 21:28-30). The necessity of repentance is seen in the following passages: Luke 13:3,5; Acts 3:19; 17:30; Romans 2:4-11; 2 Peter 3:9.
- e. Peter commanded them to be baptized.
 - 1) The Lord died on the cross, was buried in the earth, and was raised up from the dead on the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4); baptism follows the form of his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:16-18, 1-6). The action of baptism is shown to be an immersion (burial) in water (Col. 2:12; Acts 10:47-48; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5).
 - 2) The purpose of baptism is given: "for the remission of sins."
- f. For the most part, the verse is very simple and plain: those believers who will repent and be baptized in the name of Christ will receive the remission of sins.
 - 1) But many deny that there is any connection between baptism and remission of sins. This conclusion is reached by erroneous interpretations of other verses such as John 3:16, Romans 5:1, and Ephesians 2:8,9. This passage then is twisted and forced to fit the previous conclusion. So instead of "for" being understood in its proper meaning, a forced interpretation is rendered: "for" means (they assert) "because of." They illustrate by saying: "A man is hanged for stealing. He is hanged because he stole; he is not hanged in order to steal."
 - 2) In response to this, we need only to notice that whatever baptism is *for*, repentance is *for* the same thing. Why do we repent? Is it because we have already received remission of sins, or in order to obtain remission? Repentance and baptism are connected by the conjunction "and," which means that remission of sin is the result of repentance *and* baptism. Since repentance is essential to

- remission of sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30), then this passage teaches repentance is in order to obtain remission; and since repentance is in order to obtain remission, then baptism has the same end in view. Another Greek word would have been used if the point the inspired speaker was making was as our religious friends allege.
- 3) The Greek word *eis* [for] means "unto" or "in order to." This definition is obvious from the way it is used in Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many *for* ("eis") the remission of sins." The blood of Christ was not shed "because" we had already obtained remission of sins, but in order that remission might be possible.
 - 4) The sectarian view of the passage is typified by the following statement: "We have in this short verse the summary of Christian doctrine as regards man and God. Repentance and faith on the part of man; forgiveness of sins, or justification, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, or sanctification, on the part of God" (A.C. Hervey, **Pulpit Commentary**, quoted by Coffman, pp.55f). Notice the total absence, in Hervey's comment, of any reference to baptism, and the omission of any proof of his assertion.
- g. Repentance and baptism are to be done "in the name of Jesus Christ." The Lord requires that each believer is to repent and be baptized; if one accepts the authority of Christ, he will repent and be baptized (for the purpose stated).
- 1) "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).
 - 2) Robertson gives this information on the phrase *in the name of Jesus Christ*: "(|en tôi onomati Iêsou Christou|). In accordance with the command of Jesus in #Mt 28:19 (|eis to onoma|). No distinction is to be insisted on between |eis to onoma| and |en tôi onomati| with |baptizô| since |eis| and |en| are really the same word in origin. In #Ac 10:48 |en tôi onomati Iêsou Christou| occurs, but |eis| to |onoma| in #8:16; 19:5. The use of |onoma| means in the name or with the authority of one as |eis onoma prophêtou| (#Mt 10:41) as a prophet, in the name of a prophet. In the Acts the full name of the Trinity does not occur in baptism as in #Mt 28:19, but this does not show that it was not used. The name of Jesus Christ is the distinctive one in Christian baptism and really involves the Father and the Spirit" (*PC Online Bible*).
- h. "The careful reader will have observed that in stating the condition of remission of sins to the multitude, Peter says nothing about the necessity of faith. This omission is not sufficiently accounted for by the fact that faith is implied in the command to repent and be immersed; for the parties now addressed were listening to the terms for the first time, and might fail to perceive this implication. But the fact is, that they did already believe, and it was a result of their faith, that they were pierced to the heart, and made to cry out, What shall we do? This Peter perceived, and therefore it would have been but little less than mockery to command them to believe. It will be observed, throughout the course of apostolic preaching, that they never commanded men to do what they had already done, but took them as they found them, and enjoined upon them only that which they yet lacked of complete obedience. In the case before us, Peter was not laying down a complete formula of the conditions of pardon; but was simply informing the parties before him what *they* must do in order to the remission of *their* sins. Being believers already, they must add to their faith repentance and immersion. Before dismissing this topic, we must remark that the doctrine of immersion for the remission of sins does not assume that immersion is the only condition of remission, but simply that, it is *one* among *three* conditions, and the *last* of the three. Administered previous to faith and repentance, as in the case of infants, it is not only absolutely worthless, but intensely sinful" (McGarvey, pp.43f).
- 1) Acts 8:36-37: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
 - 2) Romans 10:9-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
3. Verse 39: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as

the Lord our God shall call."

- a. The *promise* was to those present, to their children, and to all that are afar off. Those who are *afar off* are the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11-13,17,19). The promise extended to all the Lord would call. The *call* is extended by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:13-14). But what is "the promise?"
 - b. In Genesis 3:15, God made a vague promise that of the seed of woman, some great personage would be raised up. This promise was restated to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 (and on later occasions); Galatians 3:16 shows that the "seed" spoken of was Christ. This promise runs throughout the Old Testament, while the background was being established and the people were being prepared. It found its ultimate fulfillment in Christ and the gospel where all families of the earth may be blessed (Eph. 1:3).
 - c. Part of that great promise is the prophecy of Joel 2:28. In order for Christ to accomplish successfully his great work, the miraculous element must be used. In Acts 2:16-18, Joel's prophecy was cited by Peter, and the events even then being portrayed before the eyes of the people are said to be in fulfillment of what Joel had predicted.
 - d. On seeing and hearing the miracles then occurring, the people asked: "What meaneth this? Their question grew out of the fact that *this* (the miracles noted) was noised abroad. Peter responded to the question:
 - 1) "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."
 - 2) Christ "hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."
 - 3) "Now when they heard this" (what Peter said), they asked another question: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (2:37).
 - e. In reply to this question, Peter gave the statement of 2:38,39. It recognizes the promise to Abraham (which affects all people); it includes the prediction of Joel (which included some of the Jews and Gentiles). Everyone can enjoy pardon; and both Jew and Gentile (then) could obtain "the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Lord never intended that every convert (whether Jew or Gentile) would receive a miraculous gift.
4. Verse 40: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."
- a. There were many other words included in the sermon presented on that occasion. The essential parts of it were recorded for future generations; the parts which pertained to the exhortation for them to obey the gospel were not included.
 - b. The further testimony the apostles gave was in reference to their having seen the resurrected Christ (John 15:26-27; Acts 4:33; 10:38-43; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-8). In these remarks they probably presented detailed evidence of times and occasions in which they had seen the Lord following his resurrection.
 - c. The exhortation included such statements as would be sufficient to encourage the audience to obey Christ.
 - d. "The command to *save themselves* must sound quite strange in the ears of such modern theorists as affirm that men have no ability to do, or say, or think any thing tending to their own salvation. But this only shows how far they have departed from apostolic speech and thought. Peter had proposed conditions of pardon which they could comply with, and now their salvation depended upon their compliance with these conditions. When they complied with them, they saved themselves. To be saved *from* that untoward *generation* was not, as the conceit of Universalists would have it, to *escape the siege of Jerusalem*; for the great mass of them escaped that, by dying a natural death before it took place. It was to escape the fate which the mass of that generation were destined to meet in eternity, on account of their sins" (McGarvey, p.45). Those believers saved themselves by repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins. "Untoward" means "crooked." It is from the Greek word *skolias* which is the opposite of *orthos* ("straight"). That generation was crooked mentally, morally, and spiritually (Boles, p.49).
 - e. No one has the capability to earn salvation; but there is a sense in which we obtain salvation on our own: God provides the means, but we must appropriate the gift (Rom. 6:23; Jas. 2:24-26; Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:5). Christians are commanded to "work out" their own salvation (Phil. 2:12) by continued obedience to the gospel (Matt. 7:21-27; Luke 6:46; John 14:15,21,23; 1 John 5:2-3).
- F. Acts 2:41-47: The Effect of the Sermon, and the Progress of the Church.
1. Verse 41: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto*

them about three thousand souls."

- a. There were many who "gladly received" the word Peter preached. This is the only way it can be received. Can one receive it "reluctantly?" (Cf. Acts 8:39-40). Anyone who comes to understand that he is lost and that Christ is willing and able to save him, will gladly accept the conditions without regard to what they are.
 - b. Those who gladly received the word on this occasion were the same ones who had cried out in anguish (vs. 37). The number baptized and the number who gladly received the word are identical.
 - c. On this occasion about three thousand were baptized and added to the church. When the Law of Moses was given at Sinai, about three thousand lost their lives because of sin; when the Law of Christ was given about three thousand were saved from sin.
 - d. Some object that there was not enough time for 3,000 to be baptized, but a simple mathematical process shows that only four and one half hours would be required for the apostles to baptize that number of people. At the rate of one person per minute each apostle could have immersed sixty in an hour; $12 \times 60 = 720$; $720 \times 4.5 = 3240$. And there would be no reason why some of those baptized could not have assisted.
 - e. Others object that there was not enough water in Jerusalem to accommodate such an extensive operation. McGarvey observes that "Jerusalem was anciently better supplied with water than any other city known to history not permeated by living streams. Even to the present day, though most of the public reservoirs are now dry, such as the supposed pool of Bethesda, 365 feet long by 131 in breadth, and the lower pool of Gihon, 600 feet long by 260 in breadth, there are still in existence bodies of water, such as the pool of Siloam, and the pool of Hezekiah, affording the most ample facilities for immersing any number of persons" (p.45).
 - f. Compare verses 41 and 47: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls....Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
 - 1) Only those who were baptized were added.
 - 2) But only the saved were added.
 - 3) Therefore, only the baptized were saved.
2. Verse 42: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."
 - a. It is just as important to keep saved as it is to become saved. The 3,000 who obeyed the gospel on Pentecost Day continued steadfastly in the instructions given through the apostles (Matt. 10:22; Gal. 5:7; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil 3:14; John 6:66ff).
 - b. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. What they taught was what had been given by the Lord (Matt. 28:19-20; John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14; Acts 2:1-4). Thus, the apostles' doctrine was the Lord's doctrine (1 Cor. 14:37; Luke 10:16). It is important that we continue in it (Col. 1:23). There is a great need to return to it today; if all did so there would be no infant baptism, sprinkling, Calvinism, instrumental music in worship, missionary societies, etc.
 - c. They continued steadfastly in fellowship. This term is from *koinonia*, which means "joint-participation; communion or association; contribution in aid."
 - 1) The term is used in reference to joint-participation in such passages as Philippians 1:2,5 and 4:15-16. The Philippians were partners with Paul in preaching the gospel. Compare this with Exodus 17:8-13 where Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands.
 - 2) It is used in connection with communion or association in Galatians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 John 1:3,7 and 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. We share the same hope of heaven, have the same enemy, and serve the same Lord.
 - 3) It is used in connection with contribution in Romans 15:26, 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13, and Hebrews 13:16. God's plan for giving is stated in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.
 - 4) "It has been urged by some writers, that the term [*koinonia*] should here be rendered *contribution*, instead of *fellowship*, and that it refers to contributions which were regularly made in the public assemblies, for the poor. That the term is used in this limited sense in at least two places in the New Testament must be admitted (Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 9:13)...But such is not, by any means, its common usage. It usually occurs in such connections as (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:3, 7)...In the present instance the context imposes no limitation upon its meaning, and it would be

- quite arbitrary to restrict it to the sense of contribution....Still, the idea of contributing to the wants of poor brethren is involved in the fellowship of Christians, and by the statement that they continued steadfastly in the fellowship, we understand that they continued in the common participation of religious enjoyments, *including* contributions for the poor" (McGarvey, pp.47f).
- d. They continued steadfastly in breaking of bread. This is in reference to their eating the Lord's Supper. How often they ate the supper is not specified here; that aspect of the supper is shown to be weekly [on Sunday] in Acts 20:7. What is given here is only a brief sketch of their activities. It informs us that the church observed this act of worship from the very beginning of its existence.
 - 1) The supper is a memorial to the Lord's death (Luke 22:19).
 - 2) It proclaims the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26).
 - 3) It is to be done until his return (1 Cor. 11:26).
 - 4) It provides saints with spiritual nourishment (1 Cor. 11:30).
 - 5) To willfully miss it is to commit sin (Jas. 4:17; Heb. 10:25).
 - 6) The importance of the Lord's Supper is shown by the fact that Christ instituted it (Matt. 26:26-28), and by the instruction governing it (1 Cor. 11:20-30).
 - e. They continued steadfastly in prayers. Judaism had specified times for prayers (See Acts 3:1). Of course, a godly person could pray privately at any time. Under Christ, we are told to pray regularly (1 Thess. 5:17); and there is no stated number of prayers to be uttered in the services, and no prescribed order which the worship activities must follow.
 - 1) Prayer is a privilege granted to God's faithful (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9; John 9:31).
 - 2) Prayer is a duty (Luke 18:1; Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17; Rom. 1:9).
 - 3) Prayer is powerful (James 5:16-18; Matt. 18:19f; Heb. 4:14-16).
 - f. The principles of Acts 2:42 will make a congregation strong.
3. Verse 43: "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles."
 - a. The many wonders and signs done by the apostles resulted in fear on the part of all the members of the church. Since only the apostles are said to have wrought these miracles it follows that only they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is just one more strong evidence of that conclusion.
 - b. All doubt had been removed from the hearts of these new followers of Christ; they stood in amazement and awe of the marvels they beheld. With this in the immediate background, it is no wonder why they did what follows.
 4. Verses 44-45: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need."
 - a. Notice first that these new Christians are described as believers. However, nothing has been said directly about their faith. We are told that they were baptized and now they are described as believers. They did more than believe; their faith is put for their entire response to the gospel.
 - b. They had all things common. "This was not a community of goods, by which all were placed on a pecuniary level; for distribution was made only as any one had *need*. It was only such a liberality to the poor as should characterize the congregations of the Lord in every age and country. Poor brethren must not be allowed to suffer for the necessities of life, though it require us to divide with them the last loaf in our possession....This conduct was in marked contrast with the neglect of the poor which was then common among the Jews, even in violation of their own law, and which was universal among the Gentiles. Nothing of this kind had ever been seen on earth before" (McGarvey, p.49).
 - c. Those who had possessions and goods, sold them for the good of those in need. Many of these new converts undoubtedly were from foreign lands, and had journeyed to Jerusalem for the purpose of observing the feast days just past, and having obeyed the gospel, many of them would naturally have remained in Jerusalem to learn more of the Messiah's new religion. Consequently, there would be many who would stand in need of food, clothing, and shelter. Those in Jerusalem having property, and others (possibly even some of the sojourners) having goods, sold what they had for the good of the needy.
 - d. "This was spontaneous rather than specifically enjoined. (5:4.) A remarkable expression of love and unity, it was also more—an expedient to meet a special and unique need. Most Pentecost pilgrims had likely not come prepared for a long sojourn. Yet many of them did no doubt remain for further fellowship and grounding in their new faith, which was made possible by the local people opening their homes to them and in many instances supporting them....But there is no indication that this
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- arrangement became permanent in the Jerusalem church, or that it was duplicated elsewhere. No doubt it would have been, however, had it been deemed permanently expedient, and certainly so if it had been a matter of divine law" (ALC, 1980, pp.27f).
- e. There are numerous reasons why this was not Communism: (Roy J. Hearn)
 - 1) The church was founded on belief in Christ; Communism rejects Christ.
 - 2) The church was founded on the fatherhood of God; this is rejected by Communists.
 - 3) The church has spiritual goals rather than material (Col. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:20).
 - 4) The selling of property was not compulsory.
 - 5) What was done was an affair of the church, not of civil authorities.
 - 6) Those who did not sell were not disciplined.
 - 7) This did not place everyone on the same economic level.
 - 8) This procedure was not followed by other congregations.
 - 9) If everyone sold all they had, soon all would be poverty-stricken.
 5. Verse 46: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."
 - a. They daily gathered in the temple, not for the purpose of following the Law, but because it made an excellent meeting place; also, there would be others who could be met there and taught the gospel (cf. Acts 3:1ff; 6:9ff). They ate their daily meals in the various homes and residences in and around the city. They did so with gladness and singleness of purpose (Matt. 6:19-23). This pictures the perfect unity and happiness they enjoyed as they worshiped and served God, assisted one another, spread the gospel, and grew in the most holy faith.
 - b. The breaking of bread of this passage is not the Lord's Supper, but the common meals by which they received their daily sustenance. The Lord's Supper belongs exclusively to the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10). These meals were eaten "at home" (ASV), which indicates that property was retained by at least some of the members.
 - c. "By the expression 'singleness of heart' is meant the concentration of their affections and desires upon a single subject. This devotion and concentration of thought could but result, as it did, in the giving the disciples 'favor with all the people,' and causing daily additions to the Church" (McGarvey, p.49).
 6. Verse 47: "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
 - a. At this early stage of the church, they had the favor of the local population. It was only after the truth had been generally spread and opposition aroused that they faced serious persecution. The Lord had wide-spread favor among the people during his public ministry until some, who correctly understood that if his message was accepted by the people their influence would be lessened, rose up in opposition to him, and influenced others to oppose his truth. After an initial season of having the fickle favor of the population, opposition soon arose when evil men sought to lessen the effect of the gospel. Satan always has enough servants to oppose the progress of the truth, when they see what the effect of truth will be on their domains.
 - b. Their "praising God" indicates their worship of God. Worship is an essential part of the Christian Life. Worship cannot be forced from the heart of anyone; it must be willingly offered. If it is not gladly forthcoming, it will not be accepted by the Lord. The attitude with which we offer our praise to God must not be one of grudging necessity, but one of glad and happy response. We must not have the attitude of "having to go to church," but one which happily looks forward to going. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 122:1). Praising God cannot be done independent of the church: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). The church is not some building, but the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-22; 5:23,25-27; Col. 1:18). Thus, praise is offered to God acceptably only by those who are faithful members of the Lord's church.
 - c. The Lord added to the church daily those others who obeyed the gospel and thus were saved. The Lord added them to the place (state) of salvation, which is the church (Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 1:3).
 - d. "Those added to the Church daily were not 'such as should be saved,' as rendered in the common version, but *tous sothomenous, the saved*. In what sense they were saved, is a question of some importance....Primarily, the term *save* means simply to *make safe*. In the religious sense, it means to make safe from the consequences of sin. If men had never sinned, they could not be *saved*, seeing they

would be already *safe*. But having sinned, they are *saved* when they are *made safe* from the consequences of their sins. This is done when their sins are forgiven. At the moment a penitent sinner obtains pardon, he is, so far as the past is concerned, *completely saved*. It is in this sense that the parties in this case added to the Church are called 'the saved.' Paul uses the term in the same sense when he says of God, 'According to his mercy he *saved* us, by the laver of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit'" [Titus 3:5] (McGarvey, p.50).

- e. The Lord had promised to build his church (Matt. 16:18); he had promised to set up his kingdom (Matt. 4:17; Dan. 2:44); he did both on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2; the church and the kingdom are the same institution (Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:23,28-29). He gave Peter the keys of the kingdom which he used (with the other apostles) in establishing the church.
 - f. "The word 'church' is left out of the Standard Version [the ASV] and 'to them' is expressed; hence, the meaning is that those who heard the word, believed it, repented of their sins, and were baptized, were by this process added together, and thus formed the church. Every step was taken by divine guidance, and all rejoiced in the unity of the faith and in the love and fellowship of each other. As we leave this instructive chapter we are impressed with the power of the gospel as preached by Peter. We also are impressed with the simple procedure of the apostles in thus forming the church. The church is now functioning under the direction of the apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit. We see how people become Christians and we see them living the Christian life. Luke, the historian, is ready now to proceed further with the expansion of the church" (Boles, p.52).
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The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

A. God Developed a Wonderful, Mysterious Plan Before Time Began.

1. Ephesians 3:1-11: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."
2. He foresaw that his greatest creation would be unable to live a sinless life upon earth, even though his obligations to his Maker were not severe.
3. The nature of the plan was such that it was not possible for it to be immediately and fully revealed to mankind; they would not have appreciated it back then. Only after many centuries of experience would man be able to value its true worth, and a great deal of time was necessary to develop the background details of the plan.
4. Angels of heaven and great men of the Old Testament wanted to search out this plan before it was revealed, but it was not for them to know.
 - a. Daniel 12:8-9: "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."
 - b. Matthew 13:17: "For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."
 - c. 1 Peter 1:10-12: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."
5. But this great "Scheme of Redemption" was not revealed until the time was right, and when that time came, it was fully revealed through the work of the Holy Spirit.
6. This great plan was developed by God's love, mercy, wisdom and power.
 - a. He sent Christ to execute the plan by his life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and teachings.
 - b. He gave the Holy Spirit the task of revealing the completed plan to men.
7. This study will be to see how the Holy Spirit fulfilled his work.

B. A Preliminary, General Promise Was Given Through John the Baptizer.

1. Matthew 3:9-12: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."
2. This promise was not to everyone who was present, as Pentecostals claim.
 - a. The pronoun "you" is used as the means of announcing the baptism of the Holy Spirit; it was not intended to mean that everyone present would receive it. The pronoun is used in the epistles in reference to certain ones even though the letter was directed to a whole congregation.

- 1) 1 Corinthians 4:8,14,21: "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you....I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you....What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?"
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 6:7-8,11: "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren....And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
 - b. Several ungodly Pharisees and Sadducees were present; the promise was never meant for them.
 - c. The context shows that some of those present were to receive the baptism of fire, a reference to their eternal punishment for sin. The cloven tongues of Acts 2 are not meant, for there the historian says that these merely had the appearance of fire and were not of fire at all. Not everyone present would receive the baptism of fire, and not everyone present would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. This is merely a brief, preliminary promise relating to Holy Spirit baptism; we must look to the specific promises and to passages giving their fulfillment in order to learn how broad the promise of Holy Spirit baptism was.
 3. But some people would receive this baptism of the Spirit.
 - a. Christ would be the administrator of this baptism and would have the final say as to who would receive it. The emphasis in the passage is that Christ would be the administrator of this baptism and that it would be given to some, who are not specifically identified in the statement.
 - b. John did not specify who would receive it, or how it would be accomplished, or when it would be done. His statement was a general promise which, as we shall see, was limited by later information given elsewhere.
- C. The Promise of Holy Spirit Baptism Was Limited to the Apostles.
1. Luke 24:46-49: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - a. This was spoken only to the apostles (see 24:36; Mark 16:14). They were to be **endued** with power. The word translated "endued" means "to be clothed with" (Vine, p.29). It is used as a figure of speech to describe their reception of the power indicated.
 - b. They would be clothed with **power**. Power means "might or authority." They would receive this might and authority which would enable and authorize them to do certain prescribed things, including those things of Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23.
 - 1) Matthew 18:18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - 2) John 20:23: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."
 - c. This clothing with power would originate **from on high** (heaven). This would be the source of this might and authority; it would not be from any earthly source.
 - d. They were to **tarry in Jerusalem** until they received this power from heaven. They were to remain in the city, awaiting the coming of this heaven-sent power. This detail of the promise shows that it was intended only for those personally addressed, for it was only they who could wait in Jerusalem; we cannot.
 - e. Being clothed with power from on high and being baptized with the Holy Spirit are different descriptions of the same thing. The word baptize means literally to dip, plunge, immerse; and metaphorically, to overwhelm. It is used in this later sense when the baptism of the Holy Spirit is being discussed. "It was not the manner of the Holy Spirit's descent from heaven that constituted the baptism of the Spirit, but their being *filled*, or *overwhelmed*, or *endued*, or *clothed*—it was the result, not the manner of descent, that defines the Holy Spirit baptism, which the apostles only received" (Foy Wallace, *The Gospel For Today*, p.697).
 2. Acts 1:1-8: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

- a. The apostles are the objects of the promise of verses 5 and 8. Notice the pronouns (whom, them, they, ye) from verses 2-8 and see that the promise of Holy Spirit baptism of verse 5 and the clothing with power of verse 8 are given only to the apostles.
- b. The baptism and the clothing with power 8 are identical.
3. Further promises of the Holy Spirit's special work are given to the apostles in John 14-16.
4. The promises of Matthew 3:11, Luke 24:49, and Acts 1:5,8 are fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4. By following the pronouns from Acts 1:26 through Acts 2:4, the fact is clearly established that only the apostles received the operation described. A pronoun takes the place of a noun. The subject of the sentence is apostles; the pronouns used to identify those receiving the Holy Spirit's power (2:4) carry the reader back to “apostles” in Acts 1:26.
 - a. The 120 other disciples of Acts 1:15 are not included, as is seen by the use of the pronouns in Acts 1:26—2:4. They are also excluded by virtue of the fact that they were not included in the promises of Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:5, 8.
 - b. Acts 1:26—2:4 shows that Matthias received the baptism of the Spirit since he met the requirements of apostleship (Acts 1:20-26), and had been selected to take Judas' place.
 - c. It is obvious that Paul later received the baptism of the Holy Spirit since he was specially picked by Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:14-18), and was equal to the other apostles in power and authority (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11-12). The details of his reception of this is not recorded, only that after he was baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16) he began to preach the gospel with great effectiveness in Damascus (Acts 9:17-22), and said he was not one whit behind the twelve (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11-13).
5. John chapters 14-16 were spoken only to the apostles at the last supper. Judas had left the room (13:29-10); only the eleven were present. Many details of what the Holy Spirit would do with the apostles are given in these chapters.

D. The Holy Spirit Empowered the Apostles in Several Special Ways.

1. He qualified them to be **ambassadors** of Christ: “And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:18-20).
 - a. One who is appointed as an official ambassador has the authority to decide issues and act in the behalf of another. An ambassador of a sovereign country has the authority to act in behalf of its chief of state and thus of the country itself.
 - b. The apostles were given authority to act in the Lord's stead as they did their work among men; they were given the guidance to fulfill their obligations without error; what they bound had already been bound in heaven and they were the means of announcing and implementing Christ's will:
 - 1) Matthew 16:19: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - 2) Matthew 18:18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - 3) Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

- 4) John 20:23: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained."
- c. Peter and the other apostles did not bind and loose according to their own designs; rather they were miraculously guided in revealing the law of Christ (Mark 13:11; John 16:12-14; 15:26; Acts 2; Gal. 1:6-12; Rev. 22:18-19). The literal meaning of the Greek text in Matthew 16:19 is, " whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." From these considerations it is seen that the apostles did not arbitrarily bind and loose, but God did the binding and loosing through them by directing their words.
- 1) Robertson gives this information: "To 'bind' (*dêsêis*) in rabbinical language is to forbid, to 'loose' (*lusêis*) is to permit....The teaching of Jesus is the standard for Peter and for all preachers of Christ. Note the future perfect indicative (*estai dedemenon*, *estai lelumenon*), a state of completion...."
 - 2) "I will give the keys of the kingdom of the heavens to you, and whatever you bind on earth has *already* been bound in the heavens; and whatever you loose on earth has been loosed in the heavens" (Matt. 16:19; English Study Bible). The footnote of this version says: "Has *already* been bound—the perfect tense of the verb (*dedemenon*) is used. Christ's law had already been set in heaven, and was now being established as the law of the Christian period. Has been loosed, from *luo*, loose. The perfect passive is used here. Sins were loosed upon one's submitting to Christ's law (Acts 2:38)."
- d. The Lord has no ambassadors on earth today; no preacher, no elder, no deacon, no teacher, no Christian is an ambassador of Christ.
2. He qualified them to be infallible witnesses of the Lord's resurrection (Acts 1:8).
- a. They were able to give their inspired testimony that Christ had truly been raised from the dead: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus..." (Acts 4:33). Acts 10:39-42: "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead."
 - b. We hear a great deal from our Biblically-ignorant contemporaries in the sectarian world, and unfortunately also from some unlearned brethren, about "witnessing." The idea is that when they talk to someone about the gospel they are doing what the apostles did, but what they do in fact is talk about what they suppose the Lord has done for them. Christians are not ordered to tell the world what Christ has done for them, but they are told to preach the gospel to the whole world (Mk. 16:15-16; Mt. 28:18-20). There is no such thing as a "substitute witness." Only one who has personally observed a crime can give testimony ("bear witness to") regarding that act; his wife, children, brother, mother, or best friend cannot stand in for him in court and give **his** testimony!
 - c. John 15:26-27: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you, from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."
 - d. No one on earth today has seen Christ; no one can give direct testimony of his resurrection from the dead; the only witnesses the Lord authorized were his handpicked apostles, who were empowered to give inspired, infallible testimony. Their testimony was all that was needed, for their generation and for all of remaining history. Their testimony has been forevermore preserved in the inspired writings of the New Testament!
3. He gave the apostles infallible and complete remembrance of all that Christ had personally taught them during his earthly ministry.
- a. John 14:26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
 - b. John 16:12: "I have yet many things to say unto you, be ye cannot bear them now." Christ did not allow them to trust their natural memory; they might err.
 - c. John 12:16: "These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him."
 - d. Because of the newness and strangeness of the information he was presenting to them, and because of the fallible nature of human memory, the Lord could not, and never intended to, reveal every truth

- to them prior to their being clothed with power by the Holy Spirit. And even then, every particle of truth was not given to them immediately (1 Cor. 13:9); furthermore, they did not grasp the full significance of some of the truth they preached on that notable day (Acts 2:39; cf. 10:34-35; 11:1-18).
4. He guided the apostles into all truth.
 - a. John 16:12-13: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." John 14:26: "But the Comforter...shall teach you all things...."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 7:12 is an example of this: "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." Christ had not addressed this situation during his personal ministry; it fell to Paul to reveal this particle of truth. It is not his personal view that he was presenting for he wrote by inspiration: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).
 - c. When all truth was revealed, confirmed, and recorded, the finished product was the "perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25). It is called "that which is perfect" in 1 Corinthians 13:10, and is described as "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" in Ephesians 4:13. When we read what the inspired apostles and prophets wrote, we learn and understand the truth which was revealed to them by the Spirit (Eph. 3:1-5).
 - d. This revelation of all the truth is called "the faith which was once [for all time] revealed unto the saints" (Jude 3).
 - e. This revelation is perfect; it is able to make us to be spiritual adults (1 Pet. 2:1-2; Heb. 5:12-14; 2 Pet. 3:18); it is "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17); it provides us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). It is able to save our souls (Jas. 1:21) and prepare us to live in eternity with our holy God.
 - f. After all the truth had been revealed, there was no need for this power any more. Since all truth was revealed to and through the apostles, there is no other truth yet to be revealed! We can know, therefore, when someone today announces that God spoke to him and gave him a message, that that man is wrong! Since God gave all truth to the inspired apostles and prophets during the first century, there remains no new truth to be revealed in our day. All modern so-called "revelations" such as the "Book of Mormon," "Pentecostal pronouncements," modern "visions and messages," and other such modern "messages from God" are false doctrines of ignorant or deluded people! "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). "If and man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Pet. 4:11). We are strictly warned against adding to, or taking from, or otherwise changing, the written word (Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6, ASV; Gal. 1:6-12; 2 John 9-11).
 5. He showed them things to come in the future: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come...he will show you things to come" (John 16:13).
 - a. Some examples of this are found in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 2 Timothy 3:1-7, and 1 Timothy 4:1-3.
 - b. Is there anyone on earth today who can predict the future? There are many who claim this power, but they are merely guessing, or are able to read the current situation and make prognostications about the probable developments, or who claim after the fact to have predicted some historical event. These are more often wrong than right; if they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit they could unerringly predict the future. If one is wrong just once, the Bible says that proves he is a false prophet (Deut. 18:20-22).
 - c. Predicting future events was one of the powers which resulted from receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If one has received this power, he will be able to make accurate predictions. If not, why not? No prediction was ever given to satisfy curiosity.
 6. He enabled the apostles to confirm their spoken word with miraculous signs.
 - a. This was the primary purpose of miracles. "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and
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- wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:3-4).
- b. Anyone at any time could dream up a religious system, complete with teachings and practices. How could the ignorant and unlearned people of the first century know whether the message of gospel preachers was really from God? It was absolutely essential that those ancient proclaimers have a means of certifying the message they preached; that certification was the ability to perform supernatural acts.
 - c. The record of many of these miracles, together with the many internal and external evidences, show that the Bible is the inspired, authoritative word of God. There is no need for confirmatory miracles today!
 - d. If one has truly received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in our time, he will of necessity be thereby enabled to prove his claim by the performance of miraculous signs. "As goes the affirmation, so must be the demonstration!" If he has it, he must be able to demonstrate it!
7. He enabled the apostles to impart spiritual, miraculous gifts to other Christians.
- a. Only the apostles had this capability. After Philip had preached the gospel to the Samaritans and many of them had become Christians, it was necessary for one of the apostles to be present before they could receive any of the supernatural gifts; hence, Peter and John went down and laid hands on them that some of these gifts might be imparted (Acts 8:12-19). Philip could not impart the spiritual gifts; Simon could not obtain that ability (8:18-24).
 - b. Acts 19:6: "And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." The apostle Paul was able to lay hands on the 12 converts at Ephesus and thus impart to them certain of the spiritual gifts.
 - c. It was necessary for Paul to be personally in Rome in order to impart to certain Christians there "some spiritual gift" (Rom. 1:11). If this could be imparted by any who had a spiritual gift, why did Paul say he had to be there before it could be imparted to them?
 - d. 2 Timothy 1:6 shows that Timothy received his spiritual gift through the laying on of the apostle Paul's hands. 1 Timothy 4:14 does not teach that the gift was given through the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, but that the prophecy relating to it had been thus given.
 - e. If anyone today has the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he could lay hands on another and confer a spiritual gift to him. If not, why not?
8. He gave the apostles full inspiration to receive, communicate, confirm, and record God's revelation. "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28; cf. I Cor. 2:9-14; Acts 2:1-4, 11, 14-36). Others, such as Mark, Luke, James, and Jude, received the miraculous ability to do some of these things, but they obtained this power through having the hands of an apostle laid upon them. Thus, the primary recipients of this ability were the apostles.
9. He guided the apostles in defending the faith before rulers and powerful enemies.
- a. Mark 13:11: "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
 - 1) Luke 21:14-15: "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."
 - 2) Luke 12:11: "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say."
 - b. The Jewish religious leaders were surprised to learn that Peter and John, whom they perceived as "ignorant and unlearned" men, were willing and able to speak so boldly and clearly to them (Acts 4:13).
 - c. Paul was able to speak with boldness and power before Roman governors and kings.
 - d. Again, while other inspired men who were not apostles were able to do similar things (e.g., Stephen in Acts 6, 7), it was the apostles who possessed the primary power and ability to do this; others on whom they laid hands could receive one or another of the spiritual gifts.
- E. All of the above nine items are bound up in the promise of the Comforter.
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1. John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
 2. "Comforter" is from the Greek word *parakletos*. Scholars say that we have no single English word that conveys the full meaning of this Greek term. Literally, the word means, "called to one's side, to one's aid; is primarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It is used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defence, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another's cause, an intercessor, advocate, as in I John 2:1, of the Lord Jesus" (Vine, p.208).
 - a. John 14:16 describes the Holy Spirit as **another** Comforter; Christ was the first one they had; the Spirit would be the second. The second would be like the first but distinctive from him.
 - b. The word "Comforter" is found four times (John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The same word also is used in I John 2:1 in reference to Christ (translated as "Advocate").
 - c. The promise of the Holy Spirit as Comforter was made only to the apostles; the promise was never extended to Christians in general. As Comforter, the Holy Spirit would do for the apostles all those things discussed in the preceding nine points.
 - d. The Holy Spirit's work was to reveal all truth to the apostles, and through them, by the imposition of their hands, to certain selected other individuals. He guided these inspired ones in receiving, proclaiming, confirming, defending, and recording the revelation of the New Testament. When this work of revealing, confirming, proclaiming, defending, and recording the New Testament was completed, the Holy Spirit ended his work as "Comforter." Since then the world has been blessed with the results of his work: the written, inspired, infallible, and eternal word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:3).
 - e. Holy Spirit baptism was intended only for certain selected men, the apostles. No promise of it was ever made to believers in general. By seeing what the baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to do, we can know that it was a special promise to them only. Is there anyone on earth today who possesses the same power and authority as the apostles received? Indeed, there is not so much as one!
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The Gift of The Holy Spirit

A. Acts 2:38 states: "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

1. This has been variously understood by many people. Pentecostals assert that the gift is the baptism of the Holy Ghost, accompanied with the full range of supernatural operations and miracles. This claim is false doctrine because the Bible plainly teaches that the age of miracles has passed (Eph. 4:11ff; 1 Cor. 13:8-13).
2. Among our own brethren there are various ideas as to the meaning of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The correct answer cannot be obtained by ascertaining how many are in each camp, or by determining the views of certain notable brethren, and exalting some view as the right one because of its popularity. The various positions we shall identify are followed by a sizeable number of good, scholarly, reliable brethren. These brethren do not make their views a test of fellowship.
 - a. Because the statement is highly disputed among those of like precious faith, it behooves us to go cautiously in arriving at a conclusion. And caution is also advised in announcing one's conclusion. We should not allow such a matter as this to drive a wedge between brethren in Christ, thus destroying fellowship.
 - b. If one's view of the subject under consideration leads him to violate some precept of God's will, sin is the consequence; such is not to be encouraged or condoned. For example, if we were to view the gift of the Spirit as a direct, personal indwelling, and then allege that his presence leads us to find parking places in a crowded city, or in some other way to direct us separate and apart from the word of God, we would have crossed the line between truth and error. We could not **know** that the Holy Spirit did the act alleged.
3. There seems to be three basic views of the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38; no doubt there are some variations of these views. We shall present a brief statement identifying each of these positions, and later discuss each in more detail. There are favorable points made for each, but there are significant objections that may be raised against each position.
 - a. It appears that the majority (or nearly so) of brethren view this gift as an ordinary indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Most of these do not claim that this benefit does anything for the Christian apart from the word of God. In the conviction and conversion of alien sinners, these brethren faithfully maintain that the word of God is the instrument. The gift is said to be something that automatically comes to each person who obeys the gospel. Passages cited include:
 - 1) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) Acts 5:32: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."
 - 3) Romans 8:9,11,16,26,27: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his....But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you....The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God....Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*"
 - 4) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
 - 5) Galatians 4:6: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."
 - 6) 2 Corinthians 1:22: "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."
 - 7) 2 Corinthians 5:5: "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."
 - 8) Ephesians 1:13-14: "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the

praise of his glory."

- 9) Many of these brethren think that the Spirit personally indwells us, that the gift received is the Holy Spirit as a person.
- b. Others say that the gift of the Holy Spirit is one or more of the spiritual blessings. Specifically, some think that pardon is the gift; or eternal life which we have in promise (I John 2:25). This view states, therefore, that the gift is something which the Spirit gives, and is not the Spirit himself. These good brethren affirm that the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian only through the word of God. Verses cited include these:
 - 1) Acts 2:38-39: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call."
 - 2) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 3) John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."
 - 4) Hebrews 9:15: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."
 - 5) 1 John 5:11: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."
 - 6) Acts 3:19: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."
 - 7) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ."
- c. A third view is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is miraculous power. Those who advocate this position say that it was not intended for anyone beyond the first century; that not everyone then received a miraculous gift; that the gift was bestowed on the apostles and Cornelius directly from heaven, but that the others who received it, obtained the gift by the imposition of the apostles' hands. Some of this persuasion state that few, if any, of the New Testament references speak of any "ordinary" indwelling of the Spirit; that all, or nearly all, of the statements in the gospel on this subject describe the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. None of these brethren believe that miracles are being wrought today; all will affirm that the age of miracles ceased as was predicted in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:11-14.

B. An examination of the Personal, Direct Indwelling as the Gift.

1. It is claimed that the phrase, "gift of the Holy Spirit," can be taken either as something that the Spirit gives or as the gift of the Spirit himself. These brethren say that even though the word "Spirit" is in the genitive case (possessive), that there are other usages of the genitive, and that the context must decide what the proper use is in the case at hand.
2. These brethren further say that the Holy Spirit as a gift dwells in us directly.
 - a. "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). John 15:26-27 identifies the apostles as the witnesses here mentioned. But it is argued that the pronoun "them" differentiates between the apostles and those to whom the Spirit was given. Two problems are encountered: (1) This verse does not state that the Holy Spirit personally dwelt in those described; and (2) we are told that God "hath given" (past) the Spirit to those who "obey" (present) him. This describes something done in the past; there is nothing in the statement that requires us to believe God is now doing the same thing. And how can we know that this indwelling is identical with the gift of Acts 2:38?
 - b. Romans 8:9-27 contains several references to the Spirit being in the Christian. But again we are not told *how* this indwelling is accomplished. To say that he dwells in us personally is to read into the statements something that is not stated. And to affirm that the Spirit dwells in us does not prove necessarily that the indwelling is the gift of Acts 2:38. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and Galatians 4:6 are also used, but the same objections must be met.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which

- is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
- 2) Galatians 4:6: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."
 - c. The earnest of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14) is said to be this gift—the personal indwelling of the Spirit. But how can we know this is so? To make the claim is not the same as proving the contention.
3. Objections to this position include the following:
- a. There is no plain statement of scripture affirming that the Holy Spirit is in us personally.
 - b. The argument is very inconclusive that the phrase in Acts 2:38 says that the gift is the Holy Spirit himself. The evidence points to the gift being something the Spirit gives, as we shall see later.
 - c. The statement was made in the midst of miraculous events as an inducement to win the multitude to believe and accept the message presented by Peter (see Acts 2:36-41). Of what value to this end would a promise of an ordinary indwelling of the Spirit be to those people?
 - d. If the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally, what does he do for us that necessitates his direct presence in us?
 - 1) Some have argued that we are urged to maintain purity of life based on the fact that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. But this is something we must do, not the Spirit.
 - 2) Some have said that the Holy Spirit's indwelling enables us to have a confident life, citing Romans 8:26-27: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." We would not know of this information except for the inspired Record. What gives us the confidence? The work the Spirit does or the truth stated in the Record? The Spirit can make this intercession in our behalf whether or not he personally is dwelling in us. Again, the point to be proved is assumed and asserted without adequate proof. How would one holding this position answer the radical who claims that the Spirit guides him to parking places, or helps him to find the best bargain when shopping for a new car, etc.?
 - 3) The following table contains a list of things done for us, which are attributed to both the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. If the Spirit accomplishes the results by means of the inspired word, we do not need his personal presence to receive them.
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The Holy Spirit Operates Through the Word

WORK	HOLY SPIRIT	WORD
Instructs	Neh. 9:20,30	2 Tim. 3:16f
Begets	John 3:5	1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18
New Birth	John 3:5	1 Peter 1:22f
Quickens	John 6:63	Psalm 119:50
Teaches	John 14:26	John 6:44f; Titus 2:11f
Convicts	John 16:8	Titus 1:9
Comforts	Acts 9:31	1 Th. 4:18; Rom. 15:4
Gives Love	Rom. 5:5	1 John 2:5
Saves	1 Cor. 6:11	Acts 4:4; Jas. 1:21
Washes	1 Cor. 6:11	Eph. 5:26
Sanctifies	1 Pet. 1:2	John 17:17
Converts	John 16:7f	Psalm 19:7
Makes Free	Rom. 8:2	John 8:32; 17:17
Strengthens	Eph. 3:16	Deut. 11:8; Acts 20:32
Indwells Saints	Eph. 5:18f	Col. 3:16
Leads	Rom. 8:14	Psalm 119:105
Witnesses: How?	Heb. 10:15; 1 John 5:6-8	Heb. 10:15f; Jer. 31:31-34
Produces Fruit	Gal. 5:22f	Col. 1:5f

e. The position discussed tends to promote extremist views that are clearly wrong. It leans toward the subjective; the effects that are supposed to be given are nebulous and uncertain.

C. An examination of spiritual blessings as the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1. These brethren (at least some of them) say that no one now or at any other time (including the apostles) has ever had a direct, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells in Christians representatively, through the word of God (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16). Thus, the gift of the Holy Spirit is something the Spirit gives, not a gift of the Spirit himself. This is a correct view so far.
2. These brethren hold the truth regarding the cessation of the spiritual gifts. Miraculous gifts were intended only for the time of the church's infancy.
3. The gift the Holy Spirit gives according to this view is pardon from past sins; or the spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3); or citizenship in the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14); or eternal life in heaven (1 John 2:25; 5:11; Rom. 6:23); or a combination of some or all of these blessings. Acts 2:38 is compared with Acts 3:19, and the parallels between the two verses are demonstrated. The point is made that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" and "the time of refreshing" are equivalents (which is true); and the latter is said to be identical to the spiritual blessings of Ephesians 1:3, hence, "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is also identified as those blessings. Those baptized into Christ are "made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Since we are led to be baptized by the Spirit's instruction, the reward of his leadership is attributed to him. This

figurative drinking is said to be the imbibing of the spiritual blessings.

4. Objections to this view include the following:
 - a. If the gift of the Holy Spirit is forgiveness of sins (pardon), then Peter was being redundant in his statement: "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and you will receive pardon."
 - b. If the other spiritual blessings in Christ are meant, there might not be any redundancy. The same is true if the gift is citizenship in the kingdom or the hope of eternal life in heaven.
 - c. But the gift is something different from remission of sins; and if one has the remission of sins he also has all the other spiritual blessings: they come in the same package.
 - d. If eternal life is synonymous with the gift of the Holy Spirit, then it is given on the conditions of repentance and baptism. But 2 Peter 1:5-11 shows that entrance into heaven (where eternal life is actually given) is conditioned on developing the graces. However, we have eternal life here in hope (in prospect and promise: Tit. 1:2; 3:7; Rom. 8:24-25; 1 John 2:25).
 - e. So it is difficult to find anything that is clearly wrong with the view that the gift of the Holy Spirit is eternal life—at least on the basis of our present inquiry.
5. This view offers nothing that would lead one into error.

D. A Examination of the View That the Gift of the Spirit Was Miraculous Abilities.

1. First, the gift of the Holy Spirit is something given by the Holy Spirit, not the gift of the Spirit as a person. This conclusion is reached from the following considerations.
 - a. "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]." *Ye* is the subject of the clause; *shall receive* is the predicate (verb); *gift* is the thing to be received. "Shall receive" is a transitive verb; as such, it must have a direct object; the direct object must be in the accusative (objective) case. The word *gift* is in the accusative case in the Greek text. Therefore, the word "gift" is the direct object of the verb "shall receive," and thus, the gift is something the Spirit provides. The word *Spirit* ("pneumatōs") is in the genitive case in the Greek text, which is the simple possessive case in English. Greek authorities say that there are other usages of the genitive than that of showing possession, but it appears that the common usage is possessive. If this is so in the present passage, then the gift is something which the Spirit gives.
 - b. The same phraseology is found in other passages which are not disputed.
 - 1) John 4:10: "If thou knewest *the gift of God*..." No one understands this gift as God himself, but something God gives. "Gift" is in the accusative case and "God" is in the genitive case. Why should we think of the gift in John 4:10 as something God gives and in Acts 2:38 as the gift of the Spirit himself?
 - 2) Acts 8:20: "...Thou hast thought that the gift of God..." The same cases of the key words are present in this clause, also. Yet no one understands the gift as God, but something God gives (cf. Rom. 6:23; 11:29; 1 Cor. 7:7; Eph. 2:8).
 - 3) Ephesians 4:7: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of *the gift of Christ*." The gift is something which Christ gives, not the gift of Christ himself.
 - c. For these viable reasons we understand Acts 2:38 as referring to a gift which is given by the Holy Spirit. If this is a sound, accurate conclusion, then the first proposition considered is wrong, and the second or third is correct.
2. Consider some reasons why the gift of the Holy Spirit is the miraculous gifts bestowed on believers during the first century.
 - a. It was a statement given to people living more than 1900 years ago; it was not something said in a 20th century setting. The exact setting was one overwhelmingly supernatural. The apostles had just received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4); Peter had informed the multitude that what they were seeing and hearing was in fulfillment of Joel (2:28), a promise that God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:16-18). With this as the setting, what would *you* have expected to receive when Peter promised you "the gift of the Holy Spirit?" Certainly not some ordinary indwelling.
 - b. The expression, "gift of the Holy Spirit," occurs only twice in the Bible (Acts 2:38 and Acts 10:45). In both of these cases, the situation is the same: a miraculous setting. "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the *gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 10:45).
 - 1) Cornelius and his household had received the miraculous ability to speak in other tongues; this supernatural gift was delivered directly from heaven without any human agency being involved,

- just as had been the case with the apostles in Acts 2:1-4. Peter's later report of these events in Acts 11 shows that this outpouring of power came just as he began to speak (11:15). The Greek word used emphasizes this fact.
- 2) In the sermon on Pentecost Day, Peter stated that the gift being displayed was intended to be for "all flesh" (Acts 2:17). This meant that it was to be given to both Jew and Gentile; this is the meaning of the phrase. It was given to Jews in Acts 2, and to Gentiles in Acts 10.
 - 3) The gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10:45 was a miraculous ability; the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 was also a promise of the same; it came directly in Acts 10; it would come through the apostles in Acts 2.
- c. In view of the powerful miraculous flavor of Pentecost Day (Acts 2), it is incongruous to try to make the gift of the Spirit some ordinary indwelling. It is entirely reasonable to expect this gift to be miraculous, more so than the alternatives.
 - d. Multitudes of Jewish people were present, from all over the Roman Empire. In a short time they must return to their homes. Many of these had obeyed the gospel; some of them would doubtless remain in Judea to learn more of this new religion they had espoused, but many would need to go back home. But since they knew so little about the kingdom, how could they be expected to remain faithful and carry out their obligations to the Lord, having only an elementary understanding of it? There was no written New Testament. What they needed was exactly what the apostles provided where ever they planted a congregation: some miraculous gifts. Before they could spread the gospel in their homelands, they needed the ability to receive further details of truth, and the ability to confirm their spoken words with miraculous signs. Paul provided these spiritual gifts to the new converts at Ephesus (Acts 19:1ff); Peter and John did the same with the Samaritan converts (Acts 8:14ff). These spiritual gifts were provided the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 12-14), in the churches of Galatia (Gal. 3:5), and in every other locality where the need existed and there was an apostle available (Acts 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6).
 - e. To hold the gift of Acts 2:38 as miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit is to put that worthy passage in complete concord with Mark 16:15-20.
 - 1) Mark 16:15-16 requires that the gospel be preached to all people; Acts 2 is an example of how that great work was begun, with salvation being extended to those believers who would repent and be baptized.
 - 2) Mark 16:17-18 states that certain miraculous signs would follow believers. Note that this promise was not limited to the apostles, but was to be exercised by believers. But not all believers had miraculous gifts. These signs were in consequence of the bestowal of miraculous powers and not the result of having obeyed the gospel. The gifts were distributed according to the will of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11). Consider some objections and problems relating to this view.
 - f. Acts 10:47 speaks of Cornelius receiving the Holy Spirit, but verse 45 speaks of it as the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is called "metonymy of the cause." In this case, the Holy Spirit is put for the thing given (verse 47). That which was poured out upon Cornelius (Acts 10) and the apostles (Acts 2) was not the Holy Spirit as a person, but the power which pertained to him. To receive the Holy Spirit in those cases was to obtain the power of the Spirit. To receive the gift of the Spirit as promised in Acts 2 was to receive the power of the Spirit (through the imposition of the apostles' hands).
 - g. Some object that if this interpretation is true, then we cannot preach Acts 2:38 today. But Mark 16:17-20 immediately follows verses 15-16, and we have no trouble making the proper distinction between the two sections. The first part (16:15-16) applies to all time; but the second part (16:17-18) had application only to the age of miracles.
 - h. Another objects, saying that since remission of sins is offered to every believer who repents and is baptized, then the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is also extended to each who thus obeys. But by using proper inductive logic, as we do in discussing Mark 16:15-20, we can see that the miraculous aspect of the passage applied only to the miraculous age. This is just another case of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The miraculous gift of the Spirit is no more offered to everyone than the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire were ordained for every person in John's audience (Matt. 3:11-12) when those two subjects were first broached.
 - i. Another objection asserts that only the apostles performed any miracles from Acts 2 through Acts 5. But just because there is no specific record that any other persons received miraculous gifts through
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- the apostles, and exercised those gifts, does not prove there were none. The time period spanning those chapters is short, and all the apostles were still in Jerusalem; it was mainly their work that was being recorded.
- j. It is argued that John would be filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:15), and yet he did no miracles (John 10:41), thus, he had a non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit. But John was inspired (Luke 7:29-30): he had a miraculous gift.
3. Consider some additional passages.
 - a. Galatians 3:2: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Many infer from this statement that a personal indwelling of the Spirit is meant, but verse 5 shows that the apostle had in mind the miraculous gifts of the Spirit: "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Paul is showing in the book that he is a genuine apostle, that the gospel he preached is the only one authorized, and that the gospel has superceded the Law of Moses. His argument in this passage is that the gifts of the Spirit came through the gospel (the hearing of faith), and not by the Law.
 - b. Romans 8:9 is used to show that all who belong to Christ must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."
 - 1) The work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the scheme of redemption was to reveal the mind of God to men (I Cor. 2:9-13) and to confirm the revealed word by miraculous signs (Heb. 2:3-4; Mark 16:20). Inspired men in the first century proved their messages by working miracles by the power of the Spirit. Preachers then used the Holy Spirit to prove they had the word of God; those who claim a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit use the word of God to try to prove they have the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) Is there anything in the context of Romans 8 which would lead Paul to say that all who belong to Christ will have the Spirit dwelling in them in some non-miraculous way? Nothing. However, there is a reason for him to refer to the miraculous gifts furnished by the Spirit to him and others who were teaching the truth. Romans deals with the problem of the Law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. Judaizers sought to turn the Gentile converts from the gospel to the Law; these false teachers could not confirm their doctrines by miraculous signs; those who preached the true gospel had the power to confirm what they preached; Paul reminds them of this fact in the latter part of the verse in question.
 - 3) It was a miraculous gift Paul indicates, and not some uncertain, indefinable indwelling. The phrase, "in the Spirit," at the beginning of verse nine, is a reference to miraculous endowments (Thayer, p.522). Paul did not change the subject from the miraculous power to the non-miraculous indwelling in the midst of this one verse. The apostle is saying to his auditors, "If someone comes to you teaching a doctrine which he could not confirm with Holy Spirit-empowered signs, do not believe him." Today, we have the inspired Record of divine truth to guide us into the truth and away from error (cf. 1 John 2:27; 1 Cor. 12:10c; 1 John 2:20, 26-29).
 - c. Acts 8:14-17: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Philip, an inspired preacher and empowered to perform miracles, had proclaimed the gospel in Samaria; many people obeyed the gospel. The two apostles (Peter and John) went to Samaria, and after praying and laying their hands on these converts, the Holy Ghost was given.
 - 1) What was given was obviously visible for verse 18 says that Simon saw it. The purpose of the apostles' actions was the conferral of miraculous gifts (Acts 19:6; Rom. 1:11). What is there about the non-miraculous indwelling that is visible? Why would Simon want the ability to confer it to others?
 - 2) These Samaritans had been converted but the Holy Spirit had come upon none of them. When the apostles laid hands on them and prayed, the Holy Spirit was then given. If the non-miraculous gift of the Spirit comes automatically at baptism, why did not these receive it then? Our situation is like that of these people: they had believed and were baptized, but had not received the gift of the

Spirit until the apostles came. We have believed and were baptized and have not received the Spirit: and will not because there is no apostle on earth to lay hands on us.

- 3) What these Samaritans received through Peter and John were miraculous gifts, such as were conferred on the Ephesians by Paul (Acts 19:1-6).
- d. Acts 5:32: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." Instead of teaching the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, this passage discusses the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Notice the context of the statement. The Jews had accused the apostles of preaching error by proclaiming the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 4:1-2). The next morning, Peter and John were brought before the Jewish court; Acts 4:8-12 records Peter's inspired defense, which attributed the healing of the lame man (Acts 3) to the resurrected Jesus. After threatening them, the council released these apostles. In Acts 5, the Jewish leaders arrested and imprisoned all the apostles. An angel released them during the night. The apostles resumed their preaching, and were arrested again (5:25-26). The council asked why they persisted in their preaching (5:28). Acts 5:29-32 is the reply Peter gave to their question. Look at verse 32:
 - 1) To what things were the apostles witnesses? The things which are stated in verses 29-31, including the resurrection of Christ.
 - 2) The Holy Spirit is said to be a witness of something: what? The same things stated above, including the resurrection of Christ.
 - 3) The apostles affirmed the resurrection of Christ; their testimony was confirmed by the miracles the Holy Spirit wrought through them. How were the apostles witnesses? By being empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 15:26-27; Acts 10:38-41). How did the Holy Spirit witness these things? By the manifestation of various miracles *through the apostles*.
 - 4) Acts 5:32 is an example of the fulfillment of the promise Christ made to the apostles in John 15:26-27 ["But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning"] and Acts 1:8 ["But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"].
 - 5) To whom had the Holy Spirit been given? To the obedient. For what purpose, according to the context, was he given? For the purpose of being witnesses of the Lord's resurrection. Does the statement of fact given in the verse apply to anyone living today? No, since we are not to be witnesses. Is the gift of the Holy Spirit in the verse miraculous or non-miraculous? Miraculous.
- e. Ephesians 1:13-14: "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." "Earnest" is a term used to describe a pledge or down-payment. The miraculous endowment of the Spirit represented God's pledge or assurance of the heavenly inheritance. The *sealing* also refers to the miraculous gifts (to Christ and the apostles):
 - 1) John 3:33-36: "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
 - 2) John 6:27: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 1:22: "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

E. What conclusions should be reached?

1. The information discussed is not intended to be a thorough dissertation, but a brief overview of the subject. It is not offered to prove any position conclusively, but to present some basic information sufficient to provide a fundamental understanding of what is involved on the "gift of the Holy Spirit."
2. It has not been the author's purpose to upset the faith of any sincere saint, but to promote and open-minded study of this difficult subject.
3. It has not been the intention to advance an issue to divide a brotherhood already sore from much internal turmoil. Although the author's view on this subject is obvious from the comments, he does not make this

a matter of fellowship, except in those cases where one of a contrary view advocates a position manifestly unscriptural. Our aim should be unity, but not at the expense of truth. We should be united in all matters of truth, but be congenial in all matters of judgment.

- a. 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
 - b. Ephesians 4:1-3: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
 - c. Ephesians 4:31-32: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."
 - d. Philippians 1:27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
 - e. Philippians 3:16: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."
 - f. 1 Peter 4:11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
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How Does One Call On The Name Of The Lord?

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The prophet Joel foretold the time when all who call on the name of the Lord would be delivered. "And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call" (Joel 2:32).
1. This was a change from Mosaic Law, which demanded perfect obedience to a complex system which had many detailed and specific requirements in its code.
 2. This prophecy was fulfilled beginning in Acts chapter two: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel....And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:16,21).
 3. The idea of calling on the name of the Lord was made a central part of the gospel system: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:9-13).
- B. What does it mean to call on the Lord's name?
1. Some say it literally means:
 - a. "To call out to God and ask for salvation."
 - b. To say, "Lord, come into my heart and save me."
 2. The statement itself not tell HOW:
 - a. "Whosoever crosses the Atlantic Ocean shall be in Europe." (But HOW is one to cross the ocean?).
 - b. "Whosoever cuts down a tree shall have lumber." [But HOW does not cut down the tree and how is the lumber produced].

DISCUSSION:

- A. The statement has a universal application—Whosoever.
1. Romans 10:13: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
 2. It includes Gentiles, Jews, and all races. There is no separate plan of salvation for different races, nations, or political orientation.
 - a. Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - b. John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."
 - c. John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 - d. Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - e. Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
 - f. Romans 10:12-13: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
 - g. Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
 3. We are told that the offer is given to all and why it is given.
 - a. Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."
 - b. Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - c. Hebrews 2:9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
- B. The statement has a condition attached—Must call.
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1. Most people say this call is prayer, but they also say that salvation is unconditional.
 - a. They reject baptism as a work, saying it makes salvation dependent on the preacher.
 - b. They contradict themselves by saying one MUST CALL on name of Lord, but one must not be baptized for the remission of sins! In their view, baptism is a work or human merit, but their position requires that one must call on the name of the Lord, which itself is a work.
 - c. Their system has this formula: preaching + belief + call = Salvation (thus is self-contradictory!).
 2. Before salvation is obtained, there must be a desire for it (Rev. 22:17); one must see the need and make the call; the burden is on the individual.
 3. Thus, some action is required: but what is that action?
 - a. The action is described as "calling on the name of the Lord."
 - b. This calling grows out of faith in Christ.
 - 1) John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
 - 2) John 6:68-69: "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."
 - 3) Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
- C. But HOW does one call on the name of the Lord?
1. This calling is not:
 - a. Prayer, for God hears only the obedient.
 - 1) Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."
 - 2) Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."
 - 3) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
 - 4) Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"
 - 5) 1 John 3:22: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."
 - b. Merely uttering words with the lips.
 2. Calling on name of Lord is explained in Romans 10:13-17: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - a. Romans 1:16, which affirms that the gospel of Christ is the power God uses to save us, is the theme of the book of Romans; therefore, the gospel is an essential part of this calling.
 - b. To grasp what it means to call on the name of the Lord reverse the order of the key items of Romans 10:14,17: call → believe → hear → preaching.
 - c. In Romans 10:13,16, Paul speaks of "calling on the name of the Lord" and "obeying the gospel." These two statements are identical in meaning (interchangeable). To call on the name of the Lord is to obey the gospel of Christ.
 - d. One is saved at point he obeys the gospel.
 - 1) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
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- 3) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
- 4) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
3. Peter explains how to call on the name of the Lord in Acts 2.
 - a. In Acts 2:22-36, he shows why Jesus could be called on and why we should call.
 - b. The process followed this pattern: The apostles preached the gospel → the audience heard the message → many in the audience believed the message → they asked how to call.
 - 1) In verse 21, they had been told that those who call on the name of the Lord would be saved.
 - 2) They now understood that they needed to be saved, thus they asked how they should call on his name: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (2:37).
 - c. The apostles told them how to call: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (2:38).
 - d. They called on the name of the Lord by obeying Gospel: they repented and were baptized.
4. Saul of Tarsus fasted and prayed after becoming convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah; but he remained unsaved until he obeyed gospel.
 - a. Acts 9:6: "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."
 - b. Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
5. Romans 10:13 ["calling on the name of the Lord"] is an Old Testament description; Mark 16:15-16 ["He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"] is the New Testament description; the expressions are parallel and equivalent.
6. The statement simply means to obey gospel.
 - a. Acts 6:7: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
 - b. Acts 9:14,21: "And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name....But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"

CONCLUSION:

- A. Salvation is a personal matter.
 1. We are saved one-by-one as we obey the gospel. "...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25-26; cf. John 3:5; Titus 3:5).
 2. Ultimately, no one is responsible for an individual's soul but the person himself.
 - B. Salvation means everything to the soul.
 1. Deliverance from guilt of sins.
 2. Brings the individual into new life and fellowship with God and his people.
 3. Gives hope and promise of eternal life as the ultimate reward!
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ACTS 3

A. Acts 3:1-11: The Healing of the Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate.

1. "Thus far, the labors of the apostles had met with uninterrupted and most astonishing success. Luke is now about to introduce us to a series of conflicts, in which success and temporary defeat alternate in the history of the Jerusalem Church" (McGarvey, p.50). "The miracle which was performed by Peter and John is an example of the kind of signs referred to in 2:43, and it also becomes the occasion for the changed attitude on the part of the people toward the church. It is true that the people who saw the miracle were filled with wonder and amazement, and were quite willing to listen to Peter's sermon which followed; but the leaders of the Jews were 'sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.' And it was from this attitude that the trouble started. (Acts 4:1-4.)" (ALC, 1962, p.91). People with denominational backgrounds would be more apt to be converted if it were not for their religious leaders instilling prejudice in their minds.
2. Verse 1: "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth hour."
 - a. Peter and John were entering into the temple. These two men were often together (Luke 22:8; John 20:3; 21:7; 18:16). They entered the temple for the purpose which ensued: to be able to preach the gospel to those who gathered. It was at the ninth hour of the day (3 p.m.), which was one of the daily times of prayer.
 - b. We are given no reason to believe they entered the temple for the purpose of worshiping according to the Old Testament Law. Daily gatherings at the temple took place at the third hour (Acts 2:15), the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and at evening (6 p.m.). The priests would be inside the temple performing their duties, and the people would be praying outside in the court (Luke 1:8-10; cf. Ps. 55:17).
3. Verse 2: "And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple."
 - a. They met a lame man as they entered the temple area at the Beautiful Gate. "There were nine doors to the temple, all being 45' high, except the gate of Nicanor which was 75' high, facing eastward, and very richly adorned. It is thought by many that this was the door mentioned here. Of it, Josephus says: 'It was adorned after a most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold....it was made of Corinthian brass. The gold had been poured upon it by Alexander, the father of Tiberius'" (Coffman, pp.66f).
 - b. The lame man had been born with his infirmity. Acts 4:22 informs us that he was more than forty years of age at the time of this incident.
 - c. His family or friends brought him daily to the temple, and positioned him at the Beautiful Gate, evidently the most popularly used entrance into the courts of the temple. He would be more apt to obtain alms from religious people; no better place existed for that purpose than that of his daily habit.
 - d. The fact that this man was daily at the temple begging alms would make him a common feature, and thus well-known to the citizens who frequented the temple. His affliction would be known by many thousands, so that his healing would obviously be miraculous to all who knew him.
 - e. The primary factors relative to Bible miracles were: (1) instantaneous (Lk. 8:44-45; 13:13; Acts 9:18); (2) complete (John 9:7; Luke 1:64); (3) unquestioned (Acts 4:15; 5:12-15); and (4) impossible for mere humans to duplicate (John 3:2).
4. Verses 3-5: "Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them."
 - a. The lame man asked Peter and John for alms as they were about to enter the temple. Peter and John looked at the man directly, and told him to, Look on us."
 - b. This was intended to focus the man's attention on them so that there would be no doubt as to the source of the forthcoming miracle. The man looked at them, expecting to obtain some alms from them.
 - c. There is nothing in the context to indicate that this man had any faith in Christ prior to the miracle. The faith by which the miracle was wrought was in the apostles (verse 16).
5. Verse 6: "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."
 - a. Peter and John faced an excellent opportunity. Their entering the temple may have included the plan

to heal the lame man, and thereby assemble an audience; or it may have been that they entered the temple without any detailed plan of action. God sets before us doors of opportunity; we must be wise enough to see them, courageous enough to seize them, strong enough to open them, and knowledgeable enough to use them.

- 1) 1 Corinthians 16:9: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."
 - 2) Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
 - 3) Colossians 4:3: "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."
 - 4) Revelation 3:8: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."
- b. Before Christians can influence the world, they must confront the world. The two apostles were about to do that. Having gained the attention of the lame man, Peter proceeded freely to give the man what he doubtless had long yearned for but which he never expected to receive: complete healing of his handicap.
 - c. Peter prefaced his offer by stating that he had no silver or gold to offer him, but "such as I have give I thee." There is a story about Thomas Aquinas visiting Pope Innocent II in Rome. The pope showed Aquinas the vast treasures of gold and silver owned by the Catholic Church, and remarked that he could not say what Peter said ("Silver and gold have I none"). Aquinas replied, "And neither can you say to the lame, 'Rise up and walk!'" God never requires of us anything that we do not have or cannot do. But we are required to use what we have and do what we can according to our "doors of opportunity." We ought continually to prepare ourselves for service, and pray for opportunities to serve.
 - d. "The value of money does not inhere within itself, but arises simply from the fact that it furnishes a ready means of exchange. Silver and gold, therefore, are worth only that which they will purchase; and they cannot purchase health, happiness, nor acceptance with God. (Acts 8:18f.)" (ALC, 1962, p.94).

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread.

For giving is living," the angel said.

"And must I be giving again and again?"

"Oh no," said the angel, piercing me through;

"Just give till the Master stops giving to you!"

(Anon.)

- e. Peter commanded the man to rise up and walk—by the authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. There may have been many with the name *Jesus*, but there was only one Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This order may have so shocked the man that he was too stunned to try to comply. He had never been able to stand and walk. Notice that Peter was not anticipating any long period of recuperation before the man could walk. He expected him to be healed immediately.
6. Verse 7: "And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."
 - a. Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up. His feet and ankle bones received strength—immediately! The beggar had no faith in Jesus; he had no anticipation of being healed, so no requirement of faith on his part was necessary. This miracle was not done to test the lame man's faith, but to demonstrate to the people who would shortly learn of it that the power of God was in the apostles.
 - b. Again, these men were not performing miracles for their own glory or financial gain; they did them for the purpose of leading men to accept their message of salvation. Would any of our modern-day "sham-artists" like to duplicate this miracle?
 7. Verse 8: "And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God."
 - a. He leaped up, stood, walked, and entered the temple with his own power, walking and leaping and praising God. Isaiah foresaw these miraculous dealings: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (35:5-6).

- b. This great prophecy was fulfilled in the miraculous work of Jesus, the apostles, and the others who received these supernatural abilities during the first century. These powers are no longer given to men.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 13:8-13: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
 - 2) Ephesians 4:8,11-14: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men....And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."
8. Verses 9-10: "And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."
 - a. "The multitudes, when left to themselves, are nearly always favorably impressed when Christians do their duty; and it would be much easier to win them to Christ, if their leaders would leave them alone. It is evident from this study that all that is needed to bring about a great victory for the cause of Christ is for his people to do their duty, that is, to use what they have and do what they can" (ALC, 1962, p.95).
 - b. The people recognized the man. If he had not been known as a cripple, his healing would have been questioned. But since he was known to be genuinely lame, and now suddenly he was walking and leaping, his healing was obviously miraculous. Since he was widely known as a real cripple, the miracle was unquestioned. Even the religious leaders admitted the miracle: "...What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*" (Acts 4:16).
 - c. It is clear, therefore, why the multitude was filled with wonder and amazement. The apostles had not put on a great show in healing the man; they simply did what was needed; the events which followed were a matter of natural course. Interest was aroused; a crowd assembled; the gospel was preached boldly and clearly.
9. Verse 11: "And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering."
 - a. The lame man clung to the apostles in gratitude. The people ran together on Solomon's Porch. This was one of the porticos (porches or covered walks) which were built on the outer edges of the temple property.
 - 1) John 10:23: "And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch."
 - 2) Acts 5:12: "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch."
 - b. The people held the apostles in great awe as though it was by their own power and holiness that this man had been made whole.

B. Acts 3:12-26: Peter's Second Sermon.

1. Verse 12: "And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"
 - a. The lame man had been instantly healed; he had entered the temple area under his own power, walking, leaping and praising God; Peter and John entered the temple; the lame man held them, and the multitude rapidly assembled around the three in the part of the temple called Solomon's Porch, greatly wondering over what had happened to the lame man, whom they recognized. Peter addressed

- this large audience. These events had most likely occurred according to plan and not by accident.
- b. The first statement by the apostle was to deny that their power had healed the man. One is made to wonder what the modern "faith healers" would have claimed! Peter plainly stated that it was not by their power that the man was enabled to walk. Paul and Barnabas had difficulty persuading the Lycaonians that they were mere men and not divine beings when they healed another cripple (Acts 14:8-18).
 - c. Notice also that the miracle was not the chief point Peter discussed in his sermon. The main emphasis with modern "faith healers" is on the healing of physical ailments. Most people are more interested in physical healing than in the healing of the soul. This is what "faith healers" emphasize. But Peter preached a gospel sermon directed toward the saving of souls.
2. Verses 13-15: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."
 - a. The apostles elicited the interest and sympathy of the company by attributing the miracle to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (through his Son, see verse 16). The God of their fathers had glorified Jesus. The ASV describes Jesus here as "my Servant," which is also used of the Lord in Isaiah 42:1 and 52:13. The God of the Patriarchs had glorified Jesus (in the resurrection and ascension), but the Jews had denied him before Pilate. Luke 23:16-20 shows that Pilate was intending to release Jesus until he was persuaded by the tumult to loose Barrabas instead.
 - b. The Jews had denied the Holy One and the Just, and demanded that a murderer be released. A sorry bargain indeed! Notice that Peter does not tone down the truth.
 - c. The Old Testament used the term *Holy One* in reference to the Messiah (Psalm 16:10); the demoniacs addressed him by that title (Mark 1:24; cf. Isa. 45:21; Zech. 9:9).
 - d. The Jews had been involved in the killing of the Prince of Life, but God had raised him up from the dead. *Prince* is translated *Author* in the ASV and in Hebrews 5:9 and 12:2, and *Captain* in Hebrews 2:10. The Greek term "primarily signifies one who takes a lead in, or provides the first occasion of, anything" (Vine, Vol. I, p.88).
 - e. Peter states that they (the apostles) were witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord.
 - 1) John 15:26-27: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."
 - 2) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 3) Acts 4:33: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."
 - 4) Acts 10:38-41: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."
 - f. In the first four verses of his sermon, Peter drew several contrasts:
 - 1) The God of the Patriarchs had glorified Jesus; but you delivered him up.
 - 2) Pilate wanted to release him; you insisted that he be crucified. Their crime was intensified by the fact that a heathen judge found him innocent, while they had refused to see his purity.
 - 3) Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but they demanded that a murderer be freed.
 - 4) You killed the Prince of Life, but God resurrected him.
 - g. "We might challenge the pages of all the classics for a climax more thrilling in its effect upon the audience, or for a happier combination of climax and antithesis. The effect upon the multitude was overwhelming. The facts declared were undeniable, except the resurrection, and of this the men who had just healed the cripple were the witnesses" (McGarvey, p.52).
 3. Verse 16: "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know:
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- yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."
- a. Peter announced the real source of the lame man's healing: the Prince of Life whom God had glorified. It was through faith in the name of Christ that the man was made whole. The statement does not identify whose faith was meant, but a brief look at the narrative of the miracle shows that it was the faith of the apostles, not of the lame man.
 - b. "The faith was not that of the cripple; for it is clear, from the description, that he had no faith. When Peter said to him, 'Look on us,' the man looked up, expecting to receive alms. And even when Peter told him, in the name of Jesus, to rise up and walk, he did not attempt to move till Peter 'took him by the right hand, and lifted him up.' He exhibited no faith, either in Jesus, or in Peter's healing power, till after he found himself able to stand and walk. We must locate the faith, therefore, in the apostles; and in this we are sustained by the fact that the exercise of miraculous power, by those in possession of spiritual gifts, was always dependent upon their faith; Peter was empowered to walk upon the water; but, when his faith wavered, he began to sink, and Jesus said, 'O thou of *little* faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' Nine of the apostles, once, having failed to cast out a demon, asked Jesus, 'Why could we not cast him out?' He replied, 'Because of your unbelief.' (Matt. 17:14)....It must be here observed that faith was necessary to the *exercise* of spiritual gifts, already *imparted*, and that no faith, however strong, ever enabled the uninspired to work miracles. The notion, therefore, which has existed in some minds, from time to time, ever since the apostolic period, that if our faith were strong enough, we, too, could work miracles, has as little foundation in scripture as it has in experiment" (McGarvey, pp.52f). One of the nine spiritual gifts was the gift of miraculous faith, which enabled the Spirit-empowered individual to produce great wonders (cf. Matt. 17:20). The worker of the supernatural act had to have faith in the gift in order for the miracle to be done.
 - c. The faith that came through Christ was the means of the miraculous power which gave this unfortunate man the ability to walk. The authority of Jesus, the Son of God, healed the man; the apostles were mere instruments, possessing the faith to use the power to heal him.
 - d. That he was healed could not be denied. Peter reminds them that they know him; they had seen him at the Beautiful Gate countless times through the years; they could behold him standing there perfectly whole now. The miracle was done openly, in the presence of the people. Even the religious leaders said they could not deny the miracle (4:16). Hence, the testimony of the apostles that Jesus had been raised from the dead was established; and the message they here presented was completely trustworthy.
 - 1) Mark 16:20: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
 - 2) Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
4. Verse 17: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers."
- a. Peter eases their consciences a bit by stating that what they had done had been done out of ignorance. They did not know that Jesus was God's Son, although if they had investigated as fully as they ought to have done, they could have learned it. On the cross, the Lord prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). Paul persecuted the body of Christ severely, but obtained mercy "because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13). What if he had done it with full knowledge? (Cf. Heb. 10:26). It would have been more difficult for him to repent if he had willfully violated what he knew to be the will of God.
 - b. "He had made a most terrific onslaught upon them, and exposed their criminality in unsparing terms; but now, induced by some perceptible change in their countenances, he softens his style and extenuates their fault....That they acted in ignorance of the real character of Jesus was an extenuation of their crime, but it did not render them innocent; for the preceding remarks were intended to convict them of crime, and in his preceding discourse he charged that with *wicked hands* they had crucified and slain him" (McGarvey, p.53).
 - c. "The exact point of their ignorance regarded the fact of Jesus' being God come in the flesh, the very
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- person who would judge them in the last day; *that* they did not know" (Coffman, p.72).
- d. There was a time when God overlooked certain cases of ignorance, but now, under the gospel system, he requires all men every where to repent (Acts 17:30-31).
5. Verse 18: "But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."
 - a. Peter states the fact that their killing of Christ was in keeping with the grand design of God as revealed through the Old Testament prophets. From the start, it was God's plan to have his Son die on the cross for the sins of the world. All the animal sacrifices from Genesis 4 onward pointed to the greatest sacrifice of all. Isaiah 53 showed that the Messiah would be slain as an offering for sin. His betrayal was predicted in Zechariah 11:10-13; that he would be pierced in 12:10; that he would be wounded in the hands in 13:6; that a fountain would be opened for sin and uncleanness in 13:1. Christ foretold many details of his death (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 21:33-46).
 - b. God had the power to plan such events and the crucifixion of Christ, and at the same time work it out so that those who were instrumental in putting him to death acted in full harmony with their free moral agency.
 - c. The power and wisdom of God could design the plan; his foreknowledge could know it would take place; his power and wisdom to control earthly situations could bring the right men into the right place and authority at the right time to fulfill his plan, and at the same time, allow his will to be done but the individuals involved still retain their freedom of choice, and so have the guilt for their sinful acts.
 - d. Only the Almighty God of heaven could accomplish such things. God can foreknow things without becoming responsible for the misdeeds of men. He can bring about his will by using men who participate by their free choice.
 6. Verse 19: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."
 - a. The apostle, having shown that Jesus is the Christ and that those present had denied and killed him, and that it was through his name that the lame man was healed, next announced the terms of pardon.
 - b. As in the first recorded sermon (Acts 2), he says nothing about faith. It is plain that those asking the question in Acts 2:37 believed in Christ at that point or they would not have asked it. The Holy Spirit, who was guiding the apostle's words, perceived that the present audience had faith in Jesus, thus did not mention faith. No one can repent unless he has strong faith (2 Cor. 7:10; Heb. 11:6; Acts 26:27). God's word is never redundant; it includes only those things that are essential. Although Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs, only 915 (verses) are in *Proverbs*. There was no need to state the requirement of faith when faith was already present, but in those cases where faith was not present, the inspired preachers stressed the essentiality of faith (Acts 16:30ff).
 - c. Notice also the absence of the common denominational requirements: "Accept Christ as your personal Savior." "Let Jesus come into your heart." "Pray down the saving power." "Pray." "Call out to the Lord." "Believe only." "Repent and believe."
 - d. Peter did not tell these believers to do anything different from what he told the believers to do on Pentecost day. In fact, there is perfect parallel between the two statements of Acts 2:38-39 and Acts 3:19.

ACTS 2:38-39	ACTS 3:19
Repent	Repent
Be Baptized	Be Converted
For the remission of sins	That sins might be blotted out
Receive the gift	Times of refreshing shall come
Of Holy Spirit	From the presence of the Lord
Promise is to you (and all)	All kindreds of earth to be blessed
As many as God shall call	Turning everyone from iniquities

- e. Peter commanded them to repent. Repentance is a change of will, produced by deep sorrow for sin which leads to reformation of life (2 Cor. 7:9-10; Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). If the change of will is not produced by godly sorrow over sin, it is not true repentance.
- 1) One either feels sorrow over his sins or he does not feel sorrow over his sins. Some change their lives (at least temporarily) because someone finds out their sins. Thus, a man who has been caught in a criminal act might quickly show remorse; but he may be sorry only because he was caught, not sorry he did evil. We cannot see into the heart; when someone states that he repents over his sins, we take his word for it. But unless his change of will was motivated by genuine sorrow over his sins, he has not repented. It is extremely hazardous to the soul for one willfully and knowingly to commit sin! One may think he can commit sin and enjoy some sinful pleasure, and later quickly and easily repent. But if he is not truly sorry for his willful act, he cannot repent! Repentance is God's hardest command! Cf. 1 Timothy 1:13-15; Hebrews 10:26; Acts 3:17.
 - 2) If the change of will is produced by sorrow for sin, but no reformation of life is forthcoming, repentance has not occurred. Judas was filled with remorse, but he did not reform his life; he ended his life by suicide.
 - 3) Repentance is a personal responsibility. No one can repent for the individual but that individual. God cannot repent for me; Christ cannot repent for me; the angels cannot repent for me; dead saints cannot repent for me; the elders cannot repent for me; the preacher cannot repent for me. God does not give me repentance directly. God granted repentance to Cornelius (Acts 11:18), but he did this through sending Peter to preach the gospel to him. God simply provided the message of truth which led Cornelius and his family to see their sins; on learning of their guilt before God, they repented and were baptized into Christ (Acts 10:47-48; 11:13-14; 2:38). Peter told this present audience to repent just as he commanded that other audience (Acts 2:38) to repent. It is an individual, personal act of obedience.
- f. Peter commanded them to be converted. This stands in direct relationship to the command to be baptized (in Acts 2:38). The ASV has "turn again" in place of "be converted." In either case, an action on the part of the individual is demanded. Repent and turn are two distinctive words calling for two distinctive actions.
- 1) "But the idea of being *passive* in this is not conveyed by the original word. The word properly means to *turn*—to return to a path from which one has gone astray; and then to turn away from sins, or to forsake them'.... It designates a change in the *conduct*. A change of conduct, however, must, from the very necessity of the case, have a beginning; and that beginning consists in the first act of the better life. Previous to that, the man has not turned; subsequent to it he *has* turned; and the act itself is the *turning* act. If, in turning to the Lord, any one of a number of actions might be the first that the penitent performed, the command to *turn* would not specially designate any one of these, but might be obeyed by the performance of either. But the fact is that one single act was uniformly enjoined upon the penitent, as the first overt act of obedience to Christ, and that was, *to be immersed*.... When, now, he commands them to repent and *turn*, they could but understand that they were to turn as their predecessors had done, by being *immersed*. The commands *turn* and *be immersed* are equivalent, not because the words have the same meaning, but because the command 'Turn to the Lord' was uniformly obeyed by the specific act of being immersed. Previous to immersion, men *repented*, but did not *turn*; after immersion, they had *turned*, and immersion was the *turning act*" (McGarvey, p.56).
 - 2) "Be converted" (or "turn again") occupies the same location between repentance and having sins blotted out, as "be baptized" does between repentance and remission of sins in Acts 2:38. Hence, to be converted (as used here) means to be baptized. A generic term is used in the present text; a specific term was employed in the former.
 - 3) McGarvey says that the Greek word for "turn again" is used 39 times in the New Testament: 18 times in reference to the physical act of turning or returning; 19 times in reference to changing from evil to good; and 2 times in reference to turning from good to evil (p.57). He adds, "If the term *convert*, therefore, were retained as the rendering, a man could, in the scriptural sense, be converted to *Satan* as well as to *God*. But *be converted* can never truly represent the original, though it is so rendered six times in the common version. The original is invariably in the active voice, and it is making a false and pernicious impression on the English reader to render it by the passive voice.
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If we render it truthfully by the term convert, we would have such readings as these: 'Repent and *convert*;' 'lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should *convert*, and I should heal them,' etc. The absurdity of such a rendering shows the necessity for some other term."

- 4) The use of the term shows that it is not something which God does directly for the individual (contrary to denominational theology).
 - a) Matthew 13:15: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - b) Mark 4:12: "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."
 - c) Luke 22:32: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
 - d) John 12:40: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."
 - e) Acts 3:19: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."
 - f) Acts 28:27: "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - g) James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."
- 5) "But the question arises, Why did Peter use this rather indirect way of stating what they must do, especially in view of what he had so flatly said on Pentecost? The answer must lie in the fact of his inspiration. God always gives the skeptic, the willful, and the unbeliever a way out. Our Lord said shortly before raising the daughter of Jairus, 'The maid is not dead, but sleepeth!' (Mark 5:39), thus leaving men room to make their own moral decision. So it is here. If one is determined to reject baptism as clearly binding upon all men, this verse gives him a straw to catch at, the excuse to refuse what is morally impossible for him already" (Coffman, pp.74f).
- g. The purpose of repentance and turning again is the blotting out of sin. To blot out means to wipe out, rub off, or erase. Remission means "dismissal, release." Remission of sins and blotting out of sins are equivalents.
- h. The seasons of refreshing would proceed from the Lord's presence. Acts 2:33 shows that the miraculous demonstrations of Pentecost day emanated from Christ, who was even then enthroned in heaven. Since "seasons of refreshing" stands in direct relationship to "gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38), then these two expressions are used synonymously. Literally, "seasons of refreshing" describes times of cooling or reviving (cf. John 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:4-6; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Mark 16:16-20). The Holy Spirit's part in redemption was in revealing and confirming the gospel; he revealed it through the inspired people of the first century, guided them in presenting it, confirmed the word by various miraculous signs, and exercised the guidance and control over New Testament writers so that the inspired message was recorded. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit to many of the first century saints enabled them to give to the world the word of God. The "seasons of refreshing" were the products of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Hence, "gift of the Holy Spirit" and "seasons of refreshing" are used correspondingly in Acts 2:38 and 3:19, and are parallel to the other passages cited:

John 3:5	Eph. 5:26	Titus 3:4-6	Acts 2:38	Acts 3:19	Mark 16:15ff
Water	Washing	Washing	Baptism	Be Converted	Baptism
Spirit	Word	Renewing of Holy Spirit	Gift of Spirit	Refreshing	Miracles

7. Verses 20-21: "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven

must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

- a. Peter states that God would send Christ back at the appropriate time, but in the meanwhile, he must remain in heaven until "the restitution of all things." The Greek term for restitution is *apokatastasis*, from *apo*, "back again, and *kathistemi*, "to set in order." It is translated as "restoration" in the ASV. Boles says that the term is a technical medical term which means a complete restoration to health (p.60).
 - b. Christ will remain in heaven until all things are restored (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28). At the coming of Christ, the earth will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10-11), all the dead will be raised (John 5:28-29), the Judgment will take place (2 Cor. 5:10), and the final sentences will be pronounced (Matt. 25:31-46). The kingdom will be turned back to the Father.
 - c. This passage does not teach the premillennial theory that all earthly things will be restored to their original purity, and that a long period of material delight will be enjoyed here while Christ reigns for a thousand years in an earthly kingdom.
 - d. The purpose of the first coming of Christ was to provide the remedy for sin; his second coming will be the completion of the eternal plan: to take home to glory all those who know God and obeyed the gospel (2 Thess. 1:6-9; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). "...But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of man; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:26-28). He came the first time to offer himself as an offering for sin; he will come the second time without any sin offering to make.
 - e. The restoration of all things was predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Christ's great mission, which he began personally and which is perpetuated by his faithful followers, was shown beforehand by the prophets. The second coming of Christ will mark the end of the restoration, not the beginning: he is to remain in heaven until this restoration is accomplished. "It is, in all probability, certain that the 'restoration of all things,' as taught by the prophets, is now going on under the reign of Christ, and that all shall be accomplished without the majority of mankind ever being in the slightest degree aware of it" (Coffman, p.76).
8. Verses 22-23: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."
- a. Moses predicted the coming of Christ in his prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15ff. There are many typical likenesses between Moses and Christ: Both were lawgivers and saviors; they both had a background in Egypt; both worked miracles; both were rejected; both were successful; both were transfigured; Moses lifted up the serpent, Christ was lifted up on the cross; both gave bread from heaven.

BRAZEN SERPENT Num. 21:4-9	POINT OF COMPARISON	CHRIST John 3:14-17
SNAKEBITE—21:5-6 Not Born Snake-bit	AFFLICTED	SIN—1 JOHN 5:19 Not Born Sinful: Ezek. 18:20
SERPENT—21:8 Only One Given	HEALING OFFERED	CHRIST—JOHN 3:16 One Savior: Acts 4:12
OFFERED TO ALL Num. 21:8-9	PROVIDED BY GRACE	OFFERED TO ALL Rom. 5:8; Tit. 3:5
SERPENT—Num. 21:8	LIFTED UP	CHRIST—John 12:31-32
MUST LOOK: Num. 21:8-9	CONDITIONS	MUST OBEY: Mark 16:15-16

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- b. Moses predicted that all those who would not heed Christ would be destroyed (be lost eternally: Matt. 10:28; Lk. 12:4-5).
 9. Verses 24-26: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."
 - a. Not only Moses, but all the prophets from Samuel on down in time, foretold the events of the New Testament (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 31:31-33; Dan. 2:44).
 - b. Peter has shown that Jesus is the source of the miracle they had witnessed; he now reminds his audience (in verses 25-26) of the fact that they were descendants of the prophets and heirs to the covenant God made with the fathers, specifically the great promise he made to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Gal. 3:16,19,29).
 - c. He then states that God sent his Son Jesus to them (the Jews) first. His coming to them was for the purpose of blessing them by turning them all away from their sins. Notice that the stated purpose of his coming was not (1) to set up an earthly kingdom or (2) give them material prosperity and advantage, but to save them from their sins. This is the preeminent design of the gospel (Jn. 3:16; Lk. 19:10; Mk. 16:15-16).
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ACTS 4

A. Acts 4:1-4: Peter and John Are Arrested as They Preached to the People.

1. Verse 1: "And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them."
 - a. This is one of several instances where a sermon was interrupted.
 - 1) Acts 2:37: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"
 - 2) Acts 17:32: "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter."
 - b. Peter and John were in the process of preaching the gospel to the great audience which had assembled on Solomon's Porch following the healing of the lame man. "As they spake unto the people" a band of men came to arrest them. This marked the end of the period of peace and the beginning of persecution for the church.
 - c. Priests were in the band. There were twenty-four orders of priests, each of which furnished a team to serve in the temple for a week at a time; these 24 courses probably rotated assignments regularly. The priests in the company which arrested the apostles were probably those on duty during that week.
 - d. The captain of the temple was present. This officer is also called the ruler of the house of God (1 Chron. 9:11; 2 Chron. 31:13; Neh. 11:11). "He was a priest whose duty was to command the guard of Levites stationed in the temple; he posted the sentinels at night and preserved peace during the day; his presence implied that the authorities were afraid of a disturbance from the crowd surrounding the apostles" (Boles, pp.63f). Several men served in this capacity, being on duty at different times (Luke 22:4,52).
 - e. Sadducees were the third component of the company. This sect did not believe in angels, spirits, or the resurrection of the dead; they became the chief Jewish persecutors of the church. During the Lord's personal ministry, his chief enemies were the Pharisees. When he attacked the hypocrisy and error which characterized them, they were greatly aroused against him. The Sadducees rejoiced at the discomfiture of their long-time enemies, but joined forces with them when the Lord also rebuked their errors (Cf. Matt. 22, 23; John 11:47-54).
 - 1) When the apostles began proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, the Sadducees rose up in arms, as indicated in this chapter. On occasion, the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection, sided with the church against the Sadducees (Acts 23:1-10). When a person who is not honest with himself has his sins or false beliefs exposed, he will turn against the one who has shown him the truth. One who loves the truth and is honest with himself will welcome the truth, even if it is unpleasant (Gal. 4:16; Acts 9:1ff; 23:1; 1 Tim. 1:13-15).
 - 2) "The distinction between Pharisees and Sadducees had grown out of national differences dating from the time of the captivity; they [the Sadducees] were a small but powerful party of the priestly nobles who were supported by the temple dues, and had come to regard religion as a matter of profitable living rather than a service to God. They disliked any popular movement which might disturb the steady accumulation of temple revenues; they saw in the preaching of Jesus that their source of revenue would be diminished" (Boles, p.64).
2. Verse 2: "Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead."
 - a. The Sadducees in particular were sorely grieved (indignant) because the two apostles taught the people. First, they saw teaching as their own domain into which the apostles were intruding.
 - b. Second, they did not want anyone preaching the doctrine of the resurrection, a teaching which they had rejected. The individual who becomes grieved when the gospel of Christ is preached and when the Lord's kingdom enjoys success is a miserable person indeed.
3. Verse 3: "And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now even-tide."
 - a. Coming suddenly upon the scene, they apprehended the apostles and imprisoned them overnight, expecting to hold a hearing the next day. Peter and John had entered the temple at the ninth hour (three p.m.); they had healed the lame man and had spoken for some time to the multitude.
 - b. Since evening was approaching and they did not have the time to convene the court and had not decided on the official charge to bring against the apostles, the leaders decided to take them into

- custody until the next day. Their actions ran contrary to Jewish law.
4. There were also many illegalities [according to the current Jewish civil code] in the Lord's Jewish trials (Rex Turner, "Sound Doctrine," 1978, p.18).
 - a. The arrest of Jesus was illegal—it was arranged by Judas, an accomplice of the corrupt Jewish leaders and a traitor, and not as the result of a legal mandate of the court.
 - b. The private examination of Jesus by Annas was illegal—a private preliminary examination of an accused person was not allowed lest he should become perplexed and give damaging testimony against himself.
 - c. The proceeding of the Court was illegal—it convened at night, and a specific and inflexible rule of the Hebrew law was that proceedings in capital trials could not be heard at night.
 - d. The place where the trial was held (the palace of Caiaphas) was illegal—the court was required to convene in the temple and within the Hall of Hewn Stones.
 - e. The indictments were illegal—they were several and without the certainty that the law required. The first clear indictment was the charge of sedition, and before that indictment was disposed of in proper legal order, another—the charge of blasphemy—was laid.
 - f. The indictment of blasphemy was illegal—it was made by Caiaphas, the high priest, and a member of the court. Such action by a member of the court was strictly against the law of the court. The members of the court were the defendants of the accused until the proper evidence showed him to be guilty. A court trial could formerly proceed only when there were witnesses to testify before the court against the accused.
 - g. The personal conduct of the high priest Caiaphas was illegal—he rent his clothes and such conduct was strictly against the Mosaic law, as well as the law of the Hebrew court. (Lev. 21:10; Matt. 26:65; Mark 14:63.)
 - h. The simultaneous and unanimous vote of the Sanhedrin Court was illegal—the court in simultaneous action condemned Christ to death; whereas, the law of the court required that the youngest judge—in terms of service on the bench—cast the first vote. The balloting was to continue in this manner from the youngest to the high priest in order that the junior judges might not be unduly influenced by the examples of their seniors by reason of years of experience and authority. Further, the Hebrew law provided that "a simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the first day of trial—indicative of extreme malice and prejudice—should have the effect of an acquittal."
 - i. The nature of the testimony on which the death sentence was passed was illegal—it was the uncorroborated testimony of Jesus, himself, that he was the Christ the Son of God. One provision of the "law of evidence" in the Hebrew System of Jurisprudence was that an uncorroborated confession made by the accused was not sufficient evidence for his conviction.
 - j. The convening of the Sanhedrin Court before the morning sacrifice was illegal—the Hebrew law required that in the case of conviction, the court should proceed the next day in the nature of an appeal and a rehearsing, but the Sanhedrin Court in its rush to have sufficient time to crucify Christ before the feast of the passover met before the morning sacrifice. The rehearing and rehearsing was a farce. They asked Christ: "Art thou then the Son of God?" Christ answered: "Ye say that I am"—meaning I am and ye ask because I am." They then bound Christ and brought him before Pilate (Luke 22:66-71; 23:1.)
 - k. The fact that the trial of Jesus was concluded in one day was illegal—the trial began after midnight and was concluded before the morning sacrifice. Their civil code allowed no death penalty conviction to be concluded in one day's time.
 - l. The fact that the trial was conducted on the day preceding a Jewish Sabbath was illegal—the Hebrew law prohibited court proceedings on a day preceding a Jewish Sabbath or a religious holy day.
 5. Verse 4: "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."
 - a. Despite the opposition by these officials, many in the audience believed the things Peter had presented. Notice that the text says that *many* of those who heard believed; it did not say that all believed. Enough clear information was presented to convince many of the truth; that others did not receive it is no reflection on Peter's sermon or the evidence he presented.
 - b. What is the meaning of "believed" as used in this passage? The word does not mean that salvation is by faith only, but it is used as a synecdoche for all of the conditions of salvation. "Repentance" is used
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in this manner in Acts 11:18, and "baptism" is so-used in 1 Peter 3:21.

- 1) Acts 11:18: "And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life" (ASV).
- 2) 1 Peter 3:21: "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, *even* baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; (ASV).

- c. How many were in the church at this point? The number "five thousand" is usually understood here to mean that the number of the men had now reached 5,000, including those who were baptized on Pentecost Day. The Greek word translated "was" means "became." "If those who believed on the present occasion were alone intended, the writer would have said the number *an, was*, instead of *egenatha, became*, about five thousand" (McGarvey, p.61). The number stated does not include women.

B. Acts 4:5-12: Peter and John Appear Before the Sanhedrin.

1. Verses 5-6: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem."
 - a. The next morning, the rulers, elders, and scribes, along with Annas, Caiaphas, and others, assembled. The Great Sanhedrin was comprised of the 24 chief priests; each course of priests had a chief. There were also 24 elders and 24 scribes. These 72 men were presided over by the High Priest. This was the highest court in the nation.
 - b. Josephus reports that the Romans had removed Annas from the office of High Priest and had appointed Caiaphas in his stead. John 18:13 says that Annas was father-in-law to Caiaphas. Luke 3:2 speaks of both Annas and Caiaphas as being high priests. Since the Law of Moses decreed that the high priest was appointed for life, the legal high priest according to the Law was Annas; hence, Jesus was first brought to him following his arrest. While the Jews still regarded Annas as the official High Priest, Rome recognized Caiaphas. This view reconciles the passages in question.
 - c. The identity of John and Alexander is unknown, although Annas had a son named Jonathan who at one time served as high priest. Others who were kin to the High Priest were present.
 - d. The term "Sanhedrin" does not appear in our English translations, but the word comes from the Greek term which is usually translated "council" (it means, "a settling together," Vine, p.245). Jewish tradition traces its origin to the seventy men chosen by Moses to handle disputes and problems in the nation (Num. 11:16-25).
2. Verse 7: "And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"
 - a. Peter and John had ample time to pray and commune with each other during their overnight imprisonment. They were fully ready for the great challenge of facing the great court. Many thoughts likely flooded their minds. They could recall being in the presence of the Sanhedrin when Christ was being tried. Peter could remember his denial of the Lord and the bitter tears he shed as a result. From Acts 4:14, we learn that the man they had healed was also present before the court. Ancient sources indicate that the court sat in a semi-circle so that each could see the other judges and the defendant (see Walker, p.30).
 - b. The Jewish leaders knew that they would have to take some kind of action against the apostles for they were spreading the message of Jesus with much success in the great city. Their own power and influence would suffer if steps were not taken. It is often the case, however, that persecution only results in greater success.
 - c. Notice that the court did not state a formal charge against Peter and John. They simply asked the apostles a question: "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" They were on a "fishing expedition." They were hoping that these ignorant fishermen would blurt out something upon which they could base a charge. Also, this great court had every reason to suppose that the apostles would be terrified before such an august assembly.
 - d. The vague question they raised did not even specify what action was meant by *this*. "They could not, however, have asked a question which suited Peter any better. It left him at liberty to select any thing he had done as the subject of reply, and, therefore, he chose to select that deed, which, of all that had been done, they were most unwilling to hear mentioned" (McGarvey, p.63). "The fear of the wicked,

- it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Prov. 10:24).
- e. The question admits that a miracle had taken place. It asked for the source of this power by which the man had been healed.
3. Verse 8: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel."
 - a. Peter did not have to make any advance preparation for the defense he gave. In fact, the apostles had been plainly told not to do so. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave answer to the question. Their defense was simply to preach the gospel.
 - 1) Matthew 10:16-20: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."
 - 2) Mark 13:11: "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
 - 3) Luke 12:11-12: "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."
 - 4) Luke 21:14-15: "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."
 - b. Inspired men could use their miraculous abilities when the need arose. Not everything the apostles ever spoke from Pentecost Day onward was inspired; their gifts could be employed when needed. We have electric lights in our houses, but we do not leave them burning all the time. When the need arose, as in the present case, the Holy Spirit would provide the inspired men the necessary information and power. The statement of the text shows that the Holy Spirit did not reside personally in Peter—he was filled with the Spirit when he began his speech. To be "filled with" the Holy Spirit here meant to be empowered by the Spirit to accomplish certain miraculous feats.
 - c. Peter addressed the court with proper respect. Christianity calls on its adherents to conduct themselves with courtesy. "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom. 13:7). We are to treat even our enemy with respect.
 4. Verses 9-10: "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole."
 - a. Peter observes that if he and John were being tried for doing the good deed which they had done to the impotent man, to discover the means by which he had been healed, then it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that he had been made whole. Surely the council would not object to the apostles doing a good deed. "The statement needed no proof, for the Sanhedrin could not deny, with the man standing before them, that the miracle had been wrought, nor could they, with plausibility, attribute the deed to any other power or name than that assumed by Peter. To deny that it was a divine power would have been absurd in the estimation of all the people; but to admit that the power was divine, and yet reject the explanation given by those through whom it was exercised, would have been still more absurd" (McGarvey, p.63).
 - b. With boldness, Peter affirmed that Jesus of Nazareth was the source of the miracle. This was a name they well remembered, and would rather hear it no more. Their greatest fears were being realized. Following the crucifixion, they had petitioned Pilate for a band of soldiers to guard the tomb of Jesus, "lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first" (Matt. 27:64).
 - c. Peter also plainly stated that they, the Jewish court, had crucified Jesus, but God had raised him from the dead. If they expected any fear on the part of the apostles, they were doomed to disappointment.
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The apostles were unimpressed by the power of this august body, and rather than quake before it, charged its members with having crucified the Christ. "Instead of the Sanhedrin placing Peter and John on trial, these apostles now put the Sanhedrin on trial; they are forced to defend the crime which they had committed or acknowledge their guilt" (Boles, p.67).

- d. The dramatic change which had taken place in Peter and John is additional evidence supporting the information they presented. A short time before, at the arrest and trial of Christ, Peter had fled from the mob and had vehemently denied knowing the Lord when certain ones accused him of being his disciple. Now he is living up to the new name Jesus gave him: Cephas ("a stone"—John 1:42).
5. Verse 11: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."
 - a. Peter refers back to Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22. Christ had used this same figure of himself (Matt. 21:42), and Peter used it again in I Peter 2:4-6. "In this passage, he places his proud judges in the ridiculous attitude of searching about vainly for a stone to fit the corner of the foundation, while persistently rejecting the real corner-stone, without which the building can not be reared" (McGarvey, p.63).
 - b. "The Sanhedrin as the rulers of the people had rejected Christ and refused to build upon him, but he has now become the 'chief corner stone.' Their rejection of Christ went to prove him to be the true stone of whom the prophets spoke" (Boles, p.67).
 - 1) "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:44).
 - 2) "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Luke 20:18).
 - 3) Isaiah 28:16: "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste"(ASV).
 - 4) Psalm 118:22: "The stone which the builders rejected Is become the head of the corner" (ASV).
 - 5) 1 Peter 2:4-6: "'Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame" (ASV).
6. Verse 12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - a. This great affirmation was made in strange circumstances. The statement had application even to the important men who comprised the Great Sanhedrin. The powerful political, military, and economic leaders of the world are no more important than any other person: we all need salvation and only Jesus of Nazareth can provide it!
 - b. The declaration of the verse is universal; every human soul that obtains salvation, obtains it only through Christ. Even those men and women who lived under the Mosaic and Patriarch Ages had to have him for salvation.
 - 1) Hebrews 9:15-17: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."
 - 2) Romans 3:25: "Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."
 - c. "Instead of answering the court timidly or evasively, as might have been expected by the latter, Peter had boldly avowed the sentiments which the apostles had been preaching and for which he and John had been arrested. And it seems that the effect was to silence their would-be accusers" (ALC, 1980, p.39). The apostles had courageously presented the truth on other occasions, publicly and privately, when only common people were present. They were no less courageous when presenting the same truths to the great men of the court.

C. Acts 4:13-22: The Sanhedrin Deliberates the Case and Passes its Sentence.

1. Verse 13: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."
 - a. The great court might have expected Peter and John to quail in their dignified presence, but these lowly men had shown boldness. They had now answered the court plainly and courageously, affirming that it was by the name of Jesus that the man had been healed; they even declared that those on the court had been responsible for the death of Jesus. When the Sanhedrin noted their boldness and perceived that they were "unlearned" and "ignorant" men, they realized that these men had been with Jesus.
 - b. "Unlearned" (*agrammatoi*) meant that the apostles had not been to the rabbinical schools. A similar statement was made about Jesus: "Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters (*gramma*), having never learned" (John 7:14-15). The word means "unlettered, uneducated." The pride of the court is indicated by this reference to the apostles. They could not understand how these men who had not been "properly" taught could speak as did these two. There are those in the world, in the sectarian realm, and even in our own brotherhood, today who spurn preachers who have not been trained at the elite schools. One instructor in a school of higher learning has often disdained schools of preaching, describing their products as "broom-grass," while he spoke of his school's products as "mighty oaks."
 - c. "Ignorant" (*idiotai*) is not a reference to intelligence, but corresponds to our word "laymen." It describes those who are private citizens as contrasted to those in public office. Those in positions of authority are thought of as being fully knowledgeable and trained in their work, while the rest of the citizens are thought to have no knowledge and training in those exalted fields. Thus, the apostles who were without special knowledge and training were presuming to instruct these men on the court who had their "degrees!"
 - d. The apostles had vastly superior information than did any of the mighty men of the Sanhedrin. The source of their knowledge was God, by his Son, through the Holy Spirit. The court now realized that these two men had been with Jesus. They knew that Jesus was a well-informed, courageous person; these men as his disciples would have been trained and taught by their Master.
2. Verse 14: "And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it."
 - a. There appears to have been a period of silence among the court members. They were faced with a most perplexing situation: on the one hand, they did not want these apostles preaching in the name of Jesus; but on the other hand, there stood the lame man who had obviously been miraculously healed.
 - b. They hated the message the apostles had preached, but could find nothing at all to say in rebuttal. They had put Jesus to death for preaching the same things; killing him did not stamp out his teachings. If these men had been interested in truth, and honest, they would have seen that the miracle proved the contentions affirmed by the apostles, and they would have accepted the truth.
3. Verses 15-16: "But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*."
 - a. They sent the apostles out of the council while they deliberated the case. They honestly admitted that a miracle had been done by these men; they could not deny it. But instead of asking the apostles for more information, they conferred among themselves to see what they could do to silence them.
 - b. "They privately admitted that the power of God had manifested itself through Peter and John (John 3:1,2), and they knew that it would be useless to deny it; but they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, had put him to death, had tried to prevent his resurrection (Matt. 27:62-66), and now they must either admit their error, confess their sin, and change their religious attitude, or continue their fight against the claims of Christ" (ALC, 1962, p.100). They have had nearly two thousand years to regret deciding on the latter! Proper decisions often are more difficult to make than wrong ones.
 - c. They knew they could not rationally deny the reality of the miracle; it had been done openly to a known man; that very man was standing in the very presence of the council with the apostles. If there had been some sane way to deny the miracle, we may be sure they would have used it to the fullest.
 - d. How did the historian Luke know what went on in this secret session? Some have appealed to natural means as the answer: that some of the council members later became Christians and reported the information (cf. Acts 6:7; 15:5); that Saul of Tarsus learned it and gave Luke the report. But the simple solution is the best: that Luke was guided by the Holy Spirit who knew what went on (Heb.

- 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).
4. Verses 17-18: "But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."
 - a. Their decision as to how the situation was to be handled was to threaten Peter and John, thus to intimidate them into silence regarding any more preaching in the name of Jesus. They had decided to oppose the name of Jesus, and this was the only means they could think of at the time by which to thwart the cause of Christ.
 - b. These influential men were seeking to perpetuate their positions. They well knew that if the teachings of Jesus were generally accepted by the Jewish population, their powerful, wealth-producing status would suffer. Thus, their pride and selfishness, along with their utter unconcern about any unpleasant truth, led them to their course of action. They chose a safe, easy plan, one which was opposed only by their own conscience, which they had long since overridden.
 - c. "The two words, 'speak' and 'teach,' are used to make the command more rigid; the original conveys the idea that they were not to let the name of Jesus pass their lips again. They severely threatened them and charged them that they were not to use 'the name of Jesus' at all" (Boles, p.70).
 5. Verses 19-20: "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
 - a. These verses contain Peter's renowned response to the ungodly order of the council. The words represent beautifully the wonderful growth on the part of Peter. He had been fearful when his Master was arrested in the garden; he forsook him and fled. He again showed fear when his discipleship was broached when the Lord was being tried; he denied his Lord. But he had now grown up spiritually: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).
 - b. If Peter and John could have been cowed by these important men, they would have quietly submitted to the demand. But to heed this edict would require them to disobey their Lord. Here is a case where to obey the law of the land was to sin. We are taught to obey civil authorities unless compliance to that man-made law would place us in disobedience to God's will.
 - 1) Romans 13:1-7: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."
 - 2) 1 Peter 2:11-17: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."
 - c. Peter's response was "an open defiance of their power, with a direct appeal to their own consciences for a vindication of it. The apostles were not willing that their silence should be construed into even a momentary acquiescence in such a command, and they spoke in such a manner as to be distinctly understood" (McGarvey, pp.64f).

- d. The apostles knew that they were under a higher authority than this court, hence they plainly stated that they must speak what they had seen and heard. They called on the court itself to judge whom the apostles were to obey: the law of Almighty God or the ruling of this court. The issue was succinctly stated; there could be no misunderstanding of the case. Peter's statement went to the very heart of the matter. When we boil a situation down to its real essence, we can see the picture clearly, and understand our obligation.
 6. Verse 21: "So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done."
 - a. The council further threatened Peter and John with punishment if they persisted in their preaching. Luke reports that they would have punished them immediately if they had not feared the reaction on the part of the people. All those Jews who knew what had happened to the lame man, accepted the miracle as coming from God, and held Peter and John as servants of the Almighty. To harm these two men would have meant an uprising against the Sanhedrin.
 - b. "It was a sore trial to the haughty spirits of the Sanhedrin to brook such defiance; but a desire to conciliate the people, mingled, no doubt, with a secret fear of the consequences of putting to death men who had exercised such power, restrained their wrath" (McGarvey, p.65).
 7. Verse 22: "For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed."
 - a. This adds more weight to the miracle. The man had been lame all of his life, the full forty years and more of it. If he had been but a small boy or baby, the effect of the miracle on the people would have been lessened.
 - b. But he was more than forty years of age; he had been a public, daily fixture at the Beautiful Gate of the temple for a considerable period of time, perhaps for many years; he was well known to be a cripple; and his cure was immediate, complete, and widely-known.
- D. Acts 4:23-31: Peter and John Return to the Other Saints Where Prayer is Offered.
1. Verse 23: "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them."
 - a. "The apostles had now humbled the pride of their adversaries, and went away from the assembly in triumph. But they were uninflated by their present prosperity, as they had been undaunted by their recent danger. They had now attained that lofty degree of faith and hope which enables men to maintain a steady calmness amid all the vicissitudes of life. The course they immediately pursue is worthy of remembrance, and of all imitation" (McGarvey, *ibid.*). The apostles reported to the brethren what had transpired before the council. What is meant by "their own company?" The rest of the church? The other ten apostles?
 - b. The word "company" is not in the original, despite the fact that it is not italicized. The phrase, "their own company" is from the Greek *tous idious*, which means "their own." The same root word is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:11 ("your own business," with the last word being supplied); in John 1:11 ("his own"); in John 16:32 ("his own"); John 19:27 ("his own home," the last word is supplied); and also in Luke 2:49 and Acts 21:6.
 - c. "Their own company" could refer to the rest of the church or to the rest of the apostles, with the latter being likely. Verse 32 does not necessarily mean that the whole church was present when the apostles made their report; it simply reports the result of what is described in verse 31, an effect which perhaps developed over a period of days or weeks, rather than instantly.
 2. Verse 24: "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is."
 - a. The whole company (the apostles and/or the whole church) prayed with one accord on hearing this report. Did they all simultaneously break forth in an inspired prayer, speaking the words in perfect unison? Or did one of the apostles utter the prayer, with all the rest of the group giving mental and vocal assent to what was said?
 - b. The prayer obviously was inspired since an interpretation is given of a prophetic statement (Ps. 2), something an uninspired man could not have known (cf. John 14:26; 16:13). All of the apostles were inspired men.
 - c. It is not likely that the whole church would have raised their combined voices in wording this prayer simultaneously and in perfect unison; this would require inspiration on the part of every member. The prayer was offered "with one accord," indicating that it was not a disjointed, confused prayer coming
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- from many different lips; under apostolic leadership, everything was done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:33). It is not likely that this was a "responsive reading" type of prayer in which the leader uttered it line-by-line, with the audience repeating each line; this would have reduced the prayer to a mere ritual.
- d. From these considerations, we conclude that the prayer was offered by Peter or one of the other apostles, and the rest of the group made that prayer their own by saying "amen" (cf. I Cor. 14:14-16). Perfect unity is evidenced when this pattern is followed. How great is the appeal of such a prayer to God, when his saints unite their hearts in approaching his throne!
 - e. Other usages of "one accord" are found elsewhere in Acts [1:14; 2:46; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29] and in Romans 15:6 ("with one mind").
 - f. The prayer began by addressing God reverently. Tribute to the majesty and power of God is made in the reference they made to his creative activities. God is the Maker of the heavens, the earth, the seas, and all creatures found therein.
3. Verses 25-26: "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ."
- a. The quotation is from Psalm 2:1-2. David the prophet had raised the question: Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The question applied to what the Gentiles and Jews would do against God and Christ in putting the Anointed One to death. David's question was in the present tense ("Why do..."); the quoted version was put in the past tense ("Why did..."), showing that the action indicated had now occurred. In opposing God's Anointed One ("Christ" or "Messiah"), the heathen, in the persons of Pilate and his Roman soldiers, and the people, in the persons of the Jewish leaders, had raged and imagined vain things.
 - b. The Greek word for "rage" (*phruasso*) was "primarily used of the snorting, neighing and prancing of horses; hence, metaphorically, of the haughtiness and insolence of men" (Vine, Vol. 3, p.244). "Imagine" is from a Greek word meaning "to practice, to caution, as orators and rhetoricians" (Boles, p.73). The civil and religious leaders acted together in opposing and killing Christ.
4. Verses 27-28: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."
- a. The enemies of Christ are more specifically identified in this passage. The heathen included Herod, Pilate, and their subordinates; the "people" of verse 25 were the people of Israel. These had been arrayed together in opposition to the "holy child Jesus."
 - b. Their antagonism toward the Lord was according to God's prearranged plan. God can ordain for certain things to be accomplished by men and still allow those men involved to be entirely responsible for their own actions. He knows what kind of characters are necessary for the required acts; he knows how these individuals will react to a given situation; he guides the affairs of the world by his providence to bring the right characters into the right positions at the right time. Therefore, when the time was ripe for Jesus to be crucified, God had allowed the right evil men to obtain their positions in Israel (Jew and Gentile), and guide and shape the events so that when Jesus finished his public ministry, they were set to arrest him and put him to death.
 - c. The specific details of all this planning and arranging are beyond our finite comprehension, but this is the only way it could be done and still give man his full freedom of choice and responsibility, and at the same time, assure that God's holiness and impartiality remained inviolate. Only the Supreme God could accomplish such wondrous things! "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11; cf. Acts 10:34-35). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33; cf. Isa. 55:8-9).
 - d. "The actors in this dreadful tragedy had no design to fulfill prophecy; they only acted of their own free will, and were guilty of the greatest crime known to man, yet they were doing that which fulfilled the predictions concerning them. The death of Jesus was a fulfillment of prophecy and was necessary to his resurrection" (Boles, pp.73f).
5. Verses 29-30: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus."
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- a. Directing the prayer to present needs, the apostles prayed that God would consider the threatenings of the enemies against their efforts. They did not ask him to destroy the enemies, or even to deliver them from the persecutions the Sanhedrin had promised.
 - b. In 1863, in the midst of the War Between the States, McGarvey wrote: "In these days of passion and war, in which it is common for prayers to be filled with terrible entreaties for victory over our enemies, and sometimes with terrible maledictions against those who are waging war against our supposed rights, it is quite refreshing to observe the tone of this apostolic prayer. These men were not in danger of losing some mere political power or privilege, but the dearest and most indisputable right they had on earth was denied them, and they were threatened with death if they did not relinquish it: yet, in their prayers, they manifest no vindictive nor resentful spirit; but, in reference to their enemies, they simply pray, Lord, behold their threatenings" (pp.65f).
 - c. They prayed that God would continue to assist their efforts by giving them the courage they needed to carry on the great work of preaching the gospel, and by performing signs and wonders by the name of Christ to confirm their words. Peter and John had courageously declared to the Sanhedrin that the miracle of healing the lame man had been accomplished by the power of the name of Christ. They intended from the very first to ignore the warnings of the council against their preaching any more in his name, but they needed more boldness to continue preaching.
 - d. In our dangerous and discouraging time, we need to pray for greater boldness to proclaim the truth to all men, regarding the threats of those who hate the truth as meaning little.
6. Verse 31: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."
- a. God demonstrated to these faithful servants in a very direct and impressive way that they had his full support. The place where they were assembled miraculously shook, evidencing the fact that God would continue to honor his promises to provide the apostles with supernatural powers.
 - 1) Mark 13:11: "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) John 14:26-27: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."
 - 3) John 15:26-27: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."
 - 4) John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."
 - b. All who were gathered in that place were filled with the Holy Spirit; that is, they received a continuation of what had been first given to them on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:1-4,33). This part of the verse does not say that every Christian received the power to perform miracles; it simply states that all who were present in this gathering received such. It is debatable whether any were in attendance besides the apostles, or that any but the apostles were here filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Those who were filled with the Spirit spoke the word with boldness. This speaking of "the word of God with boldness" was not immediately accomplished; what is here reported is a summary of this bold speaking being done—over a period of time. Verse 33 specifically affirms that it was the apostles who bore witness of the resurrection of Christ; this was part of their speaking the word of God with boldness. It was the duty and privilege of only the apostles to bear this witness (John 15:26f; Acts 1:8; 10:37-42).
 - d. These facts appear to show that only the apostles were filled with the Spirit. But whether others (or even the whole congregation) received this miraculous gift is of no great moment. Not every Christian in the first century received this ability; it was not intended for every saint during the time of miracles; it is not intended for anyone today since miraculous gifts ceased to be given according to God's plan and declarations.
 - 1) Micah 7:15: "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him

marvellous things." Israel journeyed in the wilderness for forty years; the miracles of the New Testament era would occupy the same period of about forty years. From the day of Pentecost till the time supernatural power was no longer given to men occupied about forty years.

- 2) 1 Corinthians 13:8-13: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
- 3) Ephesians 4:8-14: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

7. In this section, lessons on reverence for God, his providential workings, the need for boldness in preaching, the absence of a vindictive motive on the part of the saints, and the awesome, confirming power of God's miraculous might, are taught.

E. Acts 4:32-37: The Unity and Generosity of the Early Church are Demonstrated.

1. Verse 32: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."
 - a. Their unity is described and their generosity is declared. They were of one heart and one soul. It is sometimes difficult to see the distinction between the soul and the heart. The heart, in Bible phraseology, includes the emotions, the intellect, the will power and the conscience. The soul often is used to identify the life of the individual. Heart and soul can be used interchangeably, just as soul and spirit are sometimes used to identify the eternal part of man. But "soul" is sometimes used in the Bible as a simple reference to the life principle, possessed by both man and beast.
 - b. The brethren were perfectly united. Many today think that unity is impossible and undesired; they foster a "unity in diversity," which is a simple agreement to overlook all differences and accept everyone and everything into fellowship. In the ultimate appraisal of the practice, there is no standard of truth except as subjectively divined. But God's word is the absolute standard of truth (John 8:32; 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - c. Perfect unity is not only possible, it is positively required (Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 3:16; 2 Thess. 3:6). The unity the church had is remarkable, considering the diverse national backgrounds of the Jews involved.
 - d. Their loving concern for each other is declared in their willingness to share what they possessed. Verse 35 shows that distribution of money and necessities was made according to the individual needs. Those who had no need, received nothing; rather many of them helped to provide for those in need.
2. Verse 33: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."
 - a. The apostles continued their great work of bearing witness of the reality of the Lord's resurrection; this they did with great power. Their testimony consisted not of mere assertion, for in that case, there would have been no convincing power. Their testimony was accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders which proved beyond question that their witness was true (Jn. 15:26-27; Acts 1:8; 10:37-43; Mk. 16:15-20; Heb. 2:1-4).
 - b. Paul later declared:
 - 1) "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thess.

- 1:5).
- 2) "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:18-19).
 - c. "Great grace" shows that the entire church was held in good favor by outsiders, by the Lord, and by all the members (cf. Acts 2:47; 3:1-11; 5:11-16).
 3. Verse 34: "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold."
 - a. The brethren were tending to a local emergency. As noted in chapter two, many devout Jews had journeyed to Jerusalem to partake of the feast of Pentecost. Many of these obeyed the gospel, and remained in the city to learn this new religion. Soon, their money ran low, and thus the present need arose, which was lovingly resolved by the affluent members.
 - b. "Among the heathen nations of antiquity, systematic provision for the wants of the poor was unknown; and even among the Jews, whose law was watchful for the welfare of the poor in many respects, those who became insolvent were sold into temporary bondage to pay their debts. It was, therefore, a new thing under the sun, to see a large community selling houses and lands to supply the wants of the poor" (McGarvey, pp.66f).
 4. Verse 35: "And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."
 - a. The proceeds from the sale of property were given to the apostles, who meted it out to poor members, according to their need.
 - b. This was not communism, for in that system, theoretically, everyone is placed on the same economic level.
 5. Verses 36-37: "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet."
 - a. A case in point is next given. Joses (Joseph), who was called Barnabas by the apostles, sold a piece of land and gave the money to the apostles for the poor. This was a great man; he is among the few in the Bible who are called "good" (Acts 11:24).
 - b. He was of the tribe of Levi, which was given no land in Canaan. Since he was from Cyprus, it may be that the land he sold was located there. Cyprus is an important island at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.
 - c. "Barnabas" means "son of consolation" ("exhortation"), no doubt due to a special talent to exhort (cf. Acts 11:23; 14:14; 1 Cor. 14:3).
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ACTS 5

A. Acts 5:1-11: The Sin and Punishment of Ananias and Sapphira.

1. Verses 1-2: "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it*, at the apostles' feet."
 - a. The word "but" contrasts what is about to be related with the case of Barnabas and others of the preceding verses. While Barnabas gave gladly, out of a sincere desire to help those in need, the two people of this passage obviously desired the approbation a sizeable gift would bring to them, but with the selfish advantage of retaining part of the proceeds acquired from the sale of the property. We are not told here what kind of possession they sold, but later verses say it was a piece of land.
 - b. The name "Ananias" was a common Jewish name, and meant "the grace of the Lord" or "God is gracious." Sapphira means "sapphire," a beautiful precious stone. In Aramaic it means "Beautiful." They each wore a pleasant and beautiful name, but their actions and fate were ugly.
 - c. The saints would naturally heap congratulatory praise upon Barnabas on account of his benevolent gift, and just as naturally a desire would be kindled in an envious heart to receive similar accolades. That this was the inherent motive of these two is apparent from the details of the story that unfolds.
 - d. There was nothing unholy about their selling the land or in giving part of the proceeds for the relief of the needy. The primary flaw in their actions was in saying they had given the entire amount received but actually having kept back part of it. They lied, and likely were covetous and envious.
 - e. This is the first recorded sin by members of the church. "The first sin committed after man began to worship at the altar was Cain's sin, and it had to do with an offering. (Gen. 4:1-15.) The first sin recorded under the law of Moses in connection with the worship also had to do with an offering—the sin of Nadab and Abihu. (Lev. 10:1-7.) And the first sin recorded against the people of Israel in Canaan was likewise in connection with an offering—the sin of Achan. (Josh. 6,7.) These should be impressive lessons to us" (ALC, 1962, p.105). Ananias and Sapphira are a classic case of Christians trying to serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). They failed as does everyone who tries to do so.
2. Verses 3-4: "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."
 - a. Peter confronted Ananias with his sin, asking the rhetorical question as to why Satan had filled his heart to cause him to lie to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. "Here Peter brings together the influence of Satan, and the free agency of the tempted, just as he had, in former discourses, the free agency of men, and the purposes of God. He demands of Ananias, 'Why has Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit,' and, in the same breath, 'Why hast thou put this thing in thy heart?' The existence and agency of the tempter are distinctly recognized, yet it is not Satan, but Ananias who is rebuked; and he is rebuked for doing the very thing that Satan had done, showing that he is as guilty as though Satan had no existence. Indeed, he is rebuked for what Satan had done. The justice of this is manifest from the fact that Satan had no power to fill his heart with evil, without his co-operation. That he had rendered this co-operation, threw the responsibility upon himself" (McGarvey, p.68).
 - c. Peter states that while the land was in his possession, Ananias could do with it as he pleased, and after it was sold, he could have done with the money as he willed. This shows that the selling of the property was not something demanded by the Lord; and after property was sold, the proceeds still belonged to the individual. The statement also shows that Ananias could have safely kept part of the money with complete impunity. The error was in claiming that what they gave was the entire amount.
 - d. Peter shows the deity of the Holy Spirit by the two references in these two verses. He identifies him as the Holy Ghost (Spirit) in the first instance and as God in the second. Three statements are made in the context (verses 3, 4, and 9) about the Holy Spirit; these are to be regarded as synonymous: The Holy Ghost; God; the Spirit of the Lord.
 - 1) He is not a material being, but spiritual (John 4:24; Acts 17:29; Luke 24:39).
 - 2) He is eternal (Heb. 9:14).
 - 3) He is omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11).
 - 4) He is omnipotent (Micah 3:8).

- 5) He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10).
 - 6) He can be blasphemed (Matt. 12:31-32).
 - 7) He was active in the creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4).
 - 8) He is active in the regeneration (the new birth; John 3:5).
 - 9) He was the source of miracles (Rom. 8:11; Matt. 12:28; I Cor. 12:9,11).
- e. If the effort of these two had been successful, the authority of the apostles would have been brought into question. If Peter had not known the real situation, and if it had later become public knowledge, the apostles would have been thought to be lacking in the supernatural power and knowledge. Therefore, the full truth must be made known right away and the guilt of Ananias and Sapphira established and punished. If an uninspired writer was reporting the history of the early church, he would have doubtless omitted this negative episode.
 - f. By lying to the apostles, they were also lying to Deity for the apostles were empowered by the Spirit. Knowing the supernatural powers possessed by the twelve should have precluded their evil scheme. Men today try to do the same kind of thing, vainly thinking that because God is not visible, he does not know.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 8:11-12: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."
 - 2) Hebrews 4:13: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
3. Verses 5-6: "And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*."
 - a. Luke's report does not include any statement offered by Ananias. We are not given any explicit information regarding the cause of his sudden demise. We are not told whether Peter knew beforehand what was to transpire when the guilt of Ananias was exposed. His sudden death may have come in much the same manner in which the place where the apostles were assembled was unexpectedly shaken earlier (Acts 4:31). Or it could have been that Peter knew what was to take place.
 - b. There is nothing presented to show that Peter was the source of his death. Some scholars have speculated that the man expired immediately from shock on hearing Peter state the charges against him. But this seems farfetched and unnecessary; he could have had the same shock when he was called before the apostles. It is far more likely that God was the source of his death, and that his death was intended from the start as an object lesson on the great dangers of sin.
 - c. "The propriety of the deed may be appreciated best by supposing that Ananias had succeeded in his undertaking. His success would not only have turned the most praiseworthy feature of the new Church into a source of corruption and hypocrisy, but it would have brought discredit upon the inspiration of the apostles, by showing that the Spirit within them could be deceived. Thus the whole fabric of apostolic authority, which was based upon their inspiration, would have fallen, and precipitated the entire cause into hopeless ruin. The attempt, therefore, presented a crisis of vital importance, and demanded some such vindication of their inspiration as could neither be mistaken nor forgotten" (McGarvey, pp.68f).
 - d. Satan was the instigator of this evil attempt. If it had been successful, he would have struck a mighty blow against incipient Christianity. He tried some brilliant means of destroying God's plan in Old Testament days by seeking the utter destruction of the Jewish race (cf. Book of Esther). God would not allow the devil to be successful in the present instance any more than in the former cases. This simple "little" lie could have had some very far-reaching effects.
 - e. This summary execution of Ananias had its intended effect: it punished an evildoer and brought great fear upon all who knew of it. "The scene was too awful for lamentation, or for needless funeral services. As when Nadab and Abihu fell dead at the door of the tabernacle with strange fire in their censers (Lev. 10:1-7), there was no weeping nor delay. All were stricken with horror, as they saw the curse of God fall upon the wretch" (ibid., p.69).
 - f. Sophisticated folks of our era dislike the events portrayed here. They think of God only in terms of his love and mercy. But God is both good and severe (Rom. 11:22). Jesus is both the lamb of God
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- (John 1:29) and the lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5). "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27; cf. Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Mark 9:42-50). Some "scholars" assert that the nature of the demise of Ananias and his wife does not suggest that they died lost! It would be strange indeed for the Lord to have executed them summarily and forgiven them at the same time. The wrong lesson would have been taught if this was so; it would have taught us that we could do as we please and still be ushered gloriously into heaven. They received the just reward of their sins (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:7-8).
- g. The young men present bound the body in the custom of Jewish burials and took it out for interment. It was then customary to bury the dead on the day of death.
4. Verse 7: "And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in."
 - a. It seems strange to us that no effort was made to report to Sapphira the death of her husband. It is likely that she was kept in ignorance of the demise of Ananias by design.
 - b. "This was a most unnatural determination, and one difficult of execution, except on the further supposition that Peter commanded the multitude to restrain their natural impulses, and let her know nothing until he himself was ready to reveal it to her. This course was necessary in order to effectually expose her" (McGarvey, p.69). Sapphira arrived at the place where the apostles were about three hours after Ananias had died.
 5. Verses 8-9: "And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out."
 - a. Peter simply asked whether they had sold the land for the price he cited, to which she replied in the affirmative. She had the opportunity to tell the truth, but failed the test. She convicted herself by her statement. Peter raised another question: "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" He knew the full truth, and sought to show her that he knew by the question. Her guilt was apparent to all.
 - b. Their foolish ploy had as its effect a testing of the Holy Spirit. They may not have intended this, but their lie constituted a test of the Spirit. "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7). The results could have been disastrous to the church if they had been successful. But the power of the Holy Spirit in the apostles unmasked the evil plan, and the infant religion was spared potential grief.
 - c. At least by this time, Peter knew what the end of this woman would be. He declared that the young men who had buried her husband were even now at the door, and were ready to bury her also. She fell down dead, the young men entered, and carried her body out to be buried beside her husband.
 - d. "There were others who fell martyrs to the cause of truth...but Ananias and Sapphira died victims of their own base passions, and are enrolled forever with Judas and others who yielded to temptation" (ALC, 1962, p.107).
 6. Verse 11: "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things."
 - a. The tragic case of these two fallen saints stands as a stark warning to all others of the horrible fate awaiting the disobedient. God's word is not to be shunned or trifled with; God means what he says! The result of the developments recorded was that great fear came upon all the church and on as many as learned of these things. It set the stage for even greater success on the part of the gospel. If discipline is administered properly, it is not a deterrent to the progress of truth, but an asset.
 - b. "The fact that sinners are not summarily and publicly punished by the Lord as were Ananias and Sapphira, does not mean they will not suffer retribution in the world to come, but that God is giving them opportunity for repentance. God has made examples of a few that the rest may fear, and thus to check or prevent more widespread evil. But all have to repent or perish. (Luke 13:3, 5; 2 Pet. 3:9.)" (ALC, 1980, p.51).
 - c. "The sin of Ananias and Sapphira involved money—particularly the giving of it. They sought to leave the impression of giving more generously than they were, of giving all they had sold their land for when they had not so done....Their giving was not motivated by love, but vanity...(I Cor. 13:3)....Motive is exceedingly important. Without proper motivation, religion is a mockery and a sham" (ibid.).
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B. Acts 5:12-16: Extensive Miracles Done by the Apostles.

1. Verses 12-13: "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them."
 - a. The apostles gathered on Solomon's porch in the temple. Many miraculous works (signs and wonders) were done by them. The pronoun "they" of the latter part of verse twelve has as its antecedent the noun "apostles" in the earlier part of the same verse. The "rest" of verse thirteen is thus seen to be the remainder of the members of the church.
 - b. The apostles were held in such esteem that the other saints would not "join" themselves to them. This respect was due to the death of the two discussed above and the miracles they were currently performing. Contrary to the statement by brother Coffman (p.108), the Bible does not speak of "joining the church."
2. Verse 14: "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."
 - a. The outcome of the work being done by the apostles was that many were added to the church. The verse does not say that belief only caused them to be added; it simply announces that there were many additions to the Lord, and that those who were added were believers (not unbelievers). Since the church and the body of Christ are identical (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18,24), to be added to the Lord is equivalent to being added to the church.
 - b. Acts 2:37-41 shows that only those who were baptized were added; that only the saved were added; and that therefore only those who were baptized were saved. To be added by the Lord to the church is the same as to be translated by the Lord into his kingdom (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13-14). This takes place as we obey the gospel plan of salvation. It is when we are baptized that we enter Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27); it is when we enter the kingdom that we obtain redemption through the blood of Christ and receive forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14); all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3); thus it is when we are baptized that we are saved (forgiven, redeemed).
 - c. More and more were added to the Lord; they are counted as multitudes by Luke; the new converts included both men and women. Notice that nothing is said about any infants being among that great throng.
 - d. As the punishment of Achan's sin was followed by great success for Israel (Josh. 7, 8), so great success followed the punishment meted out in this chapter.
3. Verses 15-16: "Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."
 - a. These remarks are given as illustrations of the statement made in the first part of verse twelve. The overall report is interrupted by the parenthetical statement of verses 12b-14.
 - b. So greatly esteemed was the power in the apostles that many thought that their sick folks would be healed if even the shadow of Peter, as he passed them on the street, touched them. Luke does not state that they were correct in this idea. It seems the number of those seeking the healing powers far surpassed the capacity of the usual assembling places of the apostles, so that they sought contact even on the public streets.
 - c. Not only were many afflicted persons of Jerusalem brought to the apostles, but from the surrounding cities many were brought who were ill or vexed with demons. Notice the report of the inspired historian: "They were healed every one." "There were no failures among the cures wrought by the Twelve, thus making it clear that the phenomenon in view here was in no manner akin to the faith healing crusades of our own day, in which failure is their principle feature and the 'cure' is always questionable" (Coffman, p.109).

C. Acts 5:17-24: The Sadducees Renew their Attacks against the Apostles.

1. Verse 17: "Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation."
 - a. The high priest is unnamed by Luke. From earlier accounts, Annas was regarded by the people as the proper holder of this office, but he had been replaced by Roman authorities by Caiaphas. Which one of these it was who led the renewed persecution is insignificant; what is meaningful is that the Sadducees, led by the high priest, were filled with indignation against the apostles for refusing to heed
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- the decree of the high court to cease preaching in the name of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:18,21). They continued their bold preaching without regard to the threats of the opposition.
- b. "The excitement which now prevailed throughout Jerusalem and the neighboring villages, and found utterance in the most enthusiastic praise of the apostles, was too much for the equanimity of the dignitaries who had so strictly forbidden them to preach or teach in the name of Jesus....The zeal of these Sadducees was fanned to its fiercest heat by recent events, and they determined to execute the threats with which they had recently dismissed two of the apostles, making all the twelve their present victims" (McGarvey, p.71).
2. Verse 18: "And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison."
 - a. The apostles were arrested and placed in the common prison. This verse does not give the identity or the number of the apostles who were apprehended, but from verse 29 we learn that Peter, the spokesman, was accompanied by the other apostles. It is likely that all twelve of the apostles had been imprisoned and were now to be brought before the council.
 - b. Some writers think that only Peter and John were arrested in this present verse, and that the other ten joined them after the release of Peter and John. Since more than Peter and John were brought before the court (5:25-29), it is more likely that all were included in this imprisonment.
 - c. The common prison was the public prison, evidently the place of incarceration of ordinary prisoners, and not the high security part of the prison (cf. Acts 12:4; 16:24). Apparently the apostles could here mingle with other prisoners, while in Acts 12, Peter was bound to his keepers (vs. 6). These fellow-prisoners would include some of the dregs of society.
 3. Verses 19-20: "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."
 - a. The angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and freed the apostles! This was sometime during the night. They were instructed to return to the temple and continue their interrupted work of preaching. The reason for their release was not for their own personal comfort and safety, but for the express purpose that the preaching of the gospel might be resumed. The Lord was being true to his promise, "I am with you always...." (Matt. 28:20).
 - b. They were told to speak in the temple to all the people, "all the words of this life." Nothing was to be omitted; they were boldly to place themselves where they could be heard by the most people.
 - c. If anyone doubts the great importance of the full preaching of the pure gospel, let him explain why the angel commanded these apostles to do that very thing, even though that would place them in severe danger.
 - d. The importance of the gospel is seen by its being described as "the words of this life" (cf. John 6:63,68-69; Acts 4:11-12; Rom. 1:16-17; Jas. 1:18,21). It is through the message of the gospel, which is believed and obeyed sincerely, that we become alive spiritually after being spiritually dead through sin (Eph. 2:1ff), and which, when faithfully followed, leads to eternal life (Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).
 4. Verse 21: "And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought."
 - a. Early the next morning, the same apostles who were released from prison by the angel, and in obedience to the command of this heavenly messenger, now stood in the temple, preaching the gospel. The pronouns (*them* and *they* of verses 19-21) help us to identify those originally arrested as including more than only Peter and John; the same ones released from prison were preaching in the temple early the next morning, were arrested again and brought directly before the council, where a plurality of apostles were with Peter (verse 29).
 - b. While the apostles were presenting the "words of this life," the high priest convened the council and all the senate of the children of Israel, and called for the apostles to be brought before the court.
 - c. "Senate" is from the Greek *gerousia*, which denotes a "council of elders" (Vine, Vol. 3, p.342). Our English word "geriatrics" derives from the Greek term. Some scholars think "senate" is used as a synonym for the Sanhedrin to give Theophilus a better grasp of the Jewish judicial system. Others think that the reference to the senate is to a group of elderly men who were esteemed highly. Might it simply be a reference to the group usually called "elders" (*presbuteros*)? This question is of no great practical import to the modern reader. The term refers to the Sanhedrin, which presumably was
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comprised largely of older men. The apostles were brought before the same court as on the previous occasion in chapter 4 (see 5:25-28).

5. Verses 22-23: "But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within."
 - a. The officers were dispatched to the prison to bring the apostles. Picture the shock when they saw that the doors were still locked, the guards still in their places, but the prisoners gone! "This appalling circumstance would have been sufficient, with less determined men, to stay all hostile proceedings, and even to disperse the court who had assembled for the trial of the apostles" (McGarvey, p.71).
 - b. "These 'officers' were not Roman soldiers, but Jewish civil officers or servants of the Sanhedrin. There were no marks of prison doors being broken nor the walls battered; everything was in good order, but the prisoners were absent. It seems that the angel had miraculously opened the prison doors and brought the prisoners out without the guards or keepers knowing anything about it" (Boles, p.86).
6. Verse 24: "Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow."
 - a. The high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests were much upset, wondering what the effect this news would have on the people. This could only bring a greater degree of success to the work of the apostles, and more defeat to the declining interests of the Sadducees.
 - b. "In this narrative of the apostles' escape from prison, just related, some critics have found what they believe to be a somewhat stereotyped 'form' of such escape episodes in ancient classical literature, claiming from this, of course, that the episode before us is questionable....As Bruce warned: 'In this as in all form-critical studies it must be remembered that the material is more important than the form; meat pies and mud pies may be made in pie-dishes of identical shape, but the identity of shape is the least important consideration in comparing the two kinds of pies!'" (Coffman, p.113).
 - c. The officials were concerned over the potential for a major tumult in behalf of the apostles. That a great stir would occur they could not doubt, but to what extent it would develop was yet to be seen. They were extremely worried about what would take place. These harried officials give the impression of people scurrying about trying to plug a thousand holes which keep springing up in a dike! It was hopeless!

D. Acts 5:25-32: The Apostles Brought Before the Council.

1. Verses 25-26: "Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned."
 - a. Following the astonishing discovery of the absence of the apostles from the prison, someone reported that the men being sought were in the temple, teaching the people. The apostles were obedient to the instructions of the angel who had released them, and to the Lord who selected them for their great work.
 - b. The captain of the temple (see notes on 4:1) and other men were sent to bring the apostles before the council. This they did without violence because they feared what the multitude of people might do to protect the twelve. Recall the great respect which the apostles were accorded (Acts 5:1-16). The supernatural powers exercised by them were well-known, and it is likely that knowledge of their miraculous deliverance from prison was also advertised by now.
2. Verses 27-28: "And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."
 - a. Standing before the council, the apostles were addressed by the high priest, who reminded them of the stern warning issued by the Sanhedrin (4:17-21). The apostles had politely and plainly told the court why they could not abide by the prohibitions placed on them. The high priest saw their continued preaching as defying the authority of the high court. He charged the apostles with having filled Jerusalem with their doctrine; this was intended as a serious accusation, but it was a great compliment!
 - 1) Mark 16:15: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."
 - 2) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part

- of the earth."
- b. He further charged them with attempting to bring the blood of this man (Jesus) upon the high court. Was not this the very thing the rulers had said they were willing to accept? (Matt. 27:25). Notice that the high priest was unwilling even to speak the name of Jesus. "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25).
 3. Verse 29: "Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."
 - a. Peter and the other apostles (notice the plural) began their response. Their opening remark was a reference to the fundamental truth that God is to be obeyed when there is a difference between what he requires and what men demand. God's will must always be placed above man's wishes (Matt. 6:33; Eccl. 12:13-14; Matt. 7:21-27).
 - b. The point of the comment was to show that, while they had acted contrary to the dictates of the Sanhedrin, they had done so only because they were following orders from a much higher source—from God himself! (Heb. 1:1-4; 2:1-4; Acts 4:11-12; Phil. 2:1-11).
 4. Verses 30-31: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."
 - a. The apostles affirm that God had raised up Jesus, whom this very court had but a short time before caused to be slain on a tree. The original word for "tree" (*xulon*) means "wood, timber," not a living tree (Vine, p.153). Acts 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24. They well remembered their scheming against Jesus, and their condemning him to death—a consequence requiring much collusion and effort on their part. But their sinful plots had ultimately failed for God had raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him with his right hand to be Prince and Savior.
 - b. A Prince is one with authority; in this case, authority derived directly from God the Father (Matt. 28:18). A Savior is one having the means to give salvation to those who meet his conditions (Heb. 5:8-9; 2:9; Matt. 1:21).
 - c. The apostles also state that Jesus has the ability to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. Repentance is something that God requires of man (Acts 17:30); it is not something that God gives directly.
 - 1) Calvinists argue that man cannot do anything toward salvation, asserting that as a dead man can do nothing, so a man dead in sin can do nothing. To try to further this error, they claim that Esau was pleading with much tears that God would allow him to repent (Heb. 12:16-17). But an examination of the passage, in the light of the Genesis account (Gen. 27), shows that Esau was pleading with Isaac to change his mind (repent) with regard to which son (Jacob or Esau) should receive the great blessing of the birthright. Esau's *salvation* was not the subject of the passage (Heb. 12).
 - 2) There is a sense in which God grants repentance (Acts 11:18). "But to grant repentance can not mean to bestow it upon men without an exercise of their own will; for repentance is enjoined upon men as a duty to be performed by them. How, then, can that which is a duty to be performed, be said to be granted to us? We will readily perceive the answer to this question, by remembering that repentance is produced by sorrow for sin, and that it belongs to God to furnish men with the facts which will awaken this sorrow. Without revelation, men would never be made to feel that sorrow for sin which works repentance; but in the revelation of Jesus Christ we are furnished with the chief of these motives, and because of this, he is said to grant repentance." (McGarvey, p.72).
 - 3) God provides the basis and opportunity for repentance. The basis for repentance is furnished through the message of the gospel; the opportunity for repentance is offered by his command that the gospel be preached to all men and by his providential workings in connection with the preaching of the gospel.
 5. Verse 32: "And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."
 - a. This passage is made to teach a position that was not intended by the apostles' statement here. Many think that this verse is saying that the Holy Spirit, as a personal gift, indwells every person who becomes obedient to the gospel. The verse is alleged to be a fulfillment of the statement of the latter part of Acts 2:38 and is intended for every Christian. The detailed information provided in connection with Acts 2:38 in these notes shows that another conclusion is more accurate.
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- b. The apostles affirm in the verse that they were witnesses of the crucifixion of the Lord, of his resurrection from the dead, and of his being exalted by God's power. The gospel accounts show that they were present when Christ was arrested; two of them even saw the trial; they all could behold his crucifixion; they all had seen the resurrected Lord; and they had beheld as he ascended from earth back to heaven. They had been personally selected by Christ to be witnesses of his resurrection (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8; 10:37-43). The means by which they gave their testimony was through the use of the supernatural powers furnished them by the Holy Spirit.
- c. The apostles affirm that the Holy Spirit is also witness to the things alluded to in their former statement (5:30-31). The significance of this statement is to show that if the apostles were guilty of giving false testimony, then the Holy Spirit could likewise be charged with giving false testimony. If the apostles were wrong, the Spirit was wrong—an unthinkable postulate! The Holy Spirit bore his witness by the supernatural powers and inspired messages he wrought through the apostles.
- d. The apostles affirm that God hath given the Holy Spirit to them that obey him. To whom had the Holy Spirit been given? To the obedient. According to the context, for what purpose had the Holy Spirit been given to the obedient? For the purpose of bearing witness of the Lord's resurrection. Does the statement of fact given in the verse apply to anyone living today? No, since we are not given the duty or means of being witnesses. Is the gift of the Holy Spirit in the verse miraculous or non-miraculous? The context demands that it be a miraculous gift to the apostles, enabling them to fulfill the obligations inherent in John 15:26-27, Acts 1:8, and Acts 10:37-43.
- 1) John 15:26-27: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."
 - 2) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 3) Acts 10:37-43: "That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."
- e. In the context of the verse, the apostles had been preaching the gospel of Christ; this angered the Sadducees and the council; they arrested the apostles and warned them not to preach it any more; the apostles continued to preach the gospel and were arrested again; they are asked why they disobeyed the court's ruling; Acts 5:29-32 records the apostles' answer. If the gift of the Holy Spirit in this verse is a non-miraculous, "ordinary," personal indwelling, how would that be a pertinent answer to the high priest's question? In no way. If the gift was a miraculous endowment exercised by the apostles, what significance would it have? Much, for it would support the apostles' contentions that they were speaking the truth about Christ and supply the only logical explanation for the miracle of Acts 3 which engendered the confrontation between themselves and the Sadducees related in Acts three through five.
- E. Acts 5:33-42: Gamaliel's Counsel to the Sanhedrin and the End of the Trial.
1. Verse 33: "When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them."
 - a. When the gospel is faithfully and fully proclaimed, an effect is produced on the audience. In fact, an alien sinner is never the same in the future after he has heard the gospel message. He will either become a Christian, or will overtly reject the gospel, or he will try to shrug off the importance of it. In this present case, the Sanhedrin court was cut to the heart and wanted to put the messengers to death. More was involved in what the apostles said to the court than a defense of their actions; they were providing the august members of that assembly an opportunity to learn first hand the significance of the gospel of Christ. These men did not seriously consider the facts in the case, having already chosen their course.
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- b. The people of Acts 2:37 were affected emotionally by the message presented there; these men on this occasion were also affected emotionally, but the effect was of a different nature. The former felt the guilt of their sins and sought relief from that pain; the latter felt pain on hearing the message and sought to eliminate those who caused their pain.
 - c. The gospel is able to save those who obey it and to destroy those who reject it (2 Cor. 2:15-16). The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay; it is the set of the sail, and not the wind, that determines the direction the ship takes. It is the condition of the human heart that decides whether to accept or reject the gospel. It is the individual who develops and conditions his own heart, and he alone is ultimately at fault for having a hard heart that repels the saving gospel.
 - 1) Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination."
 - 2) Isaiah 66:2: "For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."
 - 3) Ezekiel 18:20-21: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die."
 - 4) Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light."
 - 5) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
 - 6) Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
 2. Verse 34: "Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space."
 - a. A certain Pharisee, a doctor of the law, one who was highly esteemed by many, addressed the council, after having the apostles removed from the immediate scene. His was apparently the coolest head among the council members. "The Pharisees were less exasperated, because their leading dogma was sustained by the apostles, and they saw that any imprudent proceedings were likely to involve the whole Sanhedrin in trouble, without regard to party; therefore Gamaliel interposes his advice" (McGarvey, p.73).
 - b. Saul of Tarsus had been a pupil of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was a doctor of the Law (meaning that he was a teacher of the Law of Moses).
 - c. "It is a mistake to view Gamaliel as any true friend of the apostles, his advice in the instance before us being founded utterly upon policy, rather than upon any belief of the truth which the apostles proclaimed" (Coffman, p.116).
 3. Verses 35-37: "And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed."
 - a. Addressing the other members as "men of Israel," he cautions them first in regards to what they were intending to do to the apostles. His was a word of discretion and caution.
 - b. Gamaliel calls attention to others who had arisen in Israel, purporting to be important personages. Theudas, boasting of his greatness, had gathered about 400 men about him. But he was slain, his followers were scattered, and his scheme was brought to nothing. Then there was Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing (probably the same as that of Luke 2), who obtained a large following; he also perished and all his adherents were dispersed.
 - c. "Much discussion has been raised as to who Theudas was and what he did. It does not matter who he
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- was; they were familiar with him and knew just what he had done. Josephus mentions a Theudas, who was a leader in an insurrection, but he could not have been this Theudas, for his rebellion was fifteen years later than this time. The times were full of revolts and rebellions, and as not less than three insurrectionary leaders were called Judas, and four Simon, there may have been two of the name of Theudas" (Boles, p.91).
- d. His point is becoming clear: these men [Theudas and Judas] had started a great stir in the land, but in the end, their efforts came to nothing; so must also be the end of the efforts these apostles were putting forth. He states his point plainly in verses 38-39.
4. Verses 38-39: "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."
 - a. Gamaliel's advice was that the council do nothing to the apostles, stating that if their work was of men, it would come to nothing any way, and if it was of God, they could do nothing against it. His advice may have some merits in certain situations, but it is not the method by which those who know and love the truth will wish to operate; to ignore serious error is a failure to contend for the faith.
 - 1) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."
 - 2) Galatians 2:4-5: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."
 - 3) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
 - b. "Instead of waiting to see whether such a movement is going to prove successful or not, before we take ground in reference to it, the lover of truth will promptly investigate and decide its merits without regard to public opinion. But if we regard Gamaliel as only giving a reason why men should not persecute a cause which they are not prepared to accept, it was certainly most judicious advice. When we have decided against a cause, we should render a reason for our decision, and then leave it to the developments of Providence..." (McGarvey, pp.73f).
 5. Verses 40-42: "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."
 - a. The counsel of Gamaliel met with approval on the part of the court. They did not decide to kill the apostles, but they did beat them, and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus any more. They had no reason to think their demands would be heeded in the future anymore than they were on the previous occasion (Acts 4:13-31)..
 - b. The apostles left the council chambers, not with heads hanging low in shame and discouragement, but with joyful hearts, happy that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. These were indeed changed men from what they had been when the Lord was arrested in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:56). Rather than give in to the warnings of the council, they continued to teach daily in the temple and in every house.
 6. "The Sanhedrin had now tried both threats and scourging upon the apostles without checking their activity, and as there was nothing further for them to try but death, which they were not yet prepared to inflict, they relinquished for awhile their efforts. In this first contest, therefore, the apostles were completely victorious, and compelled their adversaries to abandon the field" (ibid., p.74).
 7. Satan tried to disrupt the work of Christ, first by threatening the apostles (Acts 4). Failing in this effort, he next tried to undermine the authority of the apostles by influencing Ananias and Sapphira to lie about the land they sold (Acts 5:1-11). He failed in this scheme, so then he brought about the arrest and beating of the apostles—this also failed (Acts 5:12-42). He is now going to disrupt the church in the matter of the Grecian widows. He is relentless in his efforts to oppose the work of the Lord.
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ACTS 6

A. Acts 6:1-7: The Trouble Over Grecian Widows Resolved.

1. Verse 1: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."
 - a. After an unknown amount of time, and the church had grown to a great membership, a problem developed involving the Grecian widows being neglected in the daily ministration. The Grecian widows were Jewish Christians with a background in the Greek world, speaking the Greek language, and had likely come to Jerusalem for the feast days of Passover and Pentecost where they had learned the gospel (Acts 2). Some scholars think that about four or five years had passed since the beginning of the church; if so, the ladies had survived their husbands and remained in Jerusalem. But they may have moved there from Grecian lands at some other time.
 - b. The problem was that the Grecian saints perceived that the widows of the Grecian background were being neglected in the daily ministration. Nothing is said in rebuttal to this charge, so it appears that the charge was true. However, the report does not indicate that the neglect was intentional. This was the first challenge to the unity which the church had always enjoyed.
 - c. "The daily ministration" indicates that the brethren had a continuing practice of providing for the necessities of the widows. That was the purpose of the members selling property and goods (Acts 4:34-37).
 - d. "The tendency of human nature is to murmur, complain, find fault, a very easy thing to do, the very word 'murmur' being made up of two infantile sounds—mur mur! There is no sense in it, no wit in it, no thought in it, being the cry rather of a brute than of a man, just a double groan!" (Spurgeon, as quoted by Coffman, p.122).
2. Verse 2: "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables."
 - a. The twelve (the 12 apostles, including Matthias) called the church together to discuss and resolve this problem. That a problem existed was not denied, but these inspired apostles knew that the problem could be resolved without their leaving the high calling of apostleship to serve tables personally. This initial statement may indicate that they had not personally been taking care of this ministration, or else they would have already left the word of God to serve tables. But it is most likely the case that they were overseeing the distribution, but could not continue to see to such a vast work and preach also. The church now numbered many thousands.
 - b. The number of needy members was so large that the job had become too much for the apostles to oversee and still do their primary work. It was far more important that the apostles do the job for which they were selected and prepared to do, and let those others tend to this ordinary work. The preaching of the word is more important than helping the needy.
 - c. At this point in the history of the Lord's church, elders had not been appointed [as far as we know]. We read of elders in the congregation later. There was only one congregation, and the apostles were seeing to its needs. These men about to be appointed would be servants of the church, working under the oversight of the apostles.
3. Verse 3: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."
 - a. The plan was for the church to search out from their number seven men who met the qualifications given by the apostles to be set over the work of distributing to the needy. No formula was given by the apostles by which the seven men were to be selected. But with the qualifications specified, all that was needed was to identify and bring to the apostles, those who met the criteria. There is nothing in the guidelines given to permit a general election. Spiritual qualifications, not popularity, were to be the deciding factor. The qualifications are given below.
 - b. **They must be of honest report.** If their reputation was not sterling, there might be questions raised about their honesty in distributing the money and food. This qualification could be ascertained without undue effort.
 - c. **They must be full of the Holy Spirit.** When this term is used in other places, the reference is usually to miraculous abilities. See Acts 2:1-4; 4:8. But in Ephesians 5:18-19, it is clear that being filled with the Holy Spirit means to have the Spirit-given word in our hearts and lives (as the parallel verse shows:

Col. 3:16). In the present case, therefore, either of these could be what is meant. Certainly, a man who did not believe and obey the gospel himself should not be placed in such a responsible position. But it later develops that Stephen and Philip were men who had the power to work miracles. Did they have this ability prior to their selection to this work or did they receive it when they were appointed to the work, through the laying on of the apostles' hands? We may not be able to know which was true, but from our point of view, in a practical sense, it is relatively unimportant. It seems to this writer that this qualification required the candidates to have miraculous powers, at least prospectively. Not every Christian received a spiritual gift; hence, it might be the case that the candidates must be men who were able to receive a gift. The exercise of miraculous powers depended on the degree of faith possessed by the individual.

- 1) Matthew 17:14-20: "And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."
 - 2) Acts 3:16: "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."
- d. **They were to be full of wisdom**, "which means that they were to have practical sagacity, good sense, and sound judgment" (Boles, p.96). "How desperately this quality is needed in a delicate situation like that in Jerusalem! Those who have witnessed or been involved in a confused condition like this will readily understand Solomon's statement concerning the need for wisdom (Prov. 4:5-7)" (*Claiborne, ADL 1985*, p.120). "Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:5-7).
4. Verse 4: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."
 - a. When these men had been selected and appointed to the work, the apostles would give themselves continually to prayer and ministry of the word. The word "continually" may imply that they had been devoting part of their time to the work of distributing the food.
 - b. If it was essential for Jesus to spend much time in prayer to God during his public ministry, it was no less important for the apostles to do so in their great work. It is likewise essential that we spend a great deal of time in prayer. "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (Jas. 4:2). God answers prayers by his providence, not by miracle. While we may not understand exactly how his providence works, it is obvious to those who believe the Bible that his providence is efficacious and that he answers prayers. We are in need of his providence to help us find those who may be receptive to the gospel. Sincere and fervent prayers should attend our efforts every day. Let us pray for opportunities to reach the lost!
 - 1) Acts 19:8-20: "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them,

- so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."
- 2) 1 Corinthians 16:9: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 2:12-13: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia."
 - 4) Colossians 4:2-5: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."
 - 5) 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you."
- c. The preaching of the word was the primary function of the apostles, and it remains the greatest part of the preacher's work. To preach and teach the gospel requires a continuing study of God's word, for one cannot teach what he does not know, and he cannot tell what he does not remember. Many of the truths presented by preachers are things he learned in the past, but to keep these things fresh in his memory, plus learn more and deeper truths, he must study!
5. Verse 5: "And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch."
- a. The plan was readily accepted by the brethren, and they set about to identify those men who met the qualifications given.
 - b. Stephen was chosen, who is described as being full of faith and the Holy Spirit. This may not suggest that the others were any less filled, but in view of what this man accomplished for the Lord, it is expected that such a tribute should be paid him at this juncture. Luke wrote Acts after the events portrayed had occurred.
 - c. Philip is named next. He went on to become a great preacher of the gospel, carrying the truth to Samaria.
 - d. Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, and Parmenas are not named elsewhere in the Bible. They likely did many good things for the cause of Christ, but only eternity will reveal to us what these great things were.
 - e. Nicolas is identified as a Jewish proselyte from the city of Antioch. Irenaeus, a writer of the Ante-Nicene period, asserted that the Nicolaitanes of Revelation 2:6 were followers of this Nicolas. Doubt is cast on this assertion by another ancient writer, Victorinus, who suggested that certain heretics merely adopted the name of Nicolas to further their influence.
 - f. We are told that each of the seven names are Greek names. But we are also told that Jews commonly had Greek, as well as Jewish, names. If all of these men were from Grecian lands, then a magnanimous spirit was shown by the brethren. But Boles suggested that, "Some have contended that the Greek names do not prove that these were all from the 'Grecian Jews'; they think that three of the seven were Hebrews, three Grecians, and one a proselyte" (p.97). The truth is, we do not know the real background of these men; it is sufficient for us to know that they were faithful men, who met the qualifications given, and who discharged their obligations as was intended.
6. Verse 6: "Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them."
- a. These seven men were brought before the apostles; the 12 prayed and laid hands on them. This might very well have been the occasion when miraculous powers were conferred upon these seven (cf. Acts 8:14-17; 19:6; Rom. 1:11). We know that Stephen and Philip had spiritual gifts, and may safely conclude that the other five had them also.
 - b. The Hebrews had long had the custom of laying hands on others on solemn occasions. "Jacob laid hands on the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:13,14); it is recorded also that Moses laid hands on Joshua (Deut. 34:9); the Levites were set apart to the service of the tabernacle by the imposition of hands (Num.

8:10); hands were laid on the scapegoat to impart to it the sins to be carried away (Lev. 16:21). The laying on of hands was a symbol of the impartation of the gifts and graces which were needed to qualify them for their new duties; this was accompanied with prayer that God would bestow the necessary gifts upon them" (Boles, pp.97f).

7. Verse 7: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
 - a. The word of God increased and the number of disciples multiplied. This does not mean that the word of God increased in quantity, but in effect on the people. In other words, many people were taught the gospel and obeyed the same. Thus, the number of Christians dramatically grew. This is the pattern of church growth in the New Testament. The word of God is presented; it is received by sincere souls; those souls render obedience to the gospel and are added by the Lord to his church. This is the only means of achieving church growth. All of the modern gimmicks and slick programs cannot add a single soul!
 - b. Notice the location of the church: it was still in Jerusalem. The gospel was not carried to Samaria until the work of Philip in Acts 8. The pattern the Lord gave in Acts 1:8 is being followed by the brethren.
 - c. A great company of priests obeyed. This was a monumental achievement! "This is the first intimation of the accession of any of the priests to the new faith. It was the most signal triumph yet achieved by the gospel, for the priests of the old religion were more interested in maintaining it than were any other class among the Jews. The peculiar relation which the priesthood sustain to any system of religion must always render them the chief conservators of obsolete forms, and the most formidable opponents to the introduction of new truth. When the priests of an opposing system begin to give way, it is ready to fall. No fact yet recorded by Luke shows so strikingly the effect of the gospel upon the popular mind in Jerusalem" (McGarvey, p.78). For a priest to obey the gospel, meant that he must give up his means of livelihood, as well as to lose favor with the Jews.
 - d. These priests were "obedient to the faith." "The faith" is equivalent to the gospel (Jude 3; Gal. 1:23). To be obedient to the faith is the same as to be obedient to the gospel (Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8-9).
 - 1) Galatians 1:23: "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."
 - 2) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
 - 3) Romans 10:16: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"
 - 4) 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
 - e. This verse offers strong evidence for the deity of Jesus. This was an extraordinary event. The text does not say that a priest obeyed, it does not say that a few priests obeyed, it does not say that some priests obeyed; it does say that a great company (a great number) of priests obeyed. What caused this large number to obey the gospel? Perhaps the answer is given in some events that occurred on the morning of the Lord's resurrection.
 - 1) Matthew 28:2-4: "And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*." These men were not deceived; they knew full well that Jesus had been raised. Their statement to the chief priests was an official report.
 - 2) Matthew 28:11-15: "...behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."
 - 3) The first report given to the Jewish authorities of the resurrection of Christ was received by the

chief priests (Matt. 28:11). The testimony of the soldiers was powerful evidence to these men who had taken the lead in bringing about the crucifixion of Jesus. These Romans were indifferent to the Lord's cause; their testimony was unprejudiced.

- 4) The chief priests knew of the promises the Lord had made that he would be raised to life again the third day. This was the reason for the Roman guard being placed at the tomb, to prevent the disciples from stealing the body and claiming his resurrection. "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make *it* as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (Matt. 27:62-66).
 - 5) When the chief priests heard the soldiers' report, the truth of the resurrection was planted in their minds; it could have germinated there, and later, when the apostles boldly proclaimed that the Lord was raised up, they were ripe for the harvest.
 - 6) Acts 6:7 offers powerful, sound circumstantial evidence of the Lord's deity.
8. A much-discussed question is whether these seven men were the first deacons in the church. The chief argument against it is the fact that they are not called "deacons." The following quotation is from the *Annual Lesson Commentary* for November 2, 1980, p.53: "The Greek word rendered 'deacon,' as in Philippians 1:3, is translated 'minister' (20 times) and 'servant' (seven times). 'Minister' is an anglicized Latin word meaning the same as 'servant.' The Greek word itself is diakonos, and is defined by Thayer as 'one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master; a servant, attendant, minister.' It refers primarily to a servant in relation to his work, not in relation to a person as does doulas, which means bondservant or slave, and thus refers to a servant in relation to his master. A diakonos may be either bond or free. Other synonyms include: leitourgos, one who performs public duties; misthios and misthotos, a hired servant; oiketes, a household servant; huperetes, a subordinate official waiting on his superior; and therapon, one whose service is that of freedom and dignity.
- a. "Diakonos is used variously in the New Testament: of domestic servants, civil rulers, Jesus Christ, the followers of Christ in relation to their Lord, the followers of Christ in relation to one another, the servants of Christ in the work of teaching and preaching, those who serve in the churches, and false apostles as servants of Satan. It is rendered 'deacon' only when translators are convinced that it refers to a standing order of administrative assistants in the church.
 - b. "Although the word diakonos does not occur in our lesson text, its cognates do—diakonia, 'ministration,' and diakoneo, 'serve'—as will be noted later. And one who serves or administers is a servant, hence a diakonos. So, the thought conveyed by diakonos is in our text even though the word is not. And the persons appointed were administrative assistants—an order that seems to have become permanent in the church. In fact, forms of the verb diakoneo are rendered 'serve as deacons' and 'served as deacons' in 1 Timothy 3:10 and 13, respectively—in the King James Version, 'use the office of a deacon' and 'used the office of a deacon.'"

B. Acts 6:8-15: Charges Against Stephen.

1. Verse 8: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."
 - a. This is the first record of any of the member of the church, other than the apostles, working miracles. Any miracle would be an astounding action, but some were more so than others. The resurrection of Lazarus appears more impressive than the restoration of someone's hearing, although the same marvelous power operated in both instances.
 - b. The miracles wrought by Stephen are styled "great wonders and miracles." These miracles would undoubtedly amaze those who beheld them, hence, they could be called "great." The basis of his miracle-working ability was his faith (Matt. 17:19-20; cf. Acts 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:9; Jas. 5:14-15). This miraculous gift of faith was available to some members of the Lord's church during part of the first century.
2. Verse 9: "Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen."
 - a. Certain men of the synagogue of the Libertines disputed with Stephen over what he was preaching.

We are not told in this verse just what those points were, but in the charges made against him, some details are indicated. In virtually any society in any era, when the unadulterated gospel is preached, opposition will be aroused. The same pattern is invariably followed: efforts to meet the truth are put forth; when that fails, the enemy misrepresents the truth and tries to prejudice the minds of the people against it; attacks are made against the character of the gospel preacher; and in many cases, persecution is directed against the proclaimer.

- b. Libertines were "freedmen," individuals who have been under servitude but who had now found their freedom. The singular noun "synagogue" may apply not only to the Freemen, but also to the Cyrenians and Alexandrians, thus indicating that the synagogue was comprised of individuals with these backgrounds. Included in the group opposing Stephen were men of Cilicia and Asia. It appears that part or all of these groups were members of the same synagogue, however it may be the case that several different synagogues were intended. It has been estimated that in the Jerusalem of that time there were about 480 separate synagogues.
 - c. It is immaterial to the history being sketched whether one or several synagogues were represented; the point of the verse is to show that Jews from various backgrounds were united in their opposition to the preaching of Stephen. A "dispute" developed. "Dispute" is from the Greek term *sunzeteo*, which means "to seek, to examine, to question together." An examination of the issues was had between the two disputants. The same word is used by Luke to describe the exchange between the two disciples, who were traveling to Emmaus, as they discussed the events that took place in connection with the Lord's death (Luke 24:15).
 - 1) The word is equal to what is done in honorable debate. Romans 1:29 has another word (*erizo*) which is translated "debate." This word means *to wrangle, to strive*—this kind of confrontation is prohibited.
 - 2) The usual word for debate is the Greek *dialogomai* (which gives our English word "dialogue"). This word is used elsewhere in Acts (17:2; 18:4,19; 19:9-10), and describes the "debate" in which Paul was engaged for a period of two years.
 - d. Saul, who became the apostle Paul, was from Tarsus, a city of the province of Cilicia (Acts 22:3). He was prominently featured in the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1). Some have supposed that he was directly involved in this debate with Stephen. Certainly, he consented to the stoning that took place.
 - 1) Acts 8:1: "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."
 - 2) Acts 26:9-11: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities."
3. Verse 10: "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake."
 - a. Stephen's opponents were well-schooled in their religion, and had taught and defended it on perhaps many occasions. But they were unable to meet the wisdom and spirit with which Stephen presented the truth. When one who has the truth and the ability to defend it, the opposition has little chance of success. Many faithful brethren successfully defended the truth and put error to flight on countless polemic battlefields through the years. They did so at great personal sacrifice, suffering many personal attacks and other demonstrations of hatred and prejudice.
 - b. Remember, Stephen was preaching and defending the very things we preach and defend. His powerful enemies could not withstand the truth; our powerful opponents cannot withstand it today. In fact, it is usually only the radical enemies who are willing to meet us in public debate today.
 - c. Following Alexander Campbell's debate with a Catholic priest (Purcell), the Roman hierarchy suddenly decided that debating was unchristian-like, and forbade their people from participating in any more debates. Why? The Catholic heresy can not stand the light of the gospel! For the same reason, the "Jehovah's Witness" sect decided that debating was wrong—after their false doctrine was exposed in debate.
 - d. Christ, the apostles, Stephen, and other inspired men of the Bible debated with the enemies of the truth, and minced no words in exposing their errors. Obeying the command to "contend earnestly for

- the faith once delivered" requires debating in its various forms and levels, as the situations often dictate.
- e. The wisdom used by Stephen was inspired wisdom (I Cor. 12:8; Luke 21:14-15); his enemies could not resist his words. The "spirit" by which he spoke is a reference to the attitude he manifested (according to the KJV which does not capitalize the word); or the Holy Spirit (the ASV does capitalize *Spirit*, thus indicating the translators' belief that the Holy Spirit is meant). Stephen was inspired, as is evident from the fact that he wrought miracles. It is more likely that the "Spirit" is a reference to the Holy Spirit who empowered him to work the miracles and gave him the wisdom by which he presented and defended the truth. However, the attitude manifested by this man of God is very much like the spirit Christ showed. His demeanor was beyond reproach, even though he spoke plainly in denouncing the sins of the enemy. Verse 15 gives us an insight into this great man's spirit.
 - f. The opposition Stephen encountered and defeated represented a major crisis for the Lord's church. This would be tantamount to our facing a debate today in which the future of the church hangs in the balance. The inspired Stephen was fully equipped to meet the enemy, to defend the truth against strong attacks, to refute their erroneous interpretations, and to cause the truth to shine. The Cause of Christ is facing an equally great challenge today; it needs defenders and proclaimers who are knowledgeable and strong.
4. Verse 11: "Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God."
 - a. When their arguments were soundly exposed as faulty, and thus their positions shown to be in opposition to the truth, Stephen's opponents responded by trying to destroy him. They loved their human doctrines, they rejected the truth, and being unable to resist the truth, they sought to rid themselves of the message by killing the messenger. "When the advocates of error are defeated in discussion, they always resort to slander, or to violence. They tried both against Stephen. The Pharisees having the management of the case, we find their subsequent proceedings governed by the same policy which they pursued in the case of Jesus" (McGarvey, p.81). Such tactics reveal their true character, proving them to be servants of Satan, not of God.
 - b. They *suborned* men to testify against Stephen. This word (*hupoballo*) means "to throw or put under, to subject, denoted to suggest, whisper, prompt; hence, to instigate....To suborn in the legal sense is to procure a person who will take a false oath. The idea of making suggestions is probably present in this use of the word" (Vine, Vol. 4, p.87). "Men do not need to be bribed to tell the truth; and the Pharisees' money in view in this verse is proof enough that the testimony procured by it was false; but such is the mystery of evil that in every generation there must be champions of every lie Satan ever invented" (Coffman, p.130). A suborned witness is a false witness, often one who is paid to deliver his lies.
 - c. The charges were hearsay: "We have heard him speak blasphemous words" against Moses and God. If Stephen has blasphemed God and the Law (which was God's word), there was a grievous penalty to be met (Lev. 24:16; Deut. 13:6-10). The Lord's enemies used similar tactics against him (Matt. 26:59ff).
 - d. These charges were false for they misrepresented the truth. No one could love and respect God more than Stephen did; he was willing to give his life in defense of the Word of God. He had great respect also for Moses and his Law, but he knew that the old law had been replaced by the New Testament (Jer. 31:31-33; Acts 7:51-53,59-60).
 - e. When he showed that the Old Testament foretold the coming of the New Testament, he was showing his respect for, and knowledge of, God and his word.
 5. Verse 12: "And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council."
 - a. These opponents stirred up the people, the elders and scribes against Stephen, and sought him out, arrested him, and brought him before the council. If preachers were arrested today for preaching the whole counsel of God, how many would be guilty?
 - b. "The activity of Stephen, though probably not greater than that of the apostles during the same period, naturally attracted to him more especial attention, because he was a new actor in the scene, and one who had hitherto occupied a subordinate position. The opponents of the gospel were aroused into renewed activity. The first persecution occurred upon the surprising success of Peter and John in
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- Solomon's Portico; the second, upon the triumphs which followed the death of Ananias and Sapphira; and the third now springs up upon the appearance of new advocates of the faith" (McGarvey, p.79).
- c. The "Pharisees did not make the same mistake that the Sadducees did when they brought Peter and John into court, that is, with no specific charge against them. The persecutors of Stephen 'suborned,' that is, instigated, secretly instructed, and probably bribed, men to testify against him. (1 Kings 21:10,13.) This was also the plan which the Jewish leaders followed at the trial of Jesus. (Matt. 25:59-61.) And in both instances, that of Jesus and Stephen, they took enough of the truth, with their perversions, to make the charges seem...reasonable" (ALC 1962, p.116).
 - d. "This is the first time that 'the people' are represented as taking part against the disciples. During the first two persecutions the 'fear of the people' had restrained the violence of the persecutors, which renders their present opposition the more remarkable. But the Sadducees, who had conducted those persecutions, had but little popular influence, and had contented themselves with merely asserting the authority of the Sanhedrin, without the aid of any ingenious policy. The Pharisees were more influential and more cunning. They put in circulation a slanderous report, which was cunningly directed against a single individual, and which their great popular influence enabled them to circulate with effect; and by this means they aroused a strong popular feeling in their own favor" (McGarvey, p.80).
6. Verses 13-14: "And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."
- a. They brought forth certain false witnesses who asserted that Stephen had spoken blasphemous words against the temple and the law. "The general charge against Stephen was speaking blasphemy 'against Moses and God,' otherwise expressed, 'against this holy place, and the law.' The change of phraseology arises from the fact that the temple and law were the visible representatives of Moses and of God. The specifications under this charge were these: 'We have heard him saying that this Jesus will *destroy this place*, and *change the customs* which Moses delivered to us.' It is quite likely that Stephen was guilty of the specifications; but they fell very far short of the crime of blasphemy against Moses and against God. In thus teaching, he was really honoring Moses, by insisting upon the very termination which Moses himself had assigned to his own law, while he honored God by receiving him whom God had sent" (ibid., pp.80f).
 - b. The charges used here had been used successfully by the Pharisees against Christ (Mark 14:56-64). These charges were also brought against Paul later (Acts 21:28). It is clear from the ability of the religious leaders of the time to stir up the people, that they were both adept at doing so and that the people were easily aroused. The Semitic race, including the Jews and Arabs, are emotional people. If someone can get a man to believe another party is abusing him, he can be led into even violent action against his supposed enemy. This is one reason workers often go on foolhardy strikes which cause them to endure hardship, and which imposes on them losses which they never fully regain.
 - c. "Many of the Jews were masters at creating near-riot conditions when such would serve their evil purposes. They encouraged the prejudice of their fellow Jews by bringing false accusations against Stephen. When they had succeeded in creating the right atmosphere, they caught Stephen and brought him before the Jewish council" (ADL, p.124).
7. Verse 15: "And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."
- a. Stephen was brought into the council chamber; the charges were stated; the council members looked stedfastly upon him, seeing his face as the face of an angel. What they saw was not the face of an angel, but there was something about his countenance which looked like the face of an angel.
 - b. "The baseness of his persecutors—who, under pretense of zeal for Moses and the law, were violating the one and dishonoring the other, by seeking the lives of the only men who believed his words—must have filled him [Stephen] with indignation, while love for the truth which he was defending, and for the Redeemer for whom he was suffering, was kindled afresh, and the power of a glorious hope inspired him with the most invincible courage. Emotions so intense and so lofty spread a glow upon his countenance which attracted the attention of the whole audience. There is no need to suppose any thing supernatural in his appearance, such as a halo of light enveloping his countenance; for a countenance naturally fine and expressive, when lit up by emotions so intense and heavenly as those which must then have swelled the breast of Stephen, would be sufficient to suggest such a comparison" (McGarvey, p.81).
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ACTS 7

A. Acts 7:1-8: Stephen Responds to the Enemies of the Gospel.

1. Verse 1: "Then said the high priest, Are these things so?"
 - a. The High Priest was probably the same one who confronted the apostles earlier. He simply asked whether the charges raised against Stephen were true. What follows is a defense which Stephen gives of his actions, but more important, he sets forth an inspired declaration of God's great plan and shows that his enemies are in the wrong.
 - b. Modern critics of the Bible have tried to find many inconsistencies between the facts and figures as presented by Stephen and those given in the ancient Old Testament records. But the council before whom Stephen made these remarks was comprised of men who were experts on the details of their history he mentioned, and they said nothing in rebuttal to what he presented.
 - c. Stephen is described by the inspired writer as:
 - 1) Being full of faith (Acts 6:5,8).
 - 2) Being full of power (Acts 6:8).
 - 3) Displaying "the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).
 - 4) Being full of wisdom (Acts 6:3,10).
 - 5) Being full of courage (Acts 7:51-56).
 - 6) Possessing a masterful grasp of the Scriptures (Acts 7).
 - 7) Having love for his enemies (Acts 7:60).
 - d. By casually reading the information presented by Stephen, one is apt to miss the import of his remarks. Many views of what he attempted to accomplish are asserted by the scholars. In so many words, Stephen did not refer to the charges leveled against him. He did not directly address the charge of blaspheming Moses and God, or of disparaging the temple. "The charge against him was hypocritically preferred, and his judges had no intention to investigate it, but were using it merely as an excuse for his predetermined condemnation to death. They were now giving him somewhat the form of a trial, to keep up appearances before the people. Under such circumstances, Stephen knew that it would be useless to offer a formal defense; and, therefore, he does not undertake it. He sees, however, that his persecutors were identifying themselves, by their proceedings, with the unbelieving and persecuting portion of their forefathers, and he determines to make them stand forth to the people in this their true position. In prosecuting this purpose he selects his material from the writings of Moses, and shows that his accusers are with the persecuting party, while his Master and himself are side by side with Moses and others whom they had persecuted: Thus he hurls back upon them, and fastens on them, effectually, the charge which they had falsely preferred against him" (McGarvey, pp.81f).
2. Verses 2-4: "And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."
 - a. Stephen began his discourse by addressing the court in respectful language. He described them as brethren and fathers. They were all descendants of Abraham, thus were brethren; the council was comprised of prominent men in Israel, who were likely older than Stephen; such personages were commonly spoken of as fathers, a term which denoted respect from those who were humble. There is no support here for addressing a "priest" as "Father," which would violate the command the Lord gave (Matt. 23:1-12; cf. Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 22:1).
 - b. The "God of glory" appeared to Abraham while he was yet living in Mesopotamia, at Ur. Abraham is identified as "our father" because he was their progenitor and had become the founder of their nation.
 - c. God spoke to Abraham in Ur, instructing him to depart from that land and begin his journey to a place which would later be identified. This agrees with the words of Genesis 12:1 which states that God "had said" to Abraham the things that are recited in the next verses of that passage.
 - d. The people of Ur, and even Abraham's family, were idolaters (Josh. 24:2), thus to insure purity on the part of Abraham, it was necessary that he be separated from them. His father and his nephew Lot accompanied him (Gen. 11:27-32) to Haran; his father died there, and Abraham continued his journey

into Canaan.

- e. Notice the absolute faith and trust Abraham had in the God of glory in leaving his homeland, his kindred, and his friends, to go to an unidentified place. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8).
 3. Verse 5: "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child."
 - a. God promised to Abraham that his descendants would have possession of the land but none of it was actually given to Abraham. He bought a small parcel which included the cave of Machpelah in which he buried his beloved wife, Sarah.
 - b. At the time God promised that the land would belong to Abraham's descendants, he did not have any offspring.
 4. Verses 6-8: "And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs."
 - a. God further showed Abraham that his descendants would serve another nation for a period of four hundred years. See Genesis 15. The nation was Egypt, which was itself severely punished for its crimes against Abraham's seed.
 - b. But the hardships of bondage were essential in order for the people to be welded together with bonds that must last for many centuries, and that they might learn to depend on the God of heaven, to serve him with vigor and sincerity. God promised to bring them forth from that land of bondage and they would be able to serve him in the land of promise.
 - c. God gave to Abraham the covenant of circumcision, after which Isaac was born to Sarah about a year later. Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day, and in time there were twin boys born to him; to Isaac's son Jacob twelve sons were born, who are here called the twelve patriarchs.
 5. Among the significant points named in this part of his presentation is the fact that God chose Abraham while he was living in another land; thus God is not to be limited to the land of Canaan. He showed also that the covenant of circumcision was given before any of the Israelites were born; thus, this rite was in existence long before the time of Moses and the Law.
- B. Acts 7:9-16: The Persecution of Joseph by his Ten Older Brothers.
1. Verses 9-12: "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first."
 - a. The ten brothers were envious of Joseph because of the favor bestowed upon him by Jacob; they hated him because of the dreams he had in which they were pictured as being subservient to Joseph. They were moved by their envy to sell him into slavery in Egypt. They unwittingly laid the groundwork for their own physical salvation later on when the great famine struck the land. God was with Joseph, even in his slavery. Genesis 37-50.
 - b. He was sorely afflicted by his bondage, but God delivered him from this shame, causing him to be raised to high office in Egypt.
 - c. As shown by Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, a time of plenty was followed by a time of dreadful famine. There was no sustenance in Canaan where Jacob and the rest of his family were abiding. On learning that there was grain in Egypt, and knowing nothing about his son Joseph's being in control of Egypt's economy, he dispatched his oldest sons to Egypt to buy food. The Genesis record shows that the youngest brother, Benjamin, remained with Jacob.
 2. Verse 13: "And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh."
 - a. Genesis shows that food was provided for the men, enough to carry them through to the next year. On their second trip to Egypt, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, who this time were accompanied by Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother. He also introduced his brothers to Pharaoh.
 - b. The rejection of Joseph by his brothers may have been cited by Stephen "as an example of the Jews'
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rejection of their heavenly deliverer, prefiguring the rejection of the Christ himself; also, by his mention of Joseph's being made known to the brethren at 'the second time,' there is a hint that the Jews will really learn who Christ is at the Second Advent" (Coffman, p.136). For any unbelieving Jew or Gentile, the second coming will be too late to obtain salvation.

3. Verses 14-15: "Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers."
 - a. Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, to come into Egypt (Gen. 45:17-21). His father came down; the total number of the kindred given by Stephen is seventy-five.
 - b. "Jacob's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren amounted to sixty-six (Gen. 46:8-26). Adding Jacob himself and Joseph with his two sons, we have seventy. If to the sixty-six we add the nine wives of Jacob's sons (Judah's and Simeon's wives were dead; and Joseph could hardly be said to call himself, his own wife or his two sons into Egypt, and Jacob is specifically separated by Stephen) we have seventy-five persons as in Acts" (George DeHoff, *Alleged Bible Contradictions Explained*, p.275).
 - c. Jacob died in Egypt, as did also the twelve patriarchs.
 4. Verse 16: "And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father* of Sychem."
 - a. Jacob was buried in Canaan soon after his death in Egypt. The statement implies that the remains of the twelve sons of Jacob were likewise transported back into Canaan. Joseph's body was taken there in the Exodus (Gen. 50:25-26; Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32).
 - b. This verse speaks of the twelve sons of Jacob being transported to Canaan for burial; since Joseph's body was taken back by the Exodus, it appears that the bodies of his eleven brothers were likewise taken back at that time.
 - c. Bible critics think they have found a contradiction between Stephen's statement here and the details given in the Old Testament. DeHoff states, "(1) Abraham bought a cave and field in which it stood (Gen. 23:17). (2) Abraham bought another sepulchre, but it is not stated that he bought the field in which it stood (Acts 7:15,16). (3) Years later, Jacob bought a parcel of ground (Josh. 24:32) or a parcel of a field (Gen. 33:19). This was, in all probability, the very field in which Abraham's second sepulchre stood, as this field once belonged to the same owners though they may have been miles apart. In all the Bible nothing can be found to contradict any of these statements; and it is amazing to me that even some Christians make labored efforts to 'harmonize these difficulties.' I always ask, 'What difficulties?'" (ibid., p.232).
 5. Stephen recites "the circumstances which brought the people down into Egypt, in order that the rejection of Joseph, and the final salvation of the whole family through him, might stand out before his hearers, and be made to bear upon his final conclusion" (McGarvey, pp.82f).
- C. Acts 7:17-29: A Sketch of Israelite History from Joseph to the Call of Moses.
1. "From this glance at the leading points in the history of Joseph, Stephen advances to the case of Moses, showing that his brethren rejected him in like manner, and were also finally delivered by him" (McGarvey, p.83).
 2. Verses 17-19: "But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live."
 - a. When the time for the fulfillment of the promise drew near, the descendants of Abraham multiplied greatly in Egypt. A new regime had taken over Egyptian government, however, and having forgotten the good Joseph had done for Egypt, and fearing lest the Israelites should rise up against Pharaoh, the Egyptians enslaved Israel, bringing horrible hardships to bear upon them.
 - b. To slacken the growth of the Hebrews, the Egyptians commanded the death of their baby boys.
 3. Verses 20-21: "In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son."
 - a. It was during this time that Moses was born to Amram and Jochebed. He was "exceeding fair" and his parents decided to rebel against the evil decree. Their two older children (Aaron and Miriam) had been born before the evil king's decree for the male babies to be slain. They hid their new baby for three months, but then it became impossible for them to keep his existence a secret any longer.
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- b. The record in Exodus tells that he was placed in an ark made of bulrushes which had been made water-tight, and set afloat at the edge of the Nile River, near where Pharaoh's daughter bathed. She took Moses into her house and raised him as her own son, with his own natural mother fulfilling the duties of nurse.
 4. Verse 22: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."
 - a. Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. "The priestly caste in Egypt was noted for its knowledge of science, astronomy, medicine, and mathematics; this reputation was proverbial. (1 Kings 4:30.)" (Boles, pp.107f). Stephen also states that Moses was mighty in words and deeds—a description of his activities prior to fleeing from Egypt. After tending sheep for forty years, Moses' speech-making skills would have eroded, thus he thought he could not lead Israel. To answer this objection, God appointed Aaron to be the spokesman, at least at the first. Moses' latent talent would before long be honed to its former strength.
 - b. God's providence, as in the case of Joseph, had guided affairs so that Moses was well-placed in Egyptian society and government, and when he had been fully prepared for his greatest work, God could use him to deliver Israel.
 5. Verses 23-25: "And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not."
 - a. When he was forty years old, he came upon an Israelite being mistreated by an Egyptian; in defending the Hebrew, he slew the Egyptian (Ex. 2:11; Heb. 11:24).
 - b. He had some idea that he was to be the deliverer; we are not told how he knew this. Stephen says that Moses supposed that his brethren in Israel also understood that God was to deliver them by his hand, but they did not know it.
 6. Verses 26-29: "And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons."
 - a. The next day he came upon two Israelite men fighting each other. He asked them why they were fighting. The one who was the aggressor pushed Moses away, demanding to know who had made him (Moses) a ruler and judge. "There was a shocking parallel to this in the venomous question of the Sanhedrinists who had rejected Christ in almost the same words, demanding, 'By what authority doest thou these things; or who gave thee this authority?' (Mark 11:28)" (Coffman, p.289).
 - b. The Israelite man further asked whether Moses was going to kill him as he had the Egyptian the day before. If this man knew what he had done, others may also know; thus Moses left Egypt. He had been rejected by this man; he knew his own life was in jeopardy (Ex. 2:15). His mistake was in using the wrong means of deliverance, and acting prematurely.
 7. "In the rejection of Moses by his countrymen, when he was seeking to deliver them from bondage, according to the promise of God, Stephen has before the minds of the Sanhedrin another case bearing upon his final conclusion. It is true, that as yet they could not anticipate the use he intended to make of it, but the obscurity of his design awakened their curiosity, and rendered their mortification the more intense when at last it was suddenly developed. If they could have anticipated it, they would have stopped his mouth at the beginning" (McGarvey, p.84).
- D. Acts 7:30-37: Moses is Called to Free Israel.
1. Verses 30-31: "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him."
 - a. Men often want to anticipate God's purpose, and thus often run ahead of him. Sarah did so by having Abraham and Hagar produce a child. Moses had acted prematurely and by the wrong means in his feeble attempt to deliver the people. But now, after forty long years in the desolate reaches of Sinai, Moses was at last ready for the greatest work of his life.
 - b. The angel of the Lord appeared in the burning bush, and the voice of the Lord spoke to him from its midst. Moses was eighty years old at the time (Ex. 7:7), and after forty years in bringing Israel to
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- Canaan, he died at the age of one hundred and twenty (Deut. 29:5; 31:2; 34:7).
2. Verses 32-34: "*Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.*"
 - a. The voice of the Lord had its usual effect: Moses trembled and was fearful to look. God told him to remove his shoes for he was standing on holy ground. There was nothing sacred about the soil where this took place; it was the manifested presence of Jehovah that made this a holy location. In Japan, it is a mark of respect to remove one's shoes on entering a house; in our society, it is customary for us to remove our hats. To impress further upon Moses the wonderful importance of this event, Moses is told to remove his sandals, and out of reverence for the Lord, he complied. We can understand, of course, that God is vastly more important than we are.
 - b. God announced to Moses that he was fully cognizant of the condition of Israel in their bondage. It was not out of indifference that he had withheld direct assistance: it was necessary for Moses to be fully prepared for the mission; it was also important that the Israelites be ready for Moses' coming; and the Egyptians were to be given every opportunity to change their dealings with Israel. Only when all things were ready and every demand of God's longsufferance and wisdom had been met, did God intervene in issuing the call to Moses and setting in motion his plan to deliver his people. By repeating the details of this historical event, Stephen is honoring Moses.
 3. Verses 35-36: "*This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.*"
 - a. This same Moses returned to Egypt at God's direction to deliver Israel. Stephen reminds his hearers that it was this same Moses who had been earlier rejected when he was asked, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge?" (verses 26-28). Somehow, Moses thought he was to be the deliverer of Israel (7:25); but the Israelites did not share this belief. It may be that Moses only presumed this to be the case because of his special status in Egyptian society. God made it plain that he was the deliverer when he spoke to him as indicated in verses 30-34. He announced his plan to Moses through the angel who appeared to him on the mount in the burning bush.
 - b. Moses brought Israel out of Egypt following the manifestation of miraculous wonders and signs; supernatural actions were also wrought by Moses in the Red Sea and during the forty years of wilderness wanderings. He who was rejected at first by the people had become the leader, lawgiver, and deliverer.
 4. Verse 37: "*This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.*"
 - a. Again, Stephen specifies that it was this Moses who had prophesied: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear."
 - b. The significance of this quotation from Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (cf. Acts 3:22-23) is well-expressed by the following statements:
 - 1) "There is a deadly parallel between Moses and Christ that the Sanhedrin must see; they must also see that they are doing to Christ and his disciples just what was done to Moses. Moses was a ruler, lawgiver, deliverer, and prophet; Christ was all this to the people, but they rejected him. Moses was encouraged and supported by the angel which represented the presence of God" (Boles, p.111).
 - 2) "In this passage, the speaker has not only presented in a most emphatic manner, the contrast between the rejection of Moses by his brethren, and his appointment by God to the very office of ruler and deliverer, which they refused him, but has also made a further advance toward his final purpose, by introducing the prophecy uttered by the same Moses concerning the Messiah. This prophecy was still more apposite [suited to the purpose; appropriate], because it refuted the charge that he had spoken blasphemy against Moses, in saying that Christ would change the customs appointed by him. If Moses himself foretold the coming of a successor who should supersede him, he alone pays proper respect to Moses who submits to his successor" (McGarvey, p.84).
 - 3) "By this identification of his loyalty to Christ as being also loyal to Moses and what Moses commanded, Stephen devastated any charge that he had blasphemed Moses. On the contrary, it

was the Sanhedrin who were 'blaspheming Moses' by their refusal to honor the words of Moses commanding men to receive and obey Christ" (Coffman, p.140).

E. Acts 7:38-50: A Sketch of Israel's Recurring Rebellion Against God.

1. Verse 38: "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us."
 - a. The "church" in the wilderness was the "congregation" of Israel. The reference is not to the church of Christ, but to the assembly of the Israelites.
 - 1) The Greek word *ekklesia* means "church" or "congregation" or "assembly." The word "church" is defined as a called out body of people. The Israelites had been called out of Egypt by the command of God; the Lord's church today has been called out of the world by the gospel of Christ.
 - 2) Israel in the wilderness is a type of the Christ's church: they were baptized unto Moses (1 Cor. 10:2); we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). They were tested during the forty years of wandering; we are tested as we travel through the wilderness of life.

Israel in the Wilderness and the Church in the World

ISRAEL	POINT OF COMPARISON	LORD'S CHURCH
Moses	LEADER	Christ
Egyptian Slavery	BONDAGE	Sin and the World
Red Sea	THRESHOLD	Baptism
Wilderness Wanderings	STRUGGLES	Serving in the Church
Jordan River	BARRIER	Death
Canaan	DESTINATION	Heaven

- b. Moses was part of that congregation, and was associated with the angel who spoke to him on Sinai and assisted him in his work. This guidance was provided them outside the land of Canaan. Canaan was a special place only for a specific period of time and for definite purposes. When Israel had completed their part in God's eternal plan, and when the Savior had accomplished his earthly mission, Canaan lost its special significance. God established a special place of worship in the land during the time the Law of Moses was in effect, but prior to the Law (and after the Law was removed), serving and worshiping God was (and is) not limited to some physical holy place: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth" (John 4:20-24).
- c. Moses also received the "lively oracles" and delivered them to the people. These were the living oracles (utterances; Rom. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 4:11). Israel was blessed by having had the opportunity to receive and obey the living oracles (the Law of Moses). But this same Law foretold the coming of another Lawgiver whose law would supercede it.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 18:15-19: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken that* which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him."
 - 2) Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which

- my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
- 3) Acts 3:22-23: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."
2. Verse 39: "To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt."
- a. The Israelites turned back from the living oracles and desired *in their heart* to return to Egypt. They would not remain obedient to the law God had given to them through Moses.
 - b. "Here again is a contrast between the way Israel treated Moses and the honor God placed upon him; Israel refused Moses as a deliverer, and wanted to go back to the bondage of Egypt. They 'turned back in their hearts unto Egypt,' but did not really go back into Egypt. They did go back to the idolatry of Egypt in calling for Aaron to make them 'gods.' (Ex. 16:3; 17:3; Num. 14:4; Ezek. 20:8)" (Boles, pp.112f).
3. Verses 40-41: "Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands."
- a. While Moses was on the mount, the people influenced Aaron to make idols to go before them. God had given them the pillar of smoke by day and pillar of fire by night to guide them; they wanted something more tangible. Their excuse was that Moses had been gone so long that something must have happened to him. Aaron gave in to their demands; he fashioned a calf to which they offered sacrifices; they placed their trust in this man-made object and were proud of it.
 - b. "This instance of their rejection of Moses was much more flagrant than the first, seeing that it occurred immediately after the most splendid manifestations of God's presence with him; and that, in the very words which they addressed to Aaron, they acknowledged that it was he who had brought them out of Egypt. These circumstances also render more striking the analogy which Stephen is about to develop between him and Jesus; for he also had been rejected, notwithstanding the admission, by his enemies, that he had wrought miracles" (McGarvey, p.85).
 - c. Idolatry is gross foolishness. Anyone who will merely think will know that the object before which he is bowing is a man-made material object, having no power or volition; it is simply an inanimate thing. "They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination?"

- shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. 44:9-20).
4. Verses 42-43: "Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of* forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon."
 - a. "With this brief glance at the subsequent fate of the people who had so often rejected their deliverers, covering a period of many centuries, and terminating with their captivity in Babylon, Stephen concludes his summary of facts; but, previous to the final application, which he saw would raise a storm in the Assembly, he has a few words in reference to the temple" (McGarvey, *ibid.*). God gave them (the Israelites) up. Three times this thought is presented in Romans 1 in reference to the Gentile nations. God is longsuffering but his patience has a limit. The time comes when he will give men over to their own delusions (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10-12). Stephen cites a passage from the prophets (Amos 5:25ff) which describes the condition of ancient Israel at various times through their history. "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name *is* The God of hosts."
 - b. They worshipped the "host of heaven" (the stars, sun, and moon).
 - 1) Deuteronomy 17:3: "And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded."
 - 2) 2 Kings 17:16: "And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal."
 - 3) 2 Kings 21:3: "For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them."
 - 4) 2 Chronicles 33:3: "For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them."
 - 5) 2 Chronicles 33:5: "And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD."
 - 6) Jeremiah 8:2: "And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth."
 - 7) Jeremiah 19:13: "And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods."
 - c. Although the nation had worshipped God in the wilderness according to the plan God gave them, they turned later to the worship of Moloch (Molech). This idol was the "god" of the Ammonites.
 - 1) Solomon built a high place to this idol (1 Kings 11:7).
 - 2) Ahaz and Manasseh offered their children to it (2 Chron. 28:3; 2 Kings 21:6).
 - 3) Samaria was involved with it (2 Kings 17:17).
 - d. They worshipped the "star of your god Remphan." This is thought to have been the planet Saturn.
 - e. The promised punishment for the idolatry and other sins of Israel was that they would be carried away beyond Babylon. Amos spoke of their captivity being "beyond Damascus," a term which Stephen shows meant Babylon.
 - f. "In establishing the pattern of Israel's repeated rejection of God, Stephen here brought into view the fact that not only had the ten northern tribes been lost entirely, but that even the southern remnant had been sent away into Babylon as punishment for their idolatry" (Coffman, p.142).

5. Verses 44-50: "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what *is* the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"
 - a. The fathers who were delivered from Egypt had the tabernacle which Moses had constructed according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain. It was set up in Canaan when Israel under Jesus (Joshua) conquered the land. In occupying the land of promise, the Gentiles were driven out because of their iniquity (Gen. 15:16).
 - b. David had found favor with God. This great king desired to erect a tabernacle (habitation, ASV) for God. "When David's conscience was aroused because of the luxury of his cedar-paneled palace contrasted with the tent shrine that housed the ark of the covenant, the prophet Nathan made it clear to David that God did not want any temple built by him, but promised that a 'son of David would arise and build a house for God' (2 Sam. 7)" (Coffman, p.143). David was a man of war, a way of life which was inconsistent with the proposed idea of a house for the God of peace.
 - c. The son of David God intended to construct the temple was Solomon (2 Sam. 7:12-17). But Peter showed in Acts 2:29-31 that the real fulfillment of the prophecy was in the establishment of Christ's kingdom.
 - d. Stephen pointed out that the magnificent temple Solomon built was actually too small and insignificant to be a habitation for God. Solomon had understood this as he indicated in his prayer at the dedication of the temple: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (I Kings 8:27). God had created everything; even the earth was only his footstool.
 - e. "Instead of either admitting or denying the charge of blasphemy against the temple, he [Stephen] undertakes to show the true religious value of that building. This he does, by first alluding to the movable and perishable nature of the tabernacle, which preceded the temple, and then, by showing, from the prophets, that the presence of God is not limited to temples made with hands....By this statement [vv. 44-50], the speaker intrenches himself behind undisputed facts of their own history, and the sentiments of their own prophets, in reference to the temple, and is now ready to spring upon them the whole concealed power of the carefully-arranged facts from the life of Moses and of Joseph" (McGarvey, p.85).
 - f. When Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple, he was not blaspheming the temple; he simply showed that it was only a temporary part of God's arrangement. By referring to the Lord's promise to destroy the temple, Stephen repeated the same truth. God's eternal plan did not find its ultimate fulfillment in some material edifice, but in the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Dan. 2:44; Col. 1:13-14; Acts 14:22; 2 Pet. 1:1-12; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).
- F. Acts 7:51-60: The Death of Stephen.
 1. Verse 51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do ye*."
 - a. "As Joseph, the divinely-selected savior of his brethren, had been sold by those brethren into slavery; and as Moses, divinely selected to deliver Israel from bondage, was at first rejected by them to become a sojourner in Midian, and was then sent back by the God of their fathers to be rejected by them again and again, notwithstanding the most indisputable manifestations of God's presence with him; and as all the prophets had met with a similar fortune, so, now, the final prophet, of whom Moses and all the prophets had spoken, had been rejected and slain by the sons of these persecuting fathers. The combined power of all these facts and analogies is now concentrated in the closing paragraph of the speech, and expressed in these terrific words" (McGarvey, p.86).
 - b. The speech takes a sudden turn at this verse, which has caused some to think that it had been interrupted by some outburst from the council. However, there is nothing in the text to demand this conclusion; what Stephen states here is a natural point that should have been made in view of the direction the presentation had taken. This was not an explosion of anger, but the strong and severe denouncement of their sinful conduct. Their sins needed to be exposed in order for them to see their error and for the truth of the gospel to be upheld.

- c. To be "stiffnecked" is to be stubborn, unwilling to bend the neck in submission to the will of the Almighty. Circumcision was a sign of the individual's agreement (covenant) with God (see Gen. 17); it was a token of submission to God. To be "uncircumcised in heart and ears" meant that they were in rebellion against God. They were unwilling to consider the evidence supporting the religion of Christ, and thus continued in their disobedience to God. They were following a corrupted form of the Law of Moses, one that had been grossly perverted by many traditions, deletions, and additions.
 - d. They continued the practice of their predecessors in resisting the Holy Spirit. Some today claim that the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted (Calvinism). Stephen says otherwise! The Law of Moses (and the entirety of the Old Testament) was given by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2). When the Israelites rejected what the Spirit revealed through the prophets, they were resisting the Holy Spirit. The same is true today when men reject or ignore the written word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-12).
 - e. Judaism was Christianity's strongest adversary at the time of this chapter. It had marshalled its forces against Christ's church. Stephen was "earnestly contending for the faith" more than defending himself. "In about thirty-five years after Stephen's speech, the armies of Vespasian and Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, putting to death more than a million people, and severing from Jewish control the last effective device by which they might have hoped to destroy Christianity" (Coffman, p.145).
2. Verse 52: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."
 - a. Stephen asks them the rhetorical question: "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?" The meaning is, of course, that their fathers had opposed and persecuted all of the prophets! He also states that the prophets had predicted the coming of the *Just One* (Christ). Modernists reject the idea of fulfilled prophecy, but Stephen affirmed what they deny! Not only does he accuse the ancestors of having rejected and persecuted the prophets (who foretold the coming of Christ), he states that these forefathers had slain many of those prophets; and further, he charges those very men present at the council with having betrayed and murdered him of whom the prophets had spoken!
 - b. This is extremely strong language, and was spoken to the great Sanhedrin. These words were not given for the purpose of hurting, but to establish guilt to the end that these men might repent and that the gospel might be vindicated.
 3. Verse 53: "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*."
 - a. Israel had received the Law through the instrumentality of angels. It was an angel who appeared to Moses in the burning bush; it was an angel who led Israel from Egypt to Canaan. The Law "was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19). The mediator was Moses (Exodus 20; John 1:17). But neither they nor their fathers had kept (obeyed) the Law. They had accused Stephen of blaspheming the Law and Moses, but they were guilty of that crime, not Stephen. Instead of being tried himself, this man of God placed the council, and the nation in general, on trial.
 - b. "The exasperation of the Sanhedrin was the more intense, from the fact that the denunciation hurled upon them was not a sudden burst of passion, but the deliberate and sustained announcement of a just judgment. They had not been able to resist, in debate, the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke, and now their efforts to convict him of crime had recoiled terribly upon their own heads. They had no course now left them, but the usual resort of unprincipled partisans when totally discomfited, and in this they rushed with fearful rapidity" (McGarvey, p.86).
 - c. "Four thoughts stand out in this address of Stephen; it is well to note the lines of argument that he has presented before leaving his address. The first thought is that God's dealings with his people showed continual progress; the end was not reached by a single leap, but by development. As proof of this he recited the story of Abraham, to whom the land was promised; he did not reach the promised land until some years after he was called, and he did not get the covenant of circumcision till later. The second thought is that the temple is not exclusively holy; he makes this stand out so clearly that his hearers could not fail to get it. God appeared to Abraham in a heathen land, in Mesopotamia; Joseph had his entire glorious career in Egypt; Jacob, because of the famine, had gone down into Egypt. In another heathen land Moses found God. The signs and wonders were done in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. The law was given from Mount Sinai, another foreign country. The third thought showed the long-suffering of God and his many mercies, though the people had gone into idolatry. Joseph was ill-treated by his brethren; their rejection of Joseph was a parallel to the rejection of Christ by the Jews. They rebelled against Moses, and in the same way they had rebelled against Christ who
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was the Messiah and the one who fulfilled the prophecies. The fourth point was that he showed the falsity of the charge that they had made against him by quoting so frequently from Moses and the prophets. In a burst of impassioned words he charges the council and the race of Jews with its long-continued crime, its murder of the 'Righteous One,' and its outrage of the law given by angels" (Boles, p.117).

4. Verse 54: "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth."
 - a. At this point in his speech, Stephen was violently interrupted by the angry response of the council. This august tribunal suddenly degenerated into a riotous mob! His words cut them to the heart. They "gnashed on him with their teeth." This is a figure of speech; it "does not mean that they bit or chewed upon Stephen's flesh but that they were so infuriated that they ground their teeth together in a rage" (Coffman, p.145).
 - b. This is an extremely ugly picture of anyone, especially of people who held such an honorable position and who were looked on as valuable men in God's system. But some of the most awful crimes ever committed have been done by sinful religionists in the name of religion.
 - c. "This was a strange way for a court to break up; the whole body of seventy grave rabbis, whose official duty it was to watch for the faithful and regular proceedings of law, leaving their seats, and rushing with the wild mob, amid hideous outcries and tumultuous rage, to the sudden execution of a prisoner absolutely untried and uncondemned. But the maddest pranks ever played upon this mad earth are witnessed when wicked men set themselves in uncompromising opposition to God and his holy truth. So uniformly has this been true in history, that, at the present day, when such opposition is to be sustained, whether on great or insignificant occasions, no well-informed man expects aught else than disregard of all the rules of justice and propriety. If the infuriated scenes which have been enacted under such circumstances, in the history of Christianity, could be dramatically represented, the performance might be appropriately styled, *The Madman's Drama*" (McGarvey, pp.86f).
5. Verse 55: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."
 - a. The initial statement of this verse again stresses the fact that Stephen has been guided in his words and actions on this occasion by the Holy Spirit. His words have been inspired and he was led by the Spirit into this great controversy. He also conducted himself in accordance with the teachings of the gospel. In the midst of the ungodly mob, Stephen maintained his composure and spirituality.
 - b. "The vision witnessed by Stephen...need not be understood as a real opening of the heavens, so that the things within them could be seen by the human eye, but only a representation to his eyes, such as those granted to John in the Isle of Patmos. It was vouchsafed both for his own encouragement in the hour of death, and that the remembrance of the words in which he described it, and the hue of countenance with which he gazed upon it, might remain indelibly impressed upon the minds of those who were present" (ibid, p.87).
 - c. He saw in the vision the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. No description is given of God; he did not see the Father, but his glory. The fact that Christ is pictured as standing may indicate the respect our Savior had for this first Christian martyr.
 - d. "The death of Stephen was an event of most thrilling interest to the young Church, and well deserves the large space allotted to it by the historian. The disciples had embarked, with all their interests, both temporal and eternal, in the cause of one, who, though he proved himself mighty to deliver, while present with them, had now gone away beyond the reach of vision, and no longer held personal converse with them. They had struggled on faithfully thus far, and, amid many tears, some stripes, and much affliction, they had still found a deep satisfaction of soul in his service. It was demonstrated that their faith could sustain them in life, even amid very bitter trials; but it was not yet known how it would sustain them in the hour of death. No one of their number had yet tried the dread reality, and no man can now tell how much their spirits may have wavered in the prospect, and inclined backward toward the faith of their fathers, distrustful of the new arm of salvation. How great the strength, therefore, and how sweet the consolation imparted to every heart, when the first who died was so triumphant in the pangs of death! After witnessing the scene, they could go onward in their tear-dimmed course of suffering, without one fear or care for that within the grave, or beyond it. At the late day in which we live, which has been preceded by the happy death of millions of Christians, and which is often yet made deeply glad by their triumphs in the trying hour, we are not able to appreciate the

- eagerness with which the first disciples drank in the consolations of this glorious death. It was fortuitous and most fitting preparation for the fiery ordeal through which the Church were immediately after called to pass" (ibid.).
6. Verses 56-57: "And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord."
 - a. He described what he saw in the vision, which indicates that he was the only one beholding this wonderful sight. "Stephen here refers to Christ as 'the Son of man'; this was a name frequently used by Christ when speaking of himself, but never by any other speaker or writer save Stephen. Such a vision must have comforted Stephen and enabled him to receive with meekness the affliction of stoning" (Boles, p.119).
 - b. His words only added fuel to their fiery emotions. They had gone too far to act rationally. They closed their ears, cried out loudly, and rushed upon him in unison. "They must have regarded this statement of Stephen as one of the strongest examples of blasphemy, spoken here in the presence of the Sanhedrin; hence, they 'stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord.' The word for 'stopped' literally means to hold their ears together with their hands, as if to say that they would not listen to such blasphemous words. No trial was had; no vote was taken; no question was raised about what was the right thing to do; they rushed upon him as the hogs did down the cliff when the demons entered them. (Luke 8:33.)..." (ibid.).
 - c. "This was a mob scene, not the execution of a deliberate sentence. It was illegal, no Roman sanction having been given for execution of the death penalty; and those critics who question John's gospel with its reference repeatedly to Jewish efforts to stone Jesus, declaring such to have been illegal and therefore impossible, are frustrated by this episode" (Coffman, p.146).
 7. Verse 58: "And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."
 - a. The mob, which undoubtedly included council members, thrust Stephen out of the city where they stoned him.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 17:7: "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."
 - 2) John 8:7: "So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."
 - b. "The ancient law required that the hands of the witnesses were to be first against the one stoned, and Adam Clarke tells us that 'when they came to within four cubits of the place of execution, the victim was stripped naked.' One cannot help wondering about those 'witnesses' who had accepted money to swear lies against Stephen and thus found themselves to be his murderers also. Thus, once more, there is scriptural testimony of the relationship between lying and murder, these two sins having been named by Jesus as 'works' of Satan (John 8:44), an OT example of the same thing being that of Doeg (1 Sam. 22:9-18)" (Coffman, p.146).
 - c. This is the first mention of Saul of Tarsus. The witnesses laid down their outer garments at the feet of this man.
 8. Verses 59-60: "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."
 - a. There is no authority here for us to address our prayers to Jesus. Stephen was speaking directly to the Lord—as in a conversation. We are told to address our prayers to God (Matt. 6:9).
 - b. As they stoned Stephen, he cried unto the Lord that he might receive his spirit. This statement shows that the spirit survives the death of the body.
 - 1) Luke 23:46: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."
 - 2) James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
 - c. Apparently while the stones were falling upon him, he kneeled down and cried out for the Lord not to lay this sin to their charge (cf. Luke 23:34). This petition was not to be heeded for transgression is certainly charged to the perpetrator (1 John 3:4; Rom. 3:23; Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 2:11).
 - d. His death is described as falling asleep. "This is an appropriate figure for the death of the saints. Jesus used the term 'sleep' for 'death.' (Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:39; John 11:11,12.) Paul also used the term 'sleep' for death. (1 Cor. 15:18,51; 1 Thess. 4:13,14.)" (Boles, pp.120f).

ACTS 8

A. Acts 8:1-4: The Jerusalem Church Scattered by Persecution.

1. Verse 1: "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."
 - a. The first sentence in the verse belongs with the closing information of the preceding chapter (7:58). Saul is described as a "young man" in verse 58, which is thought by some to mean somewhere between thirty and forty years of age. He called himself "aged" in Philemon 9, a letter which was likely written in 62-64 A.D. This chapter's events took place about 34-37 A.D. If Paul was sixty-five years old when he wrote to Philemon, he would have been between 30 and 40 at the time of Stephen's death. Although Paul consented to his death, he later sorrowed greatly because of it (Acts 22:20; 26:9-11; I Tim. 1:13-15).
 - b. Beginning on the very day of Stephen's martyrdom, a great persecution was raised against the church, resulting in the saints being scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Only the apostles remained in Jerusalem. It is likely that the apostles did not flee because they knew their work was not yet completed in that city. Their leaving might also have been taken as fear, which could have been used as a weapon against the gospel. They knew that persecution was their lot; they also were persuaded that the Lord would deliver them, and even if death was to come to them, their victory in heaven would be well worth the expense.
 - c. Notice the casual way in which Saul is introduced. If some uninspired writer had been recording the story, doubtless a great deal of details would have been offered in praise of the man. When popular preachers and other religious personages are introduced today, much ado is made of their education and accomplishments.
 - d. The persecution our brethren suffered was not an indication of God's displeasure or disinterest; rather it showed that they had been doing their work most commendably, or else the Jewish leaders would not have sought to silence them (2 Tim. 3:12; John 16:2; I Pet. 4:4).
 - e. The *ecumenicalists* (the advocates of *unity-in-diversity*) of today would have had little in common with these saints for they taught the Jews to give up their Old Testament religion for the gospel of Christ. Modern thought is to allow each person to believe as he wishes, and not try to *proselyte* those of another "faith" for we all (they claim) worship the same God. But truth makes a difference!
 - f. The church's enemies thought they were inflicting a deadly injury on the disciples, but God worked it out to the spread of the gospel.
2. Verses 2-3: "And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison."
 - a. Stephen was buried by "devout" men, who also made great lamentation over him. These men were reverent and pious (Vine). It is not likely that they were Jews who were friendly toward the church. It is to be expected that faithful disciples would mourn the loss of so great and good a man as Stephen, and would see to the interment of his body. *Lamentation* means [literally] to beat the breast (Vine), an expression denoting grief.
 - b. Saul is again named, this time as being the zealous persecutor of the church. He "made havoc of the church," entering into every house where Christians were thought to be, and haling (hauling or dragging) both men and women off to prison. He gained a reputation for his rabid opposition to the saints (Acts 9:21; Gal. 1:13, 23). To make havoc is to "destroy, ravage, lay waste" (Vine, p.201).
 - 1) Acts 9:21: "But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"
 - 2) Galatians 1:13: "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it."
 - 3) Galatians 1:23: "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."
 - c. The picture is of one who violently hated the church of Christ, thinking that he was doing God a great service by persecuting its members (John 16:2; Acts 23:1; 6:9-11; Phil. 3:1-8). The riotous death of

Stephen triggered a wide-spread outbreak of violence against the church. "It is probable that the events took place in A.D. 37; this was the year in which Tiberius died and Caligula succeeded him. There was a time when there was no Roman governor in Judea, and the Jewish factions reigned supreme. Hence, the opponents of Christianity visited Christian homes and thrust Christian men and women into vile prisons, and then brought them before the elders in the synagogue, who tried to force them to deny Jesus; on their refusal some of them were put to death (Acts 22:4; 26:10), others were beaten (Acts 26:11), and all suffered many outrages. (1 Tim. 1:13.)" (Boles, p.123).

3. Verse 4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
 - a. There is a time for the Christian to fight and there is a time for him to flee (1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; Matt. 10:23). Stephen stood and fought; Paul fought on many occasions, even as did the Lord. The Lord passed through the midst of his enemies in Nazareth (Luke 4:28-30), escaping their wrath; Paul fled from Damascus, escaping in a basket lowered over the wall of the city (Acts 9:23-26). In the present case, it was expedient and right for the saints to leave Jerusalem.
 - b. Think how disappointing this was to the apostles, and how lonely they may have felt; they were surrounded by thousands of saints one day, but suddenly the flock was scattered abroad and many of them imprisoned. And how disconcerting it must have been to the brethren to lose their liberty and be in danger of losing their lives, and for the most, to have lost all their worldly possessions that could not be carried away with them in their flight.
 - 1) Hebrews 10:34: "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."
 - 2) Hebrews 12:4 "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."
 - c. To the human eye, a great tragedy had overtaken the church; the cause of Christ was on the verge of extinction. But all those who were scattered abroad went their way preaching the word of God, converting many. "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only" (Acts 11:19). As a scattered fire can ignite in many places, so the gospel took hold in the hearts of many people over a wide area.
 - d. It would seem prudent, since an aggressive presentation of the gospel had ended in severe persecution that scattered the church, that a quiet, soft, indirect approach should henceforth be pursued. A persecution had occurred, but look at the great number of precious souls who had obeyed the gospel through the courageous presentation of the gospel in public and in private. A strong, positive and kind presentation of the gospel is properly effective.
 - e. Our brethren would not cease to preach and teach the truth. "Thus, the apparent ruin of the single Church in Jerusalem resulted in the springing up of many Churches throughout the province—proving, for the thousandth time in the world's history, how impotent is the hand of man when fighting against God. As the blows of the blacksmith's hammer upon the heated iron scatter the scintillations in every direction, so the effort of wicked Jews to crush the Church of Christ only scattered its light more widely abroad" (McGarvey, p.89).
 - f. "We see here another illustration of the providential law, which appears to be an irretrievable calamity and is not only overruled, but designed from the beginning to promote the very cause which it seems to threaten with disaster and defeat" (Boles, p.123).

B. Acts 8:5-12: Philip's Great Gospel Meeting in Samaria.

1. Verse 5: "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."
 - a. Philip, one of the seven selected in chapter six to tend to the problem of the needy Grecian widows, did not limit himself to serving tables. Being a man possessing certain spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10), he made his way to the city of Samaria where he preached Christ to its citizens.
 - b. Coffman gives the following dissertation on Samaria: "This city was built by Omri as a new capital of the ten northern tribes of Israel on a hill 300' high seven miles northwest of Shechem, commanding the trade routes through the Esdraelon plain. This impressive butte afforded strong protection against assault, having steep sides and a permanent water supply within the fortifications. The city figured prominently in certain dramatic incidents in the OT. It was here that the lepers reported the flight of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 7); Ahab was buried in Samaria, as were a number of other Israelite kings. The city fell to Sargon II whose massive deportation of the inhabitants terminated the northern kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.). Extensive excavations of the site were made in 1908-10 by Harvard

University archaeologists, and also in 1931-35 by Harvard, Hebrew and British scientists. These findings revealed the city as one of great wealth, fragments of Ahab's ivory-paneled house and many other signs of extravagance being uncovered (1 Kings 22:39). Alexander the Great conquered Samaria in 331 B.C.; Pompey and others began to rebuild it about 110 B.C.; but it was Herod the Great who restored, rebuilt, decorated, fortified and embellished the city, naming it Sebaste (Augusta) in honor of his emperor, an event still perpetuated in its modern name of Sebastiyeh. There are many references to Samaria in the OT, the prophets of which considered it a center of idolatry (Isa. 8:4; 9:9; Jer. 23:13; Ezek. 23:4; Hosea 7:1; and Micah 1:6)" (p.154).

- c. Philip preached Christ; the disciples went everywhere preaching the word. These expressions are identical: to preach Christ is to preach the word of God; to preach the word of God is to preach Christ, who is the author of the New Testament and the central figure in the whole plan of the Bible. Specifically, Philip preached the kingdom of God, the name of Jesus Christ, and baptism (8:12). Preaching Christ involves far more than a mere presentation of his death, burial and resurrection.
 - d. The Lord's plan for the dissemination of the gospel is being followed explicitly by the saints (Acts 1:8). Jerusalem had been saturated with the gospel. It was now being taught throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, and was extending on toward the rest of the world. All of the members of the church to this time were Jews. There was a long-standing animosity between Jews and Samaritans, and between Jews and Gentiles. The Samaritans were a "mongrel" race, produced by the intermarrying of the Jews left behind during the Babylonian captivity and the Gentiles who moved into the vacated country; and their religion was a "mongrel" variety, comprised of a mixture of the Old Testament Law and human doctrine. The Samaritan people occupied the province of Samaria located north of Judea and south of Galilee. The truth of the gospel had broken down the natural prejudice of Philip, and made him willing to bring the good news to the Samaritans. This was a logical first step in breaking down the greater barriers separating Jew and Gentile. God's providence can be seen even in the development of the Samaritan race, the conversion of which led to the acceptance of Gentiles into the body of Christ. A few of the descendants of the Samaritans are still around today, living in the same area, and practicing their ancient religion. "After the destruction of Samaria by Alexander the Great, Shechem became more prominent, and there, after the conquest by John Hyrcanus they built a second temple. With lapse of time they reacted from their polytheism into an 'ultra Mosaism.' In our Lord's time they still preserved their identity after seven centuries; and 'though their limits had been gradually contracted, and the rallying place of their religion on Mount Gerizim had been destroyed one hundred and sixty years before by John Hyrcanus (130 B.C.) and though Samaria (the city) had been again and again destroyed, and though their territory had been the battlefield of Syria and Egypt, still preserved their nationality, still worshipped from Shechem and their other impoverished settlements toward their sacred hill; still retained their nationality, and could not coalesce with the Jews.' In the first century the Samaritans were numerous enough to excite the fears of Pilate, whose severity toward them cost him his office (Josephus Ant. 18.4.1-2), and of Vespasian, under whom more than 10,000 were slaughtered after refusing to surrender (B. J., 3.7.32). They greatly increased in numbers, particularly under Dositheus, about the time of Simon Magus. In the fourth century they were among the chief adversaries of Christianity. They were severely chastised by the emperor Zeno and thereafter were hardly noticed till the latter half of the sixteenth century, when correspondence was opened with them by Joseph Scaliger. Two of their letters to him and one to Job Sudolf are still extant and are full of interest. Shechem is represented by the modern Nablus, corresponding to Neapolis, which was built by Vespasian, a little W of the old town. Here has been a settlement of about two hundred, who have observed the law and kept the Passover on Mt. Gerizim 'with an exactness of minute ceremonial which the Jews have long since intermitted.'" (PC Study Bible, The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988.)
2. Verses 6-8: "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city."
 - a. The miraculous signs done by Philip proved the things spoken by that evangelist to be the word of God. The Samaritans *gave heed (proseichron)*: "they kept holding the mind on the things which were spoken by Philip; it carried the meaning of 'spellbound'" (Boles, p.124). The miracles he wrought were both visible and audible; there was no doubt as to their authenticity.

- b. Unclean spirits were cast out of many who were possessed; these demons left their hosts unwillingly, crying out with audible voice, either in anguish, anger, or terror. Demons cast out by the Lord sometimes loudly proclaimed their knowledge of Christ (Mark 1:34; 3:11-12; Luke 4:33-37, 41; Matt. 8:28-34; 17:14-22). Those who were sick of the palsy and the lame were healed. Palsy was a paralysis of a part or of all the body. The withered hand the Lord healed was possibly an effect of "palsy." This was a very severe disease, incurable then except by miracle. These miracles produced the great joy described in verse eight.
 3. Verses 9-10: "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God."
 - a. The prospects for successful preaching in Samaria were dim, from the human viewpoint, due to the vast popularity of Simon, who had used sorcery to bewitch ("to confuse, amaze") the people. A sorcerer was one who used drugs, potions, spells, and enchantments to beguile people into believing he was using genuine magic. Through legerdemain he hoodwinked the simple. He gave out that he was "some great one."
 - b. "Simon was an unqualified fraud; but, until the coming of the gospel, his evil influence dominated the whole city, 'from the least to the greatest.' Nor does modern man have any right to despise the Samaritans for their gullibility, because there are many examples in our own times and cities of charlatans and deceivers receiving the adulation of their duped followers. It is only the word of God that 'makes wise the simple,' 'opens the eyes of the blind,' and provides a 'lamp unto our feet.' In direct proportion, therefore, as men are ignorant of the word of God, they become the prey of deceivers" (Coffman, p.156).
 - c. The great majority of the citizens of Samaria gave heed (cf. vs. 6) to what he told them. They were utterly convinced that Simon was "the great power of God." His tricks were received as manifestations of God's power. Simon has many who follow his example today, using more sophisticated methods.
 4. Verse 11: "And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries."
 - a. They gave heed to him because for a long time he had wrought his "spells" on them, deceiving them with his sorceries. Luke's report of the great success of Philip is simply stated, giving us the impression that the victory was quickly and easily accomplished. To win the people to Christ, the evangelist had to establish the genuine power and word of God. He presented the word and proved it to be from God by the real miracles he worked. Even those who had been bewitched by Simon's enchantments could see the distinction between the genuine and the counterfeit. The proof was addressed to the eye and the ear.
 - b. "What was the distinction between these miracles and Simon's astonishing tricks, which led to so prompt a decision, we are not able to say, because we know not what these tricks were. Suffice it to say, that this single incident should put to silence forever that species of skepticism which resolves all the miracles of Christ and the apostles into occult arts and optical illusions; for here are these arts, in their most delusive form, brought into direct conflict with apostolic miracles; and so palpable is the distinction, that it is at once discovered and acknowledged by the whole multitude" (McGarvey, p.90).
 - c. "The influence of Simon was fortified and entrenched by years of successful operation; and his acceptance of the gospel, related a moment later, was all the more phenomenal in view of this; and with such a well established base of influence, it would appear incredible on the face of it that he would have given it up without a struggle unless his motives had been good. Certainly Elymas (13:8) opposed the gospel; and it seems mandatory to believe that Simon would have done the same thing unless he had truly believed" (Coffman, p.156).
 5. Verse 12: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."
 - a. The Bible is its own best interpreter. There is an amazing consistency about its contents. There is never a contradiction in its reports. In the present verse, we are told what is involved in preaching Christ. While verse five states that he preached Christ, this verse shows that he had actually presented information regarding the kingdom of God, the name of Christ, and baptism. This shows a perfect correlation with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:23).
 - b. The things concerning the kingdom of God are those matters relating to the predictions of its coming, its establishment, its nature, and the scope of its influence. The Bible shows conclusively that the kingdom of Christ is the church of Christ. The terms are used interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19.

Peter and the other apostles were given the keys of the kingdom which they used to "open" the church (Acts 2). The saved are added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47); but they are translated by the Lord into the kingdom (Col. 1:13-14). Since the kingdom is important, the church is likewise important: they are identical! Away with the false notions, therefore, that would have us to "preach Christ and leave the church out of it!" Preaching Christ necessarily includes preaching the church—the Lord's church; the church for which he died (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28); the one to which he adds the saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23), and which will be carried to glory (Eph. 5:25-27).

- c. The name of Jesus Christ involves the authority possessed by him. To establish his authority, it would be necessary to show that he is the Son of God, that he was born of a virgin, that he taught the word of God, that he died for our sins in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, that he was buried, and was raised from the dead the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Without establishing the authority of Christ, no one could be converted (Col. 3:17; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 3:22-23; 19:1-6; Heb. 1:1-4).
- d. If he had not preached baptism, they would have known nothing about its necessity. But the Lord had commanded that baptism be preached (Matt. 28:19) and had shown the purpose of baptism (Mark 16:16; Luke 24:47). But the great majority of religious teachers and professors today deny the connection between baptism and salvation. Truly, the devil has many advocates! (2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15). The purpose of baptism is "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16).
- e. Luke reports also that those baptized were men and women. Both sexes are included in the gospel system; Christianity is not limited only to men. According to Luke, only men and women were baptized; no baby was included. Again, this contradicts the notions and practices of man-made churches.
- f. "That this message of Christ and his kingdom included the commandment that men should believe, repent and be baptized is implicit in the fact of the Samaritans having done exactly that when they believed Philip's preaching. Moreover, such a thing as baptism (which is the ordinance gateway into the church Jesus established), as mentioned in the good news of 'the kingdom,' has the utility of identifying the church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God as one and the same institution" (Coffman, p.157).
 - 1) John 3:5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
 - 2) Acts 2:41,47: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls....Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
 - 3) Ephesians 5:26-27: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
 - 4) Romans 6:3-4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."
 - 6) Galatians 3:27: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
 - 7) Colossians 2:12: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."
- g. "Being convinced that they heard the word of God, they believed it because it was the word; and, for the same reason, they yielded to its authority....The simple facts of the kingdom over which Christ was reigning, thus attested, were set forth before the people, and, upon belief of these, attended by a willingness to comply with their requirements, they were immersed without delay. This was but a faithful execution of the commission, which says, 'He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved'"(McGarvey, pp.90f).

C. Acts 8:13-25: Peter and John Confer Spiritual Gifts and the Case of Simon the Sorcerer.

1. Verse 13: "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."
 - a. Many who have accepted the false doctrine of "impossibility of apostasy" (once saved, always saved), must deny the faith of Simon in order to support this error. But even a cursory examination of the facts of the case shows that he was as much of a believer as the other Samaritans were. "Simon himself

- believed also." If he was not a saved person, then neither were the Samaritans; he was as much a saved person as any of them. Since the subsequent details show that he fell into sin, therefore, the doctrine of "once saved, always saved" is false.
- b. Some try to prove that his faith was only pretended and that his hypocrisy deceived Philip, and that the report describes his "conversion" from Philip's point of view. If we grant that Simon only feigned faith and that the inspired preacher was taken in by the lie, we cannot account for Luke's report that Simon "believed also." The inspired record does not say that Simon "feigned to believe," rather it plainly states that "Simon himself believed also."
 - c. Further, when Peter later rebuked Simon for sin, he identified it as the sin of offering money for the ability to confer spiritual gifts: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness...." He said nothing of any "feigned faith" or other alien sins.
 - d. Simon did not pretend to believe; Philip was not deceived; Luke gave an accurate report of Simon's genuine conversion and later fall from grace. Those who will deny the clear teachings of God's word in trying to defend a false doctrine, have denied the Truth.
 - 1) Galatians 5:4: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."
 - 2) 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."
 - e. Following his baptism into Christ, for some unidentified space of time, Simon continued with Philip, wondering at the miracles he beheld the evangelist working. He was a man fully cognizant of the deceptions of sorcerers; he knew full well that what Philip was doing were no slick "magician's" tricks. This is strong evidence of the genuineness of Bible miracles.
2. Verse 14: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John."
- a. News of the conversion of the Samaritans came to the attention of the apostles in Jerusalem. Peter and John were selected by the twelve to go to Samaria on a very special mission. The special purpose of their trip is not expressly stated, but their reason can easily be established by seeing what they did on their arrival.
 - b. This verse shows that Peter had no greater authority than the other apostles, for he was "sent" (along with John) on this mission. He who sends is greater in authority than he who is sent (John 13:16); the apostleship was greater than any one apostle, just as the eldership is greater than any one elder.
3. Verse 15: "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost."
- a. The Samaritans had believed the gospel and had been immersed into Christ; the apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria; prior to their coming, none of the Samaritans had received a miraculous gift; when Peter and John prayed and laid hands on them, the spirituals gifts were conferred.
 - b. "Whatever other objects may have been contemplated in the mission of the two apostles, such as confirming the faith of the disciples, and assisting Philip in his labors, it is quite certain that the chief object was the impartation of the Holy Spirit. What they did when they arrived in Samaria was certainly the object for which they went. But the chief thing which they did was to confer the Holy Spirit; hence, this was the chief object of their visit. If, however, Philip could have conferred this gift, the mission, so far as the chief object of it is concerned, would have been useless. This affords strong evidence that the miraculous gift of the Spirit was bestowed by no human hands except those of the apostles. That such was the conclusion of Simon, who was an interested witness of this whole proceeding, is evident from the proposition he made to Peter, to purchase from him this power. If all who had the Spirit could impart it to others, he need only to have sought the gift himself, knowing that this would include the power to impart it. But his offer to buy this power, and that from an apostle, shows that the apostles alone possessed the power of imparting the Spirit. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that in the only other instance of the kind recorded in Acts, that of the twelve disciples in Ephesus, the same gift was bestowed by the hands of an apostle" (McGarvey, p.92).
 - 1) 1 Timothy 4:14: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." [Timothy's gift was not conferred upon him by the elders—the elders may have laid hands on him in connection with the prophecy that he should receive such a gift].

- 2) 2 Timothy 1:6: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."
 - 3) Romans 1:11: "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."
 - c. McGarvey shows the relationship between the two statements to Timothy: "These two statements can be reconciled either by supposing that Paul refers to the gift of office in the former, and the gift of the Spirit in the latter; or, that the eldership united with Paul in laying on hands..." (ibid.).
 - d. The Samaritans enjoyed full fellowship with Christ and each other prior to the coming of the apostles and the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, having a spiritual gift is not essential to one's relationship with the Lord.
 - e. What they received is described as "the Holy Ghost." This description does not mean that the Holy Spirit as a Person was imparted to them, but rather that they received the miraculous gifts provided by the Spirit. What they received through the prayers and laying on of hands by the apostles, was what Cornelius and his family obtained through the direct outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts ten. The "Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word....on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost....[they] received the Holy Ghost.... (Acts 10:44, 45, 47). What Cornelius received was a spiritual (miraculous) gift; this is precisely what the Samaritans received, also, but in an indirect way.
4. Verse 16: "(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)"
 - a. In a parenthetical statement, Luke adds that, up to this time, none of the Samaritans had received any spiritual gift. They had been baptized into Christ where all the spiritual *blessings* are located (Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:27), but the reception of the Holy Spirit was a separate operation, obtainable then only by direct impartation (in two exceptional cases: Acts 2 and Acts 10), or by the laying on of the hands of an apostle. The direct outpouring was limited only to the special cases of the apostles and Cornelius (which opened the door of salvation to the Gentiles). Since the last apostle died during the first century, and the last individual on whom an apostle laid hands to confer a spiritual gift has long since passed into eternity also, there is no one today having a miraculous gift (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:8-16).
 - b. The statement of this verse "necessarily implies that there was no such connection between immersion into Christ and the miraculous gift of the Spirit, as that the latter might be inferred from the former. This gift, then, was not common to the disciples, but was enjoyed only by those to whom it was especially imparted" (McGarvey, p.93).
 - c. The purpose of their receiving spiritual gifts was to supply what the written New Testament would later supply—the full information of the gospel and confirmation of the same (Mark 16:15-20; Heb. 2:1-4). While Philip was present, the church at Samaria was infallibly guided by that inspired evangelist; when Philip departed for other labors, they would need guidance in the faith until such time that the New Testament was fully revealed and confirmed. Thus, the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12: 8-10) would enable them to know their duties, how to live, how to worship in spirit and in truth, and furnished them with the power to convince unbelievers of the truthfulness of the gospel message. They were not left to depend on their fallible memories.
 - d. There is no indication in the text that Simon was ever given a spiritual gift; nor is there proof that a spiritual gift was intended for every member.
 5. Verses 17-19: "Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."
 - a. This completes the thought begun in verses 14 and 15. Peter and John did the thing for which they came to Samaria. The impartation of the Spirit was accompanied by (resulted in) outward manifestations; it was something that could be seen (vs. 18).
 - b. Simon saw that the miraculous gifts were given by means of the laying on of the hands of Peter and John. In Acts 2, the apostles had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-4; Luke 24:49); in the present case, an impartation of the Spirit was given. There was a vast difference between the two. The former was intended only for the apostles; the latter was intended for certain Christians during the first century. Neither is applicable today.
 - c. This episode does not suggest that Simon was not genuinely converted to Christ. The report refutes this contention. "It was at some indefinite and perhaps even considerable, time after his conversion
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- that Simon was tempted and fell into the sin mentioned here" (Coffman, p.165). We cannot even be absolutely sure that Philip was still in Samaria at the time Peter and John arrived.
- d. Simon, on seeing the circumstances of the impartation of the Spirit, offered money to Peter, the chief spokesman, that he might obtain the ability to confer the Holy Spirit on others.
 - e. Why did he want this power? The usual assumption is that he wanted to use this power as a means of making money. It is obvious that his heart was not right (vs. 21). It is likely, therefore, that he had a relapse to his former way. "From this act of Simon's comes our word 'simony,' the crime of buying, selling, or bargaining for spiritual functions" (Boles, p.129).
 - f. "In order to account for the impious proposition of Simon, we must remember his former mode of life, and consider the mental habits which it must have cultivated. Having been accustomed to the performance of astonishing tricks as a means of making money, and to the increase of his stock in trade by purchasing the secret of every new trick which he met with among his brother magicians, he had acquired the habit of looking upon every thing of an astonishing character with reference to the *money* which might be in it. When, now he saw that by imposition of the apostles' hands the miraculous power of the Spirit was imparted, and remembered that there were many even among the disciples, who had not yet received the coveted gift he at once perceived that the power to impart it could be made a source of great profit. His overruling avarice, mingled with the intense fondness for popular influence, prompted him to seek this power....If he had realized the light in which his proposition *should* be regarded, he would not have ventured to make it" (McGarvey, p.94).
6. Verse 20: "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."
- a. The apostle Peter gave Simon a scathing rebuke. Peter had earlier seen what the dire consequences are for one who would oppose God (Acts 5:1-11). We may be sure that his strong words here were not intended as an attack against the person of Simon, but as a rebuke for his sinful attitude and request.
 - b. "Thy money perish with thee." This indicates the horrible danger to his soul his motive and request had caused: He was in danger of perishing. As his money would perish in the strictest sense of the word (2 Pet. 3:10-10), so Simon's soul was, in its present state, headed for the destruction of hell (Matt. 10:28; Luke. 12:4-5). The Greek word for "destruction" (used here for "perish") means "loss of well-being" [not loss of being], (Vine).
 - c. The gift of God cannot be purchased with money. The phrase does not mean the gift of God, with God being the gift given, but reference is to the gift God provides. In this case, the gift of God was the use of a miraculous power.
7. Verse 21: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."
- a. Part and lot refer to a share and portion. Simon had no part or lot in *this matter*. The phrase "this matter" describes the operation of imparting spiritual gifts. Simon was out of order for two reasons: he tried to purchase this power; and it was not his lot to have the power to confer miraculous gifts.
 - b. Peter, who possessed all the apostolic powers (2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Cor. 12:10c), could perceive the state of Simon's heart. He knew that something was amiss with his request (vs. 19). His heart was not straight; it was not upright, but crooked.
8. Verse 22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
- a. Instead of telling him that there was no possible hope for him, Peter calls on Simon to repent and ask God's forgiveness. Notice that Peter specified the sin of which Simon was guilty as this thy wickedness; the sin was his untoward request and crooked heart (his evil intent to misuse the requested power). This is further shown by the identification of the sin as "the thought of thine heart."
 - b. Peter was privileged to announce the second law of pardon just as it had been his privilege to take the lead in announcing the first law of pardon (Acts 2:38; Matt. 16:18; 18:18). The requirements which Peter presented to Simon show that he was an erring Christian, not an alien sinner. If he had not been a child of God, Peter would have told him to believe the gospel, repent of his sins, confess his faith, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). But he told him to repent and pray, the conditions of pardon for an erring saint (see I John 1:8-10; Jas. 5:16).
 - c. "'If perhaps' means that there is some chance of his forgiveness; though his sin was great, yet if he would repent and pray God there is a hope of his being cleansed of it. Some think that Peter had in mind the sin mentioned by Jesus in Matt. 12:31, but Peter does not close the door of hope here. 'If
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perhaps' means 'if it be possible,' or since it is possible" (Boles, p.131). Peter knew whether sin was pardonable.

9. Verses 23-25: "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."
 - a. The apostle knew by his apostolic powers the true condition of Simon. He stated here that he was in the *gall of bitterness* and *in the bond of iniquity*. "As a glance at the RV margin will reveal, what Peter really said was that 'Thou *wilt become* a gall-root of bitterness and a bond of iniquity,' thus expressing not a present condition at all, but a danger of future reprobacy" (Coffman, p.167). "Bond of iniquity" refers to the bondage of sin under which sinners are held. "Iniquity" means "lawlessness." The word "sin" means "to miss the mark."
 - b. "This response indicates very clearly that the scathing speech of Peter had a good effect. It doubtless awoke Simon to a clearer perception of his own character, filled him with more becoming awe of the Holy Spirit, and aroused some fear of the terrible consequences of his sin" (McGarvey, pp.95f). We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of Simon. From his statement, we conclude that he repented and that prayer was made by and for him unto the Father.
 - c. Peter and John continued their tour of the region by preaching in the villages of the Samaritans, as they made their way back to Jerusalem.

D. Acts 8:26-40: The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

1. Verse 26: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."
 - a. In some unexplained way, an angel instructed this inspired preacher to leave his fruitful work in Samaria, and make his way toward the south to the road that led from Jerusalem toward Gaza, a deserted area. The young church in Samaria was now well equipped with spiritual gifts to carry on with their obligations, hence Philip was now free to continue his efforts in other places.
 - b. Gaza was in the province of Judea. "Gaza was about sixty miles southwest from Jerusalem, and had been destroyed in 96 B.C., but was rebuilt, and was a city of importance at this time. Philip would pass west of Jerusalem on his way from Samaria and would intercept the road between Jerusalem and Gaza; this was a journey of from sixty to seventy miles....Gaza is one of the oldest places mentioned in the Bible; it first occurs in Gen. 10:19, as a frontier town of the Canaanites, and later as the southernmost of the five cities of the Philistines, to whom it really belonged, even after it was formally assigned to Judah. (Josh. 15:47; Judges 1:18.)" (Boles, p.133). Since a chariot can travel much faster than a man can walk, and since Philip had to cover a greater distance than the eunuch and at a slower pace, the evangelist had to leave Samaria a few days before the eunuch departed from Jerusalem in order to intercept him on the road.
 - c. To say that the road ran through a "desert" is not to say it was a waterless waste. The Greek term is translated "wilderness" in Luke 15:4, a place suitable for grazing sheep. Mark 6:30-39 describes a "desert" as a place where there was enough green grass on which a great multitude could sit. These *deserts* were such only because there were few (if any) who lived there. "Dr. S.T. Barclay, who traversed this entire route in May, 1853, says that he traveled, after leaving 'the immediate vicinity of Hebron, over one of the very best roads (with slight exceptions) and one of the most fertile countries that I ever beheld'" (McGarvey, p.97).
 - d. Unknown to the eunuch, the providence of God was working to bring him face-to-face with one who was able to open his eyes to the Messiah. Both divine agency and human agency were used in the eunuch's conversion. On the divine side, the angel gave Philip instructions to go to the meeting place and the Holy Spirit instructed him to approach the chariot in which the eunuch was riding. But neither the angel nor the Holy Spirit spake a single word to, or brought any power upon, the Ethiopian directly. They worked through the instrumentality of Philip, the human agency, who taught him the soul-saving gospel. If Philip had not done his part, no conversion would have occurred. No particle of heavenly influence is brought to bear directly upon the heart of the convert.
2. Verse 27: "And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship."
 - a. Philip immediately arose and began his journey according to the angel's message. No details are

- provided regarding his trip; the historian quickly brings the two men together. The man of Ethiopia is described as a eunuch of great authority under the queen of Ethiopia, that he had charge over all her treasure, and that he had been to Jerusalem to worship.
- b. The facts in evidence suggest that he was a devout man, since he had traveled some 1500 miles (Coffman, p.170) to worship at Jerusalem. Since he had worshiped in Jerusalem, he was a Jew by religion and perhaps by birth. We do not know the color of his skin since he could have been Hebrew or Ethiopian by birth; if the latter, only his religion was Jewish; if the former, he was Jewish by religion and by race.
 - c. We do not know his age; we know of none of the circumstances by which he became a eunuch. The Law forbade a eunuch from entering into the congregation (Deut. 23:1), but he could enter the court of the Gentiles, "where men of all nations, both clean and unclean, might worship. (1 Kings 8:41-43; Matt. 21:12-16.)" (ALC 1962, p.121).
 - d. He was treasurer of the land of Ethiopia, thus had great authority. *Candace* was the general name of rulers in Ethiopia, akin to *Pharaoh* and *Caesar*. Ethiopia lay to the south of Egypt, bordered on the east by the Red Sea and possibly the Indian Ocean, and on the west by the deserts and Libya, and to the south by the interior of Africa. Jews are famous for their money-making and banking. It is possible that this man was a Jew by birth, but this is in no way certain.
3. Verses 28-29: "Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."
- a. The Ethiopian was returning home, seated in a chariot. Since he "commanded" the chariot to stop (verse 38), it appears that someone else was driving. As he rode, he read from the Old Testament Scriptures; the place was in Isaiah. The Spirit told Philip to approach the chariot. We are not told just how the Spirit spoke this message. Such messages were usually given through prophets (see Acts 20:23; 21:10; cf. 13:1-2). Philip evidently had the gift of prophecy (the power to speak for God), hence, the message was no doubt given directly to him. We are not told of anyone else being in his company at the time.
 - b. It is significant, in view of modern false notions about the work of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of alien sinners, that the Spirit had nothing to say or do to the eunuch directly. He operated through the inspired word as spoken by Philip. If a direct operation of the Spirit is true, this would be the ideal place for that information to be delineated.
 - c. Coffman points out the following facts about the eunuch:
 - 1) He was a devout and faithful worshiper of God, living up to all the light he had.
 - 2) He made a journey of fifteen hundred miles to worship in the city where God had commanded Israel to worship.
 - 3) He either took with him on the journey, or procured at Jerusalem, a copy of the prophecy of Isaiah.
 - 4) He was reading aloud from the word of God at the time of his encounter with Philip.
 - 5) He confessed to a stranger that he could not understand what he was reading and that he needed guidance in his study.
 - 6) He invited a preacher of the gospel to sit with him in his chariot.
 - 7) He asked a question concerning a passage of God's word that he could not understand.
 - d. "There are countless men today who have never done any of the things mentioned above; and, when it is considered that this Ethiopian did everything mentioned here, there can be no wonder that God acted providentially to bring him to a knowledge of his full duty and to open for him the door of eternal life" (Coffman, p.171).
4. Verses 30-31: "And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."
- a. Philip ran to meet the chariot. The Ethiopian was reading aloud, for Philip heard him reading from Isaiah. The best possible approach under those circumstances was the one he took—he asked whether he understood the passage. No Jew could explain this passage without the information given in the New Testament. Their view of the Messiah precluded identifying the suffering servant with this great Personage. They conceived the Messiah to be a great earthly king; in their preconceptions they could not understand how he could be described as a suffering servant; thus they concluded that the suffering servant and the Messiah were two different people. But they had no idea who the suffering servant was.
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- b. He replied to Philip, "How can I except some man should guide me?" Here was a man with a hunger and thirst for knowledge. He was ripe for the gospel, but without Philip being present with the truth, he would have continued in his ignorance. He invited the evangelist to board the vehicle and sit with him (thus to teach him).
 - c. "Thus we see, that, though an angel from heaven has appeared, and the Holy Spirit has operated miraculously for the conversion of the sinner, there is still an insuperable necessity for the co-operation of a man. Unless that man does his part of the work, all that has been done by both the angel and the Spirit will prove unavailing. Not the slightest influence from either of the heavenly messengers reaches the sinner's mind or heart, until the preacher begins to speak, and then it reaches him through the words which are spoken. The further process is easily traced. As Philip opens up item after item of the prophesy, and shows its fulfillment in Jesus, the eyes of the eunuch begin to penetrate the Scripture, until, at last, he sees a flood of heavenly light where all was darkness before. His eyes are opened, and he sees the wondrous glory of a suffering Savior beaming from the inspired page which lies before him. This is effected, not by an abstract influence of the Spirit, enabling him to understand what was before obscure, but by the aid of a fellow-man providentially sent to him for the purpose" (McGarvey, p.98).
5. Verses 32-33: "The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."
- a. The place in the Scriptures where he was reading was Isaiah 53. The Jews had long struggled with this prophecy, failing to connect it with the Messiah.
 - b. *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth.* A goat will plead pitifully, long and loud, when facing the knife, but a sheep will submit without a sound. The suffering Savior would be like the sheep in this regard. Christ submitted without a struggle to arrest, to the false charges raised against him, to the horrible miscarriage of justice, to the cruel beating, to the heartless mockings as he hanged on the cross, and to the inexpressibly painful death of crucifixion.
 - c. *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away.* Isaiah accurately predicted the injustice of his case, when he was condemned even though the Roman governor knew he was innocent. He was not guilty of the charges raised against him by his enemies who pressured Pilate until finally the governor acquiesced.
 - d. *Who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.* The Lord would be slain in the prime of life, and from the human perspective, he would leave no progeny. "The idea of extinction is conveyed here, but his apostles and disciples were to declare his generation; the apostles were to bear witness of him, and the Holy Spirit was sent to bear witness of him, and he was now ready to do so through Philip to the eunuch" (Boles, p.137). Hebrews 2:13 speaks of Christ having many descendants: "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Cf. John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:29). His "generation" includes all who have become Christians since the inception of his religion.
6. Verses 34-35: "And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."
- a. Having read the passage indicated, the eunuch asked Philip: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" What better opening could anyone hope to have! Philip began at the same passage and presented Jesus to him.
 - b. "The Jews could not explain that prophesy, for they could not find its facts in the life of any of their great heroes; and though the reference to the Messiah was so palpable as to at once suggest itself to every reader, they would not apply it to him, because their conception of his earthly glory conflicted with the humiliation and suffering described by the prophet. Until now, this very difficulty had been puzzling the mind of the treasurer. But he now sees the prophesy fulfilled; and while the demonstration compels him to believe, the true conception of a bleeding Messiah touches his heart. All this is effected by the Holy Spirit in Philip, *through the words* which Philip spoke" (McGarvey, p.99).
 - c. As in the previous case of the conversion of the Samaritans, the evangelist preached Jesus Christ, which included more than merely presenting the facts that related to the Lord. It is obvious that he spoke on the subject of baptism for the man requested baptism. Preaching Christ logically and necessarily includes (1) providing information about the Lord's entrance into the world (John 3:16; Isa.
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- 7:14; Matt. 1:18ff); (2) his life, teachings, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension; (3) the provisions he made for taking his gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:15-16); (4) the conditions of salvation; (5) the kind of life required of a follower of the Messiah; (6) the obligations of his follower, and (7) the blessings and hope given to the faithful Christian.
7. Verse 36: "And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"
 - a. As they continued their journey on the road toward Gaza, having discussed the information regarding Christ and his requirements for men, the eunuch requested to be baptized. His request grew directly out of the information presented by Philip.
 - b. His only opportunity to learn of the necessity of baptism was through the instructions given by Philip; but Philip had preached Jesus to him; therefore, to preach Jesus includes teaching baptism. The Lord's earthly ministry began with his being baptized by John (Matt. 3:15-17); it concluded with his command to the apostles to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20). Baptism was preached to the people on Pentecost Day (Acts 2) and to the Samaritans (8:1-13).
 - c. Notice that they came unto a certain water; the water was not brought to them. Many have tried to explain away the action of baptism as immersion (as presented in the New Testament), and attempt to justify their practice of affusion. The present case is a very clear presentation of the action of baptism, which utterly refutes the sprinkling-pouring (affusion) concept of baptism.
 - d. One who is truly sincere and honest in wanting to obey God will not balk at baptism or make quibbles to avoid it. Many prospects have to be given hours of instruction and weeks or years of persuasion to be baptized. If the heart desires to serve God, the mind can quickly and easily be shown the importance of baptism to which the heart will gladly acquiesce.
 - e. "The request for baptism on the part of the eunuch was the immediate and direct result of Philip's preaching unto him Jesus; and in this is manifest the fact that preaching Jesus means preaching baptism for the remission of sins. There are some in our generation who fancy that they are preaching Jesus, but whose hearers never request baptism; and in that is manifest the fact that such preachers are not preaching Jesus at all" (Coffman, p.174).
 8. Verse 37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
 - a. This verse is omitted from the American Standard and other recent versions of the Scriptures. The scholars are generally agreed that it is a scribal interpolation and was not part of Luke's original manuscript, although they admit that it is in full harmony with the teachings of the New Testament on the subject of the confession.
 - b. "Verse 37 is left out of the Standard Version, but a footnote is inserted, saying that 'some ancient authorities insert, wholly or in part, verse 37.' It was found in one manuscript in the latter half of the second century as it was quoted by 'Irenaeus,' who was active from the year A.D. 170 to A.D. 210. It is supposed that this verse was written in the margin and later was transcribed as a part of the original text. Even if the verse be an interpolation, and should be left out, it does not change in any way the thought; nothing is added by retaining the verse so far as doctrine is concerned, and nothing certainly is lost by omitting the verse. However, the early records that contain it show that very early in the history of the church such a question was asked and such answer was given" (Boles, pp.138f).
 - c. The statement of verse 37 seems essential, for without it the text would say: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." Philip's question and the eunuch's confession very naturally fill the gap between verse 36 and verse 38.
 - d. The New Testament teachings on the subject of the confession are given in:
 - 1) Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."
 - 2) Romans 10:8-10: "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
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- 3) 1 Timothy 6:12-13: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession."
 - 4) John 9:22: "These *words* spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."
 - 5) Matthew 16:16-18: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
- e. "The Church of Christ, like every other useful organization, is created and sustained by the obligations of some truth. This truth may be properly styled the foundation of the organization, because it is that from which it springs, and without which it could not exist. The truth declared in the confession, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is, beyond controversy, the foundation of the Church of Christ, and is so declared by Jesus himself (Matt. 16:16-18)...Inasmuch as some have conceived that Jesus in person is the foundation of the Church, it may be well to observe here that there is no way in which an organization can be built on a person, except by believing something in reference to him. It is not the fact that there is such a *person* as Jesus, but that that person is the *Christ* which gave existence to the Church" (McGarvey, pp.101f).
 - f. The efficacy of the confession is seen by noting that which it excludes when it is sincerely made. "It is certainly exclusive enough to keep out the pagan, the Jew, the Mohammedan, the atheist, and the infidel; for none of these can honestly make the confession. It will exclude the Unitarian and the Universalist; for while they are willing to confess that Jesus is the Christ, in the next breath they deny him, by contradicting some of his most emphatic declarations. It will also exclude the wicked and the impenitent; for it is offered only to penitent believers. If that is not considered sufficient, we may advance still further, and say that it will exclude the Roman Catholic, who persists in having other intercessors in heaven besides the high priest of our *confession* [Heb. 3:1]. It will exclude the devotee of the mourning bench, who waits for an operation of the Spirit before he comes to Christ. It will exclude the pedobaptist, who is satisfied with his sprinkling; for it requires an immediate immersion. None of these characters can scripturally make the good confession without some specific change in views or in character" (McGarvey, p.105).
 - g. Philip stated that he could be baptized if he believed with all his heart. Anything less is insufficient (cf. Rom. 6:17). His response: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." No greater confession could be made.
9. Verses 38-40: "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea."
- a. When Philip saw that the eunuch was sincerely desiring to be baptized, there was no delay in fulfilling his request. Note the specific language of the text describing his baptism: they came unto a certain water; they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; the man requesting baptism was baptized; they came up out of the water. It is obvious to the fair mind that an immersion took place. The implications of the report that the eunuch's baptism was an immersion in water is unmistakable.
 - b. They came to the water; the water was not brought to them. They both went down into the water and they came up out of the water. The baptism took place while they were down in the water. It is illogical to think that Philip would have conducted the eunuch down into the water just to sprinkle or pour a small amount of it upon him. If affusion is baptism, why would he need even to stop the chariot, much less dismount, wade out into the water, and apply the liquid. He would have been better served to have used a little of the drinking water the eunuch doubtless had with him.
 - c. McGarvey gives some interesting and practical comments to show that the eunuch was immersed: "It was either immersion or affusion; the latter term embracing both the specific acts of sprinkling and pouring. This is admitted by all parties; for, although some contend that either act will serve the purposes of a valid baptism, no one, at the present day, contends that the *apostles* practiced *both*.

Those who contend for affusion deny that the apostles of John the harbinger practiced immersion; while those who contend for immersion deny that they practiced affusion. It is as if A and B were brought into court for trial in reference to the murder of C. It is admitted by both the parties, and known to the counsel, the jurors, the judge, the sheriff, and the spectators, that the murder was committed by one of these two parties. Now, whatever evidence might be presented to exculpate A, would have precisely the same tendency to the conviction of B. And if the demonstration of A's innocence were complete, the jury would render a verdict against B, though not a witness had testified directly to his guilt. Just so in the present case. Whatever evidence can be found against the affusion of the eunuch and others, is good to the same extent in favor of their immersion, and *vice versa*" (p.108).

- d. John baptized in Aenon because there was much water there (John 3:23). He baptized them in the Jordan River (Mark 1:5; John 1:28; 3:26; Matt. 3:5-6, 13). It is unreasonable to suppose that John baptized people in Jordan by sprinkling water on them; the stated facts argue for immersion. The Philippian jailer decided to become a Christian at midnight (Acts 16:30-34). If baptism is by affusion, why did Paul take him and his family outside the house during the middle of the night to perform this rite? Paul was an intelligent man and acted rationally; he took them to a place where there was sufficient water for an immersion. This is the only rational explanation for why John baptized where there was much water; why Paul took the jailer and his family outside during the night; and why both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water.
 - 1) Baptism is described as a birth of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). "But there is no conceivable analogy between a birth and an application of water by affusionThe expression forces the mind to something like a birth, which can be found only in the act of drawing the body out of water, which takes place in immersion. This, alone, could have suggested the metaphor to the mind of Jesus, and to this our minds intuitively run when we hear the words pronounced....The next allusion to which we invite attention is that in which Jesus calls the unspeakable sufferings which were to terminate his life, 'The *baptism* with which I am to be *baptized*.' Here the term baptism is used metaphorically for his sufferings, which could not be unless there is, in literal baptism, something analogous to the overwhelming agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary. The soul revolts at the supposition that a mere sprinkling, or pouring of water on the face, could have supplied this analogy, and intuitively demands something like the sweep of water over the sinking body, which is witnessed in immersion. Immersion supplies the analogy, and it must be the meaning of the term baptism, if there is any meaning in the Savior's mournful words....Paul exhorts the brethren to draw near to God, 'having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our *bodies washed* with pure water' (Heb. 10:22). Here is an allusion to the sprinkled blood of Christ, as cleansing the heart from an evil conscience, and to baptism as a *washing of the body*. But this language is inconsistent with the idea of sprinkling or pouring a little water on the face, which could, by no propriety of speech, be styled a *washing of the body*. Nothing but immersion will meet the demands of the expression, for the words describe what takes place in immersion, and in no other ordinance of the New Testament. Peter's allusion is quite similar to this. He says: 'Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the seeking of a good conscience toward God.' Now Peter could not have supplied the words, 'Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,' unless there was something in baptism which might possibly be mistaken for this. But it would be impossible for any one to so mistake sprinkling, while immersion might be readily mistaken for a cleansing of the flesh. Peter, then, knew that immersion, and not affusion, was baptism, and so indicates by this language" (McGarvey, pp.110f).
 - 2) Plain statements are given in Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 which directly describe baptism as a burial. Greek lexicons list the meaning of *baptidzo* as "to immerse, to submerge, to plunge, to dip" (see Vine, p.97; Thayer, p.94; *Handbook on Baptism*, p.356).
- e. Following the baptism of the man of Ethiopia, the Holy Spirit caught away Philip, and the eunuch rejoiced as he continued his journey homeward. Luke reports that the two never met again (in this life). What did the eunuch do when he got home? We may only speculate, for the inspired record is silent. It is reasonable to assume that he arrived safely, that he remained faithful, and that he was able to influence others to obey the gospel. "Let us suppose that the eunuch, as he went on his way rejoicing, met some one who noticed that he was very happy and ventured to ask him the reason for it. What would the eunuch have told him? He could not have told him about the instruction which

the angel and the Spirit gave Philip; for he did not know of that. He could only have told him what happened at the time, and subsequent to the time, that Philip approached him and rode with him along the road" (ALC, 1962, p.123).

- f. Those who obeyed the gospel in Acts often rejoiced; they understood the nature of their present condition as it contrasted with their former state. There was good reason to rejoice! "One grand purpose of this book is to reveal how men become Christians; and, taken collectively, the various conversions in Acts reveal one plan of salvation and one alone. Invariably, those who were saved:
- 1) Heard the word of God.
 - 2) They believed what was preached.
 - 3) They believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 4) They repented of their sins.
 - 5) They confessed the Saviour.
 - 6) They were immersed, that is, baptized into Christ.
 - 7) They received forgiveness of their sins.
 - 8) They rejoiced in salvation (see Coffman, p.175).
- g. The Holy Spirit had told Philip to engage the man of Ethiopia in conversation; it was the same Spirit that directed him in another direction following the conversion of this man. It was to Azotus to which Philip now went. Azotus is the name given to the ancient Philistine city, Ashdod. "It was about thirty miles from Gaza, on the way to Joppa....The route which Philip would naturally take on his journey [from Azotus to Caesarea] led through Lydda and Joppa and we may trace the effects of his preaching in the appearance in Acts 9:32,36" (Boles, p.140). Philip is later shown to have taken up residence in Caesarea (Acts 21:8).
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ACTS 9

A. Acts 9:1-9: The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

1. Verses 1-2: "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."
 - a. Saul is again brought to our attention by the inspired historian, being first mentioned in Acts 7:58; his dedicated opposition to the church is described in Acts 8:1-3. We are told elsewhere that he was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia which was located in southeastern Asia Minor, but was brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:1-3). He was of the tribe of Benjamin, and was a Pharisee (Ph. 3:4-5; Acts 26:5). He describes himself (by inspiration) as having always had a pure conscience (Acts 23:1; 2 Tim. 1:3). His is an excellent illustration of the fact that, although a good conscience is essential, it is no proof that one is pleasing to the Almighty. He maintained a good, pure conscience even while harshly persecuting the saints and opposing the cause of Christ.
 - b. Saul continued his persecution of the church. The events of this passage appear to have taken place in close connection (and in time) with the martyrdom of Stephen, about the year 37 A.D. He furnished some details of his hatred of the gospel in Acts 26:9-11 (cf. Acts 8:3). In the text, Luke reports that Saul continued breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints.
 - c. Concerning Saul's history, McGarvey offers these comments: "The supposition that he left the school [of Gamaliel] and returned to Tarsus previous to the immersion preached by John, and reappeared in Jerusalem after the ascension of Jesus, is most agreeable to all the known facts in the case. By an absence of a few years he had not forfeited his former reputation, but appears now as a leader in the movements against the Church. We have already, in commenting on Acts 6:9, ventured the assumption, that among the Cilicians there mentioned as opponents of Stephen, Saul bore a leading part as a disputant. Such a position his superior learning and piety would naturally assign him, and his prominence at the stoning of Stephen affords evidence in favor of this assumption....After the death of Stephen, he still maintained the position of a leader, and continued to commit men and women to prison, until the Church was entirely dispersed. Many of those committed to prison met with the fate of Stephen. This fact is not stated by Luke, but is confessed by Paul in his speech before Agrippa. (Acts 26:10). Many others were beaten in the synagogues, and compelled to blaspheme the name of Jesus as the condition of release from their tortures" (Acts 27:19; 26:11) (p.114).
 - d. The scattering of the saints did not put to silence the "heresy" they had accepted; rather, they "went every where preaching the word" (8:4). From Saul's viewpoint, a bad situation had been made worse: the disciples of Christ had spread to scores of other locations, spouting forth the hated doctrine in every place. Thus, he went to the high priest to obtain authority to go to Damascus searching for them, with the purpose of arresting them and bringing them under bonds back to Jerusalem to be punished.
 - e. How could the Jewish high priest have the right to empower Saul with this authority to arrest Jews in a foreign land? "Of course, the Sanhedrin 'claimed over the Jews in foreign cities the same power, in religious questions, which they exercised in Jerusalem.' However, it was the death of Tiberius, leading to a loss of Roman control of Damascus during the reigns of Caligula and Claudia, which made it possible for the arrogant Sanhedrin to pursue their goals with such impunity at that particular time. It is not certainly known just who ruled Damascus during this period, but the eclipse of Roman authority for a time is proved by the fact that no coins with the image of Caligula or Claudius have been discovered there, whereas there have been found many with the image of Augustus or Tiberius who preceded them, and many with the images of emperors who succeeded them, thus leaving a gap..." (Coffman, p.178).
 - f. The disciples are described as "any of this way." Similar references are also found elsewhere in Acts [19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; cf. Acts 16:17; 18:25; John 14:6].
2. Verse 3: "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven."
 - a. Having received the requested authority, Saul and his company journeyed to the city of Damascus. It was about 140 miles from Jerusalem to Damascus, requiring about five or six days to cover on foot. Nearing the city, a light from heaven suddenly shone around them. A careful comparison of this account with the other reports Paul makes of these same events in Acts 22:1-16 and Acts 26:9-20 is

- essential to a correct and full understanding of the story.
- b. It was about noon when the light fell upon them (22:6); it was even brighter than the sun (26:13); the whole company fell to the earth (26:14). Some have supposed that they traveled on horses or camels, but it may have been by "shank's mare" (on foot). Saul's companions are not identified. They may have been associates from Cilicia; it is evident that they did not understand the Hebrew language in which Christ spoke with Saul (26:14). This explains why they are said to have "heard not the voice of him that spake to me" (22:9). "Hear" is often used in the scriptures to mean "understand" or "accept." "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60). The whole company could hear the sound of the voice, but only Saul could understand the words spoken in Hebrew.
3. Verses 4-5: "And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*"
 - a. The light frightened the company so that they all fell to the earth. A voice addressed Saul: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul had no idea who it was that spoke to him, as shown by his response in the next verse. But how could the Lord say that Saul's persecution of the saints was directed to the Lord? Christians comprise the body of Christ, hence to persecute the body is to persecute the Head (Col. 1:18; cf. Matt. 25:34-40; Luke 10:16).
 - b. Saul asked the speaker to identify himself, using the term "Lord" to indicate his recognition of the speaker's superiority to himself. The Lord quickly identified himself as Jesus.
 - c. "It is impossible for us, who have been familiar with the glory of our risen Savior from our infancy, to fully appreciate the feelings which must have flashed, like lightning, into the soul of Saul, upon hearing these words. Up to this moment he had supposed Jesus an impostor, cursed of God and man; and his followers blasphemers worthy of death; but now, this despised being is suddenly revealed to him in a blaze of divine glory. The evidence of his eyes and ears can not be doubted. There he stands, with the light of heaven and the glory of God around him, and he says, 'I am Jesus!'" (McGarvey, p.116).
 - d. Paul later plainly declared by a rhetorical question and clear statement that he had seen Christ.
 - 1) Acts 9:17: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 9:1: "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?"
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:8: "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."
 - e. Knowledge of his own sinfulness in rejecting and opposing the Lord now flooded his consciousness. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:13-15).
 - f. The Lord added, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The *pricks* were the goads which were used to urge oxen onward. "...Saul's conscience had not been altogether at rest during his persecutions, but that, like an unruly ox, he had been kicking against a goad, which urged him to a different course. Although he had acted ignorantly, and in unbelief, yet it was with so many misgivings, that he ever afterward regarded himself as the *chief of sinners*, having been the chief of persecutors. His conscience must have been instantaneously aroused by this reference to its past goadings" (McGarvey, p.116). But since he had ever lived in all good conscience before God (Acts 23:1), the more logical meaning seems to be: "You are fighting a losing battle, Saul, just as the oxen do who kick against the goads."
 4. Verse 6: "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."
 - a. Saul's reaction to this new information is described: it left him trembling and astonished! "The glorious power of the one great gospel proposition was never more forcibly illustrated than on this occasion. A moment ago, Saul was sternly, and with fearful calmness, pressing to the destruction of the cause of Jesus, but now he is a trembling suppliant at his feet. What has produced this change? It is not the fact that he has seen a light, and heard a voice. For when he fell to the ground in alarm, his unbelief and ignorance still remained, and he still had to ask the question, 'Who art thou?' Thus

far, he is no more convinced that Jesus is the Christ than he was before; but he is convinced that the vision is divine, and this prepares him to believe what he may further hear" (McGarvey, pp.116f).

- b. Having now heard that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had been opposing, was really from God, turned Saul into a penitent believer. This change was effected by the testimony given to him by Christ. Faith came to him by hearing this infallible word (cf. Rom. 10:17; Acts 15:7). As we shall see, Saul was not converted by some supernatural action of the Holy Spirit upon his heart; he was converted by the very process by which everyone today is saved: hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Acts 18:8). His penitence is later plainly demonstrated by his fasting and praying for three days (vs. 9). It was godly sorrow which was caused by faith that led him to repent (2 Cor. 7:10).
 - c. Saul's humble response to the Lord's identification of himself was the proper one: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We are not told how long a space of time passed between the Lord's previous statement and Saul's present question. It may have only been a moment or perhaps several moments; whatever the amount of time, the result was that Saul was now a penitent believer, but was still unsaved. Most sectarians say that he was saved right at this moment, but if so, he did not know it, for he asked what the Lord required of him. And if he was saved, he was the most miserable saved person on record, for he fasted and prayed for the next three days. If he was saved, the Lord did not know it, for he told him to go into the city and there he would receive the proper instructions. If he was saved on the road to Damascus, the preacher (Ananias) did not know it, for he told him to be baptized in order for his sins to be removed (Acts 22:16).
 - d. Christ told him to go into the city, and there he would be told what he *must* do. The word "must" indicates obligation (cf. Acts 10:6, 48; Matt. 26:54; 1 Cor. 15:53, 50). The first thing he must do was to obey the gospel (Acts 22:16). He was then told about the great mission he had been selected to fulfill as an apostle of Christ to the Gentiles (26:16-20). Neither the angel nor the Holy Spirit directly approached the man of Ethiopia (Acts 8:26ff); Jesus did not personally tell Saul what he must do to be saved. The Lord had appointed the means by which this information was to be imparted: through the preaching of his human agents. The rich man who lost his soul in torment (Luke 16:19-31) could not expect anyone from the hadean world to go and warn his five sinful brothers; if they rejected the law of Moses, there was not hope for them.
5. Verses 7-9: "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."
- a. The other men in his company stood speechless; they heard the voice but they saw not the speaker. They presumed the speaker was a man, but he was invisible to them. Acts 22:9 says they did not hear "the voice of him that spake" to Saul. Acts 26:14 shows that the Lord used the Hebrew language, which obviously the other men could not understand. They heard the sound of the Lord's voice but they did not comprehend the meaning of his words. As noted above, the Bible sometimes speaks of hearing something in the sense of understanding and accepting it (John 6:60).
 - b. Saul had seen the Lord in the blinding light for he later announced that he had seen him (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Acts 22:14). He was left blinded by this experience. His associates led him by the hand into the city where he was left at the house of Judas on the street called "Straight." Here he remained, fasting and praying, for three days. As the Lord was three days and nights in the hadean realm (and his body was in the tomb for the same period of time), so Saul the persecutor was allowed to fast and pray, mourning over his sins, for the same space of time.
- B. Acts 9:10-22: Saul's Conversion to Christ and His First Efforts at Preaching the Gospel.
1. Verses 10-12: "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord. And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight."
 - a. There was a certain disciple, named Ananias, to whom the Lord appeared in a vision. This was a common Jewish name; we have already had one man by that name to appear in the book of Acts (ch. 5). This man was respected by both Jew and Christian (22:12). Notice that he is simply introduced as a "disciple"—not by any title.
 - b. The Lord told him to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and find Saul of Tarsus, who was

- praying. "It will be observed, that, in these directions, the Lord does not tell Ananias what to tell Saul to *do*. This omission only proves that Ananias already knew perfectly what such a person *should* be told to do, and corresponds with the fact that the things in which he was to be instructed were 'the things appointed for him to do'" (McGarvey, p.119).
- c. Christ further told Ananias that Saul had seen in a vision a man by the name of Ananias coming to him to restore his sight. It was through the instrumentality of Ananias that Saul received his sight. Some think that when Paul later spoke of his thorn in the flesh, that it was weak eyesight that afflicted him; but since the Lord was behind the restoring of his sight, and since the Lord never performed any half-complete miracle, we may be certain that Paul had good eyesight when it was restored.
2. Verses 13-16: "Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."
 - a. Ananias had some doubts about approaching Saul for he knew about this man's reason for being in Damascus. Reports about the evil Saul had brought against the saints at Jerusalem were already broadcast. Ananias stated that it was for the purpose of arresting the followers of Christ that Saul had come to Damascus. Observe that those who are obedient to Christ are described as those "that call on thy name." "Calling on the name of the Lord" is simply a way of saying that they "obey Christ."
 - b. Christ assured Ananias that Saul had been chosen for a special, great work: that of bearing the Lord's name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. The prophecy of Isaiah 62:2 was fulfilled primarily through the work of Paul: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." The name *Christian* was given to the saints only after Paul had begun his great work and had been brought to Antioch (Acts 11:26). He was a *chosen vessel*, selected by Christ for a great work. Paul, and the other inspired members of the church, were "earthen vessels" bearing the treasure of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:7). Paul's great chore was to bear the name of the Lord (preach the gospel) before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. In doing this, he would be required to endure many hardships for the Lord (2 Cor. 11:24-28).
 3. Verse 17: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."
 - a. Ananias followed the Lord's directions, entered the house where Saul was, put his hands on him, addressing him as "Brother Saul." This statement has led some to think that Saul was converted on the road to Damascus, or else Ananias could not have properly addressed him as *brother*. But both men were fellow Jews, thus could speak of each other as *brother*. Also, Ananias could address him as his brother in anticipation, since Saul was in a moment to become a Christian.
 - b. Saul had seen a vision, during his three-day ordeal of fasting and praying, of a man named Ananias coming in to lay his hand on him "that he might receive his sight" (9:12). When the preacher did this, Saul received his sight again (vs. 18).
 - c. Ananias knew what had happened to Saul on the road; he bore the name of the man Saul saw in his vision (vs. 12). If the man of Tarsus needed any further convincing this would do so.
 - d. Some think that Ananias conferred the Holy Spirit on Saul in a baptismal *measure* in the same process. The text does not teach this. It simply states that Saul was to receive sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit subsequent to the arrival of Ananias. "This shows that his reception of the Spirit in some way depended upon the presence of Ananias, but does not imply that he received it by imposition of hands. All the other apostles received it direct from heaven, without human agency (Acts 2:1-4). They received it after they had been immersed; for the fact that Jesus preached the immersion of John, and caused the twelve to administer it under his eye, is proof that they themselves had submitted to it. Moreover, in every other case in the New Testament, with the single exception of Cornelius, the gift of miraculous power followed immersion. These facts furnish a firm basis for the conclusion that Saul's inspiration was awaiting his immersion; and that it depended upon the visit of Ananias, because he was sent to immerse him that he might receive pardon and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (McGarvey, p.121).
 - e. The Samaritans had to wait the arrival of Peter and John (apostles) before they received miraculous
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- gifts. The New Testament shows that only an apostle had the power to confer those spiritual gifts (Rom. 1:11; Acts 8:14-18). Since Saul (Paul) was a full-fledged apostle (2 Cor. 12:11-12), he also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit which the other apostles were given (Acts 1:5,8), even though the New Testament does not give the details of his reception of it. Christ is the only administrator of Holy Spirit baptism (Matt. 3:11). Therefore, Ananias did not administer Holy Spirit baptism to Saul. Ananias was the instrument through whom Saul received the miraculous restoration of his sight.
4. Verse 18: "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."
 - a. The miracle of the restoration of his eyesight was immediate (and complete). The return of his sight is pictured as scales falling from his eyes. These were not literal scales, but merely a figurative description given by Luke. Saul then arose and was baptized. Acts 22:16 shows that Ananias commanded Saul to arise and be baptized and have his sins washed away. Our text states that Saul quickly complied with the instructions.
 - b. Sectarian preachers will not give this command (22:16) to mourning believers. McGarvey relates that he asked an opponent in debate whether he would tell a group of penitent believers what Peter said (Acts 2:37-38) or what Ananias said (22:16). He refused to reply, hanging his head in silence (pp.122f). A doctrine that will not allow one to quote an appropriate Bible statement originally given in response to a similar modern situation is a false doctrine.
 - c. Anyone who claims Saul was saved on the road to Damascus cannot explain Acts 22:16. The purpose of his baptism as stated in 22:16 would be all wrong if he were already saved! Modern versions of the scriptures incorporate denominational theology in many verses, including Acts 22:16. One version has the audacity to have Ananias say, "Get up and be baptized and have your sins washed away by calling on his name" (*Today's English Version*). But even this is at variance with common sectarian doctrine, for according to the view, Saul was already saved before entering Damascus.
 5. Verses 19-20: "And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."
 - a. Saul was in a weakened state due to his three-day fast and the emotional ordeal of those three days. He now ate and was strengthened, and abode with the disciples at Damascus for a period of time. It was undoubtedly during this early period of his Christian life that he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for he soon began to preach the gospel in the synagogues, silencing the opposition with his knowledge and wisdom.
 - b. A novice in Christianity could not have done this, and the information necessary to do so is a long time coming if it is obtained by the usual means. But with the power provided by Holy Spirit baptism, Saul could easily do what is said of him (vs. 22).
 - c. Somewhere in this time frame, he visited Arabia, after which he returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:17). Three years later he went up to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18-19). Following this, he went into Syria and Cilicia, and remained unknown personally to the congregations in Judea (Gal. 1:21-22). But the brethren there knew of him, and glorified God because of his conversion (Gal. 1:23-24).
 6. Verses 21-22: "But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."
 - a. The Jews were amazed over the tremendous change they saw in Saul. Galatians 1:23 describes him as now preaching the faith which once he sought to destroy. He was the strongest opponent of the church prior to his conversion; following his change, he soon became one of the most ardent proclaimers and defenders it has ever had.
 - b. His former associates would naturally be inquisitive as to why he had been converted. This would afford him a ready-made audience. Unbelieving Jews would also be filled with animosity toward him, hence the following section details his escape from Damascus.
 - c. He increased in strength, that is, in his ability to present and defend the truth. His presentations confounded the Jews and proved that Jesus is truly the Messiah. Having seen Christ in the vision, he who had formerly been an avid adversary of Jesus now offered sufficient evidence to prove that Jesus is truly the Christ.
 - d. "'Proving' is from the Greek 'sunbibazon,' and means that Saul put things side by side, and so making
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a comparison and forming a conclusion that Jesus was the Christ. Saul not only grew in Christian life, but he also grew as a preacher of the gospel. He not only proved that Jesus is the Christ, but he 'confounded the Jews,' which means that they were 'poured together, conmingled'" (Boles, p.149).

- e. "If the vision which he claimed to have witnessed was a reality, then Jesus is the Christ, and his religion is divine. But if it was not a reality, then Saul was deceived, or was himself a deceiver. His blindness precludes the supposition that he could have been deceived. Was he, then, a deceiver? His whole subsequent career declares that he was not. All the motives, in reference to both time and eternity, which can prompt men to deception, were arrayed against the course he was pursuing. His reputation among men, his hopes of wealth and power, his love of friendship, and his personal safety, all demanded that he should adhere to his former religious position. In making the change, he sacrificed them all, and, if he was practicing deception, he exposed himself, also, to whatever punishment he might suppose the wicked to incur in eternity. It is possible to believe that a man might, through miscalculation as to the immediate results, *begin* to practice a deception which would involve such consequences; but it is entirely incredible that he should continue to do so after his mistake was discovered, and persist in it through a long life of unparalleled sufferings. It is incredible, therefore, that Saul was a deceiver. And, as he was neither deceived himself, nor a deceiver of others, his vision must have been a reality, and Jesus *is* the Christ" (McGarvey, pp.124f). The only other alternative is to deny the inspiration of Acts!
- f. We have brethren today who assert that the Bible was never intended to be a source book of information for argumentation. This *New Hermeneutic* argues that if one brings together assorted facts from the Scriptures, the conclusion reached is merely an opinion. But the Bible is the written record of what was orally taught by inspired men of the first century. Saul put various inspired facts together and reached infallible conclusions which confounded the Jews and proved that Jesus is Christ. When we do the same, and draw the logical conclusion clearly implied, what is learned is what God taught; it is not an unreliable opinion of man.

C. Acts 9:23-31: Saul Escapes from Damascus, and is Brought to the Apostles.

1. Verses 23-25: "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket."
 - a. Saul's bold preaching and defense of the gospel aroused strong opposition. The Jews, consistent with their history, banded together in a plot to destroy Saul. If he was no longer with them, they would not permit him free rein to present the gospel message. They watched the gates of the city day and night, to find him and put him to death. They had allowed him to preach for "many days" but now they had had enough; he had to die! Saul the persecutor had now become Saul the persecuted!
 - b. The disciples learned of the plot, and designed a plan by which he could be delivered from the enemy: at night he was lowered over the wall of the city in a basket. He later wrote of these events: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands" (2 Cor. 11:32-33). It was impossible for him to continue his work in Damascus, but he could be of valuable service in other places. The Lord calls on his people to be ready to endure persecution, but if there is an honorable way to avoid it without compromising the truth or our integrity, we are to take it.
2. Verses 26-27: "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."
 - a. When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the disciples there, but they feared him, rejecting the idea that he had been converted to Christ. One can see how they could think his claim to be a disciple might only be a clever ruse by which to locate the saints for the purpose of persecuting them.
 - b. Some have tried to find, in the wording of this verse, approval for the idea of "joining the church." However, Luke's statement merely describes Saul's attempt to have fellowship with the disciples in Jerusalem; he had already been added to the church when he obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:38-47; 9:18).
 - c. Barnabas took Saul and brought him to the apostles, relating how he had seen the Lord on the road to Damascus and that he had boldly preached the truth in that city. Barnabas has previously been introduced to us in Acts 4:36-37, where his great generosity is revealed. He is further described in

- Acts 11:22-24 as "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." He is later shown to have been a courageous and diligent worker in the kingdom (Acts 13-14). In our text, he did the church and the world an invaluable service by bringing Saul of Tarsus into fellowship with the rest of the church.
3. Verses 28-30: "And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."
 - a. Saul's great love for the truth and lost souls soon led him into discussions regarding the gospel. He spoke boldly by the authority of Jesus, disputing against the Grecians in Jerusalem. "During his three years' absence from Jerusalem, the persecution of which he had been the leader had so far abated that the Hellenists were once more willing to debate the points at issue. But they found in their new opponent one equally invincible with Stephen, and, in the madness of defeat, resolved that Stephen's fate should be his" (McGarvey, p.126).
 - b. When the brethren learned of the danger he faced, they conducted him to Caesarea and sent him on to Tarsus, his home town. This escape was not entirely based on the judgment of the brethren or his own, for in Acts 22:17-21 he reports that the Lord communicated to him in a trance, telling him to leave Jerusalem. Arriving in Tarsus, he remained there for a period of time until Barnabas went there to bring him to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). He refers to this stay in Tarsus by his remarks in Galatians 1:21-24. Knowing Paul as we do, we may be sure he continued his labors for Christ during this sojourn in his home town in Cilicia.
 4. Verse 31: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."
 - a. The saints then began to enjoy a period of rest from persecution. The congregations scattered throughout the provinces of Judea, Galilee and Samaria are included. The ASV has the singular word *church*, while the KJV has the plural.
 - b. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." All persecution and no rest can break down the will of saints to continue the fight of faith. Thus, the Lord brought about this cessation of trouble for a time, and allowed his people to grow in strength for the later persecutions which were sure to arise. During this peaceful period, the church was edified ("built up").
 - c. The word translated *comfort* is from the same word used in John 15:16. This special Greek term comprehends much more than the idea of "comfort." Scholars say that we have no single English word that conveys the full meaning of this Greek term. Literally, the word means, "called to one's side, to one's aid; is primarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It is used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defence, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another's cause, an intercessor, advocate, as in I John 2:1, of the Lord Jesus" (Vine, p.208).
 - 1) John 14:16 describes the Holy Spirit as **another** Comforter; Christ was the first one the apostles had; the Spirit would be the second. The second would be like the first but distinctive from him.
 - 2) The word "Comforter" is found four times (John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The same word also is used in 1 John 2:1 in reference to Christ (translated as "Advocate").
 - 3) The promise of the Holy Spirit as Comforter was made only to the apostles; the promise was never extended to Christians in general. As Comforter, the Holy Spirit would furnish the apostles all those powers which Holy Spirit baptism provided them as apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 12:11-13).
 - 4) The Holy Spirit's work was to reveal all truth to the apostles, and through them by the laying on of their hands on the other selected inspired men. He guided them in receiving, proclaiming, confirming, defending, and recording the revelation of the New Testament. When this work of revealing, confirming, proclaiming, defending, and recording the New Testament was completed, the Holy Spirit ended his work as "Comforter." Since then the world has been blessed with the results of his work: the written, inspired, infallible, and eternal word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:3). Holy Spirit baptism was intended only for certain selected men, the apostles. No promise of it was ever made to believers in general. By seeing what the baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to do, we can know that it was a special promise to them only. Is there anyone on earth today who possesses the same power and authority as the apostles received? Indeed, there is not so much as one!
 - 5) Thus, through this means of inspired teaching, the church was "comforted."
 - d. Boles points out that at this time, a stable government was established in Syria; Caligula set up his

statue in the temple which drew the Jews' attention away from the church; and Herod Agrippa I became ruler in Judea and Samaria. These political changes worked to provide the period of peace for the church. The brethren walked in the fear of the Lord, in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and were multiplied. The Spirit comforts through the word and providence. The counsel of Gamaliel was vindicated (5:34-40): the Jews fought unsuccessfully against the cause of Christ!

D. Acts 9:32-35: Peter Heals Aeneas at Lydda.

1. Verse 32: "And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda."
 - a. Peter was last mentioned in chapter 8 when he and John bestowed spiritual gifts to the Samaritan saints and had further preached the gospel in other Samaritan villages as they returned to Jerusalem. In the interval between, Luke reported the conversion accounts of the man of Ethiopia and Saul of Tarsus. Saul had been given the office of *apostle of Christ* and had begun his great work.
 - b. Luke returns to the experiences of Peter, primarily for the purpose of relating how the first Gentiles received the gospel (in the next chapter). But before the conversion story of Cornelius is given, Peter's miracles of healing Aeneas and raising Dorcas from the dead are reported.
 - c. He begins this new segment by noting some of the activities of Peter. He had gone through all parts (Judea, Samaria, etc.); he came to the saints which were at the city of Lydda. This place is called Lud or Lod in the Old Testament (1 Chron. 8:12; Ezra 2:33). It was located about 9 miles east of Joppa, which was situated on the seacoast northwest of Jerusalem.
2. Verses 33-34: "And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."
 - a. A certain disciple named Aeneas was among the saints at Lydda. He had been confined to his bed for eight years due to palsy. This was a paralysis which afflicted a part of or the entire body. "The term is used by the ancient physicians in a much wider sense than by our modern men of science; it included not only what we call paralysis, but also catalepsy and tetanus; that is, cramps and lockjaw" (Boles, p.155). It was incurable by ancient medicine, but Christ was able to heal it instantly (Mt. 4:23; 12:10; Mk. 2:3-12).
 - b. Peter told Aeneas that "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." He was instructed to get up and make his bed. The healing was instantly done and Aeneas immediately arose. There was no long, drawn-out commotion; Peter simply pronounced the miracle to be done and the patient was healed.
3. Verse 35: "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord."
 - a. The individual would have been known by many to have been truly afflicted, since he had been bed-ridden for so long. Thus, when he was healed, there was great confirming value in the miracle. This is one of many cases which verified Mark 16:20, that the Lord worked with his people, confirming their word with miraculous signs.
 - b. As a result of the miracle, many people in that area (Lydda and Saron) saw Aeneas after his healing and turned to the Lord. The miracle proved the message preached by the saints to be true; those citizens indicated believed and obeyed the gospel.

E. Acts 9:36-43: Peter Raises Dorcas from the Dead.

1. Verse 36: "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did."
 - a. In Joppa, about nine miles from Lydda, there dwelt a disciple by the name of Tabitha, who was also known as Dorcas ("Doe" or "Gazelle" or "Roe"—Song of Solomon 4:5). This Christian was well-known for her good works and almsdeeds. If men took note of her benevolence, how much more did God! Enough to specifically mention her in his holy word!
 - 1) Proverbs 19:17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
 - 2) Matthew 10:42: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."
 - b. "Amid the array of solemn and stately events which are moving before us, [this story] is dropped in, like a flower in the forest. It opens a vista through the larger events of history, and lets in light upon the social sorrows of the early saints, awakening a closer sympathy between our hearts and theirs. We here see enacted among them scenes with which we are familiar, when one who has been noted for good works sickens and dies: the same anxiety felt by all; the same desire for the presence of him who

- had been their religious counselor; the same company of weeping sisters, and brethren standing by in mournful silence. As each good deed of the departed is recounted by some sobbing voice, and the garments 'which she made while she was with us,' to clothe the poor, are held up to view, how the eyes gush! how the heart swells! The labors of a whole life of piety are pouring their rich influence, unresisted, into softened hearts. How blessed are the dead who die in the Lord! They rest from their labors, but their works do follow them, still working while they are at rest" (McGarvey, p.129).
2. Verses 37-38: "And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them."
 - a. This good lady grew sick and died. Her friends washed her body and laid it in an upper chamber. We are not told her age, nothing is said about her family, and the nature of the fatal ailment is left unspecified. Her obituary was her good works. The fact that this fine Christian got sick and died shows that just because one is righteous does not insulate him from disease and death. The "Christian Scientists" think that pain, sickness, and death are only illusions. Case histories in the Bible show that the illusion is their own false doctrine!
 - b. The brethren had heard about Peter being in Lydda. They quickly dispatched two men to go and bring Peter back without delay. Why did they send for Peter? For the comfort he could give them in this hour of grief? Did they think that he might raise Dorcas?
 3. Verse 39: "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them."
 - a. Peter returned to Joppa with the messengers, and when he arrived, he was taken into the upper room where Dorcas' body had been laid. All the widows stood by him, weeping, and showing him the coats and garments which she had made "while she was with them."
 - b. Although these widows are not identified as Christians, it is undoubtedly the case that they were fellow-saints with Dorcas. These widows may have been the very people who had been the objects of Dorcas' benevolence, or they could have been her fellow-workers in these good deeds.
 - c. The body of Dorcas was lying before these people, yet they spoke of Dorcas as not being present ("while she was with us"). The body of Jesus was placed in the tomb, but Jesus was somewhere else. The body of Dorcas was present in the upper chamber, but Dorcas was not there. This shows that there is something to a person that is distinct from the body (Jas. 2:26; Eccl. 12:7; 2 Sam. 12:23). The doctrine of the Jehovah-Witness cult, the Adventist sect, and others like them, which deny the existence of the human soul (spirit) that is eternal in nature, is false!
 4. Verse 40: "But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up."
 - a. The apostle sent all those with him out of the room. He kneeled down and prayed. Luke does not report the words of his prayer, but obviously they were in the behalf of Dorcas and the miracle he anticipated. Our hearts are turned to God in the presence of a dead loved one. Our prayers are truly fervent then. Peter's prayer of faith (1 Cor. 12:9; Jas. 5:14-15) was heard and answered.
 - b. Notice the calm, orderly fashion in which Peter worked. He sent the people out of the room, for there was no need for an audience to be present. Proof of the miracle would be obvious when they saw Dorcas alive. Modern "miracle-workers" seek a large audience before which to present their so-called miracles. How many of them would be willing to attempt to raise up a person who was really dead? If they have the power to work miracles, why cannot they go to cemeteries and raise the dead? They want large audiences because of the notoriety and profit they seek. Peter did not go through some big show before an audience; he simply prayed and commanded the woman to arise. He did not shout. He did not scream. He did not put on a big performance. Modern "miracle-workers" are much like the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). They cried aloud, leaped upon the altar, and even cut themselves—but Baal did not and could not hear and act (1 Kings 18:26-28). The God of heaven will not hear the pleadings of modern charlatans.
 - c. When Peter commanded her to arise, she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. "The eyes of the dead are opened, and the faith and hope which glowed in them ere they were closed are in them now. She sees the loved apostle, and rises to a sitting posture" (McGarvey, p.129).
 5. Verse 41: "And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows,
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presented her alive."

- a. Peter helped Dorcas to her feet and called the other saints and the widows, and presented her alive to them. That she was dead was attested to by the widows who had washed her body and "laid her out." That she was now alive was obvious to all. This was no sideshow act; Dorcas was dead and now was alive! A notable miracle had been wrought.
 - b. "Who can describe the scene, when brothers and sisters in the flesh and in the Lord, wild with conflicting emotions, rushed in to greet the loved one recovered from the dead! And if that is indescribable, what shall we say or think of that scene when all the sainted dead shall rise in glory, and greet each other on the shores of life? May Christ our saviour help us to that day! We have no Peter now, to wake up our sleeping sisters, and give them back to us; but we do not regret it, for we remember that Dorcas had to die again, and we would not wish to weep again, as we have wept, over the dying bed, and the fresh sods of the silent grave. We would rather let them sleep on in the arms of Jesus, till both we and they shall rise to die no more" (McGarvey, p.129).
6. Verses 42-43: "And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner."
- a. The miracle of Dorcas' resurrection was learned by all in Joppa. It resulted in many others accepting the gospel story.
 - b. Time and again, the Bible shows this to be the prime aim of miracles: to convince unbelievers that the gospel is true. This case opened the opportunity for Peter to preach the gospel in Joppa for many days.
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ACTS 10

A. Acts 10:1-8: Cornelius Has a Vision.

1. Verses 1-2: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, *A devout man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."
 - a. Caesarea was a seaport city on the Mediterranean Sea located about thirty miles north of Joppa. It was built by Herod the Great and named after Caesar Augustus. By the time of the text, Caesarea was the most prominent city in Palestine since it was here that the Roman governor was situated (Acts 23:23-26). Of course, to the Jews Jerusalem remained the most important city on earth.
 - b. In Caesarea was stationed a man named Cornelius, a Gentile from Italy, the centurion of a Roman cohort (band) called the Italian band. A centurion was a soldier in command of a hundred men, which was known as a band or cohort. No information is given which suggests that he resigned from the army following his conversion; this seems to imply that a Christian can also be a soldier. Other centurions appear in the sacred record, and all of them are set forth in a favorable light.
 - c. What follows is the report of the conversion of the first Gentile to Christ. Other Gentiles who were proselytes to Judaism had become Christians, but Cornelius was the first uncircumcised Gentile to be converted. The event was so significant that two chapters are used in its report, and various miracles were required for it to be accomplished with its desired effects on the Jewish Christians.
 - d. Verse two lists five great spiritual qualities possessed by Cornelius, and others are given in the story. In view of the outstanding attributes and practices of this man, it might seem strange to many that he even had the need to be saved. His case establishes the great truth that moral purity does not of itself give salvation. In the corrupt Roman Empire, here was one of its citizens who possessed spiritual qualities which outshine those of many Christians (Mt. 7:21-23; Heb. 5:8-9; Jn. 14:6).
 - 1) **He was a devout man.** He had deep religious feelings; he was pious and reverent. This word is used in description of those who buried Stephen (8:2); of Ananias (22:12); of Simeon (Luke 2:25). One who sincerely worships an idol could also be devout, but in the case of Cornelius, his reverence and piety were toward God. However, he was attempting to serve God by a system which was now out of date.
 - 2) **He feared God with all his house.** Although he was not in fellowship with the Jews, he revered their God. Perhaps he had been long enough in the land to come to know the true God of Israel. Not only did he reverence God himself, but his family (his house) also had this attitude toward God.
 - 3) **With all his house.** He had an outstanding influence on his own household and with his friends. The members of his house also feared God, and he was able to bring many friends to hear what Peter later presented (10:24, 33).
 - 4) **He gave much alms to the people.** This indicates that he possessed a measure of wealth. His benevolence reveals his kindness of heart toward those in need. He gave alms to the Jewish people, an act sure to attract the attention of the Jews and engender admiration for him on their part.
 - 5) **He prayed regularly to God.** His religious life was active, not only in kindness to others, but also in devotion to God (1 Thess. 5:17).
 - 6) **He fasted** (10:30). This is a very personal act of devotion. It is not to be done to be seen of men (Matt. 6:16-18). Fasting, coupled with prayer and Bible study, is able to bring one closer to God and strengthen the individual.
 - 7) **He was a just man** (10:22). He was righteous ("rightwise"); he was without prejudice or partiality; he was upright.
 - 8) **He had a good report among the Jews** (10:22). He had acted kindly toward their poor. Obviously, there was nothing in his character or life which would anger them, but rather there was much to exalt him in their estimation.
2. Verse 3: "He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius."
 - a. About the 9th hour of the day (3 p.m.), he saw a vision of an angel who called him by name. In his remarks to Peter, Cornelius said he had been fasting when he saw a *man* standing "before me in bright clothing."

- b. This angel had taken on the appearance of a man, as was the usual case, and there was something bright (shining, brilliant) about his clothing. "And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles" (Rev. 15:6).
3. Verse 4: "And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."
- a. Cornelius, a soldier, was afraid in the presence of this angel. He recognized him as one who was greater than himself, thus he called the angel *Lord*, and asked him the purpose of his appearance. This was much like the reply of Saul when Christ spoke to him from heaven (Acts 9:1-6). The angel stated that God had taken note of him.
- b. His prayers and alms had come up before God as a memorial. Most religious groups today would rate this information as proof positive that Cornelius was a saved person and would readily admit him into their fellowship. But he was not saved as Acts 11:14-15 plainly shows.
- 1) The word *memorial* (*mnemosunon*) "denotes a memorial, that which keeps alive the memory of someone or something (from *mnemom*, mindful), Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9; Acts 10:4" (Vine, Vol. 3, p.59).
 - 2) The Lord's Supper keeps our memory of Christ alive. The prayers and alms of Cornelius were a reminder to God of his great promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:16-19) that the blessings of the gospel were for all men. Of course, the infinite God had not forgotten; this is simply a literary device by which the idea was expressed.
- c. The common notion among sectarian bodies is that salvation comes as a result of prayer. They speak of "calling out to the Lord" or "ask the Lord to come into your heart" or simply pray, "Lord, save me."
- 1) That salvation of the alien sinner is not accomplished by prayer is shown in the conversion stories of Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius: they both prayed prior to salvation, but were not saved thereby (Acts 22:16; 11:14-15; 10:47-48). Christ plainly taught that words of devotion will not save (Matt. 7:21-27; Mark 16:15-16). The examples given in Acts belie the doctrine of salvation by prayer (see Acts 2:38; 3:19).
 - 2) Sectarian doctrine has aliens saved by the Holy Spirit and by prayer. But if salvation is by the Spirit, it is not by prayer; if it is by prayer, it is not by the Spirit. Why? Cornelius had prayed four days before the gift of the Spirit was poured out upon him. At what point was he saved? When he prayed? Or when the Spirit came upon him? We shall see that he was not saved at either point. Aliens are saved when they obey the Spirit-given gospel (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; Jas. 1:21; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-3,16; 6:16-18; 2 Th. 1:8-9).
 - 3) Further, the Bible teaches that God does not hear the prayers of sinners (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9; John 9:31). The man in John nine knew this truth because of what the Old Testament taught, thus he knew that Christ was no sinner.
- d. But it is obvious that the prayers of Cornelius were heard in heaven (10:4; 10:31). God "hears" and sees all that is spoken and done on earth (Num. 12:2; Prov. 15:3; Ps. 139:1-10; 1 Pet. 3:12; Heb. 4:13). The wickedness of Nineveh has come up before God also (Jonah 1:2). In the present case, God dispatched an angel with a message to Cornelius.
- 1) This man was an honest seeker after God. Also, the Jewish Christians, who comprised the church to that time, needed to be taught the truth that the gospel is also for the Gentiles. They had heard the Lord's pronouncements on this, but had not yet absorbed it (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8; 2:36-39).
 - 2) This was a major point, requiring some very special handling, for the Jews had been taught for centuries to maintain a distinct separation from the Gentiles. God had ordered that distinction as a means of keeping Israel as free from the evil influence of the Gentile corruptions as possible and to embed in their thinking the essentiality of being different from the world.
 - 3) While God may act providentially today to bring together an honest seeker and a teacher of the gospel, he does not (1) send an angel to the individual, (2) save the individual in response to prayer, or (3) save anyone by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit.
4. Verses 5-6: "And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."
- a. The angel instructed Cornelius to send some men to Joppa to locate Simon Peter who was staying with Simon, who was a tanner by trade, and who lived by the seaside. Peter would tell Cornelius what "thou

oughtest to do." The word *ought* is from the Greek word *dei* which states an obligation. This same word is used in Acts 9:6. If Cornelius was to obtain the blessings of God, he must do those things revealed to him by Peter. Notice that the angel did not tell Cornelius what he must do to be saved.

- b. The angel did not give the man of Ethiopia that information, and neither did the Holy Spirit directly furnish Cornelius those details. It was and is the duty of Christians to make that intelligence known to those who need it (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). What an awesome responsibility in view of the fact that every responsible person stands under the condemnation of sin (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eccl. 7:20; Ezek. 3:17-19; 2 Cor. 5:11-12).
5. Verses 7-8: "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa."
- a. Following the departure of the angel, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, and sent them to Joppa to get Peter. He gave these men a full report on the vision and what the angel had said. It is obvious that Cornelius trusted these men. Nothing is said about any written correspondence, so the message was to be delivered orally. This centurion obviously had much influence on his men, for the soldier is described as *devout*, an adjective not ordinarily ascribed to a military man.
 - b. The vision was seen about three in the afternoon; the messengers were sent to Joppa that same day. They traveled some distance on that day; they came to Joppa about noon on the next day; they began their return with Peter on the third day; and came to Caesarea on the fourth day. It was 30 miles from Joppa to Caesarea.

B. Acts 10:9-21: Peter Fell into a Trance.

1. The apostle Peter could not be expected to make the journey to Caesarea just because he was asked to do so. Thirty miles represented many hours of travel, and to have social contact with a Gentile was foreign to the thinking of a Jew. The Mosaic Law required the Israelites to be a separate nation, and to keep themselves from being influenced by the idolatrous practices of the Gentiles.
 - a. They were not to intermarry or enter into entangling alliances with them (Lev. 20:24-26; 18:24-30; Dt. 7:1-6; Ezra 9:11-12). Travel and business necessities required some contact with Gentiles. While the Law did not explicitly forbid their entering a Gentile's house, the Jews understood that they were to avoid doing so (Acts 10:28; 11:3; Jn. 4:9; 18:28). This may have been more of a custom or tradition than a precept of the Law.
 - b. Although the Lord had said the gospel was to be preached to all nations and every creature, and Peter had preached in Acts 2:39 that all people were subject to the gospel's call, he needed a special revelation from heaven to prepare him to respond to Cornelius' invitation.
 - c. "In order to fully appreciate the necessity for this vision, we must remember the prejudice of the Jews against uncircumcised Gentiles. Previous to the Babylonish captivity, they had too great an inclination to intimacy with their idolatrous neighbors; but that terrible affliction cured them of idolatry, and when they returned to their own land, they put away, at the instigation of Nehemiah, all the idolatrous wives among them [Neh. 13:23-31]. This was the beginning of a reaction toward the opposite extreme, and such a state of feeling was finally induced, that, in the traditions of the elders, it was regarded as a sin even to go into the house of one who was uncircumcised. The disciples of Jesus had been educated from their childhood to an intense degree of this prejudice, and there were facts in the history of Jesus calculated to foster rather than to eradicate it. They had heard him say, 'I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' [Matt. 15:24]" (McGarvey, p.133).
 - 1) Matthew 10:5-6: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
 - 2) Matthew 15:26: "But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs."
2. Verses 9-10: "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance."
 - a. On the day after Cornelius' vision, Peter went up on the housetop about noon to pray. Jewish houses were flat on top, which could be used to enjoy the warm sun or cool breezes. Peter chose to use the time before the meal in prayer. He became very hungry while he was on the housetop, and would have

- eaten, but the meal was still being prepared.
- b. While he prayed, he fell into a trance. "Trance" (from *exstasis*) "denotes a trance in Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17, a condition in which ordinary consciousness and the perception of natural circumstances were withheld, and the soul was susceptible only to the vision imparted by God" (Vine, Vol. 4, p.148). "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lignaloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters....He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open" (Num. 24:6,16).
3. Verses 11-12: "And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air."
 - a. God perfectly timed the vision: Peter was praying, thus was receptive to such; he was extremely hungry, and the vision pertained to eating. The apostle saw in the vision a "certain vessel" which looked like a great sheet bound together at the four corners. It contained all kinds of fourfooted animals, wild beasts, creeping things (*herpeton*; "serpent" is from the same root), and birds. *Creeping things* includes snakes and other creeping life-forms; it is used in contrast to quadrupeds and birds. The sheet-like vessel contained clean and unclean animals.
 - b. A list of clean and unclean animals is given in Leviticus 11. The purpose of this restriction was at least twofold: to prevent the people from contracting certain diseases inherent in some of these beasts (swine, for example), and to instill in them the concept of keeping themselves pure from contamination. The New Testament shows that there is nothing sinful about eating any animal in the Christian Age (1 Tim. 4:1-4; cf. Mark 7:15-19).
 4. Verses 13-14: "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean."
 - a. A voice called to Peter, instructing him to arise, kill, and eat. Peter politely declined the invitation, stating that he had never eaten anything that was common or unclean: "I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth" (Acts 11:5-8). The apostle understood the instruction to indicate that he should eat an unclean animal. All his life he had been taught that there were certain animals which would be sinful to eat. To this point, under the gospel system, he had learned nothing to change this view.
 - b. "This word [*common*] properly denotes *that which pertains to all*, but among the Jews, who were bound by special laws, and who were prohibited from many things that were freely indulged in by other nations, the word *common* came to be opposed to the word *sacred*, and to denote that which was in common use among the heathens, hence that which was *profane*, or *polluted*. Here it means the same as *profane*, or *forbidden*" (Barnes, p.174).
 - c. The experience of this vision was intended to teach him that there was nothing inherently sinful about eating meat, and that the Gentiles were to be taught the gospel. Peter did not know the identity of the speaker, but recognized him as one with great power, hence he called him *Lord*.
 - d. Concerning eating meat: Under Judaism, certain kinds of animal flesh were prohibited to the Israelites. In some cases, there were medical reasons included in the prohibition, as in the case of pork. In other cases, the restrictions were tests of their faith. Certain modern religious groups follow the Mosaic prohibition, even though Christ has lifted the ban. The Bible teaches that there is no meat which is inherently wrong for man to eat. "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat (Gen. 9:3-4). God has created meat, which is to be received with gratitude by them who believe and know the truth. The very fact that God created meat is evidence that it is not inherently evil; everything God made he pronounced as "very good" (Gen. 1:31).
 5. Verses 15-18: "And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, And called, and asked

whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there."

- a. The voice came again, mildly rebuking Peter: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." It appears that the voice was that of an angel. The scene was unfolded three times, apparently with the same words being spoken each time (Acts 11:9-10).
 - b. Being perplexed about the significance of this vision, Peter considered it. He repeats his experiences to his brethren in Acts 11, and Luke reports that he does so "by order" (in more precise chronological sequence than did Luke in his record of chapter ten). In Acts 11:11, Peter states that immediately following his vision, the three men from Cornelius came to the house, asking for him.
6. Verses 19-20: "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them."
- a. The Holy Spirit instructed him to go with the men, doubting nothing. They had been sent by the Spirit to get Peter. "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house" (Acts 11:12).
 - b. Notice that the Holy Spirit gave this information to Peter by means of words (he spoke to him), and not through some feeling or intuition. We may wonder why the Spirit did not directly give the entire message to Peter, instead of having the angel speak to Cornelius to direct him to send some men to fetch Peter. One reason it was done this way was to show that the Spirit does not operate directly on souls to effect their salvation, but by the message of the gospel (cf. Acts 11:13-14).
- C. Acts 10:21-33: Peter Goes to the House of Cornelius.
1. Verses 21-22: "Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee."
 - a. The apostle went down to talk with the men. He knew nothing about their mission, thus he identified himself and asked why they had come. "Peter was as yet ignorant of the reason of their coming. He had learned three things: (1) that God was about to teach him some new truth, but the precise character of it was dimly seen; (2) that the Holy Spirit had sent these three messengers to him; (3) that he was to go with them" (Boles, p.166).
 - b. The men first told Peter about the character of Cornelius: that he was a centurion; a just man (righteous, upright, unprejudiced); feared God; and had a good report among all the Jewish nation. This good man had been warned by an angel to send for Peter in order to hear "words of thee." At this point, Cornelius did not know the nature of the words Peter was to speak. The message Peter had was the gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:5,8). These words would bring salvation to Cornelius and his household (11:13-14; cf. Jas. 1:21). This shows beyond any doubt that Cornelius was saved by the gospel, not by the miraculous action of the Holy Spirit.
 2. Verses 23-24: "Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends."
 - a. He invited them in to lodge with them that night. They had traveled many miles that day, and no doubt were tired. Peter took six other members of the church (11:12) with him, and with the three messengers, they started toward Caesarea the next day. The company arrived at Cornelius' house the following day. Four days were involved in the events (vs. 30).
 - b. They found Cornelius waiting for him, with a sizeable number of his kinsmen and near friends. This Gentile understood that something very important was in the offing, and that the message Peter was to bring was extremely worthwhile. But how often it is today that members of the Lord's body treat the gospel with utter indifference and even outright scorn [or "amused contempt"]!
 - c. "During the four days which had elapsed, Cornelius had made no secret of the vision he had witnessed, but had communicated it to such friends as were likely to take the same interest in it with himself. Having presumed, with all confidence, that Peter would come, and knowing the time that the journey would require, all was in readiness for his arrival" (McGarvey, p.135).
 3. Verses 25-27: "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together."
 - a. Knowing what is reported about Cornelius, especially that he feared and worshipped God, we probably should not suppose that he was attempting to render to the apostle what he knew God deserved. When
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- John fell before the angel, he was rebuked by the angel who told him to direct his worship toward God: "And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Rev. 22:8-9).
- b. At any rate, he fell down before the apostle and offered obeisance. *Worshipped* is from *peoskunwo*, "to make obeisance, do reverence to (from *pros*, towards, and *kuneo*, to kiss), is the most frequent word rendered to worship" (Vine, Vol. 4, p.235).
 - c. The Bible is an awesome Book! Its inspiration may be seen in many ways, including its anticipation of human error that would develop centuries later. The Roman Catholic Church asserts that their popes are replacements to the apostle Peter. They permit (perhaps even demand) that others do obeisance before them, even heads of state. How unlike the humble Peter who would not allow Cornelius to direct any reverence toward him! Peter rebuked him by saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." No man has the right to worship another man—or receive it.
 - 1) Matthew 4:10: "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."
 - 2) John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - d. Peter and Cornelius talked, and entered the house where the "many" kinsmen and near friends were assembled.
4. Verses 28-29: "And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?"
- a. Peter announced to Cornelius that the Jews deemed it as an unlawful act for one of them to have social dealings with a Gentile, but through the vision he had been given on the housetop, God had shown him that he should not call any man common or unclean.
 - b. Two truths were revealed in that vision: (1) those animals which under the Law had been forbidden as unclean, were now acceptable; and (2) the Gentiles were also proper subjects of the gospel of Christ.
 - c. Therefore, Peter said he came without gainsaying (answering back), without delay. He asked why he had been summoned. It appears that Peter had not been told the full details of Cornelius' vision. But since he took six Jewish Christians with him, it certainly seems that he anticipated the need for reliable witnesses.
5. Verses 30-33: "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."
- a. Cornelius relates his vision of the angel; he adds to Luke's previous report that he had also been fasting and praying at the ninth hour when the angel appeared. He describes the angel as a man, which was obviously the form the angel manifested in the vision. He was clothed in bright clothing. Compare Acts 1:9-11: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
 - b. The messenger told him that his prayer was heard and his alms served as a reminder to God (See comments under verse 4).
 - 1) Numbers 12:2: "And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it."
 - 2) Jonah 1:2: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."
 - c. Cornelius was an honest man who would be receptive to the truth. His case was very special and unique.

- d. The heavenly messenger further instructed him to send for Peter, and even told where he could be found. Cornelius added that he immediately sent for Peter, and complimented him on a quick arrival. He stated that he and all of his kinsmen and friends were present, before God, to hear all that God had commanded Peter to speak. What a noble attitude!

D. Acts 10:34-43: Peter's Sermon.

1. Verses 34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - a. Acts 11:4,15 shows that as Peter began his remarks, the Holy Spirit came upon all of the Gentiles who had gathered to hear the apostle's speech. His initial words were to affirm that there was no respect of persons with God. Calvinism teaches that God chose those whom he ordained to go to heaven and those to be consigned to hell. The number of each is so definite that it cannot be increased or diminished. Peter's statement here repudiates that doctrine!
 - b. He strongly affirms that God is no respecter of persons. But if Calvinism is so, God is a respecter of persons, because he consigns some to torment without any choice. Such a theory violates common sense as well as Scripture.
 - c. Those of every nation who meet the conditions God sets forth are acceptable to him. This shows God is no respecter of persons. This great truth the apostle had only now come to fully realize. The impartiality of God is plainly declared in many passages. "This expansive thought was sufficient to burst asunder all the expansive bonds of the Mosaic institution, and should be sufficient now to explode the equally injurious theory of an arbitrary predestination of certain men and angels to their eternal destiny" (McGarvey, p.136).
 - d. The conditions are: (1) fear God and (2) work righteousness. To fear God is to have a deep reverence for God, to the extent that one dreads doing anything that might be offensive to him. To work righteousness is to obey the righteous commands of God (Ps. 119:172; cf. Mk. 16:16; Lk. 24:47; Acts 8:37; 2:38; 2:42; Mt. 10:22).
 - e. This passage shows conclusively that the sinner bears the responsibility of responding to the gospel invitation. God has done his part; man must do his. "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40).
2. Verse 36: "The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all)."
 - a. "Cornelius has now related to Peter such an experience, as, we have seen above, would secure him recognition as a genuine convert to Christ among Protestant sects; but Peter was so far from regarding it in this light, that he proceeds to preach to them as he would to other sinners" (ibid.).
 - b. The gospel had been sent to the children of Israel. God had spent 1500 years preparing the Jews for the coming of the Messiah. In his wise plan, he intended for them to receive the message, and from that foundation, for it to be carried to the Gentiles. God's plan was working out as intended. The gospel had been preached only to the Jews to this point, but rapidly it began to be taken to the Gentiles, many of whom gave heed to it.
 - c. The message of the gospel was one of peace: peace with God; peace between Jews and Gentiles; peace between all those who obeyed it. God is the God of peace; Christ is the Prince of Peace; the gospel is the gospel of peace; and we are called to peace.
 - d. Peter added that Christ is Lord of all—both Jew and Gentile. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
3. Verse 37: "That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached."
 - a. The gospel ("that word") was published throughout Judea; it began in Galilee after the baptism of John was preached. Cornelius and his company were not in total ignorance concerning Christ Jesus. It seems impossible that anyone could have lived in that time and place without knowing something about him. Since his crucifixion, the apostles and other saints had continued to preach his message throughout that region.
 - b. The development of the gospel can be traced through several stages.
 - 1) It existed in the eternal **plan** that God had from before the creation of the world.
 - 2) It existed in **purpose** in God's mind from the beginning of the world.
 - 3) It existed in the **promises** God made through his prophets in the Old Testament.
 - 4) It existed in the **preparations** God made in bringing it into reality in the work of John.

- 5) It exists in **perfection** today, from the time that Christ brought it into fruition.
- c. The limited commission began with the early work of Christ and his disciples; it ended with the Lord's death. The Great Commission began on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2, and will not end until the Lord returns.
4. Verse 38: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."
- a. The apostle specifies which Jesus he meant—Jesus of Nazareth. This Jesus had been anointed with the Holy Spirit. He had the power to perform all manner of miracles.
- 1) Matthew 3:13-17: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- 2) John 1:29-33: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."
- 3) John 3:34-35: "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."
- b. He went about doing good: a statement which encompasses all the works and words of the Savior.
- c. He healed all that were oppressed by the devil, a reference to the ailments brought on men by demons: "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" (Luke 13:16).
- d. He could do all of these wondrous things because God was with him: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:1-2).
5. Verse 39: "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree."
- a. The apostles had been selected and empowered to be infallible witnesses of Christ (John 15:26-27; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8). The apostles had been with the Lord from the beginning of his ministry, and had seen the things he did in Jerusalem and throughout the land of the Jews. But his enemies crucified him. Cornelius had heard these things, but the apostles had seen them!
- b. The expression, "hanged on a tree" was also used in Acts 5:30. Strictly speaking, Jesus was hanged on the cross and slain; but Peter's expression is correct for the Jews had determined beforehand that he must die; the sentence was mandated before it was carried out. The word *tree* (*xulon*) means *wood, timber*, not a living tree (Vine, p.153).
6. Verses 40-41: "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."
- a. God raised him up from the dead on the third day, and showed him openly to the chosen witnesses (the apostles) and other reliable people (1 Cor. 15:1-8). It was not necessary or expedient to show him alive to the Jewish people in general, or to their religious and civil leaders in particular. The general population would have included many who would be unreliable as witnesses due to mental weaknesses or religious prejudice; the leaders had already rejected Christ, and so would have sought to explain away his resurrection even though they had seen him.
- b. Thus, God knew that his cause would be better served to show the risen Lord to certain, reliable witnesses, men who were willing to suffer terribly in behalf of their testimony. That their witness was true is seen by their willingness to suffer in its support.
- c. These men had eaten with the Lord; they knew him personally. Although most of the population knew of him, not everyone knew him sufficiently to recognize him. The soldiers sent to arrest him had to

have someone to point him out (Matt. 26:47-50).

7. Verses 42-43: "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."
 - a. The apostles had been commanded to preach to the people; they were to affirm that he is the one who is ordained of God to be the judge of the living and the dead (Acts 17:30-31).
 - b. He did not suddenly appear without any background, for all the Old Testament prophets spoke beforehand of him. Peter believed in fulfilled prophecy, a matter which sophisticated modernists shun!
 - c. The apostle then gives a summary of the plan of salvation: "that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Sectarians use this verse in a vain attempt to justify their "faith only" doctrine of salvation. But this same apostle stated to believers on Pentecost Day that they must "repent and be baptized" to obtain remission of sins. Hence, *believeth* is used in a comprehensive sense here to include faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (cf. John 3:16). Faith without obedience is dead (Jas. 2:19-26).
 - d. We can know that salvation is not by faith only, if any one of these four points is true:
 - 1) If we are saved by a live faith: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas. 2:26).
 - 2) If salvation is in Christ: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10; cf Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4).
 - 3) If a figure of speech is used in which a part is put for the whole: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). Baptism itself is used in 1 Peter 3:21 to represent the entire plan of salvation.
 - 4) If any believer was unsaved (see John 8:30-44; 12:42-43; Acts 26:27-28 for examples).

E. Acts 10:44-48: Cornelius and his Company are Converted.

1. Verse 44: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."
 - a. While Peter yet spoke these words, miraculous demonstrations from the Holy Spirit came upon all them which heard the word. What they received was not the Holy Spirit as a person, but a miraculous gift which the Holy Spirit showered upon them (vs. 45).
 - b. Acts 11:15 shows that this miraculous outpouring was done as Peter began to speak. Just as he began his speech, as he opened his mouth to begin to speak, the miraculous display commenced. The Greek word "indicates that a thing was but just begun when it was interrupted by something else: Mt. 12:1...Acts 11:15" (Thayer, p.78).
 - 1) Matthew 26:22: "And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?"
 - 2) Matthew 26:74: "Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew."
 - 3) Mark 2:23: "And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn."
 - 4) Mark 4:1: "And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land."
 - 5) Mark 6:2: "And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?"
 - 6) Mark 10:41: "And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John."
 - 7) Luke 5:21: "And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"
 - 8) Luke 12:45-48: "But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be

- beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
- 9) Luke 13:25: "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."
 - c. This miraculous event occurred as Peter began to speak; it took place before these Gentiles came to believe in Christ, for as yet they had not heard enough for faith to have been produced in them (Rom. 10:17; Acts 15:7). Without faith it is impossible for a person to please God (Heb. 11:6). Sectarianism teaches that a direct operation of the Holy Spirit saves alien sinners. If that is so, then how could Cornelius be saved before he believed? He had not heard Peter's faith-producing sermon when the Holy Spirit gave him the miraculous gift. He and his company were either saved before they believed, or the Spirit's work had nothing to do with their salvation. Remember, Peter said in Acts 15:9 that Cornelius and his company had their hearts purified by faith, just as the Jews.
 - d. Cornelius and his company were not saved by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; this was for another purpose altogether, namely to convince the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles had a right to the gospel. Cornelius was told to send for Peter "who shall tell thee words WHEREBY thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13-14). Those words were the gospel message Peter delivered (Rom. 1:16-17; Acts 10:33ff; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; Mark 16:15-16).
 - e. The Holy Spirit empowered all that heard the word with the miraculous gift named. As yet, though, they had only begun to hear the message; Peter had scarcely opened his mouth.
2. Verse 45: "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - a. The six Jewish Christians who accompanied Peter were astonished at this. They were puzzled and shocked over the significance of this. Although the Lord had prescribed the gospel for all creatures, they had not yet accepted this basic gospel truth. There could be only one meaning to this outpouring of the Holy Spirit's gift of tongues to these Gentiles: the Gentiles must be proper subjects of the gospel also.
 - b. We might not understand the functions of the trigger and hammer on a rifle when we first look, but when we see them in action, their functions become very clear. We might not see at first the meaning of the miraculous gift to the Gentiles; however when we grasp the use Peter made of it, the meaning is crystal clear. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, he was questioned about his entering the house of a Gentile (Acts 11:1-3). The brethren contended with him about it. After describing the events of the case in verses 4-16, he stated in verse 17 that he could not withstand God, who was directing the whole affair. Peter used the events (especially the outpouring of the miracle) to prove to the brethren that the Gentiles are to be taught the gospel. Verse 18 shows that the brethren agreed, and rejoiced. Acts 10:47-48 also shows that no one could prohibit these Gentiles from being baptized.
 - c. Notice that this verse is more specific in identifying what the Gentiles received: it was "the gift of the Holy Ghost." The thing that was manifested was the thing they received. What could be heard was the miraculous gift of tongues (vs. 46). The Holy Spirit was the power behind the gift, thus it could be accurately said that they received the Holy Spirit; but since the only manifestation was the gift of tongues, it was a gift from the Spirit that was received. The Spirit "fell on them" (vs. 44), but that does not mean he entered into their bodies. Doeg "fell upon" 85 priests (1 Sam. 22:18), but he did not climb into their bodies; he exerted influence upon them (he slew them). "So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him..." (1 Kings 2:34). The Holy Spirit fell upon these people in that he exerted influence upon them.
 - d. When parallel expressions are given about God and Christ, no one understands these to mean that we actually receive God and Christ as persons; rather, we properly understand that a gift from God or Christ is received (Rom. 5:15; 6:23; 1 Cor. 7:7; Eph. 2:8; 4:7). The gift was given through the apostles in Acts 8; but directly from heaven in Acts 2 and Acts 10 (cf. 11:15; 2:1-4).
 3. Verse 46: "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter."
 - a. The Jewish brethren (and Peter) heard them speak with tongues. These tongues were understandable languages, for what they spoke is said to have magnified God.
 - b. This gift was miraculous; it was a gift of being able to speak a language the person had never studied and learned the ordinary way. See Acts 2:1ff; 1 Corinthians 14.
 4. Verse 47: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy

Ghost as well as we?"

- a. In view of this miraculous outpouring, which proved beyond doubt that God wanted the Gentiles to receive the blessings of the gospel, Peter asked the six Jewish Christians, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" It was manifest to them all that no one could refuse to baptize the Gentiles. To reject them was to fight against God.
 - b. The apostles had received the gift of the Spirit directly from heaven; so had these Gentiles. Although what the apostles received involved much more than the power to speak in tongues, they obtained it as a direct gift from heaven. Everyone else who received the miraculous gifts, except the Gentiles here, obtained it only through the agency of an apostle (Rom. 1:11; Acts 8:14-19). The gift to the apostles included powers and abilities that could only pertain to them.
 - 1) John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
 - 2) John 16:12-13: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."
 - 3) Acts 1:5,8: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence....But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 4) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - 5) 2 Corinthians 12:12-13: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong."
5. Verse 48: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."
- a. Peter commanded Cornelius and his company to submit to baptism. It was administered in the name of Christ (by his authority—Col. 3:17). The purpose of their baptism was the same as that stated in Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16—for the remission of their sins. Cornelius was not saved by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; if he was, why was he baptized?
 - b. Following the conversion of these people, they asked the apostle to remain with them for certain days.
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ACTS 11

A. Acts 11:1-18: Peter Recounts by Order the Conversion of Cornelius.

1. Verses 1-3: "And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."
 - a. After his sojourn in Caesarea with Cornelius, Peter returned to Jerusalem. The other apostles and brethren in Judea had heard that the Gentiles had received the word of God. When Peter came, these Jewish Christians contended with him, accusing him of having entered the house of the uncircumcised and ate with them. There seems to have been a rather sharp dispute.
 - b. The Jewish saints in Jerusalem had not yet learned what Peter now knew. Old customs die hard, and a good reason must be advanced before these men would be willing to give up their conception of the Gentiles, a view which had been instilled in them from their earliest years.
2. Verse 4: "But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying."
 - a. Peter rehearsed the entire chain of events by order to them. The word "order" (*kathexes*) means "one after another, successively, in order" (Thayer, p.313; cf. Luke 1:3; Acts 18:23).
 - b. He gave a report of the events in their proper and logical sequence leading up to the baptism of Cornelius and his company.
3. Verses 5-10: "I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven."
 - a. The apostle recounts the story of his vision on the rooftop in Joppa. This vision of the sheet-like vessel containing all kinds of beasts, creeping things, and birds taught Peter not to call anything God had cleansed "common or unclean."
 - b. After this scene was given three times, the vessel was drawn up again into heaven.
4. Verses 11-14: "And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."
 - a. The three messengers from Cornelius were immediately at the gate when the vision ended, asking for Peter. He took six brethren from the church at Joppa with him, and set out the next day for Caesarea (10:23).
 - b. Cornelius reported to Peter how an angel had appeared to him in his house, who instructed him to send for Simon Peter who was lodging with Simon the tanner, who lived by the sea in Joppa. Both the men named who were in that house were called Simon. The men had to call for the right *Simon*. Of the two, only Simon Peter had the keys that would open the kingdom to the Gentiles. Those keys were used by preaching the gospel. The gospel message would bring about the salvation of Cornelius. Among other things, this tells us plainly that Cornelius was not converted miraculously. He became a Christian in the same manner we became Christians: by hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel (Acts 18:8; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:26-40).
5. Verses 15-17: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"
 - a. Peter said he was reminded of how the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on Pentecost Day, when the Gentiles were suddenly, and without warning, given a supernatural gift (the gift of tongues). He had to go all the way back to Pentecost in order to find a similar occurrence. This passage does not mean that Cornelius received the same power the apostles had; what the apostles received was peculiar

to them (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14; Acts 1:5,8; Matt. 19:28; 2 Cor. 12:12-13). But the method by which Cornelius received his gift was the same way the apostles received their gift—directly from heaven.

- 1) Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
 - 2) John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
 - 3) John 15:26-27: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."
 - 4) John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you."
 - 5) Acts 1:5: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."
 - 6) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 7) 2 Corinthians 12:12-13: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong."
- b. John the Baptizer had stated in Matthew 3:10 that the Messiah would baptize some with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Christ had told the apostles in Acts 1:5 that "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." When Peter saw that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon these Gentiles directly from heaven, he was reminded of the only other occasion in which the power of miracles was given in that direct manner. He and John had laid hands on the Samaritan converts and thus conferred upon them miraculous ability, but in this instance, the Spirit's gifts were bestowed directly from Heaven.
- c. When Peter said that "God gave them [the Gentiles] the like gift as he did unto us (apostles)," he is not saying Cornelius and his company received the same power. If so, then Cornelius and all his company were equal in authority and abilities to the apostles
- d. "It is not the manner of the Holy Spirit's descent from heaven that constituted the baptism of the Spirit, but their being *filled* or *overwhelmed*, or *endued*, or *clothed*—it was the result, not the manner of descent, that defines the Holy Spirit baptism, which the apostles only received" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Gospel For Today*, p.697). What Cornelius received and what the apostles received came in the same fashion, but was different in several significant factors:
- 1) The apostles could lay hands on another Christian and confer to that person one or more of the spiritual gifts (Acts 8:12-19; 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6; Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 12:8-10). But Cornelius did not have this ability.
 - 2) All the things which Jesus had personally taught the apostles was infallibly brought back to their memory (John 14:26; 12:16; Acts 11:16). This benefit was not accorded to Cornelius.
 - 3) The apostles were guided into all truth (John 16:13), a power not vouchsafed to any except the apostles.
 - 4) The apostles were made infallible witnesses of the Lord's resurrection (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8; 4:33; 10:39-42). None but the apostles had this provision.
 - 5) The apostles were made ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Matt. 16:19; 19:28; 2 Cor. 12:12-13). This is said of none but the apostles. An ambassador has the authority to act in behalf of his nation.
 - 6) Only the apostles were given the right to "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28; this is spiritual Israel—Gal. 6:16; Rom. 2:28-29).
- e. The gift of miracles came to Cornelius in the same manner as it had come to the apostles: directly from heaven without the laying-on of anyone's hands. It was the like gift (not the same identical gift); God gave it to Cornelius as he gave it to the apostles in Acts 2 (i.e., directly). The specific gift

identified in each case was the gift of tongues. But the apostles received much more than that!

- f. "What was I, that I could withstand God?" Peter understood that all of the events connected with the conversion of these Gentiles were the workings of God, that it was God's way of showing Peter and the rest of the church that the Gentiles were to be given the privilege of obeying the gospel. The apostle raised this rhetorical question to show that they would be opposing God if they refused to baptize those Gentiles who desired to become followers of Christ.
6. Verse 18: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."
- a. The events reported from Acts 10 to this point are accepted by the church as indicating the Gentiles had a right to the kingdom and all its blessings. All of the brethren "held their peace," that is, they graciously yielded to the will of God, and glorified him for giving this benefit to the Gentiles. Their prejudice was removed, not by some direct operation of the Spirit, but through the report (engineered by inspiration) given by Peter. This is the same way that the Holy Spirit convicts and converts sinners today—by the power of the inspired word.
 - b. The praise they gave God was expressed in these words: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Repentance is not the only thing that the household of Cornelius did in being saved. Acts 15:9 states that they were purified by the faith (the article is in the original); they were purified by the gospel.
 - 1) Acts 6:7: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
 - 2) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 3) Galatians 1:23: "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
 - 5) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
 - c. They believed the gospel (Heb. 11:6; Acts 15:7-9); they repented (Acts 11:18); they confessed (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37); they were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 10:48; 2:38; Mk. 16:16). Repentance is used here as faith and baptism are in John 3:16 and 1 Peter 3:21: to represent the complete plan of salvation—a part for the whole. God *granted* it: he sent them the gospel which produced it (Rom. 2:4).

B. Acts 11:19-26: The Church is Planted at Antioch.

1. Verse 19: "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only."
 - a. The scene of activity is about to shift from Jerusalem to Antioch of Syria, which was located about 300 miles north of Jerusalem, and 100 miles from Tarsus. It is said to have had about a half million inhabitants, mostly Gentiles. It was called "The Queen of the East." Its history goes back to about 300 B.C. when it was founded by Seleucus Nicator, and named after Antiochus (his father), a Macedonian general. It was the next logical place for Christianity to be planted. Today, it has a population of only about 30,000 (Coffman, p.229).
 - b. Referring back to Acts 8:4, Luke takes up again with the general spread of the gospel by the dispersed Christians. The brethren traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch. Cyprus is the large island at the east end of the Mediterranean Sea. Phenice is "Phoenicia" in the ASV. This was a narrow strip of territory that corresponds to Lebanon today. The spread of the gospel followed a logical sequence: it started in Jerusalem, spread to the province of Judea in which Jerusalem was situated, thence to Samaria to the north of Judea, from there to Phoenicia which was to the north of Samaria, and onward to Cyprus and Antioch. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost

- is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).
- c. As they went, they preached the word only to the Jews. *The word* is a reference to the gospel.
 2. Verse 20: "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus."
 - a. Some of those who were scattered from Jerusalem by the great persecution were men formerly from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 2:9-11). Cyrene was located west of Egypt, in Libya; the name was of a province and a city. Simon, who bore the Lord's cross, was from this place (Luke 23:26).
 - b. These men began to preach to the Grecians. It appears that they had learned about Peter's preaching to Cornelius. The term *Greeks* was used in reference to Gentiles (cf. Rom. 1:14, 16). "To the Grecians" is in contrast to "the Jews only."
 - c. Notice that the phrases "preaching the word" and "preaching the Lord Jesus" are used interchangeably; to preach Jesus is to preach the word (cf. 1 Peter 1:22-25; Mark 16:15).
 3. Verse 21: "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."
 - a. The Lord worked with these faithful saints. Undoubtedly, there were various miracles wrought in the process (Mark 16:20). The Lord's hand was with the preachers, not with the sinners. The result was that a great number of them believed and turned to the Lord.
 - b. Two actions are reported: (1) they believed and (2) they turned to the Lord. The "turning" included their repentance and baptism.
 - 1) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) Acts 3:19: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."
 - 3) Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
 - c. "In the Greek text, 'believing' is a participle, and 'turned' is a verb in the past tense. Those who were already believers 'turned to the Lord'" (Coffman, p.231).
 4. Verse 22: "Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch."
 - a. The brethren back in Jerusalem learned of the success of the work in Antioch, and sent Barnabas to help. It is clear that Cornelius was the first Gentile to be converted for it was then that the issue of accepting Gentiles into fellowship was resolved (Acts 11:1-18). Nothing is indicated in this present case regarding any problem with accepting Gentiles.
 - b. The report of the work in Antioch came to the ears of the church. This shows what the church is: the church is the members (Christians), not some building. We make a serious mistake when we refer to the meeting house as "the church," for this encourages the sectarian notion that the building is the church. The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23); the body of Christ is comprised of individual saints (1 Cor. 12:13, 20, 27; Rom. 12:5).
 - c. The church had been built up again in Jerusalem, through the conversion of others and possibly by the return of some of those who had been scattered (8:1,4; 9:31).
 - d. Barnabas was chosen for this mission to Antioch. He had earlier proved himself a zealous and dedicated Christian (Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-27).
 5. Verse 23: "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."
 - a. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he saw the effects of God's grace, he was glad for it, and exhorted them all to continued faithfulness.
 - b. The grace of God is revealed through teaching (Tit. 2:11-12) and is appropriated by obedience.
 - 1) Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
 - 2) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
 - 3) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is

- accepted with him."
- 4) Romans 5:21: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 5) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - c. A faithful Christian rejoices over the success of another saint. There is no competition between lighthouses; all seek the good of the ships. No faithful saint will be envious of another Christian's progress or effectiveness; no loyal gospel preacher will be jealous when another preacher does well. Barnabas was glad to see the success of the gospel.
 - d. He exhorted the brethren that they with purpose of heart would cleave to the Lord. This was for their own good, and the good of the Lord's cause. His sincere desire for them was that they would be persistent in their loyalty to Christ. This loyalty must be the genuine intent of the Christian's heart.
6. Verse 24: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."
- a. Barnabas met with success in his labors with the church in Antioch: many others were added to the Lord (to his body, the church: Acts 2:47; Col. 1:18, 13-14). Barnabas is described as (1) a good man, (2) full of the Holy Spirit, and (3) full of faith.
 - b. He was good because he had become a Christian and continued to walk in the light of the gospel (1 John 1:7). One who lives in sin (as an alien sinner or erring Christian) is not a good person.
 - c. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, meaning that he was guided by spiritual gifts; he was an inspired man.
 - d. He was full of faith: he knew the will of God and believed it; he trusted in the Lord; and he had faith in other people.
7. Some added details concerning the goodness of Barnabas.
- a. He was proficient in the grace of giving: "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:36-37).
 - 1) He recognized God's ownership of what he possessed, and was willing to spend it all to the glory of God and for the Cause of Christ.
 - 2) He first gave himself (cf. 2 Cor. 8:5), and was then willing to give his all. The Lord did not require him to give as he did, but he wanted to do so.
 - 3) No covetous person is good (Luke 16:10). One can be liberal without being good, but one cannot be good without being liberal.
 - b. He was full of faith.
 - 1) His faith stood under all that he did (Acts 11:24; Heb. 11:1,6). He put his full trust in God when he gave his possessions away; he knew the Lord would provide his needs. Faith sustained him in the hardships and dangers he faced (Acts 13:44-46; 14:8-15, 19-22).
 - 2) He had faith in other saints. Faith in men is often misplaced, but there is no reason for us to be overly suspicious and distrustful of all (1 Cor. 13:5,7). He trusted Saul when no one else would (Acts 9:26-28). He trusted John Mark when Paul lost confidence in that young man (Acts 13:13; 15:36-41; cf. 2 Tim. 4:11).
 - c. He had a deep love for lost souls.
 - 1) He knew the gospel was for all (Acts 11:20-24). He was glad over the conversion of lost souls. He was willing to travel and work for the salvation of sinners (Acts 13:1-3). Even his difference with Paul did not keep him from preaching (Acts 15:39).
 - 2) No one can be called good who does not love souls.
 - d. He was an unselfish man.
 - 1) He was willing to have Saul's help in the work at Antioch (11:25-26). On their first great journey, Paul overshadowed him (13:2,7,13,16,46), but there was no professional jealousy involved or permitted.
 - 2) No selfish person can be called good.
 - e. He was spiritually-minded, devout, and sincere.
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- 1) We can see these traits in his liberality (4:37). These qualities can be seen in his exhortations to the new converts (11:23-24).
 - 2) These traits can also be seen in the supreme purpose he advocated (11:23). The Lord is to be the center a Christians's life (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 3:13-14).
 - 3) No worldly-minded man can be called good.
8. Verses 25-26: "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."
- a. Barnabas knew where Saul was, and went to Tarsus to get him to help in the great work in Antioch. Remember that Saul was active in proclaiming the gospel in the meantime, following his departure from Jerusalem (Gal. 1:21-24). Barnabas and Saul worked in Antioch for a whole year, and taught many people. Verse 26 adds that it was at Antioch that the disciples were first given the name "Christian."
 - b. The word "called" is used 9 times in the New Testament, and in every case it has reference to some act of God, unless this verse is the exception:
 - 1) Matthew 2:12: "And being **warned** of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod...."
 - 2) Matthew 2:22: "But when he heard the Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father, Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being **warned** of God...."
 - 3) Luke 2:26: "And it was **revealed** unto him by the Holy Ghost."
 - 4) Acts 10:22: "And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was **warned** from God by a holy angel...."
 - 5) Acts 11:26: "And the disciples were **called** Christians first in Antioch."
 - 6) Romans 7:3: "So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be **called** an adulteress...."
 - 7) Hebrews 8:5: "...For, See saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern **showed** to thee in the mount."
 - 8) Hebrews 11:7: "By faith Noah, being **warned** of God...."
 - 9) Hebrews 12:25: "...Much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that **speaketh** from heaven."
 - c. The "Watch Tower Witnesses" claim that the name "Christian" was given in derision by the enemies of the church. They have to take this wild view because they assert that "Jehovah's Witnesses" is the proper name for God's people. This claim is as baseless and false as all of their other peculiar doctrines.
 - 1) In view of the other uses of *chrematizo* ("called"), it is clear that God was the source of this name.
 - 2) Thayer gives this definition of the Greek term: "To give a response to those consulting an oracle, to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from Heaven; to be divinely commanded, admonished, instructed; to be the mouthpiece of divine revelations, to promulgate the commands of God" (p.671).
 - d. Isaiah 56:5 prophesied: "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." Although we are not told what that name is, the name "Christian" fits the details predicted.
 - 1) It was given in God's house, the church (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:11-22). It was to the members of the church that the name Christian was given (Acts 11:26).
 - 2) It was a better name than that of sons and daughters, for from the human perspective, the name can die out and the relationship cease. But this new name would be never-ending—God knows those who are his, even though they have been dead for many centuries! (Cf. 2 Tim. 2:19).
 - e. Isaiah 62:2: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name."
 - 1) After the righteousness that is of the gospel was revealed to the Gentiles, God would supply a new name. It was after the first Gentiles became followers of Christ that the name Christian was given. Acts 10; Acts 11:19-26.
 - 2) In some fashion, kings would be involved in connection with the giving of the new name. Christ said that Paul was "a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). It was after Paul was brought to Antioch, where large numbers of Gentiles had obeyed the gospel, that the name was given. And this same apostle was the

"chosen vessel" to bear Christ's name before kings. His later history reveals several cases where Paul stood before kings and other rulers, in defense of the gospel. Soon after his conversion in Damascus, he had encountered King Aretas (2 Cor. 11:32-33).

3) The new name was one which would be supplied by the Lord, not by some enemy.

- f. If "Christian" is not the new name, what is it? Has it been given yet? If not, why not? Paul was to bear the name of Christ before men; the name of Christ is the prime ingredient of *Christian*; the name means "follower of Christ." We conclude, without the slightest doubt, that "Christian" is the new name, and that it was originated by the mind of God.
- g. "In the important passage of Acts 11:26 on the name Christian the New English Bible takes out the word called, from the original term *chrematizo*--which means called of God--and substitutes the belittling word *got*, "the disciples first got the name of Christians," thus making a nick-name of the divine name Christian. The word called from *chrematizo* occurs twelve times in the New Testament and in every place, without exception, it signifies called of God--a divine calling. The word *kaleo* is the common word call, and *chrematizo* was the divine word. To ignore this fact, and substitute the word *got* for the word called is another example of deliberate dishonesty. The battle with the denominational churches on the divinely given name Christian was fought and won in earlier years, and now the modernists are translating the divinity of that name out of the New Testament----it is the only way that they can get rid of it" (Foy E. Wallace, *The Gospel for Today*, p.764).

C. Acts 11:27-30: The Prophecy of the Great Famine.

1. Verses 27-28: "And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar."
 - a. Certain prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem; one of these was Agabus. He is also named in Acts 21:10. This prophet signified by the Holy Spirit that a great dearth (famine) was coming. Luke says that it took place during the reign of Claudius Caesar (A.D. 41-54).
 - b. The extent of the famine is said to be worldwide, affecting the most (if not all) of the Empire. Secular records indicate it occurred in 45 A.D.; it was most severe in Judea, apparently, for it was to these brethren that relief was sent.
2. Verses 29-30: "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."
 - a. The brethren in Antioch decided to send relief to the church in Judea, which they did by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.
 - b. It was given to the elders, who were the proper ones to see that it reached those who needed it. One church aided another.

ACTS 12

A. Acts 12:1-5: The Martyrdom of James and Imprisonment of Peter.

1. Verse 1: "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church."
 - a. The Herod named in this passage was Herod Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod the Great, who had tried to kill Jesus (Matt. 2). This man was also a nephew of Herod the Tetrarch, who beheaded John the Baptist (Matt. 14)
 - b. "Herod Agrippa I was born 11 B.C. and sent by his mother to be brought up at Rome after the execution of his father in 7 B.C. There he developed intimate friendships with Caligula and Claudius, each of whom later reigned as emperors, in A.D. 37-41 and A.D. 41-54, respectively. Through them he was awarded from time to time, from A.D. 37 to A.D. 41, parts of his grandfather's former kingdom till he had acquired it all. And, like him, he was cruel, bloodthirsty, vain, and fond of magnificent display. Always eager to ingratiate himself with the Jews (his grandmother had been an Asmonean [Jewish] princess), and learning of their hatred against the church, he beheaded James and arrested Peter, intending no doubt to execute him" (*ALC*, 1980, p.96).
 - c. The events of this section took place in A.D. 44, the year of the death of Herod. His death was a blow to the Jews, who found in him a powerful friend. We are not told why he decided to afflict certain ones in the church, but likely it was to curry favor with the Jews.
 - d. To "vex" is to "afflict."
2. Verse 2: "And he killed James the brother of John with the sword."
 - a. He slew James, the brother of John, with the sword. James was the first of the apostles to die, and his brother John was the last. James (and John) had approached Christ with the request to be seated at the Lord's right and left hand in the kingdom, to which the Lord responded with the question: "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They asserted, "We are able" (Matt. 20:20-22). James was called upon to live up to his claim.
 - b. The account of the martyrdom of James is reported in only 11 words (KJV). If this report had been by an uninspired author, we could expect the account would be much more detailed. Execution by the sword was done by beheading the victim. Matthew 14:1-12.
3. Verses 3-4: "And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."
 - a. When he saw that the slaying of James pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter also. Although we are not told that he intended to execute him, it is certainly likely that that was his plan. "To bring him forth to the people" (12:4) suggests some kind of punishment was in store for this apostle. The inspired historian inserts the detail parenthetically that this was the time of unleavened bread (which included Passover).
 - b. Peter was apprehended and imprisoned, under the guard of four quaternions of soldiers. A quaternion (cf. *quartets*) was 4 soldiers, thus Peter was guarded by 16 men, who possibly worked alternating shifts, with one quaternion serving one watch (six hours).
 - c. It is obvious that Peter had little chance of effecting an escape while thus imprisoned and guarded. We learn from verse 6 that he was also chained between two soldiers. The apostles had mysteriously vanished from prison on an earlier occasion (Acts 5:19), thus no possibility for escape was allowed this time.
 - d. Herod intended to put the apostle on trial before the people after Easter. *Easter* is an unfortunate rendering of the original word, *pascha* ("Passover"). "The term Easter is not of Christian origin. It is another form of *Astarte*, one of the titles of the Chaldean goddess, the queen of heaven. The festival of Pasch held by Christians in post-apostolic times was a continuation of the Jewish feast, but was not instituted by Christ, nor was it connected with Lent. From this Pasch the Pagan festival of Easter was quite distinct and was introduced into the apostate Western religion, as part of the attempt to adapt Pagan festivals to Christianity" (Vine, Vol. 2, p.15).
 - e. Even if there had been an Easter celebration by the church then, Herod would not have seen any need of waiting until after such a festival before executing Peter. But since the word in the original is "Passover," we can see why he did not want to defile that "holy" season by executing the apostle. It was for the benefit of the Jews, not the Christians, that he delayed his action.

4. Verse 5: "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."
 - a. The apostle was in prison, but the saints did not forget him. They prayed for him continually (cf. 1 Th. 5:17). This did not mean that there was a steady flow of brethren standing before an audience and offering uninterrupted prayers; rather, they all prayed in his behalf.
 - b. Verse twelve shows that many of the brethren had gathered at a certain house to pray. It is likely there were other such gatherings in the city. The ASV renders the verse thus: "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him" (See margin, KJV).
- B. Acts 12:6-10: An Angel Releases Peter.
1. Verse 6: "And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison."
 - a. The night before the day Herod intended to bring Peter forth, God answered the prayers of the saints. They were fervently praying in the apostle's behalf, and God heard and answered (Jas. 5:16-18; 1 John 3:22). But before the report of the angel releasing Peter is given, Luke describes the secure fashion in which the apostle was being held.
 - b. It is clear that there was no way Peter could escape on his own, and if a large group of his friends tried to break in to free him, the guard could immediately kill him. He was sleeping between two soldiers; he was bound with two chains; there were guards at the prison door.
 2. Verse 7: "And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands."
 - a. The angel appeared; a light from some unspecified source illuminated the cell; the angel struck Peter on the side to awaken him; he told the apostle to rise quickly; the chains fell from his hands. Some kind of power must have been brought to bear on the guards and other prisoners (if any), for no alarm was sounded.
 - b. There is nothing in the report to indicate that the guards or other prisoners had seen the angel or the escape of Peter. His escape was not even known until the next morning (vs. 18).
 3. Verses 8-10: "And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him."
 - a. This is not a scene of terror or panic. The angel told Peter to get dressed and to put on his sandals. Peter obeyed. He told the apostle to cast the outer garment about him and follow him.
 - b. Peter was in somewhat of a daze: he followed the angel but thought the whole scene was a vision. Visions must have been very life-like.
 - c. They passed the first ward (guard) safely; also the second. They came to the iron gate which led to the city. It opened of its own accord. The angel and Peter went through the open gate, and passed through one street. Having safely completed the release of Peter, the angel departed. Peter was now on his own.
 4. Why was Peter delivered and James allowed to suffer martyrdom? The answer most likely lies in the statements Jesus gave to these two men. He told James that he would face the suffering symbolized by the "cup" and "baptism" mentioned (Matt. 20:23). The Lord told Peter that when he was old, he would be under the control of others who would lead him to places he did not wish to go (John 21:18-19). Thus, Peter was to live to be an old man. This was not said about James.
- C. Acts 12:11-17: Peter Returns to the Brethren.
1. Verses 11-14: "And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate."
 - a. When Peter came to realize that the events he had seen were real (when he came to himself), he knew that the Lord had dispatched an angel to effect his deliverance. Otherwise, he would have suffered
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- what Herod and the Jews expected to do to him. The Prodigal son "came to himself" (Luke 15:17).
- b. Peter thought about the situation that now existed, and decided to go to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. It may have been the usual thing for brethren to gather in her house, which was large enough for several to assemble. The house had a gate, an outer doorway that separated the house and grounds from the city (vs. 13f).
 - c. The apostle knocked at the gate. His knock was answered by a young girl who was named Rhoda. The phrase "to hearken" is defined in the margin as "to ask who was there." We say, "To answer the door." Peter identified himself; she recognized his voice; she was so elated she ran back to tell the others instead of opening the door!
2. Verses 15-16: "And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished."
 - a. The brethren accused this young lady of madness when they heard her report. They had been praying fervently, but did not expect this kind of quick response from God. Before we criticize their lack of faith, we should recall our similar unbelief toward our prayers. Human nature has not changed! Our brethren back then had the same failings and weaknesses as do we.
 - b. "When we remember that these disciples were so familiar with miracles, it is rather surprising that the deliverance of Peter should have caused so much astonishment. It shows that they were still disposed, like ourselves, to estimate the probabilities of even what God may do, by the difficulties of the execution. This is really the judging of God by the standard of human ability. While we are compelled to approach the unknown through the known, we will, perhaps, never rise above this weakness" (McGarvey, p.154).
 - c. Rhoda insisted that Peter truly was at the gate. They said it was not he but his angel. McGarvey observes that this response on their part "had allusion to the popular superstition of their day, that a man's guardian angel sometimes assumed his form. Before this, the twelve had twice imagined that they saw a disembodied spirit; once when they saw Jesus walking on the water, and once when he miraculously entered a closed room where they were sitting [Mt. 14:26; Lk. 24:37]" (pp.154f). This company perhaps thought that his angel had come to tell them something about Peter.
 - d. But the apostle continued his knocking. They opened the door, and were astonished to see that it was Peter in the flesh standing before them!
 3. Verse 17: "But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place."
 - a. Peter quieted their questions with a signal of his hand, and related to them the details of his deliverance. He told them to take this information to James and the other brethren.
 - b. This James was obviously not the brother of John (vs. 2). This James was most probably the half-brother of Jesus, the author of the book bearing that name, and who was prominent in the Jerusalem congregation (Acts 15:2, 13-21; Gal. 1:18-19; 2:6-9). He may have been an elder of the church.
 - c. He then went to another place, for when his escape was learned, the authorities would most likely seek him out again. It appears that the officials might know this place or could be expected to locate it. We are not told where he went, or even if he remained in Jerusalem. He is placed in Jerusalem in Acts 15 when the apostles convened a council to decide the issue of circumcision.
- D. Acts 12:18-19: Peter's Escape is Discovered.
1. Verse 18: "Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter."
 - a. There was a great commotion among the soldiers when they discovered Peter's absence; and for good reason, primarily because they realized that their lives were forfeit for allowing the escape.
 - b. But there would also be the natural desire to solve this great mystery: how could a man escape their clutches, while being held in a secure prison, chained between two soldiers, and guarded by others? They would not be able to explain it.
 2. Verse 19: "And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and *there* abode."
 - a. When Herod sent for Peter, and learned about his escape, he would naturally think that the soldiers must have been involved. He examined them. "The military law of the Romans required the guards
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who allowed the escape of a prisoner, and rendered no satisfactory account of it, should be put to death" (McGarvey, p.155).

- b. "Examined" is from *anakrinas*, which means "to sift up and down, to question thoroughly" (Boles, p.195). See Luke 23:14; Acts 4:9; 28:18. Vine says that this examination could also include torture (Vol. 2, p.53).
- c. It was the prerogative of Herod to condemn these sixteen men to death. He should have been familiar with the stories of the miracles wrought by the apostles, and could have attributed Peter's escape to a supernatural act.
- d. Is there any reason to blame the execution of these soldiers on God, who had directed the release of Peter? Certainly not! God cannot be held responsible for imperfect laws of men, or for the cruelty and insensitivity of rulers, or for the faulty judgments which men often dispense. Herod must bear this blame!
- e. Herod went down to Caesarea from Jerusalem. McGarvey supposes that he moved there because of a guilty conscience, but it is more probable that he did so because this sea port city was the seat of Roman government, and he had a palace there.

E. Acts 12:20-23: The Death of Herod.

1. Verse 20: "And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country*."
 - a. "Claudius the emperor of Rome and personal friend of Herod had just returned from a journey to Britain, an event celebrated widely throughout the ancient empire, Herod presiding over extensive games and ceremonies honoring the emperor at Caesarea in 44 A.D. In the midst of those festivities, Herod was cut down..." (Coffman, p.249).
 - b. Herod became highly displeased with the people of Tyre and Sidon (in Phoenicia). We are not told the cause of this problem. These cities depended on their neighbors for their supplies, hence Herod as king could control their livelihood. Luke says that their country was nourished by the territory governed by Herod.
 - c. The leaders of Tyre and Sidon made friends with Blastus, Herod's chamberlain. This term denotes an officer who held authority in the house of kings and nobles. By the influence of Blastus, they were able to gain an audience with Herod so they could reach a peaceful settlement of the problem.
2. Verses 21-23: "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, *saying*, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."
 - a. During the great festivities of the occasion, and with the ambassage from Tyre and Sidon also present, Herod arrayed himself in royal garments, sat on his throne, and gave an oration to the people.
 - b. The people gave a shout at the conclusion of his speech, saying: "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." This accolade Herod accepted.
 - c. But an angel immediately smote him because he took this glory to himself, and did not acknowledge that his talent had been given him of God. Luke reports that this "god" was eaten of worms, and died.
3. Josephus gives us an uninspired, but knowledgeable, report of the occasion: "Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city of Caesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honour of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival, a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him: and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god: and they added,—'Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.' Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, as he presently afterwards looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his

belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said,—'I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproveth the lying words you just now said to me; and I who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.' When he had said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumour went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and the seventh year of his reign; for he reigned four years under Caius Caesar, three of them were over Philip's tetrarchy only, and on the fourth he had that of Herod added to it; and he reigned besides those, three years under the reign of Claudius Caesar; in which time he reigned over the fore-mentioned countries, and also had Judea added to them, as also Samaria and Cesarea. The revenues that he received out of them were very great, no less than twelve millions of drachmae. Yet did he borrow great sums from others; for he was so very liberal, that his expenses exceeded his income; and his generosity was boundless" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 19, Chapter 8, Section 2, pp.412f).

F. Acts 12:24-25: Barnabas and Saul.

1. Verse 24: "But the word of God grew and multiplied."
 - a. God's word grew and multiplied. While the death of Herod was a blow to the Jews, who counted him as a friend, it was a boon to the saints. The efforts of men to crush the cause of Christ once again failed. The faithfulness of the Christians coupled with the power of God won for the church another victory.
 - b. The growth of the word of God refers to the spread of the gospel; it grew in its influence on the minds and lives of men.
2. Verse 15: "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark."
 - a. Barnabas and Saul, who had taken the offering of the Antioch church of Christ to the needy saints at Jerusalem, now return to Antioch. They had completed their mission (charge, marg.).
 - b. They brought back from Jerusalem a young man by the name of John Mark, in whose mother's house the brethren had met for prayer (vs. 12). This is the writer of the Book of Mark, and is thought to be the young man who fled from Gethsemane (Mark 14:51-52).
 - 1) Acts 13:2,5,13: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them....And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister....Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."
 - 2) Acts 15:36-41: "And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 4:11: "Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

ACTS 13

A. Acts 13:1-3: Barnabas and Saul Selected to do Mission Work.

1. Verse 1: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."
 - a. Barnabas and Saul had already worked in Antioch for a whole year; they had also delivered the relief the brethren in Antioch collected for the saints in Jerusalem. These two servants are now back in Antioch, and also there were certain inspired prophets and teachers: Simeon (also called Niger); Lucius of Cyrene; Manaen (who had grown up with Herod the tetrarch). These prophets may be included in Acts 11:27.
 - b. In the list of names, Barnabas is first and Saul is last, in keeping with the ancient custom to arrange names in the order of their notability at the time (McGarvey, p.156). Barnabas was well known; Saul had not yet become great in reputation. Barnabas is named first when the two are spoken of, until 13:13.
 - c. Nothing is known of the other three men, except what is stated here. Lucius may have been among the men named in Acts 11:19-20. If *Cyrene* modifies both Lucius and Simeon, then Simeon might be the Simon of Cyrene who bore the cross of Christ (see Mark 15:21). Simeon (also written as Simon and Symeon) was a common Jewish name. *Niger* means "black," but that does not necessarily address his race. There is no proof that Lucius was "Luke the beloved physician." Herod the Tetrarch was the one who executed John the Baptizer. Manaen had been brought up with this Herod; the Greek term can also be translated "foster-brother" (Marg. and ASV).
2. Verses 2-3: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away."
 - a. While these workers were in service to the Lord in Antioch, while they fasted, the Holy Spirit commanded that Barnabas and Saul be separated unto the work that they were being assigned. The most obvious means by which this message was delivered was through one of the prophets named in verse one. Good things sometimes happen when God's people fast. Fasting is not something that people can be commanded to do, any more than the amount of contribution they must give is specified. Jesus said that when we fast, we are to keep quiet about it: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:16-18).
 - b. In compliance with the instructions given by the Spirit, the brethren fasted and prayed; and after laying their hands on them, they were sent on their journey. We are not told who did the "laying on of hands," but it was likely one or more of the prophets and teachers, or perhaps the elders of the church. No worthwhile endeavor ought to be done without earnest prayer for God's help.
 - c. "That the imposition of hands, accompanied by fasting and prayer, was, in this case, as in that of the seven deacons, merely their formal separation to the special work to which they had been called. This, indeed, is sufficiently evident from the context. What they did was doubtless what they had been told to do by the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit simply said to them, '*Separate* me Barnabas and Saul *to the work* to which I have called them.' The fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands was, then, merely their *separation* to this work" (McGarvey, pp.157f).
 - d. The events of verses 2-3 probably took a few days.

B. Acts 13:4-12: The Company Travels to Cyprus.

1. Verses 4-5: "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister."
 - a. From Antioch, the company (Barnabas, Saul, John Mark) went to the seaport city of Seleucia and took a ship to Cyprus. In Salamis, located on the eastern end of the island of Cyprus, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. The usual pattern of work was to go to where people were assembled for religious purposes. There a ready-made audience was gathered.

- b. John Mark is named here as being with them as an attendant (ASV). There would have been several jobs which John could have performed, including baptizing people.
 - c. Cyprus was about 100 miles from Seleucia. The island itself was about 140 miles long and 50 miles wide. Barnabas was a native of Cyprus (Acts 4:36).
2. Verses 6-8: "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name *was* Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."
- a. Traveling to the western end of Cyprus, they came to Paphos where they found a Jewish false prophet named Barjesus, who practiced sorcery. "Every reader of ancient history has observed that statesmen and generals were in the habit of consulting oracles and auguries, and that they generally kept about them some one supposed to have the power of interpreting the signs of approaching good or evil" (McGarvey, p.159).
 - b. The Roman deputy (proconsul) Sergius Paulus, although a prudent (understanding) man, had this sorcerer with him. Barjesus had strong influence with the ruler. Sergius Paulus learned about the work of Barnabas and Saul, and called for them because he desired to hear the word of God.
 - c. Barjesus, whose name by interpretations was Elymas, withstood Barnabas and Saul in an attempt to keep the proconsul from becoming a Christian. The words used are, "to turn away the deputy from the faith."
 - 1) Acts 6:7: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
 - 2) Galatians 1:23: "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."
 - 3) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
3. Verses 9-11: "Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."
- a. Saul is called Paul for the first time here; Saul was his Jewish name; Paul was his Roman name. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and set his eyes on this false prophet. Looking intently at the man, Paul directed some strong words at him.
 - b. He described Elymas as being full of all subtilty and all mischief (ASV: "all guile and all villany"). Subtilty (guile) is from a Greek word meaning "to catch with bait" (i.e., a deceiver; a trickster). "Mischief" (villany) is from a word meaning "ease in working; laziness; recklessness" (Vine, Vol. 4, pp.187f). The word was also used in reference to theft (ibid.).
 - c. Paul plainly called him a child of the devil ("slanderer"). As the devil is one who slanders the innocent, so Elymas was "a chip off the old block." It appears that in withstanding Paul and Barnabas he had slandered them, the gospel, or Christ (or all three). The apostle called Elymas an enemy of all righteousness. Righteousness is doing what God says, thus to be an enemy of righteousness is to oppose obedience to God. Paul asked the rhetorical question: "Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Paul was not seeking an answer to this question.
 - d. The apostle declared that the hand of the Lord is upon Elymas; that he would be blind; and not be able to see for a "season." Immediately a mist and darkness fell upon this deceiver, and he sought for someone to lead him by the hand.
 - e. Some have the notion that the gospel is altogether sweetness and kindness, that there is never any cause for strong words and hard action. This case disagrees! "When Moses went into Egypt he found it necessary to impose many personal inflictions upon the priests, in order to destroy Pharaoh's confidence in them. The present case was similar to that. The conflict in the mind of Sergius Paulus was between the claim of Bar-jesus to prophetic powers, and that of the apostles. The best way to settle this question was to denounce him in his true character as a son of the devil and an enemy of all righteousness, and then prove the justice of the denunciation, by exerting miraculous control over
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his person. As he groped about, calling upon one and another of the frightened bystanders to lead him by the hand, the falsity and iniquity of his pretensions stood confessed, and the divine mission of the apostles was demonstrated" (McGarvey, p.159).

- f. The judgment of blindness was for a limited period of time, although the length of it was not stated. Elymas was to be in the darkness of the blind for "a season." We are not told what the ultimate effect of this judgment against him was. What softens some, will harden others.
4. Verse 12: "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."
 - a. The proconsul was convinced of the truth when he saw the miracle. His belief in Elymas was destroyed, and his faith in the gospel was firmly established. In this case we see again the purpose of miracles, that of furnishing positive proof of the gospel's claims.
 - b. "This triumph over Bar-jesus, and the consequent conversion of Sergius Paulus, forms an epoch in the life of the Apostle Paul. Hitherto he has occupied a subordinate position, and his name has come last in the list of himself and his fellow-laborers. But hereafter he is to occupy the foreground of almost every scene in which he acts. Heretofore, Luke has written 'Barnabas and Saul;' hereafter he writes, 'Paul and Barnabas.' He had been, up to this time, known by no other name than Saul, being so called not only by Luke, but by Jesus and Ananias [Acts 9:4-17]. Luke, though writing long after this name had gone into disuse, remembering the custom which thus far prevailed, thus far retains it in his narrative. But, from this time forward he uses the name *Paul* exclusively; and that this was the universal custom, we infer from the fact that he is so called by all others who mention his name..." (McGarvey, p.160).
 - c. "As frequently, especially in Paul's writings, this ["believed"] is a synecdoche, a type of metaphor in which one of a related group of actions stands for all of them. The meaning here is that Paulus believed the gospel of Christ, repented of his sins, confessed the Saviour, and was baptized into Christ, becoming a Christian. Luke used the same figure in 16:34, in which place, after spelling out certain preconditions of salvation fulfilled by the jailer, he spoke of the jailer's compliance with all of them as his 'having believed in God'" (Coffman, p.260).
- C. Acts 13:13-15: Paul and His Company Arrive in Asia Minor.
1. Verse 13: "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."
 - a. Beginning at this point in his inspired narrative, Luke gives Paul the leading role in the evangelistic expedition. (See 15:12; cf. 14:12; 15:25 for exceptions). Having preached in the Cypriot city of Paphos, they sailed to Perga, a port city in Pamphylia, in Asia Minor. It was here in Perga that John Mark left the company and returned to Jerusalem.
 - b. No reason for his departure is cited by Luke, but it was a decision which displeased Paul. In planning their second tour (Acts 15:36-41), Paul was opposed to their taking Mark on account of his turning back on the first journey. A likely reason for his defection lies in the presence of robbers in the mountains through which the company must pass. Some have suggested that the change in the leadership of the expedition may have disturbed Mark since he was the nephew of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). (The ASV has "cousin" instead of "sister's son" in Col. 4:10).
 - c. Perga was about 150 miles to the northwest of Paphos. Asia Minor is what is called Turkey today. Boundary lines frequently change with the passing of time, and the art of map-making in ancient times was not nearly as exact as in modern times, thus it is often difficult to know the precise divisions of provinces in those days. At one time Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe were in the province of Galatia (*Smith's Dictionary*, Vol. 1, p.854), thus the churches in these cities were included in Paul's Galatian letter.
 2. Verses 14-15: "But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye men and brethren*, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."
 - a. From the pronoun "they" we see that Luke was not with them to this point. The writer did not detail their travels through the robber-infested mountains. As far as we know, they met with no harm. *Antioch* was the name of a city in the district of Pisidia. There was a synagogue of the Jews there, to which Paul and Barnabas went on the Sabbath day. Their purpose was not to participate in Jewish worship, for that system was no longer applicable. Their work was to spread the gospel, and the best

and most logical place of finding an audience was in a gathering of Jews.

- b. Following the reading from the law and the prophets, a significant part of the Jewish worship, the leaders of the synagogue, understanding that Paul and Barnabas were Jews from "back home," invited them to speak to the people. This was the very opening that they needed.

D. Acts 13:16-41: Paul's Sermon in the Synagogue.

1. Verse 16: "Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience."
 - a. Place yourself in Paul's situation, and decide what you would have said under these circumstances. What he spoke made perfect sense. Paul stood up and attracted their attention. He addressed the audience as *men of Israel* and those *that fear God*.
 - b. From verse 42 we learn that there were some Gentiles present; these are included in the latter part of his initial statement. Paul's speech began with this verse and continues through verse 41.
2. Verses 17-23: "The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus."
 - a. Paul follows the same pattern that Stephen used (Acts 7) by tracing the history of God's dealings with Israel. In this first section of his presentation, he highlights the flow of events from their stay in Egypt to the reign of David.
 - b. The apostle reminds his audience that God had chosen their fathers as his own people, that he had exalted them when they were mere servants in Egypt, and had delivered them from their bondage with a "high arm" (irresistible might). For 40 years, God had suffered their rebellious demonstrations in the wilderness. Paul could not immediately speak about Jesus for they would have had no reason to see him as the Messiah. So he surveys the history of Israel to show that God's aim was not intended to be fulfilled in the nation of Israel, but in the Messiah.
 - c. God destroyed the seven major nations inhabiting Canaan (Dt. 7:1). He did so through the efforts of Israel, aided by his own powerful arm. These heathen nations had long ago departed from God, and had filled up their cup with iniquity (Gen. 15:16; Ps. 9:17; Prov. 14:34). The land then was divided among the tribes of Israel. Without God's help and guidance, they could not have taken possession since the seven nations were more powerful than Israel.
 - d. Paul mentions the time of the Judges, which spanned about 450 years. These judges were given in response to national emergencies which arose as a result of Israel's sinfulness. The people were faithful to God during the lifetime of Joshua and the elders of that generation (Judg. 2:7, 10-12). A horrible pattern of sin, punishment, penitence, and deliverance then occurred over and over again in Judges. (See Boles, pp.207f, for a discussion of the 450 years). Samuel was the last judge.
 - e. During Samuel's time, the people demanded a king to be like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8). God selected Saul, son of Cis (Kish), of the tribe of Benjamin. Saul was king for forty years.
 - f. Due to sinful conduct (1 Sam. 15), God removed Saul as king, and appointed David to reign in his stead. To David God gave this compliment of praise: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will." It was at the time that God "found" David, that that young man was described as a man after God's own heart. Later, David himself entered a pattern of sin in regards to Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11). He could not be accurately pictured as a man after God's own heart after that time.
 - g. Paul reaches the point toward which his remarks were pointed. The Jews would know of the promise given in 2 Samuel 7 which spoke of God's plan to establish the seed of David on the throne. The original promise to Abraham that God would bless all men through the seed of that great patriarch (Gen. 12) was channeled through David. Making a reference to these facts, which the Jews knew, the apostle asserts that God had raised up Jesus to be the Savior of Israel (Cf. Matt. 1:21). With this statement Paul introduced Jesus to their minds, and then quickly went on to show reason why this statement was true.

3. Verses 24-29: "When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose. Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*. And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre."
 - a. Paul proceeds to a discussion of John the Baptizer, with whom these Jews were doubtless familiar. Some of these men would have been back to Jerusalem for the great feast days, and while there would have heard about John and Jesus. Paul states that John bore testimony that he was not the Messiah, but that he was not even worthy of taking off the Messiah's shoes. John was a "road-builder" for Christ: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" (Isa. 40:3-4).
 - b. Paul again addresses his audience as people of Israel and as those who fear God—Jews and proselyte Gentiles. The Jews were of the "stock" of Abraham in that they were all descendants of that great man. The Gentiles present feared God, which was evidenced by their presence in the synagogue. To both Jew and Gentile, Paul states, salvation is offered. It was sent by the message being preached from place-to-place by Paul and Barnabas, and all those other apostles and teachers in other locations.
 - c. He mentioned that the people at Jerusalem, with their rulers, did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They did not heed the messages of the prophets who foretold his coming, his nature, and his work, even though these great truths were read each sabbath among the Jews. Nevertheless, by their rejecting and condemning Jesus, they fulfilled certain portions of the prophecies relating to the Messiah. Cf. Isaiah 53; Zechariah 11.
 - d. Paul further states that even though they found him guilty of no wrong-doing, they petitioned Pilate to execute him. Having fulfilled all the prophecies (those in which they had a part), his body was removed from the tree (the cross) and placed in a sepulchre.
4. Verses 30-37: "But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption."
 - a. But God raised him up from the dead, and showed him to certain witnesses who came with him from Galilee to Jerusalem; there were certain specially-selected men to bear witness of his resurrection. His appearances covered many days, at many places, and before many people. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:1-8).
 - b. Paul shows that Jesus fulfilled prophecies made of him in the Old Testament. Paul and Barnabas were able to present good news (glad tidings, the gospel) to them: that God had fulfilled the promise which he made to the fathers. God had fulfilled them to those Jews who were then living. The fulfillment centered on his having raised Jesus up from the dead. Paul cites Psalm 2:7, and applies it to the resurrection of Christ. This passage is also quoted in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5.
 - 1) Hebrews 1:5: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?"

- 2) Hebrews 5:5: "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee."
- c. The resurrection of Christ is meant. His resurrection assured his exaltation to his priestly and kingly throne, where he reigns as King over the spiritual kingdom, but also serves as our infinite High Priest:
 - 1) Zechariah 6:13: "Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Cf. Heb. 7).
 - 2) "In applying the quotation from the second Psalm, therefore, to the resurrection, and endeavoring to cheer the Jews in Antioch, with the thought that a long-cherished and familiar promise was thereby fulfilled, Paul was giving his real understanding of the passage quoted, and it is one as much more cheering than that which many commentators have gathered from it, as the exaltation of Christ from the grave to his throne in the heavens was a more glorious birth than that which brought him into this sinful world" (McGarvey, p.164).
- d. Concerning the resurrection of Christ, who was never to die again, God said, "I will give you the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3). The "sure mercies" which were promised to come through David had been given to Christ—for the benefit of those who would follow Christ's will.
 - 1) McGarvey says that the Greek phrase translated "sure mercies of David" is difficult to translate and interpret, but gave as his view of its meaning, "the holy things made sure to David. The purpose of the quotation is to prove that God would raise the Messiah from the dead no more to return to corruption" (p.165).
 - 2) "This quotation from Isaiah shows that God had promised to David that the Messiah would come through his descendants, and that he would conquer death; hence, when Jesus was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, entirely and forever beyond the reach of death, he began his reign over his kingdom, and is now upon David's throne" (Boles, p.212).
- e. Paul quotes another psalm which cites God's promise to preserve his Holy One from corruption. This quote is taken from Psalm 16:10. This was a promise of the resurrection of Christ, since the only way to keep a body from ultimately going back to the dust is by resurrecting it. The significance of the prophecy is so clear that the only objection the Jews might make was to apply it to David.
 - 1) But in verse 36, Paul shows that David died, was buried, and his body decayed. Thus does he show that the prophecy quoted did not apply to David but to Christ. This same point was made by Peter in Acts 2:25-31. In verse 37, Paul makes the application of the prediction to Christ, who saw no corruption because he was raised up from the dead.
 - 2) In describing David, Paul says that he served his own generation by the will of God. The sweet psalmist's life was not one of selfish indulgence, but of service to his people.
5. Verses 38-39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."
 - a. The inspired apostle did not close his remarks without presenting an offer of salvation. Through this man Jesus, forgiveness of sins is made possible, a blessing which the Law of Moses could not provide. There were built-in limitations in the Law (Heb. 10:1-4). It was designed to prepare men for the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:19; Rom. 10:4). Compare Paul's statement in verse 38 with Peter's in Acts 2:36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
 - b. *Believe* is used in its comprehensive sense here (as in John 3:16 and Rom. 1:16). One can not be justified by faith only (Jas. 2:24; cf. Heb. 11:6). Faith is essential, but a faith that saves is a faith that obeys God. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas. 2:24-26).
 - c. Through Christ, we can be justified from all things (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Every sin from which men will turn and renounce, can be forgiven. Notice that justification and forgiveness of sins are used as parallels here: to be forgiven of sins is to be justified; to be justified (considered guiltless) is to be forgiven.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of

- themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
- 2) Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
- d. The Law of Moses could not justify one (cause his sins to be forgiven), but the law of Christ can do so.
6. Verses 40-41: "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."
- a. Contrary to modern practice, Paul concluded his sermon by issuing a very strong warning to heed the truths he had presented. The common thought today is that sermons must be positive, and must certainly end on a positive note. The Holy Spirit did not agree! The salvation of souls is such an overwhelmingly important matter that warnings are indispensable.
- b. He refers to the warnings of the prophets but cites only one prophet's words—that of Habakkuk 1:5. A severe warning was necessary lest they reject the Savior to their own destruction. If more of the Jews had obeyed the gospel, the vast destruction of Jerusalem and the disintegration of the Jewish state might have been avoided.
- c. The "work" that Habakkuk mentioned is the atonement process: the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah. The prophet knew that when this work was plainly declared, many would not believe it. When the apostles went about preaching the resurrected Savior, although they confirmed their testimony with miraculous demonstrations, the majority rejected it. The Jews refused to give up their preconceived notions about the Messiah (that he was to be a worldly conqueror and ruler), and the Gentiles generally thought the gospel facts were foolish (1 Cor. 1:23).
- d. God's promises to punish sin are as certain as his promises to bless obedience.
- E. Paul's Sermon Follows This Outline (Acts 13:17-41):
1. He brings up the Messiah by an appeal to Jewish history.
 - a. God chose and exalted the descendants of Abraham: 13:17.
 - b. He delivered them from Egypt and was long-suffering toward them in the wilderness: 13:17-18.
 - c. He gave them Canaan and helped them take possession of it: 13:19.
 - d. God sent judges to help them out of their self-imposed difficulties: 13:20.
 - e. When they demanded a king, God gave them Saul: 13:21.
 - f. Saul was removed from the throne, and David was given in his stead: 13:22.
 - g. God promised to raise up a Savior (Jesus) through the seed of David: 13:23.
 2. Paul showed that Jesus is that Savior by:
 - a. Reminding them of the message of John: 13:24-25.
 - b. Showing that the Jewish rejection of Jesus fulfilled prophecy: 13:26-29.
 - c. Affirming that God had raised Jesus from the dead, which he confirmed by:
 - 1) Appealing to the testimony of eyewitnesses: 13:30-32.
 - 2) Appealing to the Scripture: 13:33-37.
 3. He concluded his message by:
 - a. Making an appeal: 13:38-39.
 - b. Issuing a warning: 13:40-41.
- F. Acts 13:42-52: Events on the Following Sabbath Day in Antioch.
1. Verses 42-43: "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."
 - a. The Jews left the synagogue, with no mention made here of the effect the message had on them. Their attitude is fully disclosed in the report of the events which transpired a week later (vs. 45).
 - b. When the Jews were gone, the Gentiles requested that Paul speak on this matter again the next sabbath.
 - c. When the gathering had broken up, many of the Jews and the Gentile proselytes who met with them followed Paul and Barnabas. Although the following verses indicate that the majority rejected the gospel, from later verses it is clear that there was a number of converts.

- d. It appears that a goodly crowd accompanied Paul and Barnabas as they left the meeting place. During the discussions which ensued, these men were "persuaded to continue in the grace of God." The ASV gives "urged" for "persuaded" (KJV). Since one can continue in something only if he is in it, these men were being encouraged to obey the gospel. The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). The Law had truth, but the fullness of God's grace was reserved for the gospel (Tit. 2:11), which is appropriated by obedience (Rom. 5:21).
2. Verses 44-45: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming."
 - a. So much interest was stirred up by this one sermon that Paul and Barnabas would naturally have been in great demand during the following week. The statement in verse 43 may summarize their activities taking place over several days.
 - b. On the next sabbath day, almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. The great number who assembled was a cause of chagrin to the Jewish leaders, who were envious of these missionaries. The high interest indicated would have filled them with happiness if they had been sincere in their religion.
 - c. Instead of gladness, these men, who thought more of their position than they did of the truth of God and the salvation of souls, raised their voice against the truths presented by Paul. They contradicted and blasphemed. They opposed the words Paul spoke; they spoke against them. It seems that while Paul was speaking this message of salvation and hope, these jealous men spoke out in opposition to what he said. When dishonest men hear things that would uproot their beliefs and practices, they reject the truth and oppose those who present that message.
 - 1) They also blasphemed. This must be a case of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come" (Matt. 12:31-32). Paul did not continue his appeal to them. We "cast pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6) when we try to teach people who are opposed to the truth.
3. Verses 46-47: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."
 - a. Paul and Barnabas grew bold in their remarks, and declared that it was God's plan that the gospel first be presented to the Jews (Rom. 1:16; 11:12ff), but since these people rejected it, they were determined to preach it to the Gentiles, who had shown a willingness to accept it.
 - b. These Jews had in effect judged themselves to be unworthy of eternal life by their rejection of the gospel. In the spiritual election of which the Bible speaks, God "votes" for us, the devil "votes" against us, and we cast the deciding "ballot." Paul says plainly that eternal life was something that they could have obtained by receiving the message; but since they pushed the word away from them, they thereby forfeited that blessing. This statement by the apostles shows that the Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation is false. *Men do have a choice to obey or disobey God.*
 - c. The Gentiles had one advantage over the Jews—they were not filled with preconceptions and prejudices in regards to Christ. In turning to the Gentiles, they were fulfilling the Lord's prediction as stated in Isaiah 49:6: "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23; Isa. 65:2; Luke 2:25-32; Acts 1:8).
 - 1) Isaiah 65:2: "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was* not good, after their own thoughts."
 - 2) Hosea 1:10: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God."
 - 3) Hosea 2:23: "And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they

- shall say, *Thou art my God.*"
- 4) Luke 2:25-32: "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."
 - 5) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
4. Verses 48-49: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."
- a. The Gentiles were glad to hear this; and they glorified the word of the Lord. Calvinists think they have found a statement supportive of their views of foreordination in verse 48: "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."
 - b. But there are certain problems with this interpretation.
 - 1) If God foreordained some individuals to eternal life, then the rest are also foreordained—to eternal death (separation from God); but that would make God a respecter of persons, which is denied by the Bible (Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 2:11).
 - 2) The verse does not say "foreordained," but "ordained" (*tasso*), a term better translated as "appointed."
 - c. The truth is, God foreknew a plan to which if a man submitted he would be ordained to eternal life. A certain type of person obtains eternal life: the one who will be sincerely submissive to God's will. Those who do not obey that plan, are ordained to doom. It is not the individual who is ordained, but the type of individual; the system, not the person. Only "as many as" are ordained, believed. Only "as many as" are baptized into Christ, put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).
 - d. That the Calvinistic contentions based on this verse are false is seen by the following considerations:
 - 1) The Jews of verses 45-46 were (1) filled with envy; (2) they contradicted and blasphemed those things spoken by Paul; and (3) they judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life.
 - 2) The Gentiles of verse 48 believed: (1) they were glad when they heard the things Paul said; (2) they glorified the word of God; and (3) they were ordained (i.e., disposed to, were determined to obtain) eternal life.
 - 3) By a comparison of the two attitudes it is learned that the unbelieving Jews decided their own eternal destiny (condemnation) by their envious, unbelieving attitude; but those Gentiles who believed decided their own destiny (eternal life) by their believing, happy attitude. The difference between the attitudes lies in the reception or rejection of the word of God.
 - e. The context indicates that the disposition on the part of the Gentiles was present prior to their believing the gospel. Those who were ordained to eternal life—these and only these—believed. The willingness to listen sincerely existed in their hearts before faith was built therein.
 - 1) Faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17; Acts 15:7), but if there is no willingness to listen and learn, there will be no faith.
 - 2) In today's corrupted, materialistic society, it is a rare individual who has an open mind and receptive heart, who is unprejudiced against the gospel, and is teachable. Such a person is a rare jewel! Such a one can easily be taught the truth! Such a one is a joy to teach! Unfortunately, the false promises of sin and the false doctrines of men have contaminated the hearts of most adults and many young people.
 - f. Because of the receptive hearts among the Gentile population, the word of God was freely proclaimed throughout all that region!
5. Verses 50-52: "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."
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- a. The hateful Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women and chief men of the city, and caused Paul and Barnabas to be persecuted and expelled from that place. The Jews influenced the wives of men in authority, who influenced their husbands. Such contempt for God, and for Christ and his word, will not be forgotten; but neither will the faithfulness on the part of God's faithful.
 - 1) Romans 14:10-12; "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 2) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - b. Paul and Barnabas shook off the dust from their feet, in keeping with the Lord's statement in Luke 10:10-16. This was no childish act of spite, but a pronouncement of divine displeasure against the evil men of that place who were opposing God.
 - c. Before leaving the new saints, Paul obviously conferred spiritual gifts upon them; this, coupled with their new-found salvation, filled them with joy.
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ACTS 14

A. Acts 14:1-7: Paul and Barnabas Preach in Iconium.

1. Verse 1: "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."
 - a. Iconium was located about 90 miles from Antioch of Pisidia. Both of these cities, plus Lystra and Derbe, were located in the Roman province of Galatia. Iconium is said to have been a large and rich city at the time. It is known by the name Konya today.
 - 1) **Konya**, also Konia, city in central Turkey, capital of Konya Province, on the Plain of Konya. Konya is known for its handwoven carpets and other manufactures, including sugar, flour, textiles, leather goods, and aluminum. It is also a trading center for the surrounding area, in which agriculture, mining, and livestock raising are important. Konya has a growing tourist trade, due largely to its numerous attractions, such as orchards, irrigated gardens, several mosques, and the monastery of the mystical sect known as the *Maulawiyah*, or whirling dervishes. The monastery contains the tomb of the sect's founder, the poet and mystic Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi. Also in the city is Selçuk University (1975). Konya is one of the world's oldest cities, with excavations revealing settlement from as early as the 3rd millennium BC. Under the Persian Empire, Konya, then called Iconium, was the frontier city of Phrygia. The Romans joined it to Lycaonian district and made it the capital. The early Christians Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas preached here. It is likely that the city had a considerable Jewish population at that time, and became the center from which Christianity spread in south Galatia....In the late 11th century the Seljuk Turks (*see* Seljuks) gained control of the area, and the city became the capital of the sultanate of Iconium, or Rûm. Konya experienced its greatest prosperity under Seljuk rule and still contains many fine buildings from that period. The city was taken over by Mongols at the end of the 13th century, and later by the Turkmen principality of Karaman. In the latter part of the 15th century it was annexed by the Ottoman Empire. Though Konya declined during the Ottoman period, it was revived again following the construction in 1896 of the Ýstanbul-Baghdâd railroad, which passes through the city. Population (1990) 513,346" [Encarta, 1999].
 - 2) Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue of the Jews where they had opportunity to speak, as they had had in Antioch. Obviously, there was a significant settlement of Jews in that place.
 - b. Luke says that they *so spake* that a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed. Faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17; Acts 15:7). The message of the soul-saving gospel produces faith. Faith is not produced by the *sound* of the speaker's voice, or the *strength* or *beauty* with which the message is delivered. When we understand the gospel message, and allow its truths to lodge in our minds, faith is the result.
 - c. God, in his word, reveals what he demands of us; he reveals to us the blessings of obedience and the penalties of disobedience, by means of which he urges us to do what he says. It would have been beneath the dignity of the Almighty Lawgiver to give man the right to pick and choose which part of God's law to obey and which to reject. The Creator simply delivered his commands and prohibitions, requiring man to use his intelligence to decipher, believe, and obey.
 - 1) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - 2) John 7:17: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from myself" (ASV).
 - d. The religious perversions of men use statues, crosses, superstition, imposing rites and ceremonies, sensational presentations, mind control tactics, entertainment, music, and other worldly or sensual appeals, to capture the interest of men, and thus bring them into submission to their systems. But the gospel shuns all such dramatic tactics, and instead, it presents the simple message of the New Testament, which produces faith in the sinner's heart, which in turn brings him to penitence and baptism; this same faith leads him on through life, and ultimately to heaven. The power that produces faith and saves is not in the teacher, but the divine message!
 - 1) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

- 2) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - 3) James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
 - e. Simply stated, our great job is to present the gospel to the lost, and get them to understand it. We thus plant and water, but it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). There is nothing in this process in which the preacher or the one who obtains faith can boast: God gave the message; the preacher merely told them what God said; the student believed what God said. Suppose one has imbibed poison which will most assuredly kill him; but someone offers him an antidote which will remove the danger; neither the one giving the antidote nor the victim of the poison has any right to boast, when the cure is effected.
 - f. Paul and Barnabas presented the gospel in an orderly fashion which could be understood by the auditors. They grasped the truths presented, and believed them. The word "believed" is used in its comprehensive sense (cf. John 3:16; Acts 11:18) to include the other elements of the plan of salvation: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins... (Acts 2:38).
2. Verse 2: "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."
- a. While there was a veritable multitude which believed, there was another group comprised of unbelieving Jews who were able to turn the minds of the Gentiles against the brethren. The ASV has the "Jews that were disobedient" in place of "unbelieving Jews" in the KJV. The term "disobedient" (unbelieving) is used as the opposite of "believing" in verse 1.
 - b. The Jews of verse two were those who refused to obey the gospel. Compare John 3:36 and Hebrews 3:18 (KJV and ASV); see also Romans 2:8. To disbelieve is to disobey, for one who does not believe, will not (cannot) obey (cf. Mark 16:15-16). These Jews refused to allow themselves to be persuaded by the truth preached by Paul and Barnabas.
 - 1) John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (KJV). John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (ASV).
 - 2) Hebrews 3:18: "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" (KJV). Hebrews 3:18: "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient?" (ASV).
 - 3) Romans 2:8: "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (KJV).
 - c. These infidel Jews stirred up the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas, to try to make their work more difficult. Those Jews and Gentiles who believed (vs. 1) evidently remained faithful.
3. Verse 3: "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."
- a. For what is called a "long time," the two missionaries remained in Iconium, preaching the gospel. Their words were spoken "in the Lord," that is, they spoke by inspiration; and the Lord worked with them, providing signs and wonders by their hands.
 - b. By this means, Christ gave testimony to the truthfulness of the gracious words spoken by these two bold men. "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:20).
4. Verse 4: "But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles."
- a. The population of the city was divided, part for and part against the apostles. The Greek word translated "apostle" carries the definition, "one who is sent out." Jesus is called an "apostle" [of God] (Heb. 3:1)—he was "sent out" on a mission to earth. Moses was an apostle of God in that he was sent down to Egypt.
 - b. The word is used generally to describe anyone sent on a mission; thus it is used in reference to Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14) and Epaphroditus (same Greek word translated *messenger* in this place). Barnabas was an apostle of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3); Epaphroditus was an apostle of the
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church at Philippi. See 2 Corinthians 8:23 where the word is used, translated *messengers*: "Whether *any do inquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren *be inquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ."

- c. But the twelve men selected by Christ in his public ministry, plus Matthias who replaced Judas, and Paul who was chosen to be an apostle especially to the Gentiles, were apostles of Christ. These 13 were the ones receiving special powers (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-14; Acts 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 12:11-12; Matt. 19:28). We must not make the mistake of thinking Barnabas was equal with Paul in authority and power. Both were apostles of the Antioch church of Christ, but Paul was also an apostle of Christ.
 - 1) Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
 - 2) John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
 - 3) John 15:26-27: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."
 - 4) John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you."
 - 5) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - 6) 2 Corinthians 12:11-12: "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
5. Verses 5-7: "And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them, They were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: And there they preached the gospel."
 - a. Opposition continued to mount until an assault (onset; rush or impulse) was made by the Gentiles and the Jews, along with their rulers, in which attempts were made to use Paul and Barnabas despitefully, even to the point of stoning them.
 - b. Paul and Barnabas learned of the plot, and were able to flee the city before the awful intent could be carried out. Reaching Lystra and Derbe, in the district of Lycaonia, they continued their preaching efforts. "Lystra was about eighteen miles from Iconium, and Derbe was about twenty miles east of Lystra" (Boles, p.222).

B. Acts 14:8-18: Paul and Barnabas' Experiences in Lystra.

1. McGarvey says that this area was far enough from the great commercial centers that "the people retained their primitive habits, spoke their primitive dialect, and knew little of either the civilization of the Greeks, or the religion of the Jews. This rude state of society will account for some of the peculiarities of the following narrative" (pp.173f).
2. At Lystra, they encountered a man who had been a cripple from birth, who never had walked. Luke, a physician, gave a rather detailed report of the man's condition, suggesting that only a miracle could remove his problem.
3. Verses 8-13: "The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people."
 - a. This lame man heard Paul speak. The apostle, recognizing a case by which the gospel could be confirmed, and perceiving that sufficient faith existed by which the miracle could be accomplished,

commanded loudly, "Stand upright on thy feet." In some cases, miraculous actions were effected only by the faith of the inspired preacher; in others, faith on the part of the "patient" was required. This latter point was true of the present case. The man immediately leaped to his feet and walked. It is very likely that this man's previous condition was widely known.

- b. The effect on the people was tremendous. There was no doubt whatsoever in their minds that they had witnessed a great miracle. In their superstition, they attributed it to their pagan gods, saying that the gods had come down in the form of men. The mob cried out in the language of Lycaonia. This might indicate that Paul had been using another language in his speech, and that he did not know Lycaonian. He did not object to the mob's actions until their intention to sacrifice to them was apparent.
 - c. They called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercury. Luke says Paul was so named because he was the chief speaker. Mercury is said to be the "god" of eloquence. Zeus is the Greek name for Jupiter, and was envisioned as having a stately and commanding presence. "Hermes" is the Greek name for Mercury. Jupiter was considered superior to Mercury. Does this suggest that Barnabas was a larger man than Paul? Perhaps.
 - d. The priest of Jupiter was quick to take advantage of the developing situation: he arranged for a sacrifice to be offered. The garlands were placed on the oxen prior to their being slain.
4. Verses 14-18: "*Which* when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of*, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them."
- a. When Paul and Barnabas perceived their intention, they rent their clothes in dismay and ran among the people, crying out that they ought not consider doing such a thing. Paul plainly stated that they were only men, and that they were trying to turn men from such vanities (idols) to the living God, who made heaven, earth, sea, and all things therein. This is the only case of an apostles rending his garment, and the last recorded instance of the action. "It was, certainly, very inconsistent with the calm self-possession inculcated by Christ and the apostles; but we can excuse Barnabas and Saul on this occasion, in consideration of their early habits, which often spring unexpectedly upon men in a moment of sudden excitement" (McGarvey, p.175).
 - b. Paul continued his appeal to the Lycaonians, saying that the living God suffered all nations to do as they wished, but that he had not left himself without witness as to his nature and power. He did good (blessed men in many ways), gave rain from heaven, giving fruitful seasons, and thus providing food and gladness of heart.
 - c. In the past, God had allowed Gentile nations to follow their own ways. He overlooked many acts of ignorance during Old Testament times, especially while the Law was in effect. He had every right to destroy those people who immersed themselves in sin, but due to his own goodness, he showed forbearance.
 - d. God blessed mankind, the evil and the good, with rain and fruitful seasons, through natural laws. God's hand is behind nature (Ps. 19:1). Jupiter and Mercury were inventions of perverted human thinking; the Living God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.
 - e. With these strong appeals, they scarcely restrained the people from completing the intended sacrifice. The very fact that they were accustomed to offer sacrifices grew out of the original sacrifices Cain and Abel were instructed to offer, and which practice was continued down through the generations. The one to whom the sacrifice was to be offered had been changed—from the Living God to dead idols.
- C. Acts 14:19-28: The First Missionary Journey Continues and Concludes.
1. Verse 19: "And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead."
 - a. Certain hateful Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra, and successfully persuaded the Lycaonians to stone Paul. A short time before, these same people were on the verge of offering sacrifice to him.
 - b. People who are not committed to truth are fickle. Consider the case of the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The Jews gave him a hero's welcome, but only a few days later they were crying for

- his crucifixion!
- c. These people perhaps felt shamed for making a mistake as to the identity of these two itinerant preachers, and sought vindication by now attacking Paul. Gone was the euphoria over the miracle. The Jews may have convinced them that trickery was responsible for it. They should have examined the man healed to see the truth.
 - d. The mob stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. The mode of execution shows that the Jews were the instigators of the mob scene, for this was a practice peculiar to them. Paul later referred to this experience in 2 Corinthians 11:25 and 2 Timothy 3:11. It is likely that Paul has reference to this same event in his statements in 2 Corinthians 12:1-5. It is possible that Paul was dead, but raised back to life, although this is far from certain.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 11:25: "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 3:11: "Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 12:1-5: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities."
2. Verses 20-23: "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and *to* Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."
 - a. The disciples evidently thought he was dead, but he rose up, and entered with them into the city. He and Barnabas departed the next day to Derbe, where they continued their preaching—despite Paul’s having been stoned, Paul traveled 20 miles and preached. Having taught many people, they began their return to their home base (Antioch of Syria), visiting the same cities through which they had passed.
 - b. As they again visited the converts in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, they confirmed their souls—by means of further teaching and by conferring spiritual gifts on them. "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? *if it be* yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:3-5).
 - 1) Acts 8:14-19: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) Acts 19:5-6: "When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."
 - 3) Romans 1:11: "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."
 - c. Paul reminded them that they must pass through much tribulation in order to enter heaven, the eternal phase of the kingdom. They must be faithful.
 - d. Not enough time had elapsed for men to develop into elders, so it must be that those men appointed were given spiritual gifts to enable them to do the work. Having prayed and fasted with the brethren, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed (cf. Acts 20:32). Elders were appointed in every city (Tit. 1:5), which means, in the light of the text, elders (a plurality of qualified men) were installed in every congregation.

3. Verses 24-28: "And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples."
 - a. Passing through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia; they preached in Perga, and journeyed to Attalia and caught a ship to Antioch, where their journey began. They had fulfilled the work given them to do.
 - b. They gathered the church together to report on their mission. This first journey occupied about two or three years, and covered about twelve hundred miles, about a third of which was by sea. They had converted many people and established about a half-dozen congregations. The door of faith had been opened to the Gentiles! Paul and Barnabas remained for a "long time" with the saints in Antioch.
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ACTS 15

A. Acts 15:1-5: The Problem of Judaizing Teachers.

1. Verse 1: "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."
 - a. Following the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch of Syria from their first great missionary journey, certain men came to Antioch from Judea, pushing the theory that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. They were setting their opinion up as a requirement of God. This quickly became a major problem, threatening to destroy the church. The law of Moses could not save:
 - 1) Acts 13:38-39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."
 - 2) Galatians 3:23-29: "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
 - b. To appreciate the cause of this disturbance, consider the background of the Jewish people. From the time of Genesis 17 onward, all the male descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, which included the whole nation of Israel, were required to be circumcised. Circumcision was a mark indicating their separation from the world and sanctification to God. This separation from the Gentiles was ingrained in their thinking from their earliest childhood, consequently it was naturally very difficult for them to accept the principle that circumcision was no longer a part of God's spiritual law, especially for those who had the Pharisaic turn of mind.
 - c. The Jewish saints were quite willing for the Gentiles to be given the opportunity to obey the gospel, but the Judaizing teachers, many of whom had a Pharisaic background (15:5), insisted that they be circumcised. They wanted to hold on to some of their old traditions. Since the Gentile population of the world far surpassed the Jews in number, it now appeared likely that the church's membership would soon have a Gentile majority, and that the cherished practices would be ignored. It is evident that these Judaizers were more interested in their traditions than they were in the truth of the gospel, hence they fought the efforts of Paul for many years and in many places.
 - d. The focal point of the contention of the Judaizers was circumcision, but they also demanded that the Gentile converts keep the rest of the law (15:24). To avoid giving unnecessary offense to the Jews, Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3), but he later refused to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:3-5) since in that case he would have been submitting to the wrongful demands of the Judaizers.
 - e. Paul described these Judaizers as "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Gal. 2:4). The serious nature of the problem is seen in Galatians 2:5: "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." If Paul had not withstood these false teachers, the Galatian saints would have been robbed of the pure gospel.
 - f. The greatest threats to the church are internal. Great damage can be done to it by false teaching, for error has a semblance of truth, which many are ill-equipped to discern, and people often make their choices by emotions rather than by a logical examination of truth. This was perhaps the greatest danger the church had faced till that time.
2. Verse 2: "When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."
 - a. A great controversy ensued. *Dissension* is from a Greek word (*staseos*) meaning "strife." *Disputation* is from *zeteseos* which means "a seeking" or "questioning." The apostolic authority of Paul apparently had little effect on these "sowers of discord" (cf. Prov. 6:16-19).
 - b. The brethren at Antioch decided to dispatch Paul and Barnabas, along with certain other brethren, to Jerusalem to meet with the other apostles and the elders to resolve this problem. Titus was one of

those who went with them (Gal. 2:3).

- c. Paul agreed to make the journey because of a "revelation" (Gal. 2:1-2), that is, he was instructed to go by an inspired revelation given him by the Holy Spirit. There should have been no need for the conference at Jerusalem since Paul was a properly appointed apostle, being selected by Christ personally. His apostleship was fully established by his many miracles, but Paul was ever desirous of maintaining harmony and peace. He knew that the other apostles could not but support his stand.
 - d. The conference in Jerusalem described in this chapter is identical with the meeting Paul reports in Galatians 2. Notice that in both of these cases, Paul and Barnabas are together. Their efforts were joined at Antioch before and after the first missionary journey, but when the second journey was being planned, they parted, never to work as a team again, as far as the Divine Record reports.
 - e. It is clear that Judaizers came to Antioch, claiming to have been sent there by James (Gal. 2:12), but James says in Acts 15:24 that the brethren in Jerusalem had given them no such commandment (to claim that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses). That they had traveled to Antioch with the authority of James is apparent (Gal. 2:12), but that they exceeded their commission is also obvious.
3. Verse 3-5: "And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."
- a. Representatives of the church accompanied them for a short distance as they began their journey, in keeping with ancient custom. The delegation passed through Phenice and Samaria, and stayed there long enough to report the success Paul and Barnabas had had during their travels in Asia Minor to the brethren living in these places. Despite the current problem caused by the Judaizers, the brethren greatly rejoiced over the news of the conversion of the Gentiles. Faithful Christians always are glad when the gospel has success and souls are saved. The distance from Antioch to Jerusalem was 300 miles.
 - b. Arriving in Jerusalem, Paul says in Galatians 2:2 that he met with the leaders in the church (the apostles and elders) privately to be sure that his previous efforts had not been in vain. In the current verse, Luke reports that the delegation was warmly received by the church, the apostles, and elders. The initial point to be made was to report the events of the missionary journey.
 - c. The troublemakers in the church arose to assert the need to circumcise the Gentile converts. These dissenters are said to have been Pharisees who had become believers. From outward indications, they had obeyed the gospel, but Paul declared in Galatians 2:4-5 that some had been "brought in" without having true motives, who came in to "spy out our liberty" that "they might bring us into bondage" to the law of Moses again. Paul withstood them strongly so that the "truth of the gospel might continue with you." One of the significant characteristics of Pharisees was their love for outward form and ceremony. Paul had been a zealous Pharisee, but he was able to change (Ph. 3:5).

B. Acts 15:6-11: Peter Rises to Refute the Doctrine of the Judaizers.

1. Verse 6: "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."
 - a. It seems that Paul and Barnabas reported the events of their journey to the whole congregation, and that the Pharisees raised their dissension then. Following this session, a meeting of the apostles and elders was arranged so that the question could be considered.
 - b. Sectarians claim this meeting gives them the right to conduct similar sessions in which policy is set and rules are made. But we must keep in mind that this was a gathering of men who were divinely inspired. The meeting was set up by the authority of inspired men; the decisions reached were not decided by majority vote, but by divine decree. We are forbidden to go beyond the written word of God (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19; Gal. 1:1-12). There are no inspired people on earth today. None can make laws for God today.
 - c. Galatians 2:11-14: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I

said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

- 1) Did the events of Galatians 2:11-14 occur prior to this conference? If this took place after the Jerusalem conference, why did Peter and Barnabas fall into one of the errors that they denounced at the Jerusalem meeting (that Gentiles could not be accepted as faithful brethren until they were circumcised)?
- 2) When certain men came from Jerusalem, to Antioch, Peter was present. Could this apostle and Barnabas have erred on this matter *after* what they had said and learned at the conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15)? Their error in Galatians 2:11-14 was not in binding circumcision upon the Gentile Christians, but rather in their refusal to eat with them after certain Jews came to Antioch. Before their arrival, both Peter and Barnabas had full fellowship with their Gentile brethren, but after those Jews arrived, both of these men acted hypocritically. If this episode occurred after the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15), how could it be that Peter and Barnabas could so quickly give up the positions they had defended on that occasion? Fear can easily and rapidly alter our course!
- 3) That this incident occurred after Acts 15 is evident in view of the fact that Paul is discussing events chronologically in Galatians:
 - a) Galatians 1:18: "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."
 - b) Galatians 1:21: "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia."
 - c) Galatians 2:1: "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also."
 - d) Galatians 2:9: "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."
 - e) Galatians 2:11: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."
2. Verse 7: "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."
 - a. The meeting began with much disputing: the dissenters doubtless were vociferous in pressing their views, and others took issue with them. Peter, long held in high esteem by all of the brethren, arose to address the gathering. The Pharisees not only opposed Paul and Barnabas, but Peter also, since it was he who first spoke the word to the Gentiles.
 - b. Peter began his remarks by calling attention to the fact that God had selected him to preach the word of the gospel to the Gentiles. They were all familiar with the story of Cornelius' conversion (Acts 10:1—11:18).
 - c. He showed that the faith produced in Cornelius and his company was brought about by his addressing the word to their minds.
 - 1) John 8:30-31: "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."
 - 2) Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - d. Peter had gone into the house of this Gentile, had spent some time there, and had eaten with him (10:48; 11:1-3). No where in all of these events, which God was guiding, had anything been said about Cornelius being required to be circumcised. Acts 11:3 shows that the men he preached to at Caesarea were uncircumcised.
3. Verse 8: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us."
 - a. Peter points out here that God was guiding the affairs at Caesarea. God knew the hearts of the people involved, and showed his approval of the Gentiles' admission into the church by giving them the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-18), even as he had given him to the twelve apostles on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:1-4).
 - b. Keep in mind, that what the apostles and the Gentiles received was a miraculous gift which was provided by the Holy Spirit. Since the conversion of Cornelius and his household was effected by the power of heaven [through the gospel Peter preached], and since no circumcision was required in that case, then circumcision was not to be forced upon the Gentiles.

4. Verse 9: "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."
 - a. The great apostle next stated that God did not make any distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles as to the means by which each was saved. The salvation of a Jew or a Gentile is by faith. The original has "the faith." *The faith* in the New Testament is a reference to the gospel.
 - 1) Acts 6:7: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
 - 2) Galatians 1:23: "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."
 - 3) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
 - b. We are purified by the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 6:1-18; Jas. 2:21; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). But if the gospel is polluted by error it loses its power to save (Gal. 2:4-5), for it is no longer the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). These wily enemies of truth "entered the church" (they went through the right motions), but they came in for the express purpose of subverting the membership (Gal. 2:4). The apostles and elders were not about to permit these false teachers to succeed.
 - c. The same mistake these Judaizers made is being made by countless men today who go to the Old Testament for religious authority. The Romanists go to the Law for their separate priesthood, their pomp and ceremony, holy water, and a host of other matters. The other sectarians go to the Old Testament for infant membership, instrument music in worship, etc. Lying at the root of a very great many religious errors is the failure to recognize the distinction between the two testaments. If it is wrong to adopt circumcision, it is wrong to adopt any other part of the Law.
 - d. Those Gentiles at Caesarea were purified by the faith, not by the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Law of Moses.
 5. Verse 10: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"
 - a. Peter becomes very pointed in his remarks. He demands to know why these men were trying to put a yoke upon the saints, a yoke which no one was able to bear. Only Jesus was able to keep the Law perfectly (1 Pet. 2:21-22; Heb. 4:15).
 - b. One who attempts to follow one part of the Law of Moses is obligated to follow every other part (Gal. 5:3); and to follow the Law of Moses is to fall from grace (Gal. 5:4; 2:23). Thus, Peter makes the point that the Judaizers were tempting God (putting God to the test) in trying to lead the disciples back to the Law.
 - c. Hebrews 10:1-4: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."
 - d. Acts 13:38-39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."
 6. Verse 11: "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."
 - a. The beloved apostle next states that it is through the grace of Christ that salvation is possible, for both Jew and Gentile. The grace of God is revealed and made available to mankind through the one gospel. It is appropriated by faith and obedience on the part of the individual (Rom. 3:21; Tit. 2:11-12; Acts 2:36-47; 9:1-9; 22:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5).
 - b. The disciples had been led by the Spirit's inspired revelation to believe that salvation is through the grace of Christ, not by the Law.
- C. Acts 15:12: Paul and Barnabas Give Evidence in Rebutting the Claims of the Judaizers.
1. "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them" (Acts 15:12).
 2. It appears that the church had once again assembled, or the apostles and elders had gone back to where they were assembled, for Luke reports that the multitude (indicative of more than the apostles and elders) kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul. Even the Pharisees were put to silence. Barnabas is
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named first, likely suggesting that he was the first speaker. This would be wise since he was widely known and respected by the brethren in Jerusalem. It would also give Paul the opportunity to present the concluding statements.

3. What these two brethren did was to call particular attention to the miracles and wonders God had wrought through them among the Gentiles, at Antioch of Syria and in the various cities of Asia Minor. Their presentation of these facts again shows the real purpose of miracles: that being the confirmation of the gospel (Heb. 2:2-4; Mark 16:20). By reporting to the brethren the various miracles God did by them, they proved that their actions in preaching to the Gentiles, which did not include binding circumcision or the keeping of any other portion of the Law upon the Gentiles, was what God wanted. Therefore, the Judaizing Pharisees were in error.
4. The miraculous activities done through Paul and Barnabas included their inspired preaching (13:9), the smiting of Elymas (13:7-12), the bestowal of miraculous gifts to the new converts (13:52), and the healing of the lame man at Iconium (14:8-10).

D. Acts 15:13-21: James Addresses the Brethren.

1. Verses 13-14: "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."
 - a. This is not the James, the brother of John; that James had been slain earlier by Herod (Acts 12:1-2). This James was a half-brother of Jesus, the author of the book bearing his name, and was a prominent man in the Jerusalem church of Christ. He was a prophet (an inspired spokesman for God) and likely an elder of the church. Galatians 2:9 speaks of him as a pillar of the church, along with Peter and John.
 - b. James reminded the brethren of what Peter (Simeon) had done in his speech: God had initiated Peter's work with the Gentiles (Acts 10). The purpose of that important event was that God might "take out of them a people for his name" (i.e., that the Gentiles might be part of God's spiritual nation).
2. Verses 16-17: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."
 - a. James stated that this point (verse 15) was in harmony with Old Testament Scriptures. He cited Amos 9:11-12: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this." Although he did not give a precise quotation, he gave the full sense of the prophet's statement. The statement by Amos is the basis of his statement, but he joins to it statements that were made by other Old Testament prophets. Notice that James said that "to this agree the words of the prophets" (plural).
 - 1) 2 Samuel 7:12: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom."
 - 2) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - 3) Isaiah 49:6: "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."
 - 4) Micah 4:1-4: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they

- shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*."
- b. What was to be rebuilt was not the Jewish system, but the "tabernacle" of David. The Jewish system never sustained such a relationship to David that it could be called the "tabernacle of David." This could have been said about Moses. But David had been given a promise that his throne would be established forever.
 - 1) 2 Samuel 7:16: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."
 - 2) 1 Kings 2:4: "That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel."
 - 3) Psalms 89:3-4: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah."
 - 4) Jeremiah 22:30: "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man *that* shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."
 - c. The tabernacle of David is his tent or house (his family; his royal line). It had fallen into ruin. His fleshly descendants had continued, uninterrupted, down to that time, but his royal line had ceased to occupy his throne. Coniah (Jechoniah) was removed from his throne and carried to Babylon with the Jewish nation. Jeremiah 22:30 predicted that Coniah (a descendant of David) would never have a descendant sitting on the throne of Judah: "...For no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." Jesus is of the lineage of Coniah (Matt. 1:11-12), but no descendant of Coniah would ever sit on an earthly throne, ruling in Judah. It follows that, since Jesus is King, his throne is not (and can never be) upon the earth.
 - d. During the time in which the tabernacle of David was in ruins, "in that day," God would "build it as in the days of old." Premillennialism asserts that this will be done in the *millennium*, but James showed that it was fulfilled already, in the church of Christ (15:13-17).
 - e. "In this speech James shows that God, who knows from eternity what his own works would be, had foretold, through the prophet, the work which he was then performing through the labors of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul. He had said that he would rebuild the tabernacle of David, in order that the residue of men, who had not known the Lord before, 'even all the Gentiles, upon whom his name is called,' should seek after the Lord; and now, he had, through these apostles, selected from among the gentiles 'a people for his name'" (McGarvey, p.185).
 - f. God had promised to King David, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam. 7:16; cf. Ps. 89:3-4).
 - 1) Based on outward appearances, this promise had failed, for there had been no king on David's throne since the reign of Zedekiah (586 B.C.).
 - 2) Amos was active about 750 B.C., hence he predicted not only the restoration of David's "tabernacle," he also indirectly predicted its fall into ruin, which took place during the Babylonian invasions (606—586 B.C.).
 - 3) But God had not forgotten his promises. When Jesus was born, the angel told Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).
 - 4) "Thus, the promise, when properly understood, is seen to refer neither to a continuous line of Jewish kings, descended from David, nor to a reconstruction of the Jewish Church, but to the perpetual reign of Jesus, the 'seed of David according to the flesh' [Rom. 1:3]. When, therefore, Jesus sat down upon his throne in heaven, the tabernacle of David was rebuilt, and now, by the labors of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, the remainder of the prophecy of Amos was being fulfilled, by the extension of his kingdom among the Gentiles" (McGarvey, p.186). Amos' prophecy was being fulfilled as the Gentiles learned the gospel and became citizens in Christ's kingdom (Col. 1:13-14; Jn. 3:5).
 - g. "If the tabernacle of David mentioned here has not been established, the Gentiles cannot seek after

God" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *God's Prophetic Word*, p.528). James declared that Amos' prophecy was fulfilled in the church, so the millennial view is a base twisting of God's Word. The purpose for which David's tabernacle was to be rebuilt was to enable all men, Jews and Gentiles, to seek after the Lord, and for God to be able to apply his name to all of those who sought him. Since Gentiles can seek after God today, the tabernacle of David has been rebuilt.

3. Verse 18: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."
 - a. God's future actions are not unknown to him. He knows all that he chooses to know, from the beginning of time to its very end. He did not act impulsively in any of his dealings with man. Therefore, he knew beforehand that he intended to include the Gentiles in his ultimate plan which he purposed from before time began.
 - b. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26; cf. Eph. 3:1-11).
 4. Verses 19-20: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood."
 - a. James, who was obviously an inspired prophet, stated the official decree growing out of the Jerusalem council. Remember that the decision reached was not a human judgment, but was inspired. "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (15:28).
 - b. James showed that the Gentile Christians were not to be "troubled" by requiring their obedience to the Mosaic Law. This was the conclusion already reached by Paul and Barnabas. The apostles and inspired men could not dispute this conclusion or reach another verdict contradictory to it. "There was room for no other conclusion than the one which James deduced, that they should impose on the Gentiles, so far as the class of restrictions under consideration were concerned, only those *necessary* things which were necessary independent of the Mosaic law" (McGarvey, p.185).
 - c. James said that a letter should be written to the Gentile believers to instruct them to abstain from idols, fornication, things strangled, and blood. This epistle would carry with it the authority of the apostles, and thus of Christ (John 16:13-14; Matt. 28:19-20; 19:28; cf. Eph. 3:1ff).
 - d. The pollutions of idols include all forms and features of idolatry. Idol worship was attended by all manner of immorality as well as by religious errors. This evil has always been forbidden. Fornication is prohibited, regardless of the setting or kind, whether in multiple wives or marriages, in simple cases of lust, or in a religious situation (which was common in idolatry). Among the ancient heathen societies fornication was considered innocent. In modern society it is rapidly taking on the same guise in the minds of those who reject Biblical morality.
 - e. Forbidden also was the eating of things which had been strangled, and the eating of blood. Eating animals that had been strangled violated the precept of eating blood, since strangling did not usually lead to the removal of blood from the animal. This restriction predates the Law of Moses, going back to at least Genesis 9. When Noah and his family left the ark, God emphasized the preciousness of blood and forbade the eating of blood (Gen. 9:1-6). Blood transfusions do not violate this precept since it is not eating blood.
 - f. Notice that none of the things listed as prohibited items originated with the Law. All of these things predated the time of Moses, and were incorporated in the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ.
 5. Verse 21: "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."
 - a. This statement seems to be given in anticipation of an argument from the Pharisees who instigated the dissension: "If the Gentiles are not amenable to the Law of Moses, it will be neglected and fall into contempt." But James declares that there is little danger of that since there are those in every city where Jews lived who preach the Law, it "being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."
 - b. Though God does not require that the Law be followed today, yet there is much we can learn from it: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). We still esteem it highly, and read it with great profit.
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E. Acts 15:22-35: The Outcome of the Council.

1. Verse 22: "Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren."
 - a. Those who addressed the gathering of the apostles and elders (Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James) had presented the truth so clearly that the brethren were all in full agreement, that the Gentiles were not to be required to submit to the Law of Moses. Remember, that the decision of the council was not merely the opinion of the brethren, but was in fact the inspired revelation of God: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (15:28).
 - b. If Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch with this ruling without any corroborating testimony, their opponents might well have continued their fight. But the apostles sent Judas Barsabas and Silas with Paul and Barnabas to verify the report.
 - c. Silas is also known in the Scriptures as Silvanus, a companion and fellow-worker with Paul on the second and third missionary journeys. Could this Barsabas be the man by that name in Acts 1:23 (who was also called Joseph and Justus)? Joseph Barsabas had been considered for apostleship (1:15-26). Silas and Barsabas were "chief men" among the brethren at Jerusalem.
2. Verses 23-24: "And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no *such* commandment."
 - a. A letter was written by the authority of the apostles, which was sent by Paul and the others of the company to the congregations in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. It bore divine authority, and was to be considered by the recipients as the final word on the subject it addressed. If our brethren who are trying to convince us to accept the "new hermeneutics" are correct, the letter would have been meaningless! The letter was a warm and friendly missive from one group of brethren to another. This is the earliest epistle issued by an apostle, predating all of the New Testament documents. It was later incorporated into the Book of Acts (cf. Acts 15:30; 16:4; John 16:13).
 - b. The letter said the apostles had heard about certain men who "went out from us" stirring up trouble among the Gentile saints by asserting that they must be circumcised. The opening statement admits that men had gone out from the church in Jerusalem, but it quickly states that no such commandment concerning the rite of circumcision had been authorized. The unauthorized doctrine advanced by the Judaizers would have *subverted* the souls of the saints if they had accepted it. The Greek term [*anaskeuazo*] is used in a military sense "to plunder" a town; it is used figuratively in our text to mean "to unsettle" or "overthrow" the souls of Christians [Vine]. It does make a difference what we believe and practice.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other" (ASV).
 - 2) 2 John 9: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (ASV).
3. Verses 25-28: "It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."
 - a. The brethren were in full agreement as to the chosen course of action. They decided to send certain chosen men with Barnabas and Paul, who are all described as greatly esteemed by the church in Jerusalem, back to Antioch with the report of the council's decision. Barnabas and Paul are further described as men who had hazarded their lives for the cause of Christ. That Barnabas and Paul are the ones described as having risked their lives is seen by the Greek construction (McGarvey, p.187).
 - b. Judas and Silas were sent with Barnabas and Paul so that the brethren could know that the report given was fully authenticated. This letter from the apostles would also reveal the conclusion reached in the council. The issue was highly significant, and so every step was taken to avoid any misunderstanding. The keeping of the Law of Moses was not to be imposed on the Gentile saints. Testimony to this end was given by Barnabas and Paul, and by Judas and Silas, and by the letter.
 - c. Again, the letter states that the decision was one which "seemed good" to the brethren in Jerusalem.

But, more significantly, it "seemed good to the Holy Ghost." That is, it was approved by the Holy Spirit—it was an inspired revelation. Only those things which were necessary were to be laid upon the Gentiles. Verse 28 shows that this was a very special council because it was the occasion when an important revelation was given, thus it does not furnish a precedent for men today to convene a council in which rules and regulations are established or dissolved. Men do not have any right to make or annul any law for God (Gal. 1:1-12; Rev. 22:18-19; 2 John 9-11).

4. Verse 29: "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."
 - a. The necessary things (which were part of the Law) are stated as proposed in verse 20. The Gentiles (and all saints) are to abstain from meats offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication.
 - b. What is called *pollutions of idols* in verse 20, is called "meats offered to idols" in this verse. A sacrificed animal was only partially consumed by the altar fire; the remainder was often sold in the local markets (1 Cor. 10:25). The ASV renders this phrase, "things sacrificed to idols." There seems to be a problem between the statement here and what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:14-33.
 - 1) Here, the Gentile saints are directed to abstain from things offered to idols; but Paul taught that to a knowledgeable Christian an idol was nothing, and eating what had been offered to an idol did not pollute his soul. But the apostle said that if the knowledgeable brother ate meat that had been offered to an idol, and his example encouraged another to do the same in violation of this second saint's conscience, both the first and second brother sinned. The first, by encouraging the second to act contrary to what he thought was right; the second, by doing what he believed to be sinful.
 - 2) Since the idol was a non-entity, a Christian could eat meat, which had been used in idol worship, without blame if his understanding was correct. But in those cases where his doing so would likely cause problems with his brethren (or with others), he was to abstain from it.
 - 3) The present case was at a time when the Gentiles and Jews who obeyed the gospel were cautious of each other. If Gentile converts continued to eat meat from an idol's temple, they might be emboldened to participate again in idolatry. Jewish Christians had been taught all their lives that idolatry was to be avoided. If the Gentiles ate the meat indicated, this would likely alienate the two groups, at a time when their fellowship was just beginning.
 - 4) The present ruling appears to be a matter of temporary expediency, that the Gentiles were told to abstain from meats offered to idols. When they were more fully taught, then the situation changed somewhat. When the brethren had become more knowledgeable and could see the matter more clearly, and fellowship between Jewish and Gentile saints had become firm, then the practice of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:14-33 could be followed.
 - 5) All idolatry and all things that seem to support idolatry are to be shunned by God's people: "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Th. 5:22).
 - c. They were forbidden to eat blood, and thus also from eating animals which had been slain by strangulation, which left the blood intact. Genesis 9 established the groundwork for the prohibition; it was carried over into the Law (Lev. 17:10-15), and was made part of the gospel. Pagans were gross violators of this timeless law. They caught the blood of animals in a vessel, and consumed it as food. God forbids the eating of blood because the life of the flesh is in the blood.
 - d. Fornication, in all its many forms, is to be shunned:
 - 1) Romans 6:12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."
 - 4) Galatians 5:19-22: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not

- inherit the kingdom of God.”
- 5) Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."
 - 6) Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
- e. The epistle closed with the admonition that if they followed these guidelines, along with the instructions they had been given by Paul and Barnabas and the other prophets among them, they would do well.
- f. This is the last passage in the Book of Acts in which the apostle Peter has a part.
5. Verses 30-31: "So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation."
- a. After the conference in Jerusalem, Paul and his company returned to Antioch. There they gathered the saints together and read to them the message of the epistle.
 - b. The great problem caused by the Judaizers was now settled at Antioch, although there was a continuing battle with them in other places. But the brethren at Antioch were at peace, and rejoiced because of it. Consolations means "encouragement." It is related to the word "exhortation."
6. Verses 32-35: "And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*. And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also."
- a. Judas and Silas were prophets, and they used their gifts for the benefit of the church at Antioch. Following a lengthy stay, Judas returned to Jerusalem to be with the apostles; Silas remained in Antioch.
 - b. During this time, Paul and Barnabas taught and preached in Antioch. "'Teaching' means to instruct; hence, they instructed the church. While 'preaching' means the proclamation of the gospel, it is sometimes applied to evangelists who proclaim the gospel to aliens. 'Teaching' is expounding the word of the Lord, while 'preaching' is evangelizing or proclaiming the gospel" (Boles, p.247). Luke reports that there were many others who assisted them in this great work.
 - c. The church at Antioch is depicted as a very zealous, active congregation, which was beautifully united, and which was able to accomplish much good for the Cause of Christ. Dissension saps the strength of a congregation; it diverts attention away from our primary duties; it consumes valuable time, energy, and resources. When a trouble-maker does his evil work in a congregation, the amount of damage done cannot even be estimated, for who can know of the number of souls that might otherwise have been given the opportunity of learning the truth?
- F. Acts 15:36-41: The Second Missionary Journey Begins.
1. Verses 36-38: "And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."
 - a. After a considerable period of time at Antioch, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they travel again to Asia Minor and visit the brethren there. It is important that we maintain contact with those who obey the gospel, helping them to increase their understanding of God's word.
 - b. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them again. John had accompanied them on their first trip as far as Perga, where he left them and returned to Jerusalem. It is obvious that he did so out of weakness, which Paul deplored. Barnabas was able to see this man's potential and was willing to give him another chance. His benevolent attitude toward John was possibly due to their kinship (Col. 4:10). He later proved himself to Paul, and was considered by the apostle to be profitable (2 Tim. 4:11).
 2. Verses 39-41: "And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."
 - a. The contention was so sharp that they decided to part company. Barnabas took Mark and went to
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Cyprus. We are not told where else they went. Barnabas was a native of the island (Acts 4:36).

- b. “‘Contention’ here is from the Greek ‘paroxusmos,’ and is our word for ‘paroxysm’ in English; it means to sharpen as of a blade, and of the spirit. It seems that the ‘Son of consolation,’ Barnabas, lost his temper in a dispute over his cousin [nephew, Col. 4:10, KJV], and Paul uses sharp words toward his benefactor and friend. It is frequently the case that little irritations of life give occasion for violent explosions....The result of the contention determined Paul and Barnabas to separate and each follow his own independent course. We know that Paul held no malice toward Barnabas and Mark. Barnabas is not mentioned again in Acts, but both Barnabas and Mark are mentioned by Paul in a way that showed confidence had been restored, for Paul speaks of them in warm commendation in his letters to Corinth, Colosse, and Timothy (1 Cor. 9:6; Col. 4:10,11; 2 Tim. 4:11)” (Boles, p.249).
- 1) 1 Corinthians 9:6: "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?"
 - 2) Colossians 4:10-11: "Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 4:11: "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."
- c. Silas was recommended by the brethren as a suitable companion for Paul. They formed a team that was to experience many things together over many years. They began their journey by going through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the congregations in the faith. This they accomplished by preaching and teaching they did.
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ACTS 16

A. Acts 16:1-8: The Second Journey Takes Paul and Silas to Troas.

1. Verses 1-2: "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium."
 - a. The journey began in Antioch of Syria (Acts 15:30-41). They confirmed the churches in Syria and Cilicia (where Tarsus was located). To confirm is to strengthen. The natural route from Antioch to Derbe was by land, around the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea. Leaving Cilicia, they came to Derbe, which was the last place visited by Paul and Barnabas on the outward leg of the first great journey (14:20-21). Nothing is reported of their experiences in Cilicia and Derbe.
 - b. From Derbe they next came to Lystra where Paul had been stoned and left for dead (14:19). We could naturally expect to have some misgivings about returning to a place where an angry mob had viciously attacked us, but there is no hint of fear on the part of Paul. Some details are supplied about their experiences at this second visit to Lystra, primarily to introduce Timothy, a young man who was to have a prominent role in Paul's life from henceforth.
 - c. At Lystra, the missionaries met the young disciple named Timotheus, the son of a Jewish lady who was a Christian, but whose father was a Greek. Paul described Timothy as his "own son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2), obviously meaning that Paul had been instrumental in the young man's conversion.
 - d. Timothy is described as being "well reported of" by the saints in Lystra and Iconium. He had been brought up right by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). It is significant that both of these ladies are identified by name. That he was active in the Lord's work is seen by his reputation among the brethren in the area. The excellent qualities of Timothy were extolled by Paul in Philippians 2:20 where the beloved apostle said of him, "I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state."
2. Verses 3-5: "Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily."
 - a. Paul saw the great potential of young Timothy, and decided to take him along as he and Silas continued their journey. But since a great part of their work would be among Jews, the apostle knew that it would be expedient to circumcise Timothy. This had not been done earlier because his father was a Gentile (16:1).
 - b. The subject of circumcision had been settled as far as faithful Jewish Christians were concerned, but unbelieving Jews would certainly make a great issue out of his being uncircumcised, thus hindering their missionary efforts. Paul refused to circumcise Titus because he was a Gentile (Gal. 2:3). If Paul had circumcised him, he would have been giving in to the Judaizers, thus obviating the edict of the Jerusalem council.
 - c. Circumcision was intended only for the physical descendants of Abraham (Gen. 17). Circumcision has no intrinsic spiritual value today (Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 7:18). One who seeks to follow part of the Mosaic Law is under obligation to follow all of its precepts (Gal. 5:3), but when one exalts the Law, he falls from grace (Gal. 5:4).
 - 1) "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised" (1 Cor. 7:18).
 - 2) "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).
 - d. The missionaries delivered to the saints the decrees announced by the apostles, that they might keep them. The letter written by the apostles was authoritative, just as the New Testament is; it became part of the New Testament. By teaching the brethren what was ordained for them to do, the churches were established in the faith. Their number increased daily.
3. Verses 6-8: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas."

- a. Departing from Lystra, with Timothy coming with them, Paul and his company covered the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. Phrygia included the city of Colosse. The Holy Spirit forbade their preaching in the province of Asia (where Ephesus was located), so they went to Mysia. From there, they endeavored to go into Bithynia, but again the Spirit did not permit them to do so. Consulting a map, we see that they left Lystra in a westerly direction; they were told not to turn to the left (for Asia) or right (for Bithynia). The only route left open to them, unless they headed back home, was to continue northwest, which they did. They passed Mysia and came down to Troas, a city located at the north-west corner of Asia Minor, on the shore of the Aegean Sea.
 - b. This information gives us a glimpse into the mechanics of how inspired men were guided in where they went. It appears that a measure of latitude was granted them to make common-sense decisions, but in the present case, Paul's option was overridden by the Holy Spirit. Having only the territory ahead of them still open, they continued in the direction they were headed.
- B. Acts 16:9-13: Paul and Silas Enter Europe.
1. Verse 9: "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."
 - a. While at Troas, and obviously at somewhat of a loss as to where they ought to go, Paul received a vision during the night. In the miraculous scene he beheld, a man from Macedonia requested that they "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."
 - b. Paul may have recognized the dress or speech of the man in the vision to know him to be a Macedonian.
 2. Verses 10-11: "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis."
 - a. Immediately after the vision, the company made ready to go on to Macedonia, which was situated in Europe. Notice that the pronouns identifying the company have changed from *they* in verse 8, to *us* in this verse. Luke joined their band at Troas.
 - b. Paul correctly perceived that the Spirit was directing them to go to Macedonia, thus they endeavored to make that journey. In those days, sea transportation could not be expected to be found quickly. They had gone as far as they could on foot; it was essential for them to find a ship if they wanted to reach Macedonia.
 - c. Meanwhile, in the Macedonian city of Philippi, a certain Jewish lady named Lydia, had been meeting at the river side each Saturday with other women to pray. We are not told what they prayed for, but from what happened, it may have been that they were praying for help and guidance from God. The godly ladies took it upon themselves to conduct religious services since there were not enough Jewish men there to constitute a synagogue. God was in the process of guiding the gospel to them by directing Paul and his company, as the preceding verses indicate.
 - d. The providential hand of God is plainly evident in the story. If they found a ship, it had to be going in the right direction; there must be room on board for the company; it needed to be ready to go soon. All of these requirements were met. They sailed toward Macedonia by a *straight course*. That meant that they had a highly favorable wind (it was blowing in the right direction). The trip took only two days, while on the return voyage, five days were required (20:5). God is able to help our efforts for good.
 - e. "Samothrace is an island in the Archipelago, about midway between Troas and Neapolis. Neapolis was a seaport of Macedonia, and the landing place for Philippi. The remark that they sailed to Samothrace, and the *next day* to Neapolis, shows that they spent the night at Samothrace, which accords with the custom of ancient navigators, who generally cast anchor at night, during coasting voyages, unless the stars were out. This voyage occupied a part of two days" (McGarvey, p.200).
 - f. No mention is made of any preaching in Troas at this time, but when the company returned there later (Acts 20:6-7), a congregation was present. It may be that Luke had already done some work there before joining Paul, Silas, and Timothy.
 3. Verses 12-13: "And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*."
 - a. After landing at Neapolis, they traveled on to Philippi the chief city of that part of Macedonia.
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Philippi was about twelve miles from Neapolis, and Luke informs us that the city was a Roman colony. "Roman colonies belonged to three periods and classes, (a) those of the earlier republic before 100 B. C., which were simply centers of Roman influence in conquered territory; (b) agrarian 'colonies,' planted as places for the overflowing population of Rome; (c) military 'colonies' during the time of the Civil wars and the Empire, for the settlement of disbanded soldiers. This third class was established by the emperor, who appointed a legate to exercise his authority. To this class Philippi belonged as mentioned in Acts 16:12, RV, 'a Roman colony.' They were watch towers of the Roman state and formed on the model of Rome itself. The full organization of Philippi as such was the work of Augustus, who, after the battle of Actium, 31 B. C., gave his soldiers lands in Italy and transferred most of the inhabitants there to other quarters including Philippi. These communities possessed the right of Roman freedom, and of holding the soil under Roman law, as well as exemption from poll-tax and tribute. Most Roman 'colonies' were established on the coast." [Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers].

- b. The report of Paul's vision does not indicate any particular location in Macedonia they were intended to go, but Philippi was the most logical choice. The company remained in the city for several days.
- c. During the first few days after their arrival, they learned about the ladies who met on the Sabbath by the river side for prayer. Paul's common practice on coming to a strange city was to find a Jewish synagogue, or some other preaching situation.
- d. The river was Gangites (or Gargites), and was located one mile west of the city (Boles). "These women had been wont to repair to this riverbank for prayer. God had heard their prayers, as in the case of Cornelius, and he was bringing to them the preacher through whose words they might obtain faith in Christ, and learn the way of salvation. Long before either they or Paul knew anything of it, God was directing the steps of the latter, and timing the motion of the winds at sea, with reference to that weekly meeting on the river's bank, as he had once done the flight of an angel and the steps of Philip with reference to the eunuch's chariot" (McGarvey, p.201).
- e. Paul and his company found the ladies gathered there, and sat down to talk with them. God was answering the prayers of the women, but not through some so-called "enlightening influence" of the Holy Spirit acting on their hearts, but by the process of bringing the women and preachers together by providential means. Their salvation was effected by means of the gospel which was preached to them.

C. Acts 16:14-15: The Conversion of Lydia and Her Household.

1. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us" (16:14-15).
2. Lydia, a lady from Thyatira, was a merchant who dealt in purple at Philippi. This was a very expensive dye used only on the most costly fabrics, being derived from a certain sea shell (murex). This was the dye that gave rise to the words "royal purple" (Boles, p.314).
 - a. Compare: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day" (Luke 16:19). Thyatira was about 300 miles from Philippi, and later had a congregation there (Rev. 2:18).
 - b. *Lydia* was a common name among the Greeks and Romans. It was also the name of a province in western Asia Minor.
3. Lydia was a worshipper of God. Since it was on the sabbath day she and her friends met at the river for prayer, we learn that she was a Jew, by birth or by conversion. She was not a pagan, but she was not a Christian.
 - a. Philippi was a pagan city; the Jewish sabbath was not observed there. Since only women were present at this meeting, we learn that there were not enough Jewish men present in the city to form a synagogue, which required 10 men.
 - b. Lydia was willing to put her religious activities above her business. There were likely other sellers of purple in Philippi. By closing on the sabbath, she would lose business. In this sacrificial devotion to God, she showed greater spirituality than many Christians.
4. Lydia heard the message Paul presented at the riverside gathering. This is the heart of the salvation process: the gospel is implanted into the minds and hearts of people who then can make an intelligent and sincere decision to obey the will of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Rom. 10:17; Acts

15:7,9). Lydia's heart was ready for the pure seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11,15).

5. The Lord opened her heart. The creeds have taught for centuries that man's heart is so calloused and dead in sin that it is utterly incapable of discerning the truth of the gospel, and that God must miraculously open the minds of alien sinners to make it possible for them to be saved (cf. Eph. 2:1-9).
 - a. If this is so, then all who die in their alien sins cannot be blamed for their lost condition. God would be responsible for their eternal condemnation for he failed to "open their hearts" that they might be saved. However, God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11; Acts 10:34-35). His divine nature of infinite justice and goodness requires him to be impartial. If he directly opens one man's heart, which provides him with salvation, God would be obligated to open the heart of every sinner.
 - b. Why did her heart need opening since she was a devout worshipper of God? We have no evidence that her worship was insincere; her piety and goodness are unquestioned; but she was practicing a religion that had been replaced by Christianity.
 - 1) Matthew 5:17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."
 - 2) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 3) Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
 - 4) Ephesians 2:15: "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace.
 - 5) Colossians 2:14: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.
 - c. Many pious Jews had misconceptions about Christ. They thought he was to be an earthly ruler, that his reign would be one in which military power would be exercised.
 - 1) John 6:15: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."
 - 2) John 18:36: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."
 - 3) Acts 1:6: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"
 - d. The process by which the Lord opened her heart is outlined in the text: Paul spoke the gospel to her; she heard; her heart was opened; she attended to the things that were spoken.
 - 1) The apostle presented a discourse on the gospel, which includes God's love and grace, the death of Jesus, the promise of forgiveness, the conditions of salvation, and the hope of heaven. This message appealed to the heart of Lydia; she accepted its tender truths.
 - 2) God opened her heart by providing the means—the gospel. As a rosebud opens when brought under the influence of the dew and sunshine, so Lydia's heart was opened by the beautiful story of the Savior.
 - e. Paul's mission was to open the eyes and hearts of men through the preaching of the glorious gospel: "Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:17-18).
 - 1) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."
 - 3) John 20:30-31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

- 4) Romans 1:14-17: "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 1:21: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."
 - 6) 2 Corinthians 4:1-4: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
 - 7) 2 Thessalonians 2:14: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- f. Individuals decide whether to open or close their hearts to the gospel.
- 1) Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light."
 - 2) Matthew 13:15: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - 3) Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
 - 4) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 5) Acts 13:45-46: "But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
 - 6) 2 Corinthians 4:1-4: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."
 - 7) Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
- g. There is no hint of a suggestion that the Holy Spirit opened her heart by a direct miraculous operation so that she could receive the gospel and believe. The Holy Spirit's activities were exercised through the apostle Paul, in giving him the guidance to Lydia and the inspired message to present.
6. She attended to the things which were spoken by Paul. She obeyed the commands of the gospel (Acts 2:38; 17:30; 22:16; Rom. 10:16; 6:1-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 22:14). "The term *open* is evidently used metaphorically, but in a sense not at all obscure. To *open* the *mind* is to expand it to broader or more just conceptions of a subject. To *open* the *heart* is to awaken within it more generous impulses. What exact impulse is awakened, in a given case, is to be determined by the context. *Second*: The impulse awakened in Lydia's heart was not such a disposition that she *listened* favorably to what Paul said, but, 'that she *attended* to *things*' which he spoke. The facts, in the order in which they are stated, are as follows: 1st: 'We spoke to the women.' 2nd. Lydia 'was listening.' 3d. God opened her heart. 4th. She *attended* to the things spoken. The fourth fact is declared to be the result of the third. It was *after* she 'was listening' that God opened her heart, and *after* her heart was opened, and *because* of this opening, that she *attended* to what she had heard....Now, in hearing the gospel, she learned that there were certain things which she was required to *attend* to, which were, to believe, to repent, and to be immersed. To *attend* to the things she

heard, then, was to do these things" (McGarvey, p.202).

7. Lydia and her household were baptized. Her family consisted of those who were in her employ. Verse 13 shows that Lydia and certain other women were present; no mention is made of any children or babies. Pedobaptists have argued that the fact she and her household were baptized, and that since there were infants in the household, therefore the New Testament permits infant baptism.
 - a. The argument is based on an unprovable assumption—that there were infants in her family. To prove it they must be able to show us from the Scriptures some clear indication of the fact. It cannot be done! Can anyone tell how many babies were there, tell their ages, and give their names?
 - b. There is not even a shred of evidence to show that Lydia, or any of her ladies, was married. Pedobaptists assume she was married, that she had children, that the children were in Philippi, and that there was at least one infant among them. How old was Lydia? No one knows. Was she married? The evidence given suggests that she was not, or else why was she in business?
 - c. The only "step" of the plan of salvation mentioned is baptism. Faith, repentance, and confession are not named. If we were to follow the example of our friends who preach "salvation by faith only," we would teach that salvation is by baptism only. Acts 16:30-31, John 3:16, and Acts 10:43 say nothing about repentance, confession, or baptism. If these verses teach that salvation is by faith only, then Acts 16:15 teaches salvation is by baptism only! But the truth is that salvation is not by any ONE thing. God's grace, Christ's blood, and the gospel, coupled with man's faith, repentance, confession and baptism, provide salvation.
 8. Lydia pleaded with the company to abide in her house. She was very likely financially well-off; it appears also that she had a sizeable house, big enough to shelter herself and her workers, plus the missionary band which consisted of at least four men (Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke). Paul could not be expected to accept a casual invitation, for four men living in a house with several women would have appeared unseemly. But since Lydia insisted, the men felt constrained to stay there.
 9. Looking back at the preceding events, we can see the providential hand of the Almighty at work.
 - a. Lydia's worship and prayers were noted by the Lord, but no preacher of the gospel was present in Philippi to guide her into a knowledge of the word of God more perfectly (cf. Acts 18:24-28). God determined to provide this godly lady with the opportunity of learning the whole truth. If the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners is true, this would have been the perfect situation for it to be done. But God did not send the Holy Spirit to convert her; he did not send an angel; but he did direct the steps of Paul to her.
 - b. By his providential leading, God brought the preacher and the prospect together. Paul was forbidden to go into Asia and Bithynia (16:6-7). Not ready to return home, and being prohibited from turning to the right or left, the only way open was to the west (straight ahead), thus they made their way to Troas (16:8).
 - c. At Troas, Paul was given a vision depicting a man of Macedonia pleading that he come into that country and help them (16:9). The company immediately endeavored to go to Macedonia, perceiving that God was sending them there. A ship was available and going the right way; a favorable wind blew, getting them there in two days (the return journey required 5 days—Acts 20:1-6).
 - d. They came to Philippi and found Lydia at worship on the sabbath day; they preached the gospel to those in the meeting.
 - e. The providential hand is still at work today. Many have learned the truth and obeyed it because of opportunities furnished them by God's providence. Christians need to ask for opportunities to teach the gospel to the lost, and be ready to act!
- D. Acts 16:16-24: The Demonic Damsel Delivered; Paul and Silas Beaten and Jailed.
1. Verses 16-17: "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."
 - a. The gatherings for prayer continued, most likely at the same riverside place. As they were enroute to the meeting on the present occasion, they met a young girl who was "possessed with a spirit of divination." The "Greek is 'pneuma puthone,' which means the spirit of python. 'Python' was the spirit that traditionally guarded Delphi. In Greek mythology Python was a dragon, which was slain by Apollo, who was called the Pythian Apollo; and as Apollo was the god of oracles, his priests were said to be inspired by him" (Boles, p.258).
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- b. This is another case of demon possession. "Luke's identification of this girl with that pagan establishment contains no suggestion whatever of any validity in their outlandish claims. Rather, Paul's addressing the 'spirit' in her clearly indicates exactly the same kind of demon possession so often healed by our Lord" (Coffman, p.316).
 - c. Demons had knowledge of a supernatural nature. They knew the true identity of Jesus and his work (Mk. 1:34; 3:11-12; Mt. 8:28-29). The demon in this slave girl brought her owners much money by "soothsaying." "But there is no evidence known to me that they could foretell future events, though it was believed by the heathen generally that they could. It was the prevalent confidence in the vaticinations [foretelling or prophesying] of persons possessed by them that enabled this girl to bring her owners much gain" (McGarvey, p.206). It would be interesting to know the details of how a group of men came jointly to own the girl.
2. Verses 17-18: "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."
- a. This girl followed Paul and his company, crying out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." This was the very point that Paul sought to get the people of Philippi to accept. Why did he not gladly welcome this corroboration? For some of the same reasons that Christ did not allow the demons to proclaim his true identity (Mark 1:24-25). Neither the Lord nor his apostles wanted the faith of believers to stand on the testimony of evil spirits; and neither wanted to be thought by their hearers to be in any way connected on a friendly basis with these demons or with Satan, their master. No inspired person needed the assistance of a demon to establish his credentials.
 - b. The girl followed Paul about for many days, evidently continuing her cries as stated in the previous verse. This grieved the apostle. He delayed casting out the demon for some reason, possibly trying to avoid a confrontation with her owners, or hoping that she would cease. Many preachers today would be glad to have a demon give this kind of attestation of them! But after several days, Paul commanded the spirit to come out of the girl. His command was by the authority of Jesus Christ, a power which the demon could not ignore. He came out of her the same hour.
 - c. The Lord had promised his disciples that they would be able to do this kind of thing by his name (Mark 16:17). Some vagabond Jews tried to appropriate this authority so as to cast a demon from a man, but the demon-possessed man attacked them (Acts 19:13-17).
3. Verses 19-21: "And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans."
- a. The owners of the girl perceived quickly that the source of their profit had been destroyed by Paul. Obviously, they had no concern over the welfare of the girl; they had greedily used her unfortunate condition to their own enrichment. They laid hold on Paul and Silas, dragging them into the marketplace, before the authorities.
 - b. Notice that they did not bring the real charge against Paul and Silas (which was that they had deprived them of their income by casting out the demon). Rather, they charged them with teaching customs which Romans were not permitted to receive or follow. They sought to excite prejudice by identifying Paul and Silas as Jews, and saying that they had exceedingly troubled the city. The brethren had not created any undue disturbance; they had quietly gone about the work of teaching the gospel.
 - c. The people might have sympathized with the girl who had been restored to her right mind and condition if the truth had been shown. Also, if the owners had revealed that Paul, with a word, had cast out the demon, the multitude would have been highly impressed, so much so that the cause of the owners would have been ignored.
 - d. "But the Jews and their religion were particularly obnoxious to the Romans, and hence, when the accusation was made by men of wealth and influence, that these men, '*being Jews*,' were introducing customs contrary to the religion and laws of Rome, it was easy to excite the populace against them" (McGarvey, p.207).
 - e. The magistrates were more apt to pass sentence against Paul and Silas over instigating a disturbance, than over some theological matter (cf. Acts 18:15). "The Roman law forbade Romans to introduce
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or practice any new religion; they were required to worship their own gods and no others. The Jews were permitted to practice their own religion, provided they did not attempt to proselyte Roman citizens. Hence, when Paul and Silas preached Jesus, they were preaching a new religion and were subject to prosecution and punishment according to the Roman law" (Boles, p.260). At the first, the pagan population made no distinction between Jews and Christians—the preachers were Jews, who preached to Jews and Jewish proselytes in the synagogues. Since the Jewish religion had an acceptable status in the Roman Empire, so Christianity was initially recognized as legal, because of its close connection with Judaism.

- f. Only Paul and Silas, who were Jews, were arrested; Luke was a Greek and Timothy was half-Greek.
4. Verses 22-24: "And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."
 - a. The multitude expressed its opposition to Paul and Silas. The magistrates apparently were influenced by the uproar; they tore the garments off the two preachers and commanded that they be beaten. When many stripes were laid upon them, they were cast into prison.
 - b. The jailor, being charged to keep them safely, thrust them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in stocks. The beating was laid upon their bare flesh; the stocks, together with the painful stripes, would make it nearly impossible for them to get any comfortable rest.
 - c. "In a Roman prison there were usually three distinct parts: (1) the communiora, or where the prisoners had light and fresh air; (2) the interiora, shut off by strong iron gates with bars and locks; (3) the tullianum, or dungeon, the place of execution or for one condemned to die. Not only were they put in the inner prison, but their feet were placed 'in the stocks.' Usually the 'stocks' were fixed so that the arms and legs, and even necks of the prisoners were confined; but here only the feet were placed in the stocks. 'Stocks' was an instrument of torture as well as confinement, consisting of heavy pieces of wood with holes, into which the feet were placed in such a manner that they were stretched widely apart so as to cause the sufferer great pain. Paul and Silas were placed in such torture during this eventful night" (Boles, pp.261f).

E. Acts 16:25-34: The Conversion of the Jailer and His Family.

1. Verse 25: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."
 - a. Showing the mettle of these great men, Luke reports that at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. They did not try to keep the other prisoners from knowing what they were doing.
 - b. A gospel preacher of my acquaintance once asserted that there was no worship (singing, praying, etc.) outside the assemblies. He was trying to justify the practice of singing with instrumental music in private settings. But here we have a case where two saints offered prayers and songs in a private setting which are called "praises unto God." This was worship; it was received by him—their plight was favorably addressed by his power.
 - c. Paul and Silas were not filled with anger toward their tormentors. They had been trying to bring salvation to the populace, and their efforts were rewarded by the charges of covetous and hateful men. Great composure is needed for men to pray and sing under such circumstances. "One in deep distress may be soothed by the music of other voices, but is not inclined to join in the song himself....And that, after praying, they 'sang praises to God,' shows how quickly the soothing effects of prayer had still further calmed and cheered their spirits....How rich the treasures of faith and hope which can thus cheer the gloom of a midnight dungeon, and calm the spirit of the bleeding prisoner of Jesus Christ!" (McGarvey, pp.207f).
2. Verses 26-27: "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled."
 - a. Suddenly, a great earthquake shook the very foundations of the prison, all the doors were opened, and the bonds of every prisoner were loosed. The praying and singing may have disturbed the other prisoners, but they were received gladly in heaven. It is obvious that an earthquake, a natural event normally, was on this occasion a result of God's supernatural power. Its timing, location, and effects were clearly miraculous. The lives of several pagans would never be the same again.

- b. The jailor was awakened by the earthquake. He saw that the prison doors were open, and naturally supposed that the prisoners had all escaped. The code by which the Romans operated was severe. Even though the prison was opened by powers far beyond the control of the jailor, he was still considered to be responsible for the prisoners under his control. If the prisoners had escaped, he would have been held accountable. He could not see within the prison, but knowing man's innate desire for freedom, he supposed they had all fled.
 - c. He drew his sword with the intention of committing suicide, thus to avoid the disgrace of a public trial and execution. "Not many suicides are mentioned in the Bible. There are those of Samson (Judg. 16:29,30), Saul and his armor-bearer (1 Sam. 31:4,5; 1 Chron. 16:29,30), Ahithopel (2 Sam. 17:23), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18), and Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:18). In pagan lands, however, suicide was an accepted manner of solving a problem, as in the case before us" (Coffman, p.319).
 - d. Paul could have seen the jailor in silhouette in the doorway if there was a light behind him, either from the moon or the lights in the jailor's house which was near the prison.
3. Verse 28: "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."
- a. Paul saw the jailor's intentions, and cried out to prevent the tragedy: "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." In case of an escape, under those ancient practices, the jailer was held responsible. Compare the case when Peter escaped: "Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and *there* abode" (Acts 12:18-19).
 - b. We are not told why the other prisoners did not try to escape. Possibly the apostle had something to do with their staying.
4. Verses 29-30: "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
- a. "As soon as he could collect his senses, he recollected that the calm speaker who had called to him had been preaching salvation in the name of the God of Israel; and he immediately perceived that the earthquake, the miraculous opening of doors, and the unlocking of chains and handcuffs were connected with him and his companion. In an instant he recognizes the divine authority, and, glancing into the black eternity from which he had suddenly been rescued, his own salvation, rather than the safety of his prisoners, at once absorbs his thoughts" (McGarvey, p.208).
 - b. The jailor called for a light, and came quickly to the inner prison, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. That he considered them to be very special is obvious from his actions. He brought them forth from the prison and asked his timeless question.
 - c. His question is one that comes ringing down through the centuries, being asked by countless numbers of sincere souls who grasp their need for salvation. The query is also raised in Acts 2:37 and 9:6, with the answer given recognizing the current state of spiritual progress on the part of those making the inquiry. The people in Acts 2 were believers, thus were told to repent and be baptized. Saul of Tarsus was a penitent believer, thus was told to be baptized. But this jailor knew so little about the subject, he needed instruction which would produce faith, hence was told to believe, followed by the information that created faith in him.
 - d. Notice the man's great question: "What must I do to be saved?" The request admits (1) that there is something that must be done, (2) that that something must be done personally, and (3) that salvation was something worth obtaining.
 - e. Some have thought that he was asking how he could avoid the consequences of the prison being opened, but Paul has already assured him that all the prisoners were still there; none had escaped. Hence, there would be no reprisals to be feared from the Roman authorities; they would not hold him responsible for the earthquake.
 - f. "That he asked this question proves that he had some conception of the salvation of which Paul had been preaching; and that he trembled, and fell at their feet, shows that he was overwhelmed with a sense of danger, and painfully anxious to escape from it. As sunset, when coldly thrusting the bleeding apostles into the dungeon, he cared but little for this question. In the midst of life and health, when all goes well with us, we may thrust this awful question from us; but when we come within an inch of death, like the jailer at midnight hanging over the point of his own sword, it rushes in upon the soul like a lava torrent, and burns out all other thoughts" (McGarvey, pp.208f). By falling down before Paul and Silas, and asking his question, the jailor showed that he considered them to be the
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- servants of God, although he did not know what it was that was required of him to be saved.
5. Verse 31: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
 - a. The reply by Paul is classic: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Many denominational people assert, on the basis of this statement, that salvation of the alien sinner is by "faith only." They boldly affirm that "nothing is said in this verse about baptism!"
 - b. But in response we need only to observe that it says nothing about repentance, thus the alien sinner does not need to repent to be saved. However, we know from other passages that repentance is required (Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38); and from other passages we also know that baptism is likewise required for salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Nothing is said here about the grace of God or the blood of Christ, yet we all acknowledge that these are included even if they are not specifically mentioned. The same is true with repentance and baptism.
 - c. The question of verse 30 appears also (as noted above) in Acts 2:37 and 9:6 (22:10) in slightly varying forms. The answer given in each of the three cases is different, but these responses are not contradictory.
 - d. If you were traveling from Jacksonville to Miami, and asked how far you were from your destination at different points along the road, you would expect to receive different answers. Before beginning your journey, the answer would be 350 miles; at Daytona Beach, the answer would be 260 miles; at Sebastian the answer would be 150 miles to Miami. These answers are fully consistent with each other; as you draw nearer your destination, the distance obviously decreases.
 - e. If someone were to ask for the requirements to receive a Ph.D. degree, the answer given would depend on where the individual was in the educational process. A grade school student, a high school student, and a university student would have to be given different answers, but the answers would not be contradictory.
 - f. The people in Acts 2:37 were already believers, thus there was no need to tell them to believe (2:38); Saul of Tarsus was a penitent believer when he asked the Lord what he must do (9:6; 22:10; 22:16); the jailor was at the very beginning of the salvation process (16:30), hence was told to believe (16:31). Immediately following that statement, Paul gave him the information he needed in order to believe. The faith that would soon be coming would express itself in obedience to the commands of the gospel (Jas. 2:14-26; Rom. 6:1-18; Acts 2:36-38).
 - g. Saving faith includes obedience to God (Jas. 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 2:7; cf. Num. 20:12).
 6. Verses 32-34: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."
 - a. Paul and Silas spake unto the jailor and his family the word of the Lord. It was through this process of teaching that faith was generated in their hearts.
 - 1) John 8:30-31: "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed."
 - 2) John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."
 - 3) John 20:30-31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."
 - 4) Acts 15:7: "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."
 - 5) Romans 10:17: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - b. The jailor washed their stripes, and he and his family were all baptized—at the same hour of the night! There was no waiting for a convenient time, not even till the next morning. Pedobaptists claim that the baptisms took place in the jailor's house, which they think implies an argument against immersion. But the next verse shows that the baptism took place outside the house (he "brought them into his house" which clearly implies that they had left the house for the baptism).
 - c. The ASV gives: "And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God." The jailor is a greatly changed individual now. He had before been their tormentor, but now he is a loving brother. That he recognized his great

blessings now is seen by his rejoicing (cf. Acts 8:39). His name is not given in the inspired report, but we may have the opportunity of getting to know him in eternity. The man and his family, and probably Lydia and her household, were included in Paul's later letters (Philippians and 2 Cor. 8:1-5). There were no infants in the jailor's family for all of them were believers.

F. Acts 16:35-40: Paul and Silas Are Released From Prison.

1. Verses 35-37: "And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."
 - a. Although the earthquake had released them from their confinement, Paul and Silas did not try to escape from the authorities. And as far as we know, none of the other prisoners got away. When morning came, the magistrates sent lesser officials to instruct the jailor to release Paul and Silas. The jailor gave them the information.
 - b. Paul gave a strange reply: "They have beaten us openly, without establishing any guilt on our part; we are Roman citizens with the rights that pertain to that status; they have cast us into prison, and are now trying secretly to put us forth from the city. We will not leave until the magistrates personally come and release us." He was not being proud or spiteful. He knew that if the report of their arrest followed them, their work would be impeded, but if the officials personally released them, that would be tantamount to exoneration.
 2. Verses 38-40: "And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of* Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."
 - a. The serjeants reported this to the magistrates. It was a capital offense under Roman law to scourge a Roman citizen. The charges Paul laid against the magistrates were very serious, and placed them in jeopardy if legal action were pressed. The officials were quick to comply with Paul's demands.
 - b. After meeting with the brethren in Lydia's house, where they comforted them, Paul and his company departed from Philippi.
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ACTS 17

A. Acts 17:1-9: Paul and Silas are Persecuted at Thessalonica.

1. The first name of this city was Therma, named after certain hot springs located there. "Cassander the son of Antipater rebuilt and enlarged it, and named it after his wife Thessalonica, the sister of Alexander the Great" (*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. IV, p.3230). The city was on the great Roman Road, called *Via Egnatia*, which connected Rome with the whole region to the north of the Aegean Sea. Because of the road and the importance of the city itself, it was an invaluable center for the spread of the gospel (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8).
2. Verse 1: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews."
 - a. In continuing their journey, Paul and his company passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica. The general plan of evangelization followed by Paul in Gentile lands at this time was to plant the church in strategically situated cities. With the gospel established there, its influence could radiate out into the villages and hamlets.
 - b. The distance from Philippi to Amphipolis was 33 miles; from Amphipolis to Apollonia was 30 miles; and it was 37 miles from Apollonia to Thessalonica, a total distance of 100 miles to the next place of labor.
 - c. Luke uses the pronoun *they* now, indicating that he remained behind in Philippi to promote the work there. Acts 20:5-6 takes up the pronouns *us* and *we* when Paul gets back to Philippi and sets sail for Troas. Later, Paul left Timothy and Silas at Berea temporarily while he went on to Athens (17:14-15).
3. Verse 2: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures."
 - a. Paul's usual plan when entering a city, was to go to a synagogue of the Jews, if one was present, and begin his work among them. In these gatherings he would find at least some who were open to the gospel, and often Gentile proselytes would be present who were a fertile field for the truth (cf. Rom. 1:16-17). Going to the synagogues was a very logical means of gaining an audience for the gospel.
 - b. In Thessalonica, he was present for three sabbath assemblies where he was able to set forth the gospel. This does not necessarily mean that Paul's entire stay in the city was three weeks, but that he entered the synagogue on three sabbaths. He most likely continued his work with the Gentiles and others in private meetings. The evangelists had to have a means of contacting the people; the Jewish synagogues were ideal. In Philippi, they had to go out to the riverside to find a viable audience. They could not set up a "soapbox" on a street corner; this would have been to cheapen the gospel.
 - c. Luke's inspired description of Paul's work in those gatherings is significant: he "reasoned with them out of the scriptures." The apostle presented evidence from the Old Testament Scriptures to convince the audience that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. He appealed to their intellect. Jesus was broadly rejected by the Jews for two fundamental reasons: (1) he did not measure up to their expectations as to his hometown, his demeanor, his message, and his appearance; and (2) his execution on the cross was repulsive to them because of the shame inherent in that type of death (Gal. 3:13).
 - d. Therefore, the majority of the Jews failed to see Jesus as the Messiah. Their failure was based on their own misconceptions, not on the actual predictions made of him in the Old Testament. They believed the Scriptures, so Paul directed their minds to what the Scriptures said about the Messiah. See verse three.
4. Verse 3: "Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."
 - a. He opened (from *dianoigo*: "to open up completely", Vine, Vol. 3, p.141). It is used in this verse of "opening the minds" of his auditors by presenting scriptural evidence.
 - b. The word "allege" does not carry the same meaning as our modern word. Paul did not "assert without proof" that Jesus was the Christ. The word is from the Greek term *paratithemenos* ("setting forth by argument and proof," (Vine, Vol. 1, p.47). Paul set forth from the Scriptures the proof that Jesus is the Christ. The Scriptures contain **proof** of things; there is such a thing as fulfilled prophecy; we can **know** certain things; the Bible is absolute truth.
 - c. Paul proved that it was in God's plan that the Messiah should suffer (and die), and be raised from the dead; he also proved that Jesus is the Messiah. Our teaching and preaching must follow the same

- pattern today: we must present the written word of God, and set forth the truth to others by sound argument and proof, thus reasoning with them from the Bible in order to open their minds to see the truth. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18; cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Tim. 4:1-16; Acts 2:14-40).
5. Verse 4: "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."
 - a. Although we prove the truthfulness of a proposition, that does not mean that we have proved it to someone. Paul plainly proved the proposition of his lesson, but the reaction was mixed: it was accepted by some but rejected by others (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:16; 4:1-7).
 - b. Those who believed Paul, consorted with him: they "joined themselves to" him, or they "threw in their lot with" the apostle.
 - c. A great multitude of the devout Greeks and a goodly number of the chief women were persuaded of the truthfulness of Paul's inspired message. The term translated as *believed* in the KJV and *persuaded* in the ASV, carries the idea of "obedience." This word also appears in the following passages:
 - 1) John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (ASV).
 - 2) Romans 2:8: "But unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation" (ASV).
 - 3) Hebrews 3:18: "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient?" (ASV).
 - 4) 1 Peter 2:7: "For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner" (ASV).
 - d. Paul later addressed these saints as having formerly been idol worshippers: "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9).
 6. Verse 5: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people."
 - a. The Jews who rejected the gospel were unwilling to allow the Christians to continue without opposition. There are many today, as there were then, who will not obey the truth themselves, and will try to undermine all efforts to advance it. Christ reproved the scribes and Pharisees because they "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13). The lawyers (those trained in teaching the Law of Moses) were accused by the Lord with having "taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52).
 - b. The unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica got together a band of "lewd fellows of the baser sort" and incited a riot against the brethren. The motive of these Jews was jealousy. They were far more interested in maintaining their status than in the truth. Sadly, this is true of the great majority of our generation. Our English words *zeal* and *jealousy* are derived from the same Greek word used here—*zelos*.
 - c. The "lewd fellows of the baser sort" are called "vile fellows of the rabble" in the ASV. These were unprincipled individuals (most likely Gentiles) who could be bribed or incited to initiate a disturbance. How could those Jews who claimed to follow the will of God stoop to such despicable actions? Their jealousy and hatred far exceeded their godliness and their love for truth!
 - d. We are not told who this Jason was, but obviously he was one of those who obeyed the gospel. Paul had a kinsman with this name (Rom. 16:21), but these might be entirely different individuals.
 - e. Through the work of the "lewd fellows of the baser sort," the Jewish leaders set the city in an uproar, and the mob assaulted the house of Jason, endeavoring to apprehend Paul and Silas, and possibly all that were inside.
 7. Verses 6-7: "And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus."
 - a. Paul and Silas were not in the house, but the mob dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city. They described Paul and Silas (who were not present) as those who have turned the world

upside down, i.e., revolutionaries. The news about the troubles Paul and Silas had faced in Philippi had reached Thessalonica.

- b. Their having "turned the world upside down" was not intended as a compliment, but as an accusation that they had disturbed the peace wherever they had gone. This was a false charge; it was not Paul and Silas who had caused the furor at Philippi and Thessalonica, but the spiteful enemies of the gospel. Ahab tried to make Elijah to be the trouble-maker in ancient Israel: "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:17-18).
 - c. The other accusation leveled against Paul and Silas was that they had caused the citizens to violate the decrees of Caesar by saying that there is another king who is named "Jesus" (cf. Acts 18:2). This was a misrepresentation; although Jesus is King, his realm did not interfere with the reign of Caesar.
 - 1) Mark 12:14-17: "And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought *it*. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him."
 - 2) Luke 23:2: "And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King."
 - 3) John 18:33-38: "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*."
 - 4) John 19:15: "But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."
 - d. The statement that Jesus was a king shows that they perceived that Paul had taught that Jesus was even then reigning. If Jesus was reigning, his kingdom had been established, a truth abundantly affirmed in the New Testament. The millennial theories, which say Christ is not now reigning, are false.
8. Verses 8-9: "And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go."
- a. The charges made against Paul and Silas were a source of trouble to the rulers and the people. But they could not prosecute them since they were not in custody. Before releasing Jason and the others, the rulers took a security of them (required that they post a bond). No details are given about the bond, but the purpose for it was likely to keep them from raising a disturbance. The effect of the bond would be that Paul must leave the city.
 - b. Critics of the Bible have charged that Luke erred when he used the particular term translated "rulers" in this passage. The Greek word he used is not found in classic Greek literature. But "excavation of one of the arches that led to the ancient city has exposed an old inscription which uses the very title Luke employed here, even giving the names 'Sosipater, Gaius, and Secundus,' all of which were common names of that day..." (Coffman, p.330).

B. Acts 17:10-14: The Scene Shifts to Berea.

1. Berea is called "Verria" today. It was the home of Sopater, one of Paul's later traveling companions (Acts 20:4). In the first century, Berea was prosperous, and had a significant Jewish population.
2. Verse 10: "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews."
 - a. The brethren sent Paul and Silas away immediately, during the night. A great deal of trouble, and little good, would have been the result of their remaining in Thessalonica. From human perspective, they

were not very successful in Thessalonica or Philippi; they had been forced to leave both places. But several precious souls had been converted to the Lord.

- b. It was not Paul's fault that many had rejected and opposed the gospel. He would have been successful even if no one had obeyed. He and Silas knew they were doing the will of Christ; they did not allow opposition to deter them in their great work. When they reached Berea, they sought out another synagogue in which to begin their work there. Berea was about 50 miles from Thessalonica.
 3. Verse 11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
 - a. The Jewish people in Berea were more noble than the ones in Thessalonica; they searched out the things which Paul presented to see whether he was right. They did so with readiness of mind, and on a daily basis. This is a refreshing description; all too often the attitude of the Jews was just the opposite of this. We should never lose confidence in humanity when we see the great majority manifest indifference toward the gospel; there are still "seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal!"
 - b. "Nobility" is historically used in reference to one's bloodline, but the nobility of the Bereans is descriptive of their character. Their daily searching of the scriptures with all readiness of mind is highly commendable. This attitude and practice is essential if one desires to learn God's will. A diligent investigation is required, and must be conducted with a mind that is open to learn and believe the truth. Those who view the Bible with indifference will not study it; and those who study the Bible with a prejudiced mind will not arrive at truth.
 - c. Their experiences at Berea to this point must have been a cause of great encouragement to Paul and Silas. The scattered cases of this attitude we discover are great sources of reassurance to us.
 4. Verses 12-14: "Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still."
 - a. As a direct consequence of their open-minded search of the scriptures, these Bereans believed what Paul had told them. In addition to these Jews, there were honorable Greek women, and a number of men, who obeyed. The women were of "honorable estate" (ASV), indicating that they were of influential rank, possibly the wives of leading men in the city. The impression left suggests that a large number of people obeyed the gospel. Why was not an epistle written to this congregation? For the same reason letters were not written to the hundreds of other congregations scattered throughout the Roman Empire—they were unnecessary. Those which were written were copied, and sent on to the other congregations.
 - b. Those who espouse false religion are often exceedingly zealous in propagating it, and equally diligent in opposing the truth. As the Jews of Iconium and Antioch followed Paul to Lystra, so the Jews of Thessalonica got wind of Paul's presence in Berea and made the 50 mile trip and stirred up the people against him. Paul and Silas had departed from Thessalonica at night, making it more difficult for their enemies to learn of their direction of travel.
 - c. When the brethren saw Paul's danger, they sent him away, ostensibly to the sea. This plan seems to be a feint to throw the enemy off his trail. Paul, being the leader of the company, was in greater danger so it was imperative that he be protected first. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea, with the intention of joining Paul later.
 5. Paul had been successful in establishing the Lord's church in three principle cities of Macedonia: Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. He is now about to engage the attention of the great minds of Athens. Through the work of this small band of devout and dedicated men of God, countless souls had opportunity to learn the way of salvation. The sound work of even a few can accomplish great things today!
- C. Acts 17:15-21: Paul Journeys to Athens.
1. Athens was one of the four great cities of the Roman Empire: Alexandria (Egypt), Rome, and Jerusalem were the others. "The city was in a plain extending to the sea on the southwest, where it had three ports, the passage to which was defended by long and broad walls. Several rocky hills rose in the plain, the largest of which was the citadel, or Acropolis. Around this the city was built, most of the buildings spreading towards the sea. The summit of the hill was nearly level, about eight-hundred feet long and four hundred wide....A small valley lay between the Acropolis and the hill on which the Areopagus held its sessions; it also separated the Areopagus from the Pnyx, a small rocky hill on which the general

assemblies of the people were held. Here the spot is yet pointed out from which the eminent orators addressed the people. It is cut in the natural rock. In this vicinity also was the *agora*, or market-place, Acts 17:17, an open square surrounded by beautiful structures; while on every side altars, shrines, and temples were seen, some of them exceedingly magnificent....It was the very flower of ancient civilization; its schools of philosophy were the most illustrious in the world, and its painters, sculptors, and architects have never been surpassed. Yet no city was so 'wholly given to idolatry'" (*International Bible Dictionary*, pp.45f). Athens "was the arrogant and sophisticated intellectual center of the whole empire; and the significant thing in this chapter is that Christianity was preached in the very eye of Greek culture....Paul's message in Athens was identical with what it was everywhere he taught, allowing, of course, a few skillful words introduced in a move to enlist the attention and support of his audience" (Coffman, p.346).

2. Verse 15: "And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed."
 - a. Paul was accompanied on the trip to Athens by some of the brethren from Berea. The text is not absolutely clear as to Paul's means of travel: by sea or by land. The distance by land was about 250 miles, which would require nearly two weeks of travel.
 - b. The trip could have been made much quicker by sea, but verse 14 seems to say that Paul went by land. He sent word back to Berea by the brethren who accompanied him for Silas and Timothy to come to him in Athens as quickly as possible.
3. Verse 16: "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."
 - a. While Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy, his spirit was stirred in him when he beheld how widespread idolatry was practiced in this *intellectual center*. As Jerusalem was the great center of divine revelation, so Athens was the center of human philosophy. The relative value of each is seen by considering the morality of the two peoples involved. Jerusalem was free of idolatry, and its people generally of a high moral character; Athens was filled with idol worship, fornication, and most of the moral ills of the pagan world (cf. Rom. 1:18-32).
 - b. We cannot imagine, given our background and experience, the awful sinful conduct that was acceptable to the people of Athens, and other such pagan cities. Suicide, infanticide, fornication, idolatry, homosexuality, political persecution, etc., were common. Biblical morality was the exception. No wonder Paul was so stirred over what he saw!
 - c. It was no exaggeration that Athens was wholly given to idolatry. "Pretonius satirically said it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens; Zenophon calls the city one great altar, one great offering to the gods" (Boles, p.276).
 - d. This verse contains an interesting statement that materialistic religionists might find difficult to interpret, in view of their contentions that man has no eternal spirit. They assert that our human spirit is our breath. How was Paul's breath troubled? And was an "evil spirit" of the Bible, a "bad breath?"
 - e. If you were in Paul's place, how would you have sought to uproot the idolatry of Athens? Would you have tried to physically destroy the temples, the altars, and the idols? Today the great temples and other vestiges of idolatry are in ruin. How did they come to fall? The beginning of their downfall was the preaching of the gospel done by the apostle. "Paul was not concerned with removing the idolatrous art from the city, but with removing the worship of idols from men's hearts" (Coffman, p.336). When the worship of idols ceased, the idols would crumble into ruin.
 - f. As Paul was able to turn many in Thessalonica from idols to the living God by means of the gospel message he preached (1 Thess. 1:5,9), so that same powerful means could bring even the Athenians to desert the magnificent temples and lovingly serve the true God of heaven. The gospel is the only means powerful enough to destroy love of sin, and create sincere obedience to the Savior.
 - 1) 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."
 - 2) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
4. Verse 17: "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him."
 - a. Paul reasoned with the Jews in their synagogue. The word translated *disputed* is *reasoned* in the ASV,

- and means: "to think different things with oneself, to ponder, then, to dispute with others, is translated to reason in Acts 17:2..." (Vine, Vol. 3, p.252). When religious truth is being presented, a simple discussion often grows into a dispute. There were other devout persons present who were doubtless the Gentile proselytes. The apostle continued his discussions with those who met with him daily in the marketplace (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16-32).
- b. The marketplace is the "agora" in the Greek, a gathering place where Socrates had taught his students. *Agora* was the Greek term to denote a place where produce and goods were sold, which was also used for public meetings.
 - c. The Agora "must not be conceived of as a great 'market' (Acts 17:17), like the bare spaces in many modern towns, where little attention has been paid to artistic decoration,—but is rather to be compared to the beautiful squares of such Italian cities as Verona and Florence, where historical buildings have closed in the space within narrow limits, and sculpture has peopled it with impressive figures....One characteristic of the Agora was, that it was full of memorials of actual history" (Coneybeare and Howson, pp.273f).
 - d. There is no mention made here of any success the apostle had from these discussions with the Jews and others. A great clash of ideology is imminent, between the human wisdom which the Grecians had perfected and the divine revelation which had come from God. The ultimate outcome of the conflict may be seen by the ruins of Athens and the continuing presence of the glorious gospel!
5. Verse 18: "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection."
- a. Paul was met by some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Some referred to Paul as a babbler, and others said he seemed to be setting forth strange gods. "Babbler" is from the Greek word *spermo-logos*, used primarily as an adjective, but it came to be used as a noun signifying a crow or some other bird, picking up seeds (*sperma*—a seed; *lego*—to collect). "Metaphorically it became used of a man who picks up scraps of information and retails them secondhand, a plagiarist, or of those who make a show, in unscientific style, of knowledge obtained from misunderstanding lectures (Vine, Vol. 1, p.93). The word *babbling* in 1 Timothy 6:20 and 2 Timothy 2:16 is from another Greek word (*kenophonia*: *kenos*—empty; and *phone*—a sound) [ibid.].
 - b. The Epicureans were named after Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) who founded this system. "In their view, the world was formed by an accidental concourse of atoms, and was not in any sense created, or even modified, by the Divinity. They did indeed profess a certain belief in what were called gods; but these equivocal divinities were merely phantoms,—impressions on the popular mind,—dreams, which had no objective reality, or at least exercised no active influence on the physical world, or the business of life....The essential principle of the Epicurean philosopher was that there was nothing to alarm him, nothing to disturb him. His furthest reach was to do deliberately what the animals do instinctively. His highest aim was to gratify himself. With the coarser and more energetic minds, this principle inevitably led to the grossest sensuality and crime; in the case of others, whose temperament was more common-place, or whose taste was more pure, the system took the form of a selfishness more refined" (Coneybeare and Howson, p.285).
 - c. The Stoics took their name from the place where their founder, Zeno, taught: *stoa*, a painted porch. "Zeno taught that God was the soul of the world, or the world was God; that everything was governed by fate, to which God himself was subject; they denied the immortality of the soul. The Stoic philosophers taught that virtue was its own reward, and vice its own punishment; that pleasure was no good, and pain no evil" (Boles, p.277). "The Stoics were Pantheists....Matter was inseparable from the Deity...The soul was, in fact, corporeal. The Stoics said that at death it would be burnt, or return to be absorbed in God. Thus, a resurrection from the dead, in the sense in which the Gospel has revealed it, must have appeared to the Stoics irrational....The proud ideal which was set before the disciple of Zeno was, a magnanimous self-denial, an austere apathy, untouched by human passion, unmoved by change of circumstance....Nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of Christianity....-Christianity is the School of Humility; Stoicism was the Education of Pride. Christianity is a discipline of life: Stoicism was nothing better than an apprenticeship for death" (Coneybeare and Howson, p.284).
 - d. The philosophies of these two groups were at odds with the basic tenets of the gospel. Neither of the two systems saw any need of a Savior and the resurrection did not fit their views. The Stoic was

- indifferent to the circumstances of life, and the Epicurean did not want his selfish desires restrained.
6. Verses 19-21: "And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is*? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)"
 - a. These philosophers took hold of Paul and brought him to Areopagus, demanding that he present before them all this new doctrine. This place to which they escorted him was known as "Mars' Hill." The hill was named after the mythical god of war who was tried here for murdering the son of Poseidon (Neptune) the sea-god, in one of the many disputes among the gods (Coffman, p.338).
 - b. The great orators, politicians, and philosophers assembled at this place to discuss and debate their various philosophies. Paul did not quail before this august gathering; it afforded him an excellent opportunity to discourse upon the greatest theme of the ages, Jesus Christ and him crucified.
 - c. The interest the philosophers had in the doctrine Paul preached was only a surface curiosity—it was only a new and different idea that amused the philosophers momentarily. Luke informs us in the parenthetical statement of verse 21 that this was the basic characteristic of the Athenians—to tell or learn some new thing. This trait has not died out, for many Americans are interested in those doctrines that are new and sensational. This explains the success of the Millennialists, "miracle workers," and others who deny or pervert plain Bible truths to their own selfish ends.
- D. Acts 17:22-31: Paul's Sermon on Mars' Hill.
1. Verse 22: "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, *Ye* men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious."
 - a. "The excellence of an argumentative discourse is measured by the degree of adaptation to the exact mental condition of the audience, and the conclusiveness with which every position is established. It would be difficult to conceive how this discourse could be improved in either of these particulars" (McGarvey, p.220).
 - b. He addressed his audiences as "ye men of Athens," a personal reference; he did not directly call attention to their respective philosophies.
 - c. "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." The ASV translates the last phrase as "very religious." McGarvey says that neither of these two is what Paul said, but that "the term he employs, *deisedaimonestirous*, from *deido* to fear, and *daimou* a demon, means *demon-fearing*, or *given to the worship of demons*. This was the exact truth in the case, and the audience received the statement of it as a compliment" (ibid.). *Daimon* is defined by Vine as "a demon, signified, among pagan Greeks, an inferior deity, whether good or bad" (Vol. 1, p.291). Paul's reference could be to their worship of demons or of inferior gods.
 - d. The word is used in Acts 25:19 in reference to the Jewish religion. Coffman says that since "Paul's purpose at the outset was one of rapport with his hearers, the [ASV] is far preferable" to the KJV (p.339).
 2. Verse 23: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."
 - a. As a reason for his statement of the previous verse, Paul says that as he made the rounds of Athens, beholding the objects of their worship, he observed an altar having the inscription, "To the unknown God." "Some poor worshiper, having placated all the gods that he knew, still felt no certainty of confidence, but went out and erected an altar to the god who was unknown" (ibid.). "Unknown" is from the Greek word *agnostos*.
 - b. The Grecians had said that Paul seemed to be a "setter forth of strange gods" (gods with whom they were not familiar: i.e., God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son).
 - c. Paul pointed out in this verse that he was revealing to them the God they did not know. They were paying blind, unguided reverence to this God; Paul was going to show them the proper devotion to give him. This should excite their interest since he was revealing information of which they confessed their ignorance. They should have been willing to hear all that he had to say. There is no record of any miracle being wrought in their presence, perhaps because of their unbelief.
 3. Verse 24: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."
 - a. First, the apostle declares that the God who made the worlds (the God he was revealing to them), seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not need physical temples in which to dwell.

- b. He is not the god of the Epicureans, whose conception of God was extremely faulty: they maintained that he did not create the world, that he would not hold men accountable for their actions, and that he was not real. But neither did this comport with the views the Stoics had of God. Paul was not afraid to state the plain truth, even though the audience was bound to take issue with what he presented.
4. Verse 25: "Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."
- a. The God Paul was revealing does not need anything that man might offer him. He made all things (vs. 24), and gave life, breath, and all things to his creatures. Idol worshipers think that they must provide gifts to God which are essential to his well-being. God can get along quite well without us, but we cannot get along without him. Our worship exalts his name among men, it brings glory to God, and it brings us more and more into his likeness.
- b. Poverty-stricken idol worshipers have been known to waste their wealth on extravagant temples, images, decorations and offerings on these "gods which are not gods." V.E. Howard described a group of people in India who erected a temple dedicated to rats, spending thousands of dollars yearly in its upkeep and for feeding the rodents.
- c. The God who created the whole universe and everything in it has no need for a manmade temple situated on his footstool, the earth! "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27).
5. Verse 26: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."
- a. This God had made all nations of men of one blood. "The Greeks, like the Jews, thought themselves of finer nature, a superior race in origin, character and destiny. Paul instructs them of the brotherhood of man; this was indeed strange to Greek ears; they had an idea of different origins, different gods, different religions for different nations" (Boles, p.281). The Jews divided the human race into Jews and Gentiles, the Romans thought of men as citizens or non-citizens, and the Greeks saw the world as comprised of Greeks or barbarians; Americans tend to think of the world as populated with Americans and the rest (Coffman, p.341).
- b. Paul's statement about one blood is true in a sense no one back then could know. Science can examine a blood specimen and know the kind of being from which it came, whether from man, cow, dog, etc. The blood of mankind is different from that of all other beings; only the specific blood *type* distinguishes the blood of all men. Forensic science has developed to the point that it can identify, using DNA tests, a blood sample as belonging to a specific person. God designed this in the beginning. All of mankind descended from Adam and Eve. (The ASV does not have the word *blood*).
- c. God also determined the times and bounds of the nations. God is not so distant, unconcerned, and uninvolved with mankind as the philosophers thought. He has worked behind the scenes in various ways to direct the different nations into the places in which they were to dwell, and has set limits to the times of their existence as nations and the influence they will exert. Some have continued to our day and some have lost their identity as distinct nations. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:32).
6. Verses 27-28: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."
- a. "The purpose of God's exalting some races or nations for a season, and then debasing them and raising up others, is revealed as a device for bringing them to faith in God. Repeatedly throughout history, nations in the ascendancy forgot God and turned their backs upon his word; whereupon God cast them down and raised up others" (Coffman, p.341).
- b. Evidence of the existence of God is all around us (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). His power and Godhead are clearly seen by the things which he has made. But we must go to his revealed word in order to find what he requires of us. One who wishes to find God will be encouraged to know that God is not far from any one of us. "'Feel after him' is a vivid picture of the darkened and benighted condition of those who thought themselves to be wise. The evidences of God were round about them; yet they did not know him" (Boles, p.282). To "feel" is to "grope after; search for." "Mentally to seek after tokens of a person or thing" (Thayer, p.676).
- 1) Psalms 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."
- 2) Romans 1:20: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,

- being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."
- c. The apostle shows the closeness of God by stating that we live and move in him and have our being from him. He cites something one of their own poets had said about God, that we are his offspring. Boles says that the poet Paul quotes was Aratus of Soli in Cilicia, a Stoic who lived about 270 B.C. The poet had the right concept of God in this particular. The Stoics saw God as pantheistic and carnal; the Epicureans viewed God as imaginary; but Paul set him forth as a real being who cared for his offspring. Instead of man trying to tend to God's needs, man is totally dependent upon God for even his breath and life.
7. Verse 29: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."
 - a. Paul includes himself in the conclusion he reaches in this verse. **We** ought not to think of God as a material object carved from gold, silver, or stone. The skill of man is able to produce some impressive and beautiful images, but that does not make them divine beings. The Greeks' conception of deity was along materialistic lines; separate them from their images and they could not picture God. The real nature of God was not like gold or any other natural element.
 - b. The word *Godhead* is a reference to the true nature of God, the characteristics of a spiritual, Divine Being. The Godhead of God the Father is illustrated by the creation he made (Rom. 1:20). All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ (Col. 2:9). We use the words *motherhood*, *parenthood*, *brotherhood*, etc., to describe the traits that pertain to being a mother, a parent, or brothers. This is also the significance of *Godhead* (Godhood)—characteristics that pertain to being God (Rom. 1:20).
 - c. "This was a strong appeal to the self-respect of his hearers. To acknowledge that they were the offspring of God, and at the same time admit that he was similar to a carved piece of metal, or marble, was to degrade themselves by degrading their origin" (McGarvey, p.223).
 - d. The argument by which he revealed to them the God who had been unknown is now completed. He has exhibited the uselessness of all the splendid temples around him, by showing that the true God dwells not in them, and that he is the God who made the earth and the heavens and all conceivable things. He has proved the folly of all their acts of worship, by showing that the real God has no need of any thing, but that all men are dependent on him for life and breath and all things. He has exhibited the foreknowledge; the providence, general and special; the omnipresence, and the universal parentage of this God; and has made them feel disgusted at the idea of worshiping, as their creator, any thing similar to metal or marble shaped by human hands. Thus their temples, their services, and their images are all degraded to their proper level, while the grandeur and glory and paternity of the true God are exalted before them" (ibid.).
 8. Verse 30: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."
 - a. Having reached the conclusion of the previous verse, Paul can now logically adduce the requirement of this verse: God requires repentance of all men.
 - b. There was a time in which God overlooked the ignorance that was demonstrated by the ignorant worship the Athenians had been offering. The men of Athens admitted their ignorance by erecting the altar to "The Unknown God." His statement here is parallel with the one Paul made in Lystra: "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them" (Acts 14:16-18). God overlooked certain things among the Gentiles of the Old Testament era; he also overlooked some things among the Old Testament Jews. He allowed David and others to have more than one wife; he permitted them to put away their wives for more reasons than the one he originally intended (Matt. 19:1-9).
 - c. But the time for these things to be ignored by God had passed since he had given his Son to die for the sins of the world.
 - d. The requirement of repentance is met when one learns God's will sufficiently to believe it, and sees his own condition; genuine sorrow is produced by this faith, which in turn produces a decision to change one's life; that commitment is then lived out in a reformed life.
 - 1) Romans 10:17: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - 2) Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must

- believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
- 3) 2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
 - 4) Acts 26:20: "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."
9. Verse 31: "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
- a. The reason for the repentance is the fact that the day of Judgment has been appointed by God in which the world will be judged.
 - b. The Judgment, as taught elsewhere in the New Testament, will include every one who has ever lived on earth.
 - 1) Matthew 25:31-32: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."
 - 2) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - c. The basis of the verdict will be God's word.
 - 1) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
 - 2) Revelation 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."
 - d. The destiny given each one will be eternal in its scope, and thus unchangeable: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46); cf. Luke 16:19-31).
 - e. The determining difference will be the "works" of the individuals.
 - 1) John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - f. Righteousness is the doing of God's will.
 - 1) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
 - 2) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 3) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 - 4) 1 John 3:7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
 - g. The Judge will be God's Son, Jesus Christ. In view of this Great Day and its consequences to the human soul, the apostles pleaded with men to obey the gospel.
 - 1) Acts 2:40: "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."
 - 2) Acts 26:26-29: "For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner."

King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

3) 2 Corinthians 5:11: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."

h. The assurance given of these truths is the resurrection of Christ. The apostles were equipped to prove his resurrection, to the satisfaction of all who would evaluate the evidence properly.

E. Acts 17:32-34: The Results of the Sermon.

1. Verses 32-33: "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*. So Paul departed from among them."
 - a. It appears that Paul intended to say more, but was interrupted by an outburst of mockery. Others in the audience said they would hear him again before making a commitment one way or the other.
 - b. With this conclusion, Paul departed from them.
 2. Verse 34: "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."
 - a. There were some who believed, including Dionysius and a woman named Damaris. Dionysius was a member of the Athenian Council, thus an Areopagite; the council met at Areopagus. There were others who likewise obeyed the gospel, although their names and number are not given.
 - b. Human wisdom causes many to reject the gospel: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).
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ACTS 18

A. The City of Corinth.

1. Corinth's history goes back to ancient times when it was called Ephyra. It is situated on an isthmus which joins Greece with the Peloponnesus (which was once called *Morea*). The isthmus is a narrow band of land which separates the Ionian and Aegean Seas. This *isthmus* gave the name for all other similar strips of land. Corinth is also known for another geographic feature, a citadel of rock which rises almost 2,000 feet above the sea, called *Acro-Corinthus*. At the top of this mountain was a flat area large enough for a town. A temple dedicated to Aphrodite (the goddess the Romans called *Venus*) was built atop this citadel, in which a thousand religious prostitutes served. The city proper was a little ways inland from this citadel. The Acropolis in Athens, about fifty miles away, was visible from the Acro-Corinthus.
 - a. Corinth acquired vast riches on account of its good location for trade by land over the isthmus and by sea from many quarters. Corinth was known for many centuries for its shipbuilding and for its famous Isthmian Games. Its importance was also attributable to its military significance. The citadel could be guarded by a few soldiers since the ascent to it was made difficult by the steep slope of the mountain. "It had good harbors at Cenchræe and Lechaëum, on either side of the isthmus. By 750 B.C., Corinth had become the wealthiest city of ancient Greece. Except for two periods...it maintained economic supremacy for about 1,300 years" (*World Book Encyclo-pedia*, Vol. 4, p.832). But with the increase of wealth, great corruption of morality came.
 - b. "CORINTH: (kor'-inth) (Korinthos, 'ornament'): A celebrated city of the Peloponnesus, capital of Corinthia, which lay North of Argolis, and with the isthmus joined the peninsula to the mainland. Corinth had three good harbors (Lechaëum, on the Corinthian, and Cenchræe and Schoenus on the Saronic Gulf), and thus commanded the traffic of both the eastern and the western seas. The larger ships could not be hauled across the isthmus (Acts 27:6,37); smaller vessels were taken over by means of a ship tramway with wooden rails. The Phoenicians, who settled here very early, left many traces of their civilization in the industrial arts, such as dyeing and weaving, as well as in their religion and mythology. The Corinthian cult of Aphrodite, of Melikertes (Melkart) and of Athene Phoenike are of Phoenician origin. Poseidon, too, and other sea deities were held in high esteem in the commercial city. Various arts were cultivated and the Corinthians, even in the earliest times, were famous for their cleverness, inventiveness and artistic sense, and they prided themselves on surpassing the other Greeks in the embellishment of their city and in the adornment of their temples. There were many celebrated painters in Corinth, and the city became famous for the Corinthian order of architecture: an order, which, by the way, though held in high esteem by the Romans, was very little used by the Greeks themselves. It was here, too, that the dithyramb (hymn to Dionysus) was first arranged artistically to be sung by a chorus; and the Isthmian games, held every two years, were celebrated just outside the city on the isthmus near the Saronic Gulf. But the commercial and materialistic spirit prevailed later. Not a single Corinthian distinguished himself in literature. Statesmen, however, there were in abundance: Periander, Phidon, Timoleon.
 - 1) "Harbors are few on the Corinthian Gulf. Hence, no other city could wrest the commerce of these waters from Corinth. According to Thucydides, the first ships of war were built here in 664 BC. In those early days Corinth held a leading position among the Greek cities; but in consequence of her great material prosperity she would not risk all as Athens did, and win eternal supremacy over men: she had too much to lose to jeopardize her material interests for principle, and she soon sank into the second class. But when Athens, Thebes, Sparta and Argos fell away, Corinth came to the front again as the wealthiest and most important city in Greece; and when it was destroyed by Mummius in 146 BC, the treasures of art carried to Rome were as great as those of Athens. Delos became the commercial center for a time; but when Julius Caesar restored Corinth a century later (46 BC), it grew so rapidly that the Roman colony soon became again one of the most prominent centers in Greece.
 - 2) "When Paul visited Corinth, he found it the metropolis of the Peloponnesus. Jews flocked to this center of trade (Acts 18:1-18; Rom 16:21 ff; 1 Cor 9:20), the natural site for a great mart, and flourishing under the lavish hand of the Caesars; and this is one reason why Paul remained there so long (Acts 18:11) instead of sojourning in the old seats of aristocracy, such as Argos, Sparta and Athens. He found a strong Jewish nucleus to begin with; and it was in direct communication with

Ephesus. But earthquake, malaria, and the harsh Turkish rule finally swept everything away except seven columns of one old Doric temple, the only object above ground left today to mark the site of the ancient city of wealth and luxury and immorality—the city of vice paragraph excellence in the Roman world. Near the temple have been excavated the ruins of the famous fount of Peirene, so celebrated in Greek literature. Directly South of the city is the high rock (over 1,800 ft.) Acrocorinthus, which formed an impregnable fortress. Traces of the old ship-canal across the isthmus (attempted by Nero in 66-67 AD) were to be seen before excavations were begun for the present canal. At this time the city was thoroughly Roman. Hence, the many Latin names in the NT: Lucius, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, Quartus (Rom 16:21-23), Crispus, Titus Justus (Acts 18:7-8), Fortunatus, Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17). According to the testimony of Dio Chrysostomus, Corinth had become in the 2nd century of our era the richest city in Greece. Its monuments and public buildings and art treasures are described in detail by Pausanias.

- 3) “The church in Corinth consisted principally of non-Jews (1 Cor 12:2). Paul had no intention at first of making the city a base of operations (Acts 18:1; 16:9-10); for he wished to return to Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:17-18). His plans were changed by a revelation (Acts 18:9-10). The Lord commanded him to speak boldly, and he did so, remaining in the city eighteen months. Finding strong opposition in the synagogue he left the Jews and went to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). Nevertheless, Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue and his household were believers and baptisms were numerous (Acts 18:8); but no Corinthians were baptized by Paul himself except Crispus, Gaius and some of the household of Stephanas (1 Cor 1:14,16) ‘the firstfruits of Achaia’ (1 Cor 16:15). One of these, Gaius, was Paul's host the next time he visited the city (Rom 16:23). Silas and Timothy, who had been left at Beroea, came on to Corinth about 45 days after Paul's arrival. It was at this time that Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Thessalonians (3:6). During Gallio's administration the Jews accused Paul, but the proconsul refused to allow the case to be brought to trial. This decision must have been looked upon with favor by a large majority of the Corinthians, who had a great dislike for the Jews (Acts 18:17). Paul became acquainted also with Priscilla and Aquila (18:18,26; Rom 16:3; 2 Tim 4:19), and later they accompanied him to Ephesus. Within a few years after Paul's first visit to Corinth the Christians had increased so rapidly that they made quite a large congregation, but it was composed mainly of the lower classes: they were neither 'learned, influential, nor of noble birth' (1 Cor 1:26).
- 4) “Paul probably left Corinth to attend the celebration of the feast at Jerusalem (Acts 18:21). Little is known of the history of the church in Corinth after his departure. Apollos came from Ephesus with a letter of recommendation to the brethren in Achaia (Acts 18:27; 2 Cor 3:1); and he exercised a powerful influence (Acts 18:27-28; 1 Cor 1:12); and Paul came down later from Macedonia. His first letter to the Corinthians was written from Ephesus. Both Titus and Timothy were sent to Corinth from Ephesus (2 Cor 7:13,15; 1 Cor 4:17), and Timothy returned by land, meeting Paul in Macedonia (2 Cor 1:1), who visited Greece again in 56-57 or 57-58" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by BibleSoft].
 - c. The city was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. when some of their ambassadors were mistreated. A hundred years later, it was rebuilt by the Romans, under Julius Caesar. It regained its former glory and wealth, along with its moral corruption.
2. So corrupt did Corinth become that the Greek language used the word "Corinthianize" to describe moral degradation. "Even as late as the seventeenth century, the 'Corinthian' in Shakespearean dramas was always a debauchee, making his entry on stage in a state of drunkenness" (Coffman, p.350). So base had Corinthian society become that Paul was virtually over-awed when he arrived there.
 - a. Acts 18:9-10: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 2:3: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."
3. Modern Corinth (*Kórinthos*), is located “on the Isthmus of Corinth near the site of the ancient city of Corinth. The town is a minor commercial center linked by rail and road with Návplion, Pátrai, and Athens. Corinth has a small harbor, active since completion of the ship canal across the Isthmus of Corinth in 1893. Among the chief products of trade are currants, corn, honey, silk, and olive oil. The modern town, founded in 1858 after the destruction of the old city by an earthquake, was itself severely damaged by an earthquake in 1928. Population (1981 preliminary) 22,495" (Encarta, 1999).

4. While Nero was emperor in Rome, an unsuccessful attempt was made to dig a canal across the isthmus in order to aid the flow of shipping. Sailing around the Peloponnesus was time-consuming and dangerous. The idea had been pursued by an ancient king of Macedonia and by Julius Caesar. A French company began cutting the canal in 1882, and Greece completed it in 1893. It is 4 miles long, 70 feet in width, and 26 feet deep.

B. Acts 18:1-6: Paul Begins his Work in Corinth.

1. Verses 1-2: "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them."
 - a. We are not told why he remained only for a short time in Athens. In terms of importance, and perhaps also population, Corinth outstripped its neighbor. The gospel would have a better chance of being spread if it could be firmly planted in Corinth. With ships and tradesmen coming from many parts of the Empire, the gospel would have a very wide influence. Athens and Corinth were separated by only about 50 miles.
 - b. Some think that Paul made another visit to Corinth not reported in the Bible.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 1:15: "And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 2:1: "But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 12:14: "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 12:21: "*And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed."
 - 5) 2 Corinthians 13:1-2: "This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare."
 - c. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. They had been among the Jews who had been expelled from Rome at the decree of Claudius Caesar. The Jews were unpopular in Rome, and were thought to be the source of tumult in the imperial city. Claudius issued an edict about 49 A.D. which forced the Jews to leave Rome. This husband-wife team had only lately come from Italy.
 - d. Aquila was a Jew by birth, thus had to leave. He had been born in the province of Pontus, located in the northeastern part of Asia Minor, on the southern shore of the Black Sea. The Bible does not indicate whether Aquila and Priscilla were Christians when they left Rome or whether they were converted by Paul in Corinth. Jews from Rome and Pontus were among the great crowds in Jerusalem on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:9-10). It is certainly possible that they could have been in the audience to hear the first gospel sermon almost 20 years earlier. Paul's current visit to Corinth began about 51 A.D.
2. Verses 3-4: "And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks."
 - a. Aquila and Priscilla and the apostle Paul were tent-makers by trade, thus the apostle abode with them and plied his trade. The Jews had a proverb that a father who failed to teach his son a trade, had by default taught him to steal. There was much in common between the three partners: they were Jews, tentmakers, and Christians.
 - b. Paul praised these two devout saints in Romans 16:3-4: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." By the time Paul penned the Roman Epistle (56-58 A.D.), Aquila and Priscilla had returned to Rome. This godly couple had been instrumental in setting Apollos aright in scriptural matters (Acts 18:24-26).
 - c. The apostle made several allusions to his working with his hands for his own support (1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8; Acts 20:34). When Paul came to Corinth, he was likely short of funds.
 - d. Paul again resorted to his long-established practice of entering Jewish synagogues to reason with those

- gathered there. This he did in Corinth for a number of sabbath days, reasoning with them to persuade them that Jesus is the Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10-11).
3. Verse 5: "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ*."
 - a. Silas and Timothy finally caught up with Paul in Corinth. They had remained in Berea following his sudden departure, being given instruction to follow him on to Athens with all speed (17:14-15). It appears that Paul left Athens before they arrived, (if so, he left word in Athens which would guide them to him in Corinth), but from a statement in 1 Thessalonians 3, another possibility is indicated, which is discussed below.
 - b. Their arrival greatly encouraged the apostle on account of the good report they brought him about the brethren in Macedonia and the financial support sent to him by the saints there (2 Cor. 11:8-9; Ph. 4:15; 2 Cor. 8:1-5). The good news they brought gave Paul fresh motivation to press the great work of preaching the gospel in Corinth. His heart would have been relieved of any doubts or anxieties about the welfare of his co-laborers and the new saints in Macedonia.
 - c. 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8 speaks of Timothy coming from Thessalonica to Paul at Corinth: "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."
 - 1) The first verse says that Paul had sent Timothy to Thessalonica and that he had abode alone in Athens. It seems that Timothy had actually rejoined Paul at Athens, and had been sent back to Thessalonica.
 - 2) "His present arrival in Corinth [Acts 18:5], therefore, was not from his original stay in Berea; but from a recent visit to Thessalonica. Probably Silas had remained till now in Berea" (McGarvey, p.225).
 - d. The arrival of Silas and Timothy in Corinth was the occasion of the writing of the book of 1 Thessalonians, which appears to be the first of his many epistles. He was re-invigorated at the news they brought (1 Th. 3:6-8; Acts 18:5; cf. 18:28).
 - 1) Acts 18:5: "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ*."
 - 2) Acts 18:28 "For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."
 - 3) 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8: "But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."
 - e. He pressed forward with the work, testifying (John 15:26-27; Acts 10:39; 1:8; 4:33) that Jesus is the Christ.
 - 1) John 15:26-27: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."
 - 2) Acts 10:39: "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree."
 - 3) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 4) Acts 4:33: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."
 4. Verse 6: "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them,
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Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

- a. As was the usual result of gospel preaching then, some of the Jews rejected the truth. Luke reports that they "opposed themselves" by so doing. The Jews in Antioch of Pisidia had "judged" themselves "unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:44-46) by their rejection of the gospel; these Jews had done the same thing. In both cases, they became guilty of blasphemy (cf. Matt. 12:32; Rom. 1:16; John 12:48). One would be wasting his time to continue to try to teach people who have rejected the gospel. Compare Matthew 7:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
- b. When the Jews in a local situation rejected the gospel, Paul turned to the Gentiles, but when he went to another location, he first sought out the Jews there to begin his ministry in that new place. Paul shook his raiment, symbolizing his freedom from their lost condition. "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean..." (Cf. Ezek. 3:17-19; 33:4,7-9; Acts 20:26). Paul had done all that anyone could do to bring them to salvation. We should not be discouraged when we face similar cases today.
 - 1) Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 2) Ezekiel 22:4: "Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come *even* unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries."
 - 3) Ezekiel 22:7-9: "In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness."
 - 4) Acts 20:26: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*."

C. Acts 18:7-11: Paul Continues His Work at Corinth Among the Gentiles.

1. Verse 7: "And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue."
 - a. Seeing that the majority of the Jews were unwilling to receive the gospel, Paul moved his base of operation to the house of Justus. He would no longer be given opportunity of speaking openly and freely in the synagogue; to have persisted would have been to bring premature, unnecessary difficulties upon the cause. Gracefully, he took up his work elsewhere. He probably continued to stay with Aquila.
 - b. We know very little about this Justus, identified in the ASV as Titus Justus. He was a worshipper of God; his name indicates he was a Gentile; thus, he obviously was a proselyte to the Jewish religion. But now he was favorably inclined toward Paul, although the text does not state that he was a Christian at this point. He readily opened his home as a meeting place where Paul could continue his preaching, and as a place of worship.
 - c. His house was next door to the synagogue. When Satan closes one door, God is able to open another. How easily we become despondent when little problems develop! How little trust we often have! If we are faithful in the basic tenets of Christianity and sincerely practice them regularly (prayer, Bible study, mutual encouragement, worship, etc.), these discouraging difficulties would not appear nearly as serious.
 - d. Titus Justus was not the Titus who was a fellow-traveler with Paul; that Titus was already active in Antioch and Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1; Acts 15:2).
2. Verse 8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
 - a. Paul's work was bearing good fruit. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, obeyed the gospel, along with the other members of his family. Luke reports further that many of the Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized. Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14 that he had personally baptized Crispus and Gaius.
 - b. "It was very seldom that men of high position in the Jewish synagogues were induced to obey the gospel. It is greatly to the credit of Crispus, therefore, that he was among the first in Corinth to take

this position, and this, too, at the moment when the opposition and blasphemy of the other Jews were most intense. He must have been a man of great independence of spirit and goodness of heart—the right kind of a man to form the nucleus for a congregation of disciples" (McGarvey, p.226).

- c. The details of the conversion of these Corinthians are summed up in three actions: they heard, believed, and were baptized. This is a beautiful, concise and accurate rendering of the plan of salvation. Repentance and confession are not specifically named, but obviously they are implied since they are elsewhere required (Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:10).
 - d. Crispus would give up his position as chief ruler in the synagogue; he could not continue in that work now that he had become a Christian, and indeed the Jews would not permit it. Verse 17 speaks of Sosthenes as the chief ruler; but in 1 Corinthians 1:1, a Sosthenes is included with Paul in the greetings sent to the church at Corinth. It is possible that different synagogues are meant, but not likely; it is possible that different men are indicated by the name Sosthenes, but it is also possible that the replacement to Crispus (Sosthenes) was also converted to Christ.
3. Verses 9-10: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."
- a. The Lord saw the need to speak to Paul in a vision to give encouragement to him. Even the apostles were not immune to discouragement. Christ told Paul to cease being fearful, but speak the gospel plainly. He assured his beloved apostle that he would see to it that no one would hurt him. How would you like to have such a direct promise from Christ? He does not address us orally or directly today, but his written word is just as reliable! He has promised to take care of his people.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) Hebrews 13:5: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*"
 - b. Paul was facing a large pagan population which had little regard for human life, no regard for God's word, no respect for Christ and his followers, a people who were given over to licentiousness. These people did not fear God, and would have no concern over a lowly Jew who presented a message about another Jew who claimed to be the Son of God!
 - c. How would you have approached the work in Corinth? Would there have been any fear in your heart? We would have done just as Paul did: go to the Jews first, and then work with those Jews and proselytes who showed interest; and we would have had a measure of fear just as he did!
 - d. Given the assurance of heavenly protection, Paul was urged to speak forth the word of salvation. The Lord stated that there were many in the city who were teachable. Things are not always as bleak and dangerous as they appear! Who would think that there would be many in this wicked city who would obey? Look at our own country. Although there seems to be little hope of finding people who will obey the gospel, yet from experience we know there are many.
 - e. Some have perverted the Lord's statement to agree with Calvinistic doctrine that God has already picked out individuals who are to be saved. This would violate Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Knowing the hearts of men, Christ could also know that there were some who would hear, believe and obey. He spoke by anticipation.
4. Verse 11: "And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."
- a. Being encouraged by the Lord's promise to protect him and by the assurance that there were many in the city who would be receptive to the gospel, Paul vigorously pursued the great work of preaching the gospel.
 - b. He continued there for eighteen months, teaching the word of God among the Corinthians. Christ fulfilled his pledge to safeguard the apostle; the chief ruler of the synagogue was beaten instead of Paul, when the Jews raised a tumult against Paul (18:12-17).
- D. Acts 18:12-17: The Jews Are Unsuccessful in Their Suit Against Paul.
1. Verses 12-13: "And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law."
 - a. Gallio was the brother of Seneca, who was an advisor to Nero. Seneca wrote of his brother: "No one of mortals is so pleasant to one person as he is to all" (see Boles, p.290). "His brother speaks of him

with singular affection; not only as a man of integrity and honesty, but as one who won universal regard by his amiable temper and popular manners. His conduct on the occasion of the tumult at Corinth is quite in harmony with a character so described. He did not allow himself, like Pilate, to be led into injustice by the clamour of the Jews; and yet he overlooked, with easy indifference, an outbreak of violence which a sterner and more imperious governor would at once have arrested" (Conybeare and Howson, p.327). Gallio became proconsul in Achaia in 51 A.D. (Coffman, p.354). Achaia was the name of the region of Greece south of Macedonia, including Morea; Achaia was also used in reference to the province of which Corinth was the capital.

- b. On a day when the proconsul was available for such matters, the Jews united their opposition to Paul, seized him, and brought him before the judgment seat. Their charge against him was that he was attempting to persuade men to worship God contrary to the law. The Jewish religion was recognized by the Romans as legitimate; Christianity was not. The charge against Paul was essentially the same as those the Gentiles made in Philippi and Thessalonica (16:20-23; 17:5-10).
 - c. But here the charges were raised by Jews who asserted that Paul was teaching a new religion, which was not recognized by the Roman law. These Jews were unconcerned about Rome's laws; they hated Paul for teaching something that opposed their own religious traditions.
2. Verses 14-16: "And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O *ye* Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your law, look *ye to it*; for I will be no judge of such *matters*. And he drave them from the judgment seat."
- a. Paul was about to speak forth in his defense when Gallio took the issue into his own hands. He saw through the Jewish scheme. He stated that if the case was one which involved a genuine villainy, reason would dictate that he hear their charge and render a verdict. It appears that this man knew his business; he may have had enough dealings with the Jews to know their true nature, and perhaps had heard something of the teachings Paul affirmed to know they were harmless to his government.
 - b. He rightly perceived that this was not a matter for his concern, as he indicates in his statement here. Their charge dealt with words, names, and their Mosaic Law; it was a matter that must be resolved among themselves. When a doctrine arises in any religious organization in our country, the federal government has no jurisdiction or interest in it. Gallio refused to take part in the problem, and drove the Jews from his court. The proconsul appears to live up to his brother's tribute. He certainly was far above the magistrates of Philippi (Acts 16)! This present case is the only time in Paul's trials where his accusers were dealt with justly.
3. Verse 17: "Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things."
- a. The Greeks laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and gave him a beating in the presence of the proconsul; Gallio did not try to prevent the beating.
 - b. Questions naturally arise: (1) was Sosthenes the chief ruler over a different synagogue or did he replace Crispus in that capacity? (2) Is this Sosthenes the same as the one mentioned in Paul's opening statement in his epistle to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:1)? (3) And why was he beaten by the Greeks?
 - c. Sosthenes was probably the successor to Crispus. The Greeks likely beat Sosthenes because he was the chief ruler, the punishment being due to the trivial charge raised by the Jews. Sosthenes led the assault against Paul; it seems unlikely, although not impossible, that he was later converted to Christ. Very few of the enemies of the gospel were converted; Saul of Tarsus is the preeminent exception to that general verity.
 - d. "For once, the heart of the unconverted multitude was with the apostle, and so indignant were they at the unprovoked attempt to injure him, that when it was fully exposed, they visited upon the head of the chief persecutor the very beating which he had laid up for Paul" (McGarvey, p.228). Here is a case of evil being quickly and summarily punished (cf. Gal. 6:7-8).
- E. Acts 18:18-23: Paul Returns to Jerusalem, and Begins His Third Missionary Journey.
1. In these six verses, the inspired historian covers a considerable amount of time and a tremendous amount of events in a very few words. Many details are omitted which our curiosity would like to investigate, but God left those things unreported.
 2. Verse 18: "And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had

- a vow."
- a. Paul continued his work in Corinth for a "good while," then took his leave of the brethren there. Verse 11 says he was there for eighteen months, but that may be in reference to the time he was in Corinth prior to the coming of Gallio; most scholars take it to mean his entire stay covered a year and six months.
 - b. The quickest means of returning was by ship. Ships bound eastward from Corinth, were boarded at Cenchrea, the harbor city situated about 10 miles to the southeast. His destination was Syria (Antioch), where he would obviously want to give a report to the church of his experiences. His journey took him first to Ephesus, then to Caesarea, and Jerusalem, and finally to Antioch. Accompanying him on the initial leg of this long voyage were Priscilla and Aquila.
 - c. A question of prominent discussion pertains to the shaved head of this verse. Some renowned scholars maintain that it was Aquila, not Paul, who shaved his head. The argument is on principles of grammar. Some take the statement as parenthetical, and in reference to Aquila. But the subject of the sentence is Paul; the participle is masculine and cannot include Priscilla (Aquila and Priscilla are joined in the sentence by *and*); the other participles in the verse refer to Paul. It seems clear that it was Paul who had shorn off his hair.
 - d. The reason for the shorn head was the vow he made at Cenchrea. There is nothing stated to identify the vow. A full discussion of whether it was right for Paul to make a vow, in keeping with the Jewish system, and to participate in Jewish rites in the temple, will be covered in the comments under Acts 21:22-26.
 - 1) Some think that Paul sinned by entering the temple for the purification ceremony.
 - 2) Others say that he used it as a means of softening Jewish opposition so that he could preach the gospel to them with greater success, making Paul's activities a matter of expediency.
 - 3) Others say that until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, Jewish Christians could participate in certain of precepts of the Law, including vows and circumcision.
3. Verses 19-21: "And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus."
- a. They sailed to Ephesus, a distance of about 250 miles. With favorable winds, and sailing around the clock, the time of travel time would have been about two or three days. Paul parted company with Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus; he entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.
 - b. The Jews were obviously kindly disposed toward what Paul presented, for they asked him to stay with them longer than he intended. He could not accede to their desires since he wanted to "keep the feast" which was soon to take place in Jerusalem. This suggests that Paul was going to take part in, or take advantage of, the occasion.
 - c. He promised to return to them, *if God will* (Jas. 4:13-15; Rom. 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Heb. 6:3). He was able to fulfill his promise (Acts 19).
 - d. The trip across the Mediterranean from Ephesus to Caesarea would require about a month of sailing (Boles, pp.293f).
4. Verses 22-23: "And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed, and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples."
- a. When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to salute the church. If he fulfilled his stated plan, he also was there for the feast (which is unidentified). The church mentioned was the one in Jerusalem. When one went to Jerusalem, it was spoken of as "going up," and when one left Jerusalem for another place, it is described as "going down." Following his stay in Jerusalem, Paul "went down to Antioch." Antioch lay 300 miles north of Jerusalem, and was lower in elevation than Jerusalem.
 - b. His second missionary journey ended in the events of this verse, and the third began after his stay at Antioch. The second journey occupied about three years, and in addition to revisiting sites of his previous journey, he also worked in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and briefly at Ephesus; he also traveled to Caesarea and Jerusalem, before ending that great journey at its beginning point—Antioch. The world would never be the same after the tremendous events of that journey.
 - c. He visited Galatia and Phrygia, following an orderly plan. He strengthened the brethren, and he doubtless also made new converts as he pursued his work.
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F. Acts 18:24-28: Apollos Preaches at Ephesus.

1. The events of this section are included for at least two reasons: it sets the stage for the great work Paul was to do in Ephesus (Acts 19); and it introduces to us a man of great ability and influence, who would be virtually unknown to us without the information supplied here by Luke. In anticipation of Paul's promised return to Ephesus, these details are given to furnish a good background for this work there.
2. Verse 24: "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus."
 - a. Apollos, a Jew born in Alexandria, was preaching the Old Testament scriptures in Ephesus.
 - b. Alexandria was a famous Egyptian city situated on the Mediterranean Sea, only a few miles from the mouth of the Nile River. It was named in honor of Alexander the Great, who founded it in 332 B.C. It was a famous place of learning, boasting the famed library which was considered the greatest collection of writings in the world.
 - c. Apollos was an eloquent and educated man, and mighty in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the scriptures, although, as later appears, his knowledge was not complete. "In a day when a knowledge of the word of God had to be acquired from manuscripts, and in which the art of reading was acquired by only a few, it was no ordinary endowment to be familiar with the Scriptures....Indeed, the amount of clerical ignorance now extant would astonish the masses of men, if they only had the means of detecting it" (McGarvey, p.231). Such a man was bound to have a decided effect on many people.
3. Verse 25: "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John."
 - a. Luke reports that Apollos was instructed in the way of the Lord, that he was fervent in spirit, and that he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord. He concludes the verse by saying that he knew only the baptism of John. His information was accurate, but his knowledge was incomplete.
 - b. He was instructed in the Lord's way, but his information was limited to what John taught. We are not told who his instructor was, whether it was John or one of John's followers. He knew at least some of the life, works, and teachings of Jesus, enough to convince others of his Messiahship. It is apparent that Apollos did not know about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, or of the events that occurred on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2. As John preached for people to believe on the Christ who was to come, so did Apollos.
 - c. Apollos was fervent in spirit; that is, he was a very zealous man. But zeal without knowledge can be extremely dangerous.
 - 1) Acts 14:19: "And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead." [These pagans were very zealous, but for the wrong cause].
 - 2) Acts 17:13: "But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people." [These Jews were deadly enemies of the cause of Christ—to their own hurt].
 - 3) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 - d. He taught the way of the Lord diligently. The ASV has "accurately" in place of "diligently." His information was accurate, but it was incomplete (vs. 26).
 - e. He knew only the baptism of John. John's baptism pointed to the Christ who was to come; the baptism of the Great Commission points back to the Christ who has come and died, been buried, and resurrected from the dead. John did not know about the baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:18-20). Thus the baptism taught by Apollos was seriously flawed, compared to the baptism of the Great Commission.
4. Verses 26-28: "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."
 - a. He spoke boldly in the synagogue, presenting the information he had received. There is no suggestion

- that he was inspired or could do any miracles; if so, he would have preached the whole truth.
- b. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak, they took him aside privately and expounded to him the way of God *more perfectly*. It does make a difference what we believe and teach. Again, the ASV has "more accurately" in place of "more perfectly." The original term is from the same Greek as the word in verse 25. Apollos was also a man with an open mind and a love for truth. He readily received this new information, and made the proper changes in his later preaching.
 - c. Apollos continued his travels, entering Achaia and coming to Corinth (19:1). The brethren in Ephesus, including Aquila and Priscilla, and others who had become Christians, wrote the brethren in Achaia to receive Apollos. He was able to furnish much help to the saints in Achaia.
 - d. Apollos was able powerfully to refute the argumentations of Jewish unbelievers, proving by the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. These discussions were public, thus affording the best and most extensive effect possible. Apollos had many admirers, including the apostle Paul. Some wrongfully called themselves after Apollos (1 Cor. 3:4); Paul spoke highly of him (1 Cor. 3:6). His last mention in the New Testament is in Titus 3:13: "Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them."
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ACTS 19

A. Acts 19:1-7: Paul Begins His Work in Ephesus.

1. The history of Ephesus goes back to about one thousand years before the coming of Christ. At one time long ago, its population is estimated to have been about three hundred thousand, but today only a little village remains.
 - a. "The great Ephesian temple of Artemis (loosely identified with Diana) was ranked by ancient writers as one of the seven wonders of the world, its importance deriving not merely from its architectural beauty and size, but from the status which the temple management enjoyed as 'bankers of the whole world.' It has been said that the temple of Diana was the equivalent in ancient pagan society to the Bank of England in modern times. The principal industry of Ephesus was that of manufacturing and selling images" (Coffman, p.373).
 - b. The temple was about eighty thousand square feet in size, or about four times the size of the Parthenon in Greece.
 - c. "Ephesus, one of the 12 cities of Ionia (an ancient Greek district on the western coast of Asia Minor), located near modern Ýzmir, Turkey. As a port city at the mouth of the Cayster (modern Küçük-menderes) River, it was a major departure point for trade routes into Asia Minor. Known in antiquity for its sacred shrines, notably a famous temple (one of the Seven Wonders of the World) to the goddess Artemis, or Diana, the city was also an important center of early Christianity. Probably founded in the 11th century BC by Ionian Greeks, Ephesus was conquered by the Cimmerians in the 7th century BC; by Croesus, king of Lydia, in the 6th century; and soon after, by Cyrus the Great, king of Persia. Later it was a tributary of Athens, but it sided with Sparta against Athens in the Peloponnesian War (431-404BC). Sparta ceded it to the Persians, who were driven out by Alexander the Great in 333BC. Under this Macedonian rule Ephesus flourished, and it was briefly renamed Arsinoë. The city passed to Roman rule in 189BC and remained an important commercial center. St. Paul established a Christian congregation in Ephesus in the 1st century AD, and it was the site of the third general council of the Christian church, which condemned the Nestorian heresy, in 431. Having been destroyed by the Goths in 262, Ephesus, although rebuilt, never regained its former splendor. Under the Byzantine Empire it declined, and its harbor silted up; it was abandoned in the 14th century. Excavations at Ephesus, begun in 1863, have uncovered temples to Artemis, public buildings, works of the Greek sculptors Phidias and Polyclitus, and a portrait of Alexander the Great" (Encarta, 1999).
2. Verse 1: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples."
 - a. Apollos, after preaching in Ephesus, and having been taught the way of God more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla, had gone into Achaia. In Achaia, he labored in the city of Corinth, from which Paul had lately departed (Acts 18:18-28). Paul continued on to Jerusalem and Antioch of Syria.
 - b. He had then begun his third missionary journey which led him in time to Ephesus. He had briefly stayed there on his return from the second journey.
 - c. Now he returned, in keeping with his promise (18:21), and found some disciples there. All Christians are disciples, but not all disciples are Christians. This is so because a disciple is a "learner" (a student, pupil); one must learn the gospel before becoming a Christian (John 6:44-45; Mark 16:15-16), and after becoming a Christian, one must continue to learn (Heb. 5:12-14).
 - 1) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."
 - 3) Hebrews 5:12-14: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
3. Verse 2: "He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him,

- We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."
- a. Paul, being an apostle of Christ, would naturally ask the question posed in this verse: Have you received the Holy Spirit since you became believers? The ASV has, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"
 - b. His question was intended to discover whether they had received the miraculous gifts. Since the New Testament had not been written, and many years would pass before it was fully revealed and disseminated among the brethren, the saints needed spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10) in order to learn their full duty and to teach the gospel to the lost (Eph. 4:8-14).
 - c. Being an apostle, it was within the scope of his work to lay hands on certain ones in order to impart to them one or more of the spiritual gifts (Rom. 1:11; Acts 8:14-24). Only an apostle had the ability to do this.
 - d. The reception of the Holy Spirit was not some indefinite, nebulous gift that came without manifestation. These disciples could know whether they had received it. When Paul conferred the gift upon them (verse 6), what they received was the power to speak with tongues and prophesy. This puts the issue to rest: the gift of the Holy Spirit was not some direct, indirect, or mysterious indwelling, but the ability to perform certain miraculous acts by the power of the Spirit.
 - e. These disciples had not so much as learned that the Holy Spirit was given. The ASV reads, "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given." The KJV says, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." They stated thusly that they had not received the gift.
 - f. The word "believed" included their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah and their baptism. Paul now knew that there was something defective about their faith and baptism because of this answer.
4. Verses 3-4: "And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."
- a. Because of their answer to his opening question, Paul saw something was wrong. He asked them about their baptism. They had been baptized according to John's baptism. The apostle accepted as a basic premise that they had been baptized, because they had believed. Nothing had been said about baptism till now, but the reference to their belief included baptism. However, the baptism they received was not the baptism of the Great Commission.
 - b. Paul properly appraised John's baptism—it was valid for a time. But when it was being practiced with God's approval, it pointed forward in time to the coming of Christ. New Testament baptism (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:36-38) points back in time to the fact that Christ has come and has completed his mission.
 - c. This relatively "small" matter was sufficiently important to make their immersion inadequate. Many today think that believers are to be immersed, but assign to baptism a role that is unscriptural: "One is first saved by faith only, and then he is immersed as an act by which he joins the church; baptism is [they say], an outward demonstration that he has been saved."
 - d. But since it was the case that these disciples had been baptized, being told to believe on Jesus who was to come, and since their immersion was flawed, the immersion of believers for the wrong purpose today nullifies their immersion. For baptism to be correct and beneficial, it must be done by the right people (people who believe and repent—Heb. 11:6; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38), it must be done in the right manner (immersion in water), and it must be done for the right purposes (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3f; 1 Pet. 3:21; Mark 16:16). Anything short of this makes it ineffectual. One cannot be taught wrong and be baptized right!
 - e. John's baptism was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4); the remission offered was prospective, in that it looked forward to the death of Christ (Heb. 9:22; 10:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 1:7). It looked to the coming of Christ and the completion of his mission (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:15).
 - f. It is clear from the context that these disciples had been taught and baptized by Apollos (18:24-28; 19:1). At the time he worked with these individuals, all he knew was John's baptism. We speak of being "re-baptized," but that is a misnomer. If one has been baptized, he is baptized correctly; if he has received sectarian "baptism," he has not been scripturally baptized; he is no better off than these disciples were. Those who received John's baptism when it was valid, were not subsequently immersed again; but these who received it after it was replaced by the Great Commission, were.
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5. Verses 5-7: "When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve."
 - a. When these men learned this new and updated information, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. That is, they submitted to the authority of Christ fully, and for the first time received the baptism of the Great Commission. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 29:18-20).
 - b. After their genuine conversion, Paul laid hands on them; they received the gift of tongues and of prophecy. Notice that the Spirit did not, apart from the apostle's actions, come automatically upon them; it was necessary that Paul lay hands on them.
 - c. If the gift of the Spirit was a natural indwelling, such as many maintain is taught in Acts 2:38, Paul would have had no need to ask; that would have been assumed. But the apostle had in mind the miraculous gifts which the early saints needed. In those passages where the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is exemplified or discussed in detail, the gift is miraculous (Acts 8:5-24; 10:19-48; 11:1-18).
 - d. The number of men was about twelve. Nothing is said about there being any women among their number; apparently the total number of the disciples was about a dozen.
- B. Acts 19:8-12: Paul Continues His Work, With Jews and Gentiles.
 1. Verse 8: "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."
 - a. It appears that the apostle met the disciples discussed above at the very start of his work in Ephesus. Following their baptism, he entered into the synagogue, and boldly taught the worshipers gathered there. In most synagogues, he was permitted to speak only a few times, but here they countenanced his preaching for three months.
 - b. The subject of his teachings concerned the "kingdom of God" (the church). Many do not accept the truth that the church and kingdom are identical. Most of the religious groups in our country which claim to be "Christian" think that the kingdom has not yet been established.
 - c. That the kingdom has come, and that it is simply another way of identifying the people of Christ (members of his church; Christians), is plainly taught in the New Testament. Matthew 16:18-19 uses the terms *church* and *kingdom* interchangeably; the Lord's Supper was designed to be eaten in the kingdom (Luke 22:1-30); but it is eaten by the church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-30). The kingdom has been established (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9). The same process by which we become members of the church, puts us into the kingdom (Acts 2:36-47; Col. 1:13-14; John 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:22-23).
 - d. Men are wrong who say that we ought to "just preach Christ, and leave the church out of it." We cannot preach Christ without also preaching his church (kingdom: Acts 8:5,12). Paul's teaching on the kingdom resulted in the establishment of the Lord's church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17).
 2. Verse 9: "But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."
 - a. After three months of trying to teach the Jews, there were many who became hardened against the truth, refusing to believe Paul's plain preaching.
 - b. When the truth is preached today, and few or none obey, the fault is with the hearers. It was not due to the weakness of the seed that no crops were produced in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Luke 8:4-18), but because of the condition of the soil (the human heart). Only the *good ground* soil produced.
 - c. The majority of the Jews spoke evil against the gospel Paul preached. Their rejection forced the apostle to preach elsewhere. They had done as did their brothers in Antioch and Thessalonica—they refused to accept the truth.
 - d. This is such a simple truth, but many in the Lord's church cannot, or will not, see it. When a population will not obey the plainly-preached gospel, it will do no good to compromise the message, or attempt to draw them to Christ by entertainment. Sooner or later such a congregation that follows that modernistic approach will have to teach their new "converts" the truth, or abandon the truth

altogether! If they do the former, they will lose their "converts." If they do the latter, they will entirely destroy the congregation (Rev. 2:1-7), and lose their own souls.

- e. He began holding daily sessions in the school of Tyrannus, where the disputes and discussions over the gospel continued. Nothing is known of Tyrannus. Boles says it was a common name, a name that means "tyrant." Could this be descriptive of the manner in which he conducted his school?
3. Verse 10: "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."
 - a. Paul continued his daily teaching of the gospel in the school of Tyrannus for two years. The effect of his work was felt throughout the province of Asia, including both Jews and Gentiles. The miracles he wrought (vs. 12) enabled him to prove the truthfulness of his message, and drew many to hear him who might not otherwise have had sufficient interest.
 - b. In the case of many Bible miracles, the supernatural acts depended in some measure on the presence of faith within the individual to be healed; in some cases it depended on the existence of faith on the part of the general population (Matt. 13:57-58; Mark 6:5-6); in every case, faith was essential on the part of him who was to produce the miracle (Matt. 17:19-20; Acts 3:1-8).
4. Verses 11-12: "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."
 - a. God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul. Handkerchiefs or aprons which were taken from Paul's presence, perhaps having been placed into contact with him, were carried to those who were sick, and their diseases were healed. Those who were afflicted with demons, were cleansed. These were special miracles because the manner in which they were wrought was very rare.
 - b. Notice that there is no mention of Paul charging for these miracles, or for the handkerchiefs or aprons. Modern "fake-healers" have been known to advertise on their radio and television programs for their listeners to send for certain items (at a charge, of course), which they alleged would cure diseases and afflictions.

C. Acts 19:13-20: Fake Exorcists Exposed.

1. Verse 13: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth."
 - a. Luke reports that certain wandering Jews who claimed to be exorcists tried to use the name of Jesus to cast out demons. Their view of his holy name was such that the name itself was magical; they thought the mere use of the name would be sufficient to drive out the demons. This shameful scheme exposes them as frauds, for if their former methods actually worked, why did they resort to this sordid misuse of the holy name of our Lord?
 - b. "It is difficult to imagine how men could witness miracles so astonishing and not acknowledge the presence of divine power....How deep the depravity, then, of men, even Jews by birth and education, who *would* see in them nothing but the tricks of a skillful and designing magician" (McGarvey, pp.235f).
 - c. "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." *To adjure* was to command a response by placing the recipient under the obligation of an oath. Jesus was adjured to give a direct response as to whether he was the Son of God (Matt. 26:63); the word used by the high priest was an intensified form of the word used by the *exorcists*. "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt, 26:63).
2. Verses 14-15: "And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"
 - a. The case in point was the attempt by the seven sons of a Jew named Sceva, who was a chief priest. The demon responded audibly by saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"
 - b. "Nothing is more mortifying, or better calculated to provoke the contempt of the community, than the unexpected exposure of mysterious pretensions such as were assumed by these exorcists. The spirit was enraged at their insulting pretensions, and doubtless enjoyed the joke of exposing them. The seven resisted until they were stripped and wounded, when they fled, presenting a very ludicrous aspect as they passed along the streets. While all Ephesus was laughing at them, it was remembered that the spirit acknowledged the authority of Jesus, and of Paul, and that a licentious use of the name

of Jesus was the cause of all their trouble. The mirth awakened by the event was soon changed into reverence for the name of Jesus, which they now saw was not, as the exorcists had pretended, a mere conjurer's talisman" (McGarvey, p.236).

- c. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." "The devils believe and tremble." But ignorant, foolish men often expose their true nature by unbelief and irreverence.
3. Verses 16-17: "And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."
 - a. The man in whom the demon resided, being motivated by the evil spirit, leaped upon the seven men, overpowered them, and caused them to flee from the house, naked and wounded. Such an episode could not be hidden. The population knew what happened.
 - b. The resulting effect this event had on the Jews and Greeks was that the name of Jesus received the magnification it deserved.
4. Verses 18-20: "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."
 - a. The ASV reads: "Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds" (vs. 18). In the church were some who had not turned loose all of their superstitions. These came, confessing their sinful actions, and revealed their errors.
 - b. Verse 19 gives the details of the sinful superstitions these believers and others had been maintaining. "Curious arts" (*magical arts*, ASV) were being practiced by many of them; they brought their books forth, books from which they derived their *magical arts*. The books were so numerous and so valuable that they were worth 50,000 pieces of silver. Depending on the rate of exchange, this amounted somewhere between \$9,000 and \$35,000 (Coffman). They were willing to sacrifice all of this in the interest of their immortal souls (Matt. 6:19-21, 33; Heb. 13:14).
 - c. The believers who made confession of this evil-doing had not until now realized how improper and wicked their practices had been. Others who were not believers until now, saw the same truth. Boles pointed out that Ephesus at that time was swarmed with magicians and astrologers.
 - d. "It is a shame that in our own times all kinds of spiritualists, fortune-tellers, palm-readers, and voodoo specialists are operating in the same manner as those ancient sinners" (Coffman, p.370). There are a very great many today who appear to have greater faith in horoscopes than in the gospel.
 - e. The word of God grew mightily in its influence, prevailing over the foolish occult theology of the Ephesians. But this does not mean there were no enemies left to do battle, as the rest of the chapter shows.

D. Acts 19:21-41: Paul is Confronted by the Silversmiths.

1. Verses 21-22: "After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season."
 - a. Paul now intended to begin his journey back to Jerusalem, traveling through Macedonia and Achaia. This decision was made "in the spirit." This could mean he had made up in his own mind to do this, or perhaps it was revealed to him by the Spirit.
 - b. His aim was to see Rome after his return to Jerusalem. He did see Rome, but the circumstances were not as pleasant as he would have liked (Acts 21-28).
 - c. It was during this stay at Ephesus that he penned the book of 1 Corinthians. "I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great and effectual door is opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:8-9).
 - d. No mention has been made so far on this journey as to his companions. Here we are told that two of them, Timothy and Erastus, were sent into Macedonia, while Paul remained in Ephesus for a while longer. They could prepare for the apostle's arrival.
2. Verses 23-25: "And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

- Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.”
- a. Someone has well said that the most sensitive nerve in a man's makeup is the one that leads to his wallet. The chief stock in trade in Ephesus was the manufacture and sell of images, especially the silver images and shrines of Diana.
 - b. When the silversmiths saw that the progress of the gospel resulted in a threat to their livelihood, they began a revolt against the apostle. Demetrius took the lead in this opposition, calling the attention of his fellow tradesmen to the losses they faced.
3. Verses 26-27: “Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.”
- a. Demetrius continued his speech, saying that Paul had persuaded many in Asia to turn away from all idols (including Diana), teaching that gods made with hands were non-existent. He concluded by stating that not only their trade was endangered, but the temple of Diana was being despised, and her majesty should be destroyed, even though the whole world worshipped her.
 - b. "It is likely that Demetrius exaggerated the success of Paul; but even if he did, the insight which he had regarding the eventual fate of the shrine business was accurate: 'Pliny in his epistle to Trajan (Ep. X, p.96), half a century later, spoke of *deserted temples, worship neglected, and hardly a single purchaser found for sacrificial victims*'" (Coffman, p.374).
 - c. "This is the most truthful and candid of all the speeches ever uttered against Paul....The statement of the effects already produced by Paul's preaching throughout the city and the province, endangering their whole system of idolatry, was equally truthful....It appears to have been a corrupt determination to save their traffic at all hazards, which made them ignore the evidence of their own senses, and rendered them impervious to the arguments and demonstrations of Paul" (McGarvey, p.238).
4. Verses 28-29: "And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre."
- a. The speech Demetrius made stirred up the wrath of the silversmiths, who cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Before long, the whole city was filled with confusion. The mob, recognizing Gaius and Aristarchus as Paul's companions, caught them, and rushed with one accord into the theater. Luke says Gaius and Aristarchus were from Macedonia (Acts 20:4; 27:2; 1 Cor. 1:14; Rom. 16:23; Col. 4:10; Phile. 24).
 - b. The mob was stirred up by the cry. This is an effective tool for those who seek to incite a riot. This tactic was used successfully against Christ when Pilate was minded to release him. The Jewish leaders had evidently circulated through the crowd, and encouraged the people to cry out that Jesus should be crucified. Most anyone in a great crowd can be incited to participate, unless he has his senses about him.
 - c. The mob had not found Paul, so they rushed his two companions into the theater "where criminals were sometimes exposed to wild beasts" (McGarvey, p.239). "This was an immense open-air auditorium capable of holding 50,000 people, or at least, as some suppose, 25,000" (Coffman, p.375).
 - d. Paul apparently refers to this event when he wrote 1 Corinthians 15:32: "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die." Paul might have been torn asunder or trampled underfoot had he entered. His love for his friends far surpassed his fear of death. But wisdom dictated that he stay out.
5. Verses 30-34: "And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians."
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- a. Paul learned about the arrest of his friends, and endeavored to enter into the theater to intervene in their behalf. The brethren urged him against it, as did certain leaders in the province who were friendly toward Paul.
 - b. The greater part of the mob did not even know what had started the riot; one part shouted one thing, and another part shouted something else. It must have been a very confusing scene.
 - c. Someone identified Alexander as one of Paul's cohorts, or converts at Ephesus; the Jews in the crowd pushed him forward. He beckoned with his hand to quieten the mob so that he could present a defense. But when those around him perceived that he was a Jew, another great chant was begun, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." For the space of two hours this cry was shouted.
6. Verses 35-36: "And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, *Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.*"
- a. The town clerk, a high ranking official of the city, was able to quiet the mob. Gaining their attention, he asserted that they all knew the whole city worshiped Diana, whose image fell down from Jupiter. He may have believed what he said, or he might have been humoring the people.
 - b. Thus, he gives utterance to a popular superstition about Diana's origin. The official said that these "truths" were so self-evident that they cannot be defamed. He further said that they ought not do anything rashly, but be quiet.
7. Verses 37-41: "For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly."
- a. The official, who possibly was friendly toward Paul, declared that the two men the mob had taken were not robbers of *churches* or blasphemers of your goddess. The word *churches* should be translated *temples*. The original word is *hierosulous*. He recommended that Demetrius and his craftsmen take proper legal action against Paul, if they thought they had a case. The court would be open to hear their plea, and thus settle the matter in a quiet, legal manner.
 - b. If there was a genuine grievance, the clerk said there were proper means of addressing it. He warned that the Roman authorities were apt to look into the cause of this riot, and there was no logical or legal method of explaining away the uproar. He was able, by this well-conceived speech, to quieten the crowd, and send them home.
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ACTS 20

A. Acts 20:1-6: Paul Visits the Brethren in Macedonia and Greece.

1. Verse 1: "And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia."
 - a. Following the uproar in Ephesus, Paul bade the saints farewell and departed for Macedonia. His present journey (the third) had occupied several years, during which he had covered the districts of Galatia and Phrygia in Asia Minor (Acts 19:23), and had preached in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31).
 - b. Paul had planted the church in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea on the previous journey (Acts 16, 17). He refers to his departure from Ephesus from the port at Troas in 2 Corinthians 2:12-13, where he had intended to do some preaching. But due to the disappointment of not meeting with Titus as he had hoped, he continued his journey on into Macedonia.
 - c. His troubles in Asia (Ephesus) were extremely severe, as he described them in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."
2. Verse 2: "And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece."
 - a. When he came to Macedonia, the apostle was still under duress (2 Cor. 7:5), but he was soon comforted by the arrival of Titus (2 Cor. 7:6). Titus gave the report that the first epistle had brought about a good effect on the saints, and that they had disciplined the incestuous man (2 Cor. 2); they also were planning to give to the needy saints in Judea (2 Cor. 9:1-2). He also had told the apostle about the enemies he had in Corinth (2 Cor. 10:10ff; 13:1-2).
 - b. After traveling over Macedonia, giving much exhortation to the saints, Paul made his way into Greece, which possibly included another visit to Athens, and on to Corinth, scenes of much labor on the second missionary tour.
3. Verse 3: "And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia."
 - a. He spent three months in Greece. He wrote to the church at Corinth while he was in Ephesus, expressing his plans: "And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go" (1 Cor. 16:3-6).
 - b. His three-month stay in Greece probably coincided with his aim to spend the winter with the brethren in Corinth. While he was in Greece, he planned to sail from there to Syria, as on the second journey (18:18-22), but he learned of another plot against him. Apparently, it was no longer feasible to take a ship from Corinth, thus he began his return to Antioch by way of Macedonia, the route he had taken in entering Greece.
4. Verses 4-5: "And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. These going before tarried for us at Troas."
 - a. Accompanying him in his travels were Sopater (from Berea), Aristarcus and Secundus (from Thessalonica), Gaius (from Derbe), Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus (from Asia). Timothy was from the city Lystra (16:1).
 - b. These men were with Paul in keeping with his invitation for the brethren to send men with him, bearing the gift for the poor saints in Judea (1 Cor. 16:1-6; Rom. 15:22-28). Paul did not take any chances with the money; the company of men would make their journey safer, and their being with him would eliminate any possible charges against him of misappropriation of the funds.
 - c. These traveling companions Paul sent on ahead of him, with the intention of joining them in Troas. Luke takes up the personal pronouns *us* and *we* at this point, showing that he had rejoined Paul at Philippi, where he had been left some five or six years before (Acts 16:12,40; 17:1). The third journey

occupied the years 54-58 A.D.

5. Verse 6: "And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days."
 - a. Paul and Luke sailed from Philippi after the time of unleavened bread, and after five days of sailing, came to Troas. On the first trip to Philippi, the sailing time between Troas and the seaport serving Philippi required only two days.
 - b. At Troas, they waited for seven days so as to be able to meet with the brethren on the Lord's day (20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). We should not suppose that they gave themselves to idleness during the week-long wait. This seven-day wait included Sunday and the previous six days, thus their departure from Philippi was on Monday. They possibly remained in Philippi through the Passover season in order to teach any Jews who were present. Likely, they spent the time quietly, studying, worshipping, praying, and teaching.

B. Acts 20:7-12: Paul Meets With the Saints at Troas.

1. Verse 7: "And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."
 - a. The disciples met and broke bread on the first day of the week (Sunday); this is the only passage that directly links the Lord's Supper and the first day of the week. However, there is other evidence which shows that Sunday was the day in which they ate the sacred supper.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 requires a weekly assembly in which the saints were commanded to give as they had been prospered. 1 Corinthians 11:20 shows their obligation to gather to eat the Lord's supper (which the brethren in Corinth had perverted: 11:20ff). When they came together "into one place" they were expected to eat the supper; they came together on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2); this was obviously the time when they ate the supper.
 - c. Pliny, a Roman official, wrote to Emperor Trajan in 112 A.D. about the practice of Christians eating the Lord's Supper on a "fixed day." (See Coffman, pp.385f).
 - d. Events that occurred on the first day of the week indicate the special significance of that day:
 - 1) Christ was raised from the dead (Matt. 28:1).
 - 2) The church was established (Lev. 23:15-16; Acts 2:1, 47).
 - 3) The Lord's Supper was eaten (Acts 20:7).
 - 4) The collection was taken up on that day (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
 - e. The Lord's Supper is eaten on the Lord's Day from the Lord's Table.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 10:21: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 11:20: "When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper."
 - 3) Revelation 1:10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."
 - f. The text reads that they came together to break bread "on the first of the week," with *day* being italicized. The phrase, which is also used in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, means *upon one of the sabbath*, "Hebrew idiom for the first day of the week. The word *sabbaton* was by them used to designate the week (cf. Luke 18:12); hence, day *one* of the week is the *first* day thereof" (Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers*, Vol. 1, p.355).
 - g. They came together to "break bread." "'Break bread' here is likely a synecdoche for all the items of worship, teaching, singing, the contribution, the Lord's Supper and prayer (Acts 2:42), derived, of course, from the fact that bread was 'broken' (eaten) in the Lord's Supper. Otherwise, where is authority for 'fruit of the vine' in Acts 20:7? On the assumption that the phrase, 'to break bread,' is a literal, and not a figurative allusion, this passage, at least, could not be cited to support any activity other than breaking a piece of bread. In this case, where is authority here for the items of worship? It seems clear, therefore, that the phrase, 'to break bread,' is a figurative statement embracing all the items of worship, including the Lord's Supper" (ibid., pp.67f).
 - h. Paul preached to them; he continued his speech until midnight. Depending on which system of time-keeping was employed at the time, the gathering began on the evening toward the end of Sunday or in the evening at the beginning of Sunday. The Romans divided their days as we do, with the day beginning at midnight and ending at the following midnight; the beginning of a day according to the

Jewish system was at sundown (six p.m.) and concluded at the same time the next evening. In either case this gathering was on the first day of the week.

- 1) However, as Woods pointed out, the breaking of the bread cited in verse 11 is clearly the Lord's Supper, in which case, they would have been partaking of it on Monday morning—if the Roman time is being used. (ibid., pp.68f).
 - 2) The Romans divided their days from midnight to midnight. Under the Jewish method of dividing the days, a new day began at sundown (about 6 p.m.) and ended at the same time the next evening.
 - 3) If the Roman method was the one used, the brethren would have eaten the Lord's Supper on Monday, not on the first day of the week—Paul preached until midnight; it was after he finished his sermon that they ate the sacred Supper. It follows, therefore, that they observed the Jewish method, meeting soon after the beginning of the Lord's Day; Paul preached until midnight; they ate the Supper; this was followed by a regular meal; they talked until daybreak; Paul took his leave from the brethren.
 - 4) Acts 20:7,11: "And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight....And when he was gone up, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed" (ASV).
 - i. Paul had waited in Troas for seven days in order to meet with the saints; his plans were to leave the next morning following the assembly described.
2. Verses 8-10: "And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him."
- a. The upper chamber where they had gathered was illuminated. A young man was seated in the window in the "third loft." Paul's long sermon, possibly coupled with fatigue on the part of Eutychus, resulted in his falling asleep, and tumbling down to his death. The statement is that he was taken up dead, not that they merely thought he was dead. Remember that Luke was a medical doctor, and in his report he indicates the young man was dead. The "third loft" places the "upper chamber" on the third floor of the house. The age of Eutychus is not given, but likely he was a teenager.
 - b. Paul went down to the young man, fell on him, and embraced him; he reported to the crowd that there was no need for them to be troubled, for "his life is in him."
3. Verses 11-12: "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted."
- a. When he returned to the upper chamber, they broke "the bread." The definite article is in the ASV, which identifies this bread with the bread of verse seven. That this is the Lord's Supper is also indicated by the connecting thought: "and eaten." They broke bread **and** ate. In biblical phraseology, to break bread was to eat; Luke would be using an unnecessary repetition if a common meal is all that is described in the verse. The verse reports their partaking of the Lord's Supper, which was followed by a regular meal. The brethren continued to talk until daybreak, when Paul departed to meet his ship.
 - b. The young man had been brought back to the upper chamber—alive. The text does not say that they carried him. Naturally, there was considerable comfort in his being raised back to life.
- C. Acts 20:13-16: Paul Continues His Journey.
1. Verses 13-15: "And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus."
 - a. Paul had made earlier arrangements for the rest of the company to take the ship from Troas to Assos, while the apostle intended to go on foot to that place where he would join them on board. Assos was 20 miles southeast of Troas.
 - b. Paul boarded the ship at Assos, and they sailed on to Mitylene. The next day they sailed "over against" Chios, and the next day arrived at Samos; after tarrying at Trogyllium, they came the next day to Miletus.
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2. Verse 16: "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."
 - a. Paul had decided not to go to Ephesus since he wanted to be in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost. "The day of Pentecost, however, furnished the only occasion which he could expect before fall, on which the Jews would be generally congregated in Jerusalem, and he desired to be there to distribute the contribution for the poor without visiting the rural districts individually for that purpose. We will yet see that he made the journey in time for the feast" (McGarvey, p.250).
 - b. Was the gift only for members of the church, or for unbelieving Jews as well? That it was for some who were not Christians is seen from another statement by Paul: "Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*" (2 Cor. 9:13). The expression, "unto them and unto all," shows that more than saints are included. Compare:
 - 1) 1 Thessalonians 5:15: "See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*."
 - 2) Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
- D. Acts 20:17-35: Paul Speaks To The Elders From Ephesus.
 1. Verse 17: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church."
 - a. At Miletus, Paul sent word to the elders of the church at Ephesus for them to meet him during his layover. Miletus was about 28 miles south of Ephesus by land, and was situated near the mouth of the Meander River.
 - b. The congregation in Ephesus had a plurality of elders. In verse 28, these men are called *overseers*, which in the Greek is the word for *bishops*. In that same verse, these bishops (or elders) are instructed to *feed* (the verb form of *pastor* or *shepherd*) the church.
 - c. The word translated *elders* is *presbuteros*; the word for *bishops* is *episkopos*; the word for *feed* (shepherd; pastor) is *poimano*.
 - d. In this one passage (20:17-35) the Bible shows the truth on this subject, and thus exposes the corrupt one-man-pastor system of the sectarians. The same truths are also made in 1 Peter 5:1-4.
 2. Verses 18-19: "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews."
 - a. It would take a day to get the message to the elders; another day for them to make their journey to Paul; and possibly this meeting here detailed, occurred at the end of the second or on the third day. Paul began his address to them by reminding the brethren of the manner of his work and life in their midst.
 - b. He served the Lord with all lowliness of mind; there was no boastfulness with the apostle. His work in Ephesus was done with tears, which indicates his sincerity. He was truly interested in their welfare, and had to undergo much hardship himself in accomplishing his work. He was beset with the persecutions (trials) of the Jews who sought to harm him.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:32: "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 16:8-9: "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 1:8-9: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead."
 3. Verse 20: "*And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."
 - a. Paul had not withheld any truth from them that would be profitable. He had opened the gospel to them, teaching them publicly and privately. His public presentations had been first in the synagogue and later in the school of Tyrannus. And in between those public sessions, the apostle had given instruction privately, in the homes where he visited.

- b. In doing located work with a congregation where people have an interest in learning more about God's word, the preacher often spends many profitable hours discussing and teaching the Bible in private homes, of the members and non-members.
 - c. Paul would have been negligent if he had failed to tell the brethren the whole truth. Today, a preacher who will refuse to preach some Bible truths is, by those omissions, a false teacher. If one believes the gospel, he will preach it in its entirety. If he condones drinking, gambling, immodest dress, profanity, etc., he is allowing precious souls to rush headlong into perdition without warning. If he believes in the dangers of such evils, as the Bible teaches, he will warn them. But if he loves his well-paid position in the church more than he loves the truth of God and the souls of men, he will keep quiet. Paul was not like this.
4. Verse 21: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
- a. Paul had testified (the same word is used in Acts 2:40 to describe Peter's preaching) to the Jews and to the Greeks. He had shown no favoritism. His preaching called on both Jew and Greek to repent toward God and have faith toward Christ. Their offenses (sins) had been against the God of heaven.
 - 1) Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear."
 - 2) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - b. Their faith must include belief in Christ. One cannot repent before God without believing in God; and the means of obtaining pardon for offenses is through faith in Christ.
 - 1) John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 - 2) Acts 2:36-41: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls."
 - c. Some have used this passage, and the other verses which place repentance before faith, to claim that the correct order is (1) repentance, and (2) faith. It is impossible for one to repent unless he believes, or else there would be no motivation for repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10). The Pentecostians repented because they believed; without faith it impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6; Acts 17:30-31).
 - d. If repentance precedes faith because of the order of the statement in this verse, then sanctification precedes faith because it is listed before faith in 2 Thessalonians 2:13. It would also mean that confession of faith must precede faith since they are given in that order in Romans 10:9. "The order of the words describing two actions proves nothing in reference to their occurrence, except when it is made evident that it was the writer's intention to indicate the order of occurrence. No such intention is manifest here" (McGarvey, p.251).
 - e. "...Protestant parties contend that *saving* faith, as it is styled, must follow repentance. The mistake which they commit arises from a misconception of the nature of both faith and repentance. Regarding repentance as simply *sorrow for sins*, and faith as a *yielding up of the will to Christ*, they very readily reach the conclusion that the former must precede the latter. But in this conception the sorrow for sin which produces repentance is mistaken for repentance itself; while the yielding up of the will to Christ, which is really repentance, is mistaken for faith. Repentance, therefore, really covers all the ground usually assigned to both repentance and saving faith, leaving no room for faith to arise after it" (ibid., p.252).
 - f. All the Jews and proselyted Gentiles who attended the synagogue services already believed in God before Paul preached Jesus to them. They had all been guilty of sinning against God, for the Law of Moses could not take away sin (Heb. 10:1ff). His preaching called on them to repent of their sins and
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- obtain forgiveness by means of an obedient faith in Christ (Jas. 2:14-26; Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21; Acts 2:36-41; 22:16).
5. Verses 22-23: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witness to in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."
 - a. Paul further stated that he was enroute to Jerusalem, bound in the spirit. In Acts 19:21, Paul is described as having "purposed in the spirit" to go to Jerusalem at the end of the second journey; this was the purpose (the intent) of his spirit.
 - b. In this passage, he was "bound in the spirit," which again appears to be a commitment he had made within his own mind. Some, however, think that this was something bound on him by the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Paul did not know what would befall him when he got to Jerusalem. Although the Holy Spirit had witnessed in every city (doubtless through those who had received the gift of prophecy—1 Cor. 12:8-10; 14:1; Acts 21:10-12), that bonds and afflictions awaited him in Jerusalem, he did not know the particulars.
 - 1) Acts 21:10-12: "And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 12:8-10: "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 14:1: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but rather that ye may prophesy."
 6. Verse 24: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."
 - a. But the apostle did not allow the warnings to keep him from doing what he intended. He was determined to complete his mission, that of bringing back to the people of Judea the liberal gift the saints in Gentile lands had sent.
 - b. He was fully reconciled to the idea of giving his life, if need be, in order to finish the course he had been given to run. He did indeed finish it (2 Tim. 4:7). He was determined to complete his work, which he calls "the ministry." He had received his commission from Jesus himself; his mission was to "testify of the gospel of the grace of God."
 - c. God's grace is revealed and applied by the gospel of Christ. When we learn the gospel message, we perceive the grace of God; when we believe the facts and obey the commands of the gospel, we receive the benefits of the grace of God (Tit. 2:11-12; Rom. 5:21; Acts 10:34-35; 2:14-47).
 7. Verse 25: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."
 - a. If Paul's expectation were fulfilled, the brethren in Ephesus would see him no more in this life. As far as we know, he was exactly right about this.
 - b. What he had preached among them was "the kingdom of God." But verse 24 said he preached "the gospel of the grace of God." To preach the gospel is to preach the kingdom; to preach the kingdom is to preach the church, since they are the same.
 - c. Some scholars think that Paul was mistaken about not seeing them again; they claim he did return to Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), and Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3; 3:14). We remember that many of the plans made by inspired men were based on their common knowledge and wisdom, and were sometimes faulty. Paul intended to go to Rome (Acts 19:21), but the circumstances of his journey to the Imperial City were not according to his intentions.
 8. Verses 26-27: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
 - a. Paul affirmed that he was free from the blood of all men. He meant that he had preached the gospel sufficiently wherever he went that he could not be held accountable by God for those remaining in
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their lost condition (Ezek. 3:17-19; 33:4,7-9; Acts 18:6; Jas. 3:1; 1 Cor. 9:16-17; Acts 20:27). We tend to focus on our great blessings in Christ; we must also remember our heavy obligations which our status as Christians places upon us.

- 1) Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 2) Ezekiel 33:4: "Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head."
 - 3) Ezekiel 33:7-9: "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 4) Acts 18:6: "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."
 - 5) Acts 20:27: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 9:16-17: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is committed unto me."
 - 7) James 3:1: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."
- b. In order for Paul to make the statement of the preceding verse, what he says here must be true. He had fully preached the whole counsel of God. He had given the people at Ephesus (and elsewhere) all they needed to know to become Christians and to be faithful to Christ.
 - c. He could therefore say correctly, that those who had rejected the gospel had only themselves to blame. As noted earlier, many preachers and teachers in the church today cannot say what Paul declared; they do not preach the whole counsel of God.
 - d. If we hold back some principle or command from the knowledge of the brethren or the world, we show no love for them, and we do ourselves great damage. Although many congregations will not stand for the whole counsel of God, it must be preached even though it results in our being ostracized from their society (2 Tim. 4:1-5).
9. Verse 28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
 - a. In a chapter of famous statements, this one stands equal to any. The apostle addresses these sober thoughts to the elders of the church at Ephesus, and to all men in the eldership anywhere and at any time. Elders operate under a fearful onus: they watch for the souls placed under their charge (Heb. 13:17) and must give answer to God for the discharge of these obligations.
 - b. Paul charges that they first take heed to their own souls. Before an elder can be a proper example, and influence others as he must, his own life must conform to the gospel pattern. Compare: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Qualification of elders are given in the following passages:
 - 1) 1 Timothy 3:1-7: "This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

- 2) Titus 1:5-11: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."
- 3) 1 Peter 4:1-4: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*."
- c. He charges them to take heed to the flock over which they had been placed. These men have the divine obligation of caring for the flock, just as a shepherd is required to tend to all the needs of his flock of sheep. Elders who will not take charge of the flock are not qualified for that great work. Responsibility cannot be passed on to others; ultimately, they must give answer for those under their care. While they may delegate authority for specific works, it is they who must see to it that the work gets done. Their duty is to all the flock, not just to a few of their closest associates.
- d. The apostle reminds them that it was the Holy Spirit who made them overseers.
 - 1) The word *overseers* is from the Greek word *episkopos* (bishops). The word itself shows that they have authority. They cannot make or loose laws for God; their authority resides in the realm of expedience; and they see to it that God's word is kept in the congregation where they rule.
 - 2) In the miraculous age of the first century, elders at first received their qualifications to serve through spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10,28; Rom. 12:4-8; Acts 14:23). Today, elders are still appointed by the Holy Spirit, but in a more indirect way: they meet the qualifications set forth in the Spirit-given word (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-11). Then, they did not have the New Testament fully revealed in written form; they depended on miraculous gifts to guide them. The elders first appointed to oversee congregations had not had the time to cultivate the knowledge and wisdom necessary to do the work of elders; they needed supernatural guidance for a while (cf. Acts 14:22:23).
- e. Elders are charged with the duty of feeding the church. The word *feed*, as noted earlier, is from the Greek word for *shepherd* or *pastor*. Sectarian error uses this "title" in reference to preachers. But in the New Testament, elders are the pastors of the local flock, and there was always a plurality of them, never just one (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Tit. 1:5). When this distinction is shown to them, between their doctrine and New Testament truth, few are impressed (2 Thess. 2:10-12; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6 (ASV); John 8:32; 17:17).
- f. The church is called the "church of God" (KJV) and "church of the Lord" (ASV). Either is correct, and both are accurate. The word in the Greek is *Theou* (God). But it was not God the Father who shed the blood; it was Christ (1 Pet. 1:19).
 - 1) In the Lord's Supper, it is incorrect to direct a comment to God, thanking **him** for shedding **his** blood.
 - 2) In this passage, Christ is called *God*. "This is one of ten NT references to Jesus as 'God,' and no matter how offensive this may be to human ears, the plain truth is that the sacred text here is unassailable. No critic may intelligently deny that what is written here is: 'The church of God, which he purchased with his own blood'" (Coffman, p.395).
 - 3) A few other passages attesting the deity of Christ are:
 - a) John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
 - b) John 20:28: "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."
 - c) Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his

- own blood."
- d) Romans 9:5: "Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."
 - e) Philippians 2:6: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."
 - f) Colossians 2:9: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."
 - g) Titus 2:13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."
 - h) 2 Peter 1:1: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."
 - i) 1 John 5:20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."
 - j) Hebrews 1:5-8: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom."
- g. Christ purchased the church with his own blood. Without the shedding of our Lord's blood, the church could not have been made possible; and without the shedding of his blood, salvation from sins could not have been made possible (Heb. 9:22; Rev. 1:5). These two are joined together in Ephesians 5:23, for Christ is there said to be the Savior of the body (which is his church, Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).
- 1) If the church is unimportant to our salvation, then the Lord's death is likewise unimportant to our salvation. But he purchased the church with his blood and we are saved by the power of his blood. The Lord made a good bargain; he did not pay too high a price for the church!
 - 2) Coffman points out that this truth refutes the idea of salvation by faith only. "By any definition, salvation by 'faith alone' means salvation without the church of Jesus Christ; and in such a view the crucifixion of our Lord is reduced to the status of a senseless murder. If men are saved, in any sense by the blood of Jesus, they must be saved through the church of which that blood is here declared to be the purchase price" (p.395). The only way known by the New Testament by which we can enter the church (the body of Christ), is through baptism (1 Cor. 12:13); we enter Christ by baptism (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4); we are saved at the point of baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Mk. 16:15-16); thus, salvation is not by faith alone!
10. Verses 29-30: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."
- a. Paul, having the gift of prophecy as part of his powers as an apostle, could know certain things of the future. He knew, for example, that after his departure from Ephesus (or by death), grievous wolves would arise in the church at Ephesus.
 - 1) In Revelation 2:1-7, Christ admonished the church at Ephesus to repent. By the time of its writing, some of the saints there had fallen away. Paul may have had a larger scope in view in this passage; he may have been alluding to the great apostasy which he delineated more fully in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and 1 Timothy 4:1-4.
 - 2) False teachers would enter the church, and would have no concern over the welfare of the flock. Just as literal wolves attack a flock of sheep, destroying many of them without mercy, so these human *wolves* would mercilessly ravage God's flock.
 - 3) The picture of wolves attacking God's flock is not an overblown figure. Jesus used it in Matthew 7:15-20. The method of assault is not physical, but in teaching. If one has the notion that doctrine is relatively unimportant, consider what Jesus and Paul said! That the attack was to be done through false doctrine is clearly shown in the next verse.
 - b. In addition to the wolves who would enter the church, men would arise in the eldership and wreak havoc on the congregation.
 - 1) "The church at Ephesus became notorious in after days as a seat of a great Gnostic heresy; even in the New Testament writings, not fewer than six of the pioneers of these false teachers are
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- mentioned as belonging to Ephesus; they are: Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20), Phygelus and Hermogenes (2 Tim. 1:15), and Philetus. In 3 John 9 we read of Diotrephes who lived at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus is condemned for its false teachers later by John. (Rev. 2:2.)" (Boles, p.327).
- 2) If false teachers can become part of the eldership, the congregation will surely be destroyed eventually. One of the early errors to afflict the church was connected with the eldership. Over a period of time, one of the elders was elevated to the position of *bishop*. Each elder is a bishop in New Testament teaching. By leaving this Bible principle, the road was paved for the full-scale apostasy predicted in the New Testament. This special "bishop" was soon elevated to be in charge of several area congregations; then "arch-bishops" were placed over several bishops and their "territory." From this unscriptural and sinful arrangement, the pope of Rome came into being. At some time during the apostasy, the church ceased to be the Lord's church, and became a human organization.
 - 3) The method by which these corrupt elders would contaminate the members was through "perverse words." *Perverse words* is a reference to false doctrine. Despite the multitude of warnings to "speak the things that become sound doctrine," the great errors of the time were still preached; despite the many plain predictions of the general apostasy that would hit the church, most of the brethren took no heed.
11. Verses 31-32: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."
 - a. In view of the foregoing predictions, Paul admonished the elders to **watch** and **remember**. Tearfully, he had warned them daily, night and day for three years, about the distressing things of the future. Do false teachings matter? Is the apostasy of a saint serious? Paul's tearful warnings say these things are extremely important!
 - b. It is his belief that he shall see these brethren no more in this life. In concluding his discourse, he commended them unto God and to the word of his grace. To commend means "to commit or entrust" to another's care. There is no better care that anyone could receive than in God's hands.
 - c. The word of God's grace is the gospel.
 - 1) God's grace and truth came through Christ (John 1:17).
 - 2) God's grace teaches both positive and negative lessons (Tit. 2:11-12).
 - 3) His grace *reigns* through *righteousness* (Rom. 5:21); all of God's commandments are righteousness (Ps. 119:172; Acts 10:34-35).
 - 4) Those in Christ are sanctified (1 Cor. 1:1f); sanctification is accomplished by God's truth (John 17:17).
 - 5) The grace of God brings salvation (Tit. 2:11); the word of God brings salvation (Jas. 1:21; Mark 16:15-16).
 - d. The word of God's grace is able to build us up; it can make us grow into spiritual maturity (Heb. 4:12; 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1:1-12; Matt. 28:20). If a Christian does not partake of the word of God, regularly and sincerely, he will starve himself to death, spiritually.
 - e. The word of God's grace is able to provide us with an inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3-5; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-11). This inheritance is shared by all who are sanctified. To be sanctified means to be "set apart" for God's holy purposes. We have obligations to perform, but we also have blessings to enjoy; and we have a wondrous hope to sustain us (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Those who are sanctified have the promise of an eternal life in God's heaven (Rom. 8:1-18).
 12. Verses 33-35: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."
 - a. The apostle turns to personal matters, assuring his brethren that he has conducted himself honorably and unselfishly. He had not coveted anybody's silver, gold, or apparel. Rather, he had willingly worked with his own hands to provide for the necessities of himself and for his companions. He had not asked for financial support from the Ephesians, even though it is right for those who proclaim it to receive support from the brethren for the services they render (1 Cor. 9:6-16; 4:12). Paul did not
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preach for money.

- 1) 1 Corinthians 4:12: "And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 9:6-16: "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are not* we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"
- b. Paul taught the brethren by his example that they ought to work so that they could support the weak, and to remember the Lord's statement: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
- 1) The ASV rendering: "In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."
 - 2) Christians are taught by their Lord to help those less fortunate, as they have the ability and opportunity (Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:28; Matt. 25:31-46).
 - 3) The Lord's statement cited by the apostle is no where else recorded in the New Testament. It was obviously widely-circulated, and was worthy of being preserved permanently in Paul's statement here.

E. Acts 20:36-38: Paul's Tearful Goodbye to the Brethren.

1. Verses 36-37: "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him."
 - a. At the conclusion of the foregoing remarks, Paul kneeled down and prayed with the brethren. This is a very appropriate action.
 - b. We are not told how many elders there were, but several are indicated. They **all** embraced the beloved apostle, weeping and kissing him with much affection. What a wonderful demonstration of mutual concern and respect! When full-grown men weep, men who are strong in knowledge and faith and spiritual maturity, the emotional attachment is great, and the sorrow runs deep. This is not worldly sorrow, but an expression of the deepest and most sincere ties. Such tears soften and purify the heart. Such tears are good for the soul.
 2. Verse 38: "Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."
 - a. They were especially sorrowful over the knowledge that they should see his face no more (in this life). He had so stated in verse 25. We can be sure that their sorrow about not seeing Paul again was matched by his regret over not being able to see them again.
 - b. They accompanied him to the ship.
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ACTS 21

A. Acts 21:1-7: Paul Returns to Palestine.

1. Verse 1: "And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden."
 - a. The Greek text expresses an emotional parting. From Miletus, the ship sailed by a straight course to Coos, about forty miles distant. The next day they came to Rhodes, and from there they went on to Patara. Rhodes is famous for its Colossus, a giant bronze statue that stood (according to some sources) astride the harbor. It was 105 feet tall. It was constructed in 300 B.C. and was destroyed by an earthquake in 244 B.C. The remnants were sold to a Jewish scrap dealer in 656 A.D., who used 900 camels to transport it. (See Coffman, p.399f).
 - b. At Patara they took a ship that was going across the Mediterranean to Phoenicia. The vessel they had been using was traveling along the coast. By going direct, the distance across to Phoenicia was only about 400 miles. Isaiah 60:9 may have pointed to Paul's trip from the "isles" by the "ships of Tarshish." They found the island of Cyprus, and leaving it on their left, they sailed on to Syria, landing at Tyre. Syria evidently encompassed Tyre. The cargo was unloaded at Tyre.
2. Verse 4: "And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem."
 - a. Paul and his company remained in Tyre for seven days. There was a congregation located in Tyre, and since they waited for seven days, it is possible they remained until after the Lord's Day (cf. Acts 20:6-7; 28:14).
 - b. "Here Paul met a repetition of those prophetic warnings which had already cast a gloom over his feelings, and so much alarmed were the brethren at the prospects before him, that they entreated him to go no further. We are not to understand that these *entreaties* were dictated by the Spirit, for this would have made it Paul's duty to desist from his purpose; but the statement means that they were enabled to advise him not to go, by knowing, through the Spirit, what awaited him. The knowledge was supernatural; the advice was the result of their own judgment" (McGarvey, p.255).
 - c. There was much love between the saints (cf. Acts 20:36-40). The warmness of Christian fellowship often sustains us through difficulties.
3. Verses 5-7: "And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day."
 - a. When the time came for Paul to continue the journey to Jerusalem, the brethren and their families accompanied him to the shore. There they knelt down and prayed together. This was not the picture of people who followed some prescribed formula of "canned prayers," but rather saints who poured out their hearts' desires to the Almighty (Rom. 10:1). Think of the good impression their praying must have had on any unbelieving observers present. Luke then reports that the company boarded the ship and the brethren from Tyre returned home. This may or may not have been the same ship they had taken from Patara.
 - b. They left the ship at Ptolemais, where they stayed with the brethren for one day. The church had been planted in Phoenicia following the death of Stephen (see Acts 11:19). It appears that the sea voyage ended at Ptolemais, and that Paul and his company traveled on foot to Caesarea and then on to Jerusalem.

B. Acts 21:8-16: Paul and His Company Abode With Philip at Caesarea Many Days.

1. Verse 8: "And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him."
 - a. Leaving Ptolemais, Paul and the brethren travel on to Caesarea. This and the opening line of verse 7 give us the indication that they ended their journey by sea at Ptolemais. Philip, identified first as "the evangelist," and then as one of "the seven," had a house in Caesarea.
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- b. Obviously, he was willing to show hospitality to the company. One of the wonderful benefits of Christianity is the warm hospitality that Christians exhibit toward each other, even to those saints they do not personally know.
 - c. *Evangelist* is defined as "a bringer of good tidings." One can be an evangelist in an area where the church is prominent as well as in a "mission" field; everyone, including Christians, needs to hear the message of the gospel.
 - d. Philip was one of the seven men selected for a special need in Acts 6. This great man went on to become one of the great preachers of the time.
2. Verse 9: "And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy."
 - a. Philip had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy. This was in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy which Peter quoted in Acts 2:14-21. Much speculation has been built around this verse.
 - b. Pentecostals and others have alleged that since these four girls had the gift of prophecy, that they exercised it in the presence of men, in the assemblies of the church. Therefore, they conclude, it is right for us to have women preachers now. But all the verse says is that Philip had four daughters who prophesied. We are not told when or before whom they exercised that gift.
 - c. In view of the prohibition given in 1 Timothy 2:8-16 (and 1 Cor. 14:34-35), we know they did not exercise the gift publicly, in the presence of men. There would be many occasions in which these ladies could use their gift publicly in teaching women and children, and even men in private situations (Acts 18:26; 1 Cor. 11:5).
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 14:34-35: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 2:8-15: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."
 - 3) Acts 18:26: "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."
 - 4) 1 Corinthians 11:5: "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven."
 3. Verses 10-11: "And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles."
 - a. Since they stayed with Philip many days, a certain prophet came down from Judea. Agabus may have been directed on this mission by the Holy Spirit. This same prophet had delivered the prediction regarding the great famine that occurred during the reign of Claudius (Acts 11:28).
 - b. This prophet delivered a prediction in this case which affected Paul. Taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own hands and feet, citing the message given him by the Holy Spirit: "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Notice that the Spirit did not say "if he should go" to Jerusalem; he said that this **would** be done to him.
 - c. Old Testament prophets sometimes illustrated their prophecies with symbolic actions such as this (1 Kings 22:11; Jer. 13:1-7; Ezek. 4:1-16). The dramatic manner by which Agabus depicted the troubles Paul would face at Jerusalem gave the apostle a clear picture of his forthcoming tribulations.
 - d. This episode illustrates how the Holy Spirit had testified in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23; 21:4). These prophecies were not given by premonitions or strange feelings, but by the audible voice an inspired prophet.
 4. Verses 12-13: "And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go
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up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

- a. Those who were traveling with Paul, and those other saints at Caesarea, when they heard this unpleasant prophecy, pleaded with the apostle to stay away from Jerusalem. Paul would already be fighting the battle within himself about whether to go; their pleas would only make it more difficult for him.
 - b. He could have offered many good reasons for staying away, but he was committed to the venture. He was bringing the gifts from the Gentile Christians to the needy Jewish saints in Judea. His bringing this gift might break down Jewish opposition to the gospel and weld the Jewish and Gentile saints together.
 - c. How tenderly and emotionally his statement of verse 13 must have been uttered! It is one of the most touching in the book. It indicates the difficulty with which Paul met their pleas. He was ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem, to say nothing of being imprisoned there. He was willing to spend and be spent for the cause of Christ (2 Cor. 12:15).
 - d. "The fearfulness of his prospects was a sufficient trial to his own courage, when he enjoyed at least the silent sympathy of his chosen companions; but when they deserted him, and threw the weight of their influence upon the weight already too heavy for him, the effect was crushing to his heart, though the steadfastness of his purpose was not shaken" (McGarvey, p.257).
5. Verses 14-16: "And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge."
- a. When the brethren saw that he could not be persuaded, they resigned themselves to whatever might develop, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." Little did they realize that their beloved friend was soon to enter into a four-year imprisonment.
 - b. After spending some time with Philip at Caesarea, Paul and his company took their baggage and began the final leg of their journey to Jerusalem, a distance of about sixty miles.
 - c. They were accompanied by certain brethren from Caesarea, including an old disciple named Mnason. This aged brother was from Cyprus; he would provide a place for Paul and his company to stay while in Jerusalem. Instead of "aged," the ASV has "early," indicating that he was one of the initial converts to Christ. Mnason was not necessarily ancient in years, but he was old in the faith. The church had been established about 25 years earlier.

C. Acts 21:17-26: Paul Concludes the Third Journey in Jerusalem.

1. Verse 17: "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly."
 - a. "The period which had been looked forward to for months with prayerful anxiety had now arrived, and Paul was to know, without further delay, whether or not the service which he had for Jerusalem would be accepted by the saints [Rom. 15:31]. To this unspeakable relief, the historian was able to say" that Paul and the company were warmly received by the brethren (McGarvey, pp.257f). The brethren who gladly received them were probably the saints he met privately on the day of arrival.
 - b. We would think that the saints would gladly welcome Paul, especially since he was bringing the needed money. Paul had asked brethren to pray for him, "That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints" (Rom. 15:31).
 - c. But the apostle had powerful enemies in the church at Jerusalem. Those Jewish converts who wanted to hold on to the law of Moses, and require the Gentile Christians to be circumcised and keep the law, had sought to undermine his efforts at Antioch.
 2. Verse 18: "And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present."
 - a. The next day after their arrival, Paul and the company went in to see James and the elders. It does not appear that any of the other apostles were in Jerusalem at this time, else Paul would have approached them, and they would have been mentioned.
 - b. This is the same James that was prominent in Acts 15; he was the writer of the book that bears his name; and was a half-brother of Jesus. From the reference to James in connection with the elders, it appears that he was an elder himself. He did occupy a position of authority and responsibility with the church at Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19; 2:9; Acts 15). If he was not an apostle or an elder, by what
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- authority did he have *any* authority in the church?
- c. Some strong charges have been leveled against James by modern writers. Some have accused him of complicity in the efforts to turn the Gentile converts into mere Jewish proselytes. Paul stated that certain brethren came to Antioch from James, but James said that those men had no authority from the Jerusalem church to bind the Law on the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9-14; Acts 15:24). If James was wrong in what he said in the letter, how can we believe what he said in Acts 15:15-17? James was an inspired prophet, and his words are authoritative and accurate.
3. Verses 19-21: "And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs."
 - a. Paul greeted the elders, and gave a detailed report of all that God had done among the Gentiles by his work. This account must of necessity have been involved, for the third journey had occupied several years, and included many important events.
 - b. The statements that begin here came from the elders. When they (the elders) heard the report, "they glorified the Lord, and (they) said unto him...." If we accuse James of making an unjust requirement of Paul on the part of James, we must make it against the entire eldership. Their statement includes the following:
 - 1) Many thousands of Jews now believe on Christ.
 - 2) These are all zealous of the law (i.e., the Law of Moses).
 - 3) They have heard that you teach all the Jews who live in Gentile lands to forsake what Moses said in the Law, telling them they ought not circumcise their children, and not to walk after the customs. The customs were those imposed by the Law of Moses. Paul did not deny the Jewish or Gentile converts the right to circumcise their sons; he did teach that such was not required under Christ (cf. Acts 16:1-3; Gal. 5:6). He did not forbid the Jews to circumcise their sons.
 4. Verses 22-25: "What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication."
 - a. There has been much discussion regarding the request that the elders made of Paul in this passage. And since the apostle followed their wishes, some have concluded that Paul was in error (that he committed sin).
 - b. The elders offered the following counsel by which they hoped that the Jewish believers might receive Paul:
 - 1) The Christians will come together when they learn that you are present. Something must be done to reconcile them to you.
 - 2) We have four men who have taken a vow upon themselves; take them and purify thyself with them, and pay the charges involved, so they may shave their heads.
 - 3) The point of this is that the multitude may learn of these actions, that you walk orderly, and also keep the law. This will ease any differences they feel toward you in regard to what they heard that you taught in Gentile lands.
 - 4) Concerning the Gentile Christians, we have written and concluded that they have no need to follow the law, except that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication.
 - c. Possible explanations, why the elders suggested the course of action which Paul accepted, include the following:
 - 1) That Paul committed sin by entering the temple for the purification ceremony. But if this was the case, why was no censure placed on his evil actions by the inspired writer? If the assertion is true, the courageous apostle, who had faced many terrors from powerful enemies, and had withstood Peter and Barnabas (Gal. 2:11-14) when those men erred on a similar matter (regarding the Law),

- had caved in to the demands of the elders that he "go back to the Law."
- 2) That these actions were a matter of expedience by which it was hoped that the Jewish opposition to Paul (on the part of the believers and unbelievers) would be softened; this would reconcile Paul with the believing Jews and would make it easier for him to preach the gospel to those who were yet unbelievers (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20-23). But if this was the purpose, there does not seem to have been any success. Paul got very little opportunity to preach to anyone, why then was the episode even included in Luke's report?
 - 3) That until the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., Jewish Christians could take part in certain elements of the Law, including vows, circumcision, and animal sacrifices. If this is true, how can one reconcile that idea with what Paul wrote in Galatians, especially chapter 5:1-6?
 - 4) That the members did certain things because of ancient practice, until such time that revelations of the New Testament clarified the issue. Peter preached in Acts 2:38-39 that the gospel was for all men, but special guidance and further revelation were necessary before he and his Jewish brethren perceived that God intended for the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles (Acts 10-11). This seems to be the most agreeable resolution of the problem.
5. Verse 26: "Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them."
- a. Paul took the four men, and purifying himself with them the next day, they entered the temple to signify the fulfillment of the days of purification, so that an offering could be made in behalf of each of them. The law governing the Nazaritic vow is found in Numbers 6.
 - b. McGarvey pointed out that "when a Nazarite became unclean within the period of his vow, it was necessary that he should *purify* himself, *shear his head* on the *seventh* day after, and on the *eighth* day bring certain offerings. Then he lost the days of his vow which had preceded the uncleanness, and had to begin the count anew from the day that the offering was presented. This is fully stated in the sixth chapter of Numbers, where the law of the Nazarite is prescribed. Such was the condition of these Nazarites, as is further proved by the notice given of the 'days of purification,' and the mention, in the next verse below, of '*the seven days*,' as of a period well known. Nazarites had no purification to perform except when they became *unclean* during their vow; and there was no period of *seven days* connected with their vow, except in the instance just mentioned. In this instance, as the head was to be sheared on the seventh day, and the offerings presented on the eighth, there were just seven whole days employed. Paul's part was to give notice to the priest of the beginning of these days, and to pay the expenses of the offerings; but he had to purify himself before he went in for this purpose" (pp.261f).
 - c. The case before us appears to be parallel with the example of Peter (with the 11) preaching on Pentecost Day that the Gentiles were included in the gospel promises (Acts 2:36-39); but later it was necessary for God to take special steps to convince Peter and the apostles, and the rest of the Jewish believers, that uncircumcised Gentiles were to be accepted into the church (Acts 10-11).
 - 1) Between the times of Acts two and Acts ten, no Gentiles were taught and baptized. The brethren were given a period of grace prior to being required to make direct efforts to convert Gentiles.
 - 2) The Law of Moses was given only to the descendants of Abraham through Jacob. Gentiles could become proselytes, but were excluded from full participation in Judaism. Becoming proselytes would make it easier on Gentiles who lived among the Jews. But the Jews were not commanded actively to seek proselytes.
 - d. "It will be remembered that no Jew who, like Paul, had been mingling with Gentiles, and disregarding the ceremonial cleanness of the law, was permitted to enter the inner court of the temple without being *purified*. This purification he must have undergone, and there is no evidence that he underwent any other. But it is said he purified himself 'with them,' which shows that they, too, were unclean" (ibid).
 - e. Prior to the time of Cornelius' conversion, the members of the church thought it was improper to preach the gospel to Gentiles. Were they guilty of sin in this? Or did God permit them a period of grace during which they could be taught the full truth on this subject? It is clear that the latter case is true, else none of the Christians who died in the meanwhile were saved. Did Stephen die saved? Surely! Had he preached to Gentiles? No.
 - f. Up to the time of the present events, nothing had been revealed (at least not in the written record)
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which specifically forbade the service of the altar. The apostle Paul had shown that we are not under the law, and that those who try to be saved by keeping the ordinances of the law gave up their salvation under Christ (Gal. 5:1-4). At this point in time, however, the books of Colossians and Hebrews had not been penned; and evidently, the details these epistles include had not been revealed. If this is the case, Paul's activities in the temple may be parallel to the church's attitude toward the Gentiles up until the conversion of Cornelius.

- g. Until such time that the details of God's will on this matters was fully revealed, it appears to be the case that the Jewish Christians were permitted to participate in certain activities of the Law of Moses. But after the New Testament was fully revealed on this matter, such was no longer permitted. Therefore, if our argumentation has been accurate, Paul merely did what was commonly practiced by the other brethren. To say that he committed sin in these activities, also taints James and the other elders, and all of the Jewish believers.
- h. "If we admit that the proposition above quoted from Galatians, affirming that 'we are no longer under the law,' was, when fully understood, inconsistent with the continuance of sacrifice, we make his case only the more like Peter's in regard to the Gentiles; for he announced propositions, on Pentecost, which were inconsistent with his subsequent course, until he was made to better understand the force of his own words. Peter finally discovered that he was wrong in that matter, and Paul at length discovered that he was wrong in his connection with the offerings of these Nazarites. Some years later, the whole question concerning the Aaronic priesthood and animal sacrifices was thrust more distinctly upon his mind, and the Holy Spirit made to him a more distinct revelation of the truth upon the subject, and caused him to develop it to the Churches, in Ephesians, Colossians, and especially in Hebrews. In the last-named epistle, written during this imprisonment in Rome, he exhibited the utter inefficiency of animal sacrifices; the sacrifice of Christ, once for all, as the only sufficient sin-offering; and the abrogation of the Aaronic priesthood by that of Christ, who was now the only high priest and mediator between God and man. After these developments, he could not, for all earthly consideration, have repeated the transaction with the Nazarites; for it would have been to insult the great High Priest over the house of God, by presenting, before a human priest, an offering which could not take away sin, and which would proclaim the insufficiency of the blood of the atonement. We conclude, therefore, that the procedure described in the text was inconsistent with the truth as finally developed by the apostles, but not with so much of it as was then understood by Paul. This conclusion presents but another proof that the Holy Spirit, in leading the apostles 'into all truth,' did so by a gradual development running through a series of years" (McGarvey, p.261).

D. Acts 21:27-40: Paul is Rescued From the Riotous Mob by the Romans.

1. Verses 27-29: "And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple)."
 - a. The seven days could have reference to either the Nazaritic vow situation just discussed or to the Pentecost week. The Jews from Asia, recognizing Paul, stirred up the people with the false charge that he had taken a Gentile into the temple. They first identified Paul as the one who "teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place."
 - b. Verse twenty-nine shows that they had "supposed" that he had brought Trophimus into the temple. The wording of Luke's clarifying statement indicates that the Ephesian (Trophimus) had not entered the temple. Since Paul's aim was to mollify the attitude of the Jews toward himself and the gospel, he would not have foolishly antagonized them by such an action.
 - c. The Jews were a volatile people, ready to believe most anything except the truth. Their anger against the church was so intense that it was ready to explode on the least provocation. Mobs act from emotion, not from reason; they are not prone to investigate a matter calmly and reasonably.
2. Verse 30: "And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut."
 - a. When the shouts were heard, the multitude in the vicinity rushed upon Paul, laid hands on him, and dragged him from the temple. They quickly shut the doors of the temple, to prevent further disturbance, or perhaps, as McGarvey suggests, to keep the temple from being polluted by the blood

- which Paul was likely to shed immediately. The apostle had never been in greater danger of losing his life.
- b. Paul named some of his earlier perils in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28: "Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." The events reported here occurred at some time after the second letter had been written to the Corinthians.
3. Verses 31-33: "And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done."
 - a. The mob went about to kill Paul. Since so many would have been involved in this murder, it would have been virtually impossible for the Roman authorities to single out any of the throng to charge with the crime. As far as we know, no one was held accountable in the killing of Stephen. But in the present case, news about the great uproar was brought to the Roman military commander in Jerusalem.
 - b. "Herod the Great had built a strong fortress, the castle of Antonia, on a rock on the northwest corner of the temple area; it overlooked the temple, and was connected by two flights of stairs with the outermost courts of the temple on the northern and western sides. The Romans always kept this castle strongly garrisoned with troops to overawe Jerusalem. At festivals, when Jerusalem was filled with excitable crowds, the garrison consisted of a cohort or 'band' of one thousand men. The 'chief captain' of this number was called 'Chiliarch'" (Boles, p.346).
 - c. The captain took some of his soldiers and centurions, and rushed down into the mob. The Jews ceased to beat the apostle when they saw the soldiers. Undoubtedly, Paul was spared death by their timely appearance. This is the second time Roman authorities had rescued Paul from the wrath of his own countrymen (cf. Acts 18:14-18).
 - d. The captain came with some of his men and took Paul from the mob. The apostle was bound with two chains, and was asked to identify himself and what he had done.
 4. Verses 34-36: "And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him."
 - a. It appears that Paul was unable to give a statement at this time due to the cries of the multitude. Some in the mob cried one thing and others cried something else, so that the captain could make no sense of the charges. He decided to take the prisoner into the castle to decide the issue.
 - b. The violence of the Jewish throng had not abated. When the soldiers made their way back to the stairs, it became necessary for them to carry Paul to protect him from their fury. The multitude of angry men pressed upon the soldiers, shouting, "Away with him."
 - c. This is similar to the riotous scene when Jesus was on trial before Pilate (see Luke 23:18; John 19:15; cf. Acts 22:22). The hostile, hate-filled fanatics would have slain Paul before he was taken into the castle but for the protection of the soldiers. Even in a mob, some zealot might still have found a way to kill him if he could have gotten close enough.
 5. Verses 37-40: "And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying."
 - a. As they led Paul into the castle, the apostle addressed the chief captain in the Greek language, requesting permission to speak to him. The captain asked Paul if he could use the Greek language.
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This would be the natural response, since he had assumed that Paul was an Egyptian (cf. verse 38). There were many things about Paul that would surprise the Roman commander. He was convinced at this point that Paul was a criminal. Paul's request to speak to the commander showed due regard for military procedures.

- b. The captain asked Paul whether he was that certain Egyptian who had led a revolt a short time earlier. Josephus writes of an Egyptian who claimed to be a prophet, and convinced many Jews to go out to the Mount of Olives, and at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall. "Now when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen, from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight, but did not appear any more" (Ant., XX, VIII, 5, pp.421f).
 - c. The captain said that the Egyptian had led 4,000 men into the wilderness; Josephus did not mention the number that accompanied him after the battle. Luke reports what the Roman commander said; he did not necessarily confirm the 4,000 figure.
 - d. The captain called the band led by the Egyptian "murderers." The ASV calls these men *Assassins*. Felix had earlier connived with some of these men to assassinate Jonathan, the high priest (ibid., p.421). These men would commonly enter the city and mingle with the people, pretending to be worshippers, but under their garments they carried daggers, with which they did their murders.
 - e. Paul identified himself as a Jew, from Tarsus. He requested permission to address the multitude. Receiving permission to speak, he beckoned the people to give him their ear. They quieted down, and he spoke to them in the Hebrew language.
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ACTS 22

A. Acts 22:1:1-21: Paul Addresses the Jewish Mob.

1. Verses 1-3: "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."
 - a. He had beckoned with his hand to attract their attention, and now begins his remarks. When they perceived that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they remained silent, giving him their full attention. If the apostle had used Greek, perhaps many of the mob could have understood him, but his use of Hebrew got their ear.
 - b. Paul told them his personal background, that he was born in Tarsus, a city in the province of Cilicia, that he had been brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, that his instructions were according to the perfect manner of the Law, and that he was as zealous toward God as they were. His remarks here showed them that he was sincere in his religion. The change he had made was not lightly taken.
2. Verses 4-5: "And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished."
 - a. He had persecuted "this way" (Christianity; the Lord's church) unto death; he was involved in bringing some of the saints to be put to death. He held the garments of those who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:58). Many others he had caused to be imprisoned, both men and women (Acts 8:3).
 - b. He had obtained written permission from the high priest giving him authority to go into foreign cities, to arrest Christians, and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. His statement here in effect says that they could ask the high priest whether this was so.
 - c. The "estate" of the elders was the assembly or council, known as the Sanhedrin. Paul had the permission of this august assembly, which was presided over by the high priest. This assembly could verify what Paul here affirms.
 - d. He had made a trip to Damascus to arrest Christians, and bring them back in bonds. His zeal for the law and his hatred for the church were well documented. No one could question his devotion to what he then believed.
3. Verses 6-10: "And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."
 - a. As he drew near to Damascus, about midday, a great light suddenly shone forth from the sky. The light would be exceedingly bright to be more intense than the sun at noon. It appears that providence had attended the progress of Saul, to time his arrival so the light's magnificence could be shown at its greatest.
 - b. Having fallen to the ground, Saul heard an unidentified voice saying, "Why persecutest thou me?" By afflicting the followers of Christ, he was persecuting their Master.
 - c. Saul, recognizing the voice as belonging to some great authority, replied with the first question that came to his mind: "Who art thou, Lord?" He used the word *Lord* because he knew the speaker must be some extremely important person. At this time, however, he did not believe the speaker was Christ.
 - d. The Lord identified himself as "Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." What a horrible shock this must have been to Saul! He was perfectly at ease in his belief that Jesus was an imposter. But now, in an irrefutable way, Jesus has shown the persecutor that his actions were misguided and wicked. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2).

- e. His companions saw the light, and were terrified. None of them would deny the awesome nature of this experience. Paul reports here that they "heard not the voice of him who spake to me." But Acts 9:7 says that they heard a voice but saw not the speaker. While Bible critics are quick to declare that this represents an obvious contradiction, they fail to take into consideration the simple solution given in the third account. In Acts 26:14, Christ is shown to have spoken in the Hebrew language, a language which the men with Paul could not understand. They heard the sound of the voice, but they did not hear the message spoken. In John 6:60, some Jews raised this question in response to the Lord's teachings on that occasion: "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" They meant, "Who can understand and accept it?"
 - f. Saul replied to the statement from Christ by asking, "What shall I do, Lord?" He now used the term *Lord* in a higher sense, for he now knew who the speaker is. Saul also understood, in view of the fact that he had been opposing Jesus, that there must be some obligation he had toward the Lord. His question shows his faith and repentance.
 - g. Christ merely told him to continue into the city, and there he would receive the information he needed; all the things which were appointed for him to do would be revealed there. Part of his obligations is expressed in verse 16; others were given him in 26:16-18. His immediate need was to become a Christian; his long-term obligations were reported when he received his commission as an apostle.
4. Verses 11-13: "And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him."
- a. The brightness of the great light blinded him. Obviously, his companions were still able to see since they led him into Damascus. Why was he blinded and they were not? Maybe he was the only one who looked at it; or more likely, he was the one directly involved in the experience, part of which was to bring him to penitence. Few things would be more humbling than the sudden loss of one's sight. He is the only one in the group who saw Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; 2 Cor. 12:12-13).
 - b. In Damascus, Ananias, a devout man according to the law, and one who had a good name among the Jews in that place, came to Saul. Standing near him, Ananias spoke saying, "Brother Saul, receive thy sight." He could call him brother because of their kinship in Israel, both being descendants of Abraham. This was a common expression among the Jews.
 - c. Ananias was a Christian (9:10) and a Jew. Paul did not identify him here as a Christian, but as a devout, law-keeping Jew who was held in high esteem by the Jews in Damascus. This would tend to soften the mob.
 - d. Saul immediately received his sight, and "in the same hour I looked up upon him." Acts 9:18 describes the restoration of his eyesight as scales falling from his eyes. Some have thought that Galatians 4:15 implies that his eyesight never was the same again, but that view would require that (1) the Lord did an incomplete job in restoring it, or (2) that the miraculous healing did not last long. If he lost his sight later, we are not told of it.
5. Verses 14-15: "And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."
- a. Paul is reporting to the mob the essence of the events at Damascus for the purpose of showing that he was acting under divine influence, first by his conversion to Christianity, and secondly, by his efforts to spread Christianity throughout the world.
 - b. Ananias reported to Saul that God had chosen him, that he might learn the will of God, see Christ, and hear the voice of his Righteous One. One qualification of apostleship was to have seen the risen Lord. Paul not only saw him, he also heard his voice. "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22).
 - c. The intent of seeing and hearing Christ was that Saul could become his witness to all men, giving testimony of what he had seen and heard. The miraculous powers with which he operated as an apostle would confirm his testimony (Heb. 2:3-4).
 - d. Paul bore his witness before the Jews and Gentiles on many occasions, and even today his recorded testimony is open for all to read.
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6. Verse 16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - a. Before Paul could do the great work of preaching the gospel, he must first be obedient to it himself. He still bore the guilt of his sins, as is seen by the command to be baptized. It is highly significant that Paul chose to speak of baptism and its purpose when he addressed this riotous mob. Its importance must be very great for it to be emphasized in this setting.
 - b. Some have tried to find in the statement of this verse, evidence that the action of baptism is sprinkling or pouring water on the subject. The argument claims that Paul is told to stand up and be baptized, that baptism would be done to him while he was in the standing position; hence, baptism could not be immersion. But that is pressing the point too far. If Paul was to be immersed, it would be necessary for him to arise; he could not be immersed while kneeling or prostrate upon the floor (or while lying on a bed). If baptism is immersion (and it is), everything essential unto the action is included in the command. If he was to be sprinkled, he might as well stay in the kneeling or prostrate position; there would have been no need for him to arise.
 - c. Some have tried to wrest from the text what it plainly affirms: that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mt. 26:28). Those who deny what the verse clearly teaches try to make baptism merely a token; hence, "arise, and be baptized as a token of the fact that your sins already have been washed away." There is nothing in the verse, or in any other verse, to support such a theory.
 - d. It was necessary for him to arise in order to be baptized; it was essential for him to be baptized in order for his sins to be washed away. It was not the water that cleansed his soul of sin, any more than it was the waters of Jordan that cleansed Naaman of his leprosy. The authority of God placed the dipping of Naaman between his leprosy and his cleansing; the same authority placed baptism between the sinful individual and the cleansing of his soul. The cleansing agent for sin is the blood of Christ.
 - 1) Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - 2) Ephesians 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."
 - 3) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:18-25: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
 - 5) Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
 - e. Through obedience to the gospel, Saul called on the name of the Lord. He invoked the authority of Christ by his obedience. "Calling on the name of the Lord" is not a "calling out to the Lord" for salvation (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46). In Acts 2:21, Peter cited Joel's prophecy which affirmed that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." In 2:38, he showed how this calling was to be done: by repenting and being baptized. The purpose of the "calling" was salvation; the purpose of baptism is remission of sins (2:38); or having sins washed away (22:16). Mark 16:15,16 connects faith and baptism together, with salvation as the result.
7. Verses 17-21: "And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of

Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

- a. Paul next relates an experience he had in Jerusalem, after his return from Damascus. As he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance. He beheld the Lord speaking to him, warning him to get out of Jerusalem quickly, for the people were not inclined to hear his testimony about Christ.
 - b. In the conversation Paul had with Christ during this trance, the apostle mentioned to the Lord that the people knew that he had had a hand in persecuting the Christians; he stated that he had taken part in the martyrdom of Stephen. His point seems to be, "Lord, the Jews know of my past actions against the church; this will make them desirous of learning why I have changed."
 - c. Saul's great change began with the appearance of Christ (22:6-10); perhaps his relating these details would make an impression on these Jews. Paul was willing to expose himself to danger in order for them to have opportunity to learn the truth.
 - 1) Romans 1:14-17: "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 2) Romans 9:1-3: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."
 - 3) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 - d. The Lord insisted that Paul depart from Jerusalem. There were many others who were lost. The Jews will not listen; the Gentiles will. We might wonder what amount of good one man can make in a sin-filled world. When Paul concluded his three great missionary tours, the world was forever changed. He had the Lord working with him, and there were other diligent men assisting his efforts. How much good can you do? You can never know unless you endeavor to use your talents and opportunities fully.
8. Paul's statement consisted more of preaching the gospel than a personal defense. "Here is a man in the hands of a heathen soldiery, with a prison-door opening behind him, and before him a mob thirsting for his blood, whom to appease would save him from prison, and, perhaps, from death, yet appearing to be utterly oblivious of the danger which surrounded him, and though permitted to speak, making not the slightest effort to obtain release. He could most truthfully have denied bringing Greeks into the temple, or speaking improperly of the people, the law, or that holy place; but he was so far elevated above all selfish considerations, that he desired no vindication of himself not involving a vindication of the cause he was pleading. He saw before him a deluded multitude rushing blindly to destruction, and though they were thirsting for his own blood, he pitied them, and resolved to give them light. Under the smart of the bruises they had inflicted on him, and amid their wild outcries, he remembered when he once took part in similar mobs, and the blood of Stephen rose up before his vision" (McGarvey, pp.264f).
- B. Acts 22:22-30: Paul Talks With the Chief Captain.
1. Verses 22-24: "And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air, The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him."
 - a. The Jews listened carefully to Paul until he mentioned his having been sent by Christ to preach to the Gentiles. At this point, they raised up their voices in fury against him, saying, "It is not fit that he should live; away with him." Their hatred for the Gentiles lay behind this furious outburst. They cast off some of their clothing, and threw dust into the air, displaying the feverous pitch of their wrath.
 - b. The chief captain had Paul taken into the castle, and gave order that he be examined by scourging so that the cause of the assault against him might be learned.
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2. Verses 25-28: "And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born."
 - a. As they bound him with thongs, Paul asked the centurion whether it was legal for a Roman citizen to be scourged, uncondemned. The centurion cautioned the chief captain, warning him that Paul was a Roman. It was illegal to scourge a Roman.
 - b. The chief captain inquired whether Paul was a Roman. The captain stated that he had obtained his citizenship by paying a large sum of money. He seems to say that perhaps Paul could not have made such a purchase. Paul stated that he was free-born, that is, his citizenship was conferred on him by virtue of birth. Having Roman citizenship facilitated his work as an apostle to the Gentiles.
 - c. Roman Citizenship: "This is of especial interest to the Bible student because of the apostle Paul's relation to it....Luke shows him in Acts as a Roman citizen, who, though a Jew and Christian receives, for the most part, justice and courtesy from the Roman officials, and more than once successfully claims its privileges. He himself declares that he was a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21:39). He was not only born in that city but had a citizen's rights in it....But this citizenship in Tarsus did not of itself confer upon Paul the higher dignity of Roman citizenship. Had it done so, Claudius Lysias would not have ordered him to be scourged, as he did, after having learned that he was a citizen of Tarsus (Acts 21:39; compare 22:25). So, over and above this Tarsian citizenship, was the Roman one, which availed for him not in one city only, but throughout the Roman world and secured for him everywhere certain great immunities and rights. Precisely what all of these were we are not certain, but we know that, by the Valerian and Porcian laws, exemption from shameful punishments, such as scourging with rods or whips, and especially crucifixion, was secured to every Roman citizen; also the right of appeal to the emperor with certain limitations. This sanctity of person had become almost a part of their religion, so that any violation was esteemed a sacrilege. Cicero's oration against Verres indicates the almost fanatical extreme to which this feeling had been carried. Yet Paul had been thrice beaten with rods, and five times received from the Jews forty stripes save one (2 Cor 11:24-25). Perhaps it was as at Philippi before he made known his citizenship (Acts 16:22-23), or the Jews had the right to whip those who came before their own tribunals. Roman citizenship included also the right of appeal to the emperor in all cases, after sentence had been passed, and no needless impediment must be interposed against a trial. Furthermore, the citizen had the right to be sent to Rome for trial before the emperor himself, when charged with capital offences (Acts 16:37; 22:25-29; 25:11). How then had Paul, a Jew, acquired this valued dignity? He himself tells us. In contrast to the parvenu citizenship of the chief captain, who seems to have thought that Paul also must have purchased it, though apparently too poor, Paul quietly, says, 'But I was free born' (King James Versions; 'a Roman born' the Revised Version (British and American), Acts 22:28). Thus either Paul's father or some other ancestor had acquired the right and had transmitted it to the son" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
 - d. More on Citizenship: "Paul's Roman citizenship was of the lower kind, which though not entitling him to vote with the tribes and enjoy a magistracy, yet secured to him the protection of the laws of the empire, and the right of appeal from his own hostile countrymen to Caesar, as also exemption from scourging (Acts 16:37; 22:25-28; 25:11). He seems to have inherited it from his father. Hence, he naturally uses the image to express the believer's high privileges as a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. 'Our citizenship (Greek, or rather our life as citizens; politeuma (NT:4175), not politeia (NT:4174)) is in heaven,' etc. (Phil 3:20); an image especially appropriate at Philippi, it being a Roman colony and possessing Roman citizenship of which its people were proud. Moreover, it was there that Paul had compelled the magistrates publicly to recognize a Roman citizen's privileges. So believers, though absent from their heavenly city in body, still enjoy its civic privileges and protection; pilgrims on earth, citizens of heaven (Eph 2:6; Gal 4:26; Heb 11:9-10,13-16; 12:22; Rev 21:2,10; Luke 10:20" [Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1998 by Biblesoft].
3. Verses 29-30: "Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed

him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them."

- a. The torturers were dismissed, but the captain was fearful because he had bound a Roman citizen. The binding was not the ordinary restraints, but the binding to the whippingpost. He had loosed him from the post, and now loosed him from the bands.
 - b. Arrangements were made for the Jewish leaders to be assembled, and for Paul to be set before them to hear their charges.
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ACTS 23

A. Acts 23:1-5: Paul Before the Jewish High Priest.

1. Verses 1-2: "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth."
 - a. Looking stedfastly on the council, the apostle began by stating his sincere adherence to what he believed to be right. His having lived in all good conscience throughout his life did not mean that he was always right; it did mean that he had ever acted in harmony with his conscience.
 - b. When he was persecuting the followers of Christ, he fully believed that he was doing the right thing.
 - 1) John 16:2: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."
 - 2) Romans 14:23: "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin." To act out of faith here, is to act sincerely, believing fully that the action taken is right.
 - 3) 1 Timothy 1:13-16: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."
 - c. His case illustrates clearly that having a good conscience, while it is a condition to being acceptable to God, does not mean that we have his good pleasure. One can believe he is right, and have his conscience as a witness to that end, but if what he believes and practices is not what God requires, the individual is wrong.
 - d. Immediately the high priest, Ananias, commanded that Paul be smitten on the mouth. The high priest's order was as arrogant as it was illegal. "Ananias is thought to have been the son of Nebedaeus, and was appointed high priest by Herod in A.D. 48. History describes him as being violent, cruel, and gluttonous. It is recorded that he was assassinated about ten years later" (Boles, p.362).
2. Verse 3: "Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"
 - a. Paul's response was more of a prophetic utterance than an expression of resentment. Many scholars think that Paul erred on this occasion, by failing to control his anger and insulting the high priest.
 - b. Christ had promised the apostles that they were to give no consideration to what or how they should speak when they were arrested and brought before the authorities. "But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13:11; cf. Luke 21:14-15; Matt. 10:19). The Holy Spirit did not abandon the apostle in this severe test. Therefore, what Paul said to the High Priest was an inspired statement.
 - c. Paul described the high priest accurately as a "whited wall." Josephus presents him as a covetous man, one who paid out bribes, and who used wicked and violent men (*Antiquities*, 20, 9, 2, p.424). The high priest set himself forth as a pious and holy man, but Paul showed that he was a hypocrite. The Law (Deut. 25:1-2) prescribed beating as proper punishment, but only after guilt had been established. Ananias violated the Law by ordering Paul to be smitten before guilt had been shown; in fact, no charges had been made against the apostle at this point.
 - d. By saying that God would smite the high priest, Paul gave a prophecy of impending punishment Ananias would receive. Josephus reports that Ananias was slain by the Zealots a few years later (*Wars*, 2, 17, 9, p.492).
3. Verses 4-5: "And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."
 - a. Those standing by Paul accused him of reviling "God's high priest." His reply was that he did not know that Ananias was high priest. In the preceding references to the high priest, the article *the* is used in the original; the article is not included in Paul's reply.
 - b. His response may be an example of biting irony, which in effect has Paul saying: "I did not think that

a high priest would conduct himself as this man is doing." The Greek text may support this conclusion, and the tense of "knew" (*wist*, KJV) carries the idea of, "I did not know and do not now know" that he is high priest. (See *Christian Courier*, January, 1976).

- c. Exodus 22:28 is cited by Paul to show that one ought not speak evil of a ruler of the people: "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people" (Ex. 22:28). The original word is *Elohim* which properly describes the true God. Some scholars think that reference here is to magistrates (see margin). Whichever the best translation of the word in this passage, Moses showed that they were not permitted to revile God or the duly ordained earthly authorities.
- d. Some writers think that Paul's statement ("I wist not that he was the high priest") indicates that he could not see well enough to identify the high priest. But there is no evidence to support this conclusion. Coffman thinks that Paul did not know the man, and that he inadvertently violated the Old Testament injunction he cited. It seems more likely that Paul was speaking by inspiration in saying what he said.

B. Acts 23:6-10: Paul's Ingenious Plan to Divide the Opposition.

1. Verses 6-8: "But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both."
 - a. He perceived that the group was made up of Sadducees and Pharisees. He cried out loudly that he had a background as a Pharisee, and that it was over the subject of the resurrection of the dead that had caused him to be called into question. These two religious sects had been long divided over this very issue, plus belief in angels and spirits; the Pharisees believed all three doctrines and the Sadducees denied them all.
 - b. The multitude was divided along the lines of the two groups represented. They began to bicker over the time-worn issues.
2. Verses 9-10: "And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle."
 - a. The scribes, who were Pharisees, announced that they found no fault in Paul, and that if a spirit or an angel had spoken to him, they should release him lest they be found to fight against God.
 - b. The chief captain took action again. He feared that the two opposing parties might pull Paul to pieces in their struggles, so he sent soldiers to enter the crowd and rescue the apostle again, and bring him once more into the castle. Nothing had been gained by bringing Paul before the Sanhedrin.

C. Acts 23:11-22: The Jewish Plot To Assassinate Paul.

1. Verse 11: "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."
 - a. Knowing that the great apostle was in need of comfort, the Lord appeared to him during the night. In this vision, Paul was told to be of good cheer; he had given testimony of Christ in Jerusalem, and he would do the same in Rome. With assurance from the Lord, Paul bravely could face whatever trial or danger that might arise. The dangers of the great storm at sea would offer no terror to him, for he believed what the Lord had said—he would live to see Rome!
 - b. But on the occasion of this vision, the apostle stood in need of comfort. He had received much needed comfort in the past and would obtain it in the future.
 - 1) Acts 18:9-10: "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."
 - 2) Acts 27:24-25: "Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 4:16-18: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened

me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen."

- c. Paul had planned to go to Rome, but the circumstances were not what he thought:
 - 1) Romans 15:19-24: "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ... For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your *company*."
 - 2) Romans 15:30-31: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed."
2. Verses 12-15: "And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him."
 - a. A group of more than forty Jews bound themselves together with an oath, that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.
 - b. These murderous men approached the chief priests and elders, revealing to these rulers what they intended. But for their plan to succeed, they needed the complicity of the council. The plan was for the council to send word to the Roman commander that they wanted to examine Paul more perfectly, and when he was brought from the castle, these men would draw near and kill him.
3. Verses 16-22: "And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him* and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me? And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, *See thou* tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me."
 - a. Paul's sister's son learned about the plot; he entered the castle and told Paul about it. The apostle called one of the centurions and asked him to take the young man in to see the chief captain, that he had something important to report.
 - b. The young man was taken to the captain, and gave him the information. He asked the captain to turn down the request the Jewish council would make, to question Paul again. The Roman commander sent Paul's nephew away, cautioning him to say nothing about the plot.

D. Acts 23:23-35: Paul is Taken to Caesarea.

1. Verses 23-24: "And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor."
 - a. The captain called two of his centurions, and instructed them to make ready two hundred soldiers, and seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen; they were to be ready to begin the operation he planned at the third hour of the night (9 p.m.). They were to be provided with beasts; Paul was to ride one of these animals.

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- b. Thus, the commander intended to safely conduct Paul to the Roman governor, Felix. The word for *beasts* is from the Greek word *ktene*, and refers to asses or horses.
2. Verses 25-30: "And he wrote a letter after this manner: Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell."
- a. The Roman commander, whose name is now given as Claudius Lysias, wrote a letter to be taken to Felix, and which was to explain the details of Paul's case. He relates that Paul had been apprehended by the Jews, who were in the process of killing him, when Lysias, saying he knew Paul was a Roman, interrupted their plans by rescuing the apostle. He claimed for himself an honor which he did not deserve: he did not know Paul was a Roman until later. His aim was to put himself in the best light before the governor.
- b. He stated that he brought Paul before the Jewish council to learn what the charges against him were; he perceived that the trouble had to do with their religious law. When he learned of the plot to kill Paul, he sent Paul to the governor, under the protection of the army. He intended for the Jews to bring their charges against Paul in the governor's court.
3. Verses 31-35: "Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia; I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall."
- a. The next day, they came to Antipatris. Leaving Jerusalem at night, they soon left the danger posed by the conspirators. The horsemen continued on with Paul while the rest of the party returned to Jerusalem. Antipatris was about half-way between Jerusalem and Caesarea. When they arrived in Caesarea, the letter and Paul were delivered to the governor.
- b. Learning that Paul was from Cilicia, he promised to hear the case when his accusers arrived from Jerusalem. Paul was ordered to be held in Herod's judgment hall. The apostle would have his day in a Roman court.
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ACTS 24

A. Acts 24:1-9: Paul Accused before Felix.

1. Verse 1: "And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul."
 - a. The enemies of Paul had tried mob action, conspiracy, and assassination to destroy the apostle, but without success. Now they reached into their bag of tricks for oratory as a means of his destruction. So five days after Paul had been taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea, Ananias the high priest, with the elders, and Tertullus, came down to accuse Paul before Felix.
 - b. Paul had been in Jerusalem for about seven days (see 21:26-27); the occasion of this trial was only twelve days after he entered Jerusalem (24:11). It appears that five days after he departed from Jerusalem, the trial was held.
 - c. That the high priest and elders made this trip shows the importance they attached to the case. They set forth formal charges against Paul, but these were baseless; none of them could be proved (vs. 13).
 - d. Boles points out that Tertullus was a Roman lawyer, and that many of them went to the provinces to gain experience in the practice of law. In verse six he speaks of himself as a Jew when he referred to the Mosaic Law as *our* law. He was a Jew by birth or by conversion.
2. Verses 2-4: "And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words."
 - a. Tertullus began his speech by complimenting the Roman Governor, Felix. He stated that the present quietness which was enjoyed by the citizens was due to the worthy deeds accomplished by Felix.
 - b. "The complimentary words with which this speech is introduced were not undeserved by Felix; for he had restored tranquillity to the country, when it was disturbed, first by hordes of robber; afterward by organized bands of Assassins, and, more recently, by that Egyptian for whom Lysias at first mistook Paul. [See 21:38.] In suppressing all these disturbances, his administration had been prosperous" (McGarvey, p.271).
 - c. But Tertullus did not mention the historical fact that Felix had been behind the assassination of Jonathan, another high priest. The orator expressed gratitude to the governor for these benefits. These opening remarks were evidently intended to win Felix over to the cause of these Jewish accusers.
 - 1) Assassins: "Josephus (BJ, II, xiii, 3, xvii) relates that 'there sprang up in Jerusalem a class of robbers called Sicarii, who slew men in the daytime, and in the midst of the city. This they did chiefly when they mingled with the populace at the festivals, and, hiding short daggers in their garments, stabbed with them those that were their enemies. The first to be assassinated by them was Jonathan the high priest, and after him many were slain daily' (see also Ant, XX, viii, 6, ix). The name is derived from Latin *sica*, 'a dagger.' The sicarioi were implacable in their hatred to Rome and to those Jews who were suspected of leaning toward Rome. They took a leading part in the Jewish rebellion and in the disturbance previous to it, and also in the faction quarrels during the war. After the war they continued their nefarious practices in Egypt and Cyrene whither they had fled" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
 - 2) "Felix also bore an ill-will to Jonathan, the high priest, because he frequently gave him admonitions about governing the Jewish affairs better than he did, lest he should himself have complaints made of him by the multitude, since he it was who had desired Caesar to send him as procurator of Judea. So Felix contrived a method whereby he might get rid of him, now he was become so continually troublesome to him; for such continual admonitions are grievous to those who are disposed to act unjustly. Wherefore Felix persuaded one of Jonathan's most faithful friends, a citizen of Jerusalem, whose name was Doras, to bring the robbers upon Jonathan, in order to kill him; and this he did by promising to give him a great deal of money for so doing. Doras complied with the proposal, and contrived matters so, that the robbers might murder him after the following manner:—Certain of those robbers went up to the city, as if they were going to worship God, while they had daggers under their garments; and, by thus mingling themselves among the multitude, they slew Jonathan; and as this murder was never avenged, the robbers went up with

- the greatest security at the festivals after this time; and having weapons concealed in like manner as before, and mingling themselves among the multitude, they slew certain of their own enemies, and were subservient to other men for money; and slew others not only in remote parts of the city, but in the temple itself also; for they had the boldness to murder men there, without thinking of the impiety of which they were guilty. And this seems to me to have been the reason why God, out of his hatred to these men's wickedness, rejected our city; and as for the temple, he no longer esteemed it sufficiently pure for him to inhabit therein, but brought the Romans upon us, and threw a fire upon the city to purge it; and brought upon us, our wives, and children, slavery,—as desirous to make us wiser by our calamities” (Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XX, Chapter VIII, Section 5, pp.423f).
- d. Tertullus continues his flattery by saying he did not want to be further tedious by reciting more of the good things Felix had done for the people. He begged for the clemency of the governor, that he might listen to these *few words*.
3. Verses 5-6: "For we have found this man a pestilent *fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law."
 - a. Their four accusations against Paul were plainly alleged. But no proof of the charges was offered. He was charged with being a pestilent fellow. *Pestilent* means one who creates troubles, is injurious to peace. Paul had once attacked the church, bringing injury, and even death, to many. But he was now creating troubles for the unbelieving Jews. Because he opposed the sins and errors of the religious leaders, they sought his death, but he worked for the good of all, and for the harm of none.
 - 1) Sin and error are opposed to righteousness and truth (2 Cor. 6:14-16). From the world's viewpoint, each saint is pestilent, because we wage war against anything that opposes the will of God (Luke 4:34; 6:26; 1 Kings 18:17-18; Eph. 5:11).
 - 2) The world will see a Christian either as a pest or a pacifist. If we compromise truth, we are a pacifist; if we oppose sin and error, we are a pest.
 - b. He was charged with being an insurrectionist against the lawful rule of Rome. Roman authorities were quick to put down ruthlessly any rebellion, so it would appear that this charge had the potential to incite the anger of Felix against Paul.
 - 1) The gospel does not lead anyone to oppose civil authority; rather we are told to be in subjection to it (Rom. 13:1-5) and to pray for its leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-2). The gospel leads believers to rise up in rebellion against sin (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Eph. 6:10-17). Paul and the other saints of the first century turned the world upside down by exposing idolatry, sin, and error through gospel preaching.
 - 2) The gospel provides for peace between man and God, between all Christians, and with self (Eph. 2:16-17; Ph. 4:6,7,11). But it resists sin and error (Mt. 10:34-36).
 - 3) For the gospel to change people, it must first expose the evils of their lives and hearts (Jer. 1:10; Acts 2:37; 5:33; 7:54; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; Jas. 1:18,21). It is a painful process which many reject.
 - 4) Paul had not spread rebellion against the authority of Rome.
 - c. He was accused with being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. This was not intended to be a compliment, but a rebuking accusation. Tertullus was belittling the body of Christ as he ridiculed Paul. Similar charges are leveled against us.
 - 1) This gives no authority for a church to be called *Nazarene*. Those who use it are ringleaders of error on nearly every significant Biblical truth.
 - 2) By calling Paul a ringleader, Tertullus was accusing Paul of being a prominent member of this despised *sect*. But there was no crime in being a member of the Lord's church, unless it could be shown that such membership violated Roman law.
 - d. He was accused of attempting to profane the Jewish temple. But this would have nothing to do with Roman law. Tertullus realized this, thus quickly adds that they were about to punish Paul according to their law when the chief captain interfered.
 - 1) This was a serious charge in the eyes of the Jews. There was no evidence that he had endeavored to do so. In point of fact, his great aim in returning to the city with the gift from the Gentile Christians and in going through the purification rite was to gain the approval of the Jews. He would certainly have known that to bring a Gentile into the temple would have destroyed such an

- aim; hence, we may be sure that he was innocent of the charge.
- 2) The temple had ceased to be God's house (Matt. 23:37). God's temple from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and onward is the church (1 Cor. 3:16-17). The church can be defiled by sin and error.
4. Verses 6-7: "Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came *upon us*, and with great violence took *him* away out of our hands."
 - a. Tertullus continued his speech by saying that the Jews had apprehended Paul, and were intending to judge him according to Jewish law, but Lysias disrupted their plans. What they were in the process of doing was to murder Paul by mob action; no calm legal action was intended. If the chief captain had not intervened, Paul would have been a dead man in a few moments.
 - b. Notice that no mention is made of the extreme violence of the Jewish mob; but the chief captain is accused of freeing Paul from the Jews "with great violence."
 - c. Verse seven is omitted in the ASV, the translators thinking there was not enough support for its inclusion. But this text is in many ancient manuscripts, and is properly included as part of the sacred text.
 5. Verses 8-9: "Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so."
 - a. Tertullus concluded his speech by stating that Lysias, the chief captain over the Roman garrison at Jerusalem, had commanded that Paul's accusers make the trip to Caesarea to make their case before Felix. He added that Felix could verify all these matters if he would examine Lysias.
 - b. The Jews who had accompanied Tertullus agreed that what their spokesman had stated was correct.
- B. Acts 24:10-21: Paul's Defense Before Felix.
1. Verses 10-12: "Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city."
 - a. Felix indicated with a hand signal that Paul was now to present his defense. The apostle, calling attention to the fact that the governor had been in office for many years, stated that he was glad to reply to the charges. He addresses each one of the charges, and shows that none of them has any foundation in truth.
 - b. He had only entered Jerusalem twelve days earlier, and five of these days had been spent in traveling to Caesarea and under guard there. He had been in Jerusalem only seven days, and one of these was in custody in the castle. His point here is in response to the charge that he was attempting to mount an insurrection. How can any person instigate a rebellion in such a short time?
 - c. He denied that they had found him in the temple disputing with anyone, or in trying to stir up the people; he had done none of these things in the synagogues or in the city. He categorically denied their accusations.
 2. Verses 13-15: "Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."
 - a. Here the apostle declares that his enemies can prove none of the charges they had alleged against him. The burden of proof should have been upon them.
 - b. He admits that he worships the God of the fathers by means of the way his enemies called *heresy*. Since he worshipped the God of the fathers, and the Romans permitted a nation to follow their own religion, Paul could not be charged with establishing or following an unauthorized religion.
 - c. But he added that he believed all the things recorded in the law and prophets. Being a Christian, he could see how the Old Testament had been fulfilled in, and replaced by, the New Testament. Believing the Old Testament, he would not have done anything to profane the temple. The fact is, they found him purified in the temple. His entry into the temple for the purposes stated in Acts 21 gave his Jewish enemies the occasion they desired to accuse him; and at the same time, the situation gave him a strong defense against their charge of profaning the temple.
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- d. He averred his belief in the resurrection, just as some of his enemies admitted. There shall be a resurrection of the dead, a resurrection which includes both the just and the unjust. The resurrection is singular; it is universal; it will affect all the dead, regardless of their spiritual condition. This plain statement is a death blow to the materialists, who deny that the unrighteous will be raised.
 3. Verses 16-17: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men. Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings."
 - a. He affirmed his sincerity in the practice of his religion. His earnest desire was to so live that he would give no offense to God or his fellowman. After many years of traveling through Gentile lands, he states that he came back to Jerusalem, bringing alms and offerings to his nation. This fact could be easily and firmly established, if necessary, by obtaining testimony from James and the elders.
 - b. His sincerity in practicing Christianity, together with his interest in the welfare of his nation, should show that his aims were neither riotous nor selfish. Christ, Paul, and Peter showed that those who would please God will support civil government:
 - 1) Matthew 22:17-21: "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? *18* But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, *ye* hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."
 - 2) Romans 13:1-7: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:13-17: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."
 4. Verses 18-21: "Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day."
 - a. Certain Jews from Asia had found Paul in the temple; he had been purified according to the law; they did not find him amid a multitude, trying to incite them; and they did not find him in the midst of a tumult.
 - b. For a proper court to be held, these Jews should be present to give their testimony, if they had any legitimate complaint. Since they were not present, then Paul said these who are here should be called on to spell out his wrongdoing, if they had discovered any when he stood before the Sanhedrin.
 - c. With this concluding remark, Paul lets Felix know that the real cause of the charges was sectarian hatred. He had cried out before the Jewish council, "Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day." This broke up the council meeting, by dividing the Pharisees and Sadducees. The high priest is said to have been a Sadducee, thus placing him squarely against the apostle.
- C. Acts 24:22-27: Paul's Case is Delayed for Two Years.
1. Verses 22-23: "And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of
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your matter. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him."

- a. When Felix had heard the preceding case to this point, he decided to wait until such time that Lysias should come to Caesarea, and present his testimony. "At Caesarea, Felix must have seen and heard something of Christianity. The conversion of Cornelius with his household and friends, men belonging to the dominant Roman power; the work of Philip the evangelist, residing probably for some years at Caesarea, and working among Romans as well as Jews, must have given Felix some knowledge of 'the Way.' He would learn something, too, both of Judaism and Christianity from Drusilla, his wife" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - b. In the meantime, Paul was to be kept in custody, but allowed to have a measure of freedom, and that any of his friends should be permitted to visit with him. This ruling would penalize Paul, but it did not give his enemies full satisfaction.
2. Verses 24-25: "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."
- a. After an unspecified period of time had passed, Felix and his wife Drusilla, a Jewish woman, sent for Paul, and heard what he had to say concerning the faith in Christ. Paul preached a sermon to those present, holding nothing back.
 - b. He **reasoned** with Felix. This was the usual way of preaching and teaching among the inspired men of the first century. No pretty little talk, no oratory, no gimmicks; only a straightforward presentation of the truths of the gospel, which made its appeal to the mind and heart.
 - 1) Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."
 - 2) Acts 17:2-3: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - c. He reasoned of **righteousness**. Righteousness is the doing of right: obeying God: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness" (Ps. 119:172); "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him" (Matt. 3:15).
 - 1) Righteousness is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 5:13); we are made to be righteous by obeying the gospel (Rom. 10:1-3).
 - a) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - b) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 - c) Hebrews 5:13: "For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe."
 - d) 1 John 3:7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
 - 2) Preaching righteousness includes preaching the facts, commands, warnings, and promises of the gospel, and to urge obedience to it.
 - d. He reasoned with Felix of **temperance**. Temperance is self-control; we are required to be moderate in things that are right, and to totally abstain from things that are evil (1 Th. 5:22; Col. 3:5; Rom. 8:13.). It is required of all (1 Cor. 9:25,27).
 - 1) Romans 8:13: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 9:25,27: "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now

- they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible....But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
- 3) Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
 - 4) 1 Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil."
- e. He reasoned with Felix of **the judgment to come** (Heb. 9:27; Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10-11). Liberalism and modernism ignore the Judgment; it is not pleasant for them to consider and it is not popular with the masses.
- 1) Romans 14:10-12: "...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*"
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
 - 3) Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
- f. Felix was terrified by this information, but it did not change him. He delayed his obedience to some future convenient time, a time that never came. "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).
3. Verses 26-27: "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."
 - a. The governor hoped that Paul would pay a bribe to obtain his freedom. Perhaps he thought the apostle who could raise money to help needy Jews could also raise some to effect his release from prison. With this hope in mind, he met often with Paul. The brethren could have raised enough money for a bribe, but that would be against the principles of the gospel.
 - b. But after two years had passed, Paul was still imprisoned in Caesarea when Felix was replaced by Festus. And Festus, in keeping with Felix's plan to win the favor of the Jews, kept the apostle in custody. Felix was replaced by Nero when the Jews raised complaints against him. At this point in the narrative, Luke brings us to about 60 A.D.
- D. A Brief history of Felix, Drusilla, Festus, Agrippa and Bernice as given by Coffman.
1. "Felix Marcus Antonius, a brother of Pallas, the notorious favorite of Claudius, through influence at Rome, was named procurator of Judaea about 52 A.D., an office he held till recalled by Nero in 59 A.D. He was succeeded by Festus. Thus, this is another date in secular history that touches and illuminates Acts....Felix, trading on his influence in Rome, was an unscrupulous scoundrel. Paul was innocent, and should have been released at once; but Felix hoped to get a fat bribe, and kept Paul in prison. He put down certain brigands and robbers, 'but he himself was worse than any of them.' Hervey tells how he 'murdered Jonathan the high priest, using the *Assassins*,' one of the 'high priests' who held office during the term of Ananias, whose high priesthood was interrupted. The epitaph which history has written by his name is this: 'With savagery and lust, he exercised the powers of a king with the disposition of a slave'" (p.443).
 2. "Drusilla was a sensuously beautiful person, one of the ten descendants of Herod the Great whose names appear in the NT, and, like all the Herods, possessed of a character marked by selfishness and profligacy. She was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I; and at this time (57 or 58 A.D.), she was not yet twenty years old. Her brother Agrippa II gave her in marriage to the king of Emesa when she was only fourteen or fifteen years of age. The young queen was only sixteen when Felix, with the help of Atomos, a Cypriot magician, persuaded her to leave her husband and marry him. She was Felix's third wife, and they had a son named Agrippa. After the recall of Felix, Drusilla and her only son by him perished in the eruption of Vesuvius. She was one of three royal wives taken by Felix. According to the unanimous testimony of the ancients, she was a woman of spectacular beauty. Luke's mention of the fact that 'she was a Jewess' probably indicates Drusilla as the source, or one of the sources, of Felix's decision to retain Paul in custody" (p.458).

3. "Porcius Festus. This man was described by Josephus as wise, just and agreeable. However, nothing is known of his life before his accession to the procuratorship of Judaea, in which office he died after about two years. The picture of Festus that emerges in Acts contradicts Josephus, for he is revealed as willing to sacrifice Paul to please the Jews; and he further deliberately exploited Paul the prisoner for the entertainment of Agrippa and Bernice. As G.P. Gould said, 'Paul's appeal to Nero is the lasting condemnation of Festus'" (p.461).
 4. "Agrippa II was the son of Agrippa I who was the son of Aristobulus the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne the Maccabean princess, thus being a fourth generation of the Herods whose names figure so prominently in the NT. He was appointed governor of Chalcis in A.D. 48 by Claudius, but traded that position for a kingship over the tetrarchy of Philip in A.D. 54. In the great war (66 to 70 A.D.), he sided with the Romans; and after the war was confirmed in his kingdom, living till A.D. 100 (p.470).
 5. "When Bernice (his sister) was only sixteen, and already twice married, first to Alexander of Alexandria and then to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, who died in A.D. 48, she moved in with her brother Agrippa I. Juvenal, the Roman satirist, called her 'Agrippa's incestuous sister'; and after a brief marriage she evidently made to quiet rumors of her relationship to her brother, she again took up residence with him at Caesarea Philippi. She was later the mistress of both Vespasian and his son Titus; and the latter would have married her except for popular outrage. She and her brother were the 'royalty' who heard Paul on this occasion" (p.471).
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ACTS 25

A. Acts 25:1-5: Charges Alleged by the Jews Against Paul Before Festus.

1. Verse 1: "Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem."
 - a. Festus, the new Roman governor of Palestine, arrived to take over from Felix. Willing to placate the Jews, he allowed Paul to continue in bonds (24:27). Three days after he entered the province, he went up to Jerusalem from his headquarters in Caesarea. Jerusalem was the largest city in the province, and was also the center of the Jewish population and religion, thus it behooved the governor to call on the leaders of his constituency.
 - b. Caesarea: "(1) Caesarea Palestina (pal-es-ti'na). The ancient name in the Arabic form Qaisariyeh still clings to the ruins on the sea shore, about 30 miles North of Jaffa. It was built by Herod the Great on the site of Strato's Tower (Ant, XIII, xi, 2; XV, ix, 6), and the name Caesarea Sebaste was given it in honor of Augustus (ib, XVI, v, 1). With his usual magnificence Herod lavished adornments on the city. He erected sumptuous palaces and public buildings, a theater, and amphitheater with prospect to the sea; while a spacious system of sewers under the city secured cleanliness and health. But 'the greatest and most laborious work of all' was a magnificent harbor 'always free from the waves of the sea,' which Josephus says was not less than the Piraeus....It was of excellent workmanship, and all the more remarkable because the place itself was not suitable for such noble structures. The whole coast line, indeed, is singularly ill-fitted for the formation of harbors. The mighty breakwater was constructed by letting down stones 50 x 18 x 9 ft. in size into twenty fathoms deep. The mole was 200 ft. wide. Part was surmounted by a wall and towers. A promenade and dwellings for mariners were also provided. The work was done in ten or twelve years. It became the residence of the Roman procurator. It passed into the hands of Agrippa I; and here he miserably died (Acts 12:19,23). Here dwelt Philip the Evangelist (Acts 8:40; 21:8). To Caesarea Peter was sent to minister to the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10). Thrice Paul passed through Caesarea (Acts 9:30; 18:22; 21:8); hither he was sent under guard from Jerusalem to escape danger from the Jews (23:23); and here he was imprisoned till his final departure for Rome. Riots between Gentiles and Jews in Caesarea gave rise to the war (BJ, II, xiii, 7;. xiv, 4 f). Terrible cruelties were practiced on the Jews under Felix and Florus. Here Vespasian was hailed emperor by his soldiers. Titus here celebrated the birthday of his brother Domitian by setting 2,500 Jews to fight with beasts in the amphitheater...[W. Ewing, International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 2-3: "Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him."
 - a. The high priest and others of the council met with Festus, being quick to inform the governor against Paul. Even after two years, these evil men still retained their hatred of the apostle. They requested that Festus send word for Paul to be brought to Jerusalem, ostensibly to be tried by (or at least in the presence of) the Sanhedrin.
 - b. Their real motive was to obtain an opportunity for Paul to be assassinated on the journey. Assassins and terrorists are able to operate with relative freedom.
3. Verses 4-5: "But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him."
 - a. Festus politely declined this offer, stating that Paul would be kept at Caesarea. Apparently he had some understanding of the Jewish leaders; he may not have wanted to spend any more time in Jerusalem than necessary.
 - b. Since he was to return there shortly, he invited the Jewish council, as many of them as were able, to accompany him to Caesarea, where they could there accuse him of any wickedness he had done.

B. Acts 25:6-12: Paul Appeals His Case to Caesar.

1. Verses 6-8: "And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews,

- neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all."
- a. After spending about ten days in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea. The next day, wasting no time, he sat on the judgment seat to hear Paul's case.
 - b. The Jews were present, standing round about, when Paul was brought before the court. They leveled many grievous charges against the apostle, which Luke does not enumerate, but which he says they could not prove. Judging by Paul's reply in the next verse, the allegation they made were the same as those given by Tertullus in the previous chapter: "For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law" (24:5-6).
 - c. Paul plainly denied having spoken against the law of the Jews, or against their temple, and neither had he raised any cry against the authority of Caesar. In none of these matters had Paul given any offense.
2. Verse 9: "But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?"
- a. The weakness of Festus appears again in the request he makes here. He asked whether Paul would be willing to go up to Jerusalem to face trial there before the governor. The purpose of the request was to please the Jews. "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king *is* a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!" (Eccl. 10:16).
 - b. We have no reason to believe that Festus knew about the plot to assassinate Paul if he should make the trip (vs. 3). Paul had reason to suspect such a scheme since they had already laid one such plot to kill him (23:12-22). He knew that in Jerusalem he would be in grave danger, for in some way, the Jews would likely find a way to kill him.
3. Verses 10-11: "Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar."
- a. Paul reminded Festus that he was standing before Caesar's court, which was the proper place for his case to be heard. He had violated no Jewish law, which he reminds Festus was a fact that the governor well knew.
 - b. The apostle courageously affirms that if he has done any crime punishable by death, he stands willing to suffer this penalty. But since there was no accusation which they could substantiate against him, he refused to be turned over to the Jews.
 - c. He made a formal appeal to have his case heard by Caesar, which was his right under Roman law. The Caesar on the throne at the time was Nero. Paul's Roman citizenship saved his life on this occasion, and led to the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to Paul: "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11).
 - d. Nero was a despicable man and a murderous ruler.
 - 1) Nero was homosexual and openly practiced this sin. By the time he was 25, already "he had murdered his innocent wife and his adopted brother, and had dyed his hands in the blood of his mother. Yet even these enormities seem to have disgusted the Romans less than his prostitution of the imperial purple, by publicly performing as a musician on the stage and a charioteer in the circus" (Conybeare & Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, p.742).
 - 2) Regarding the death of Nero: "Hearing that the Praetorian Guard was ready to abandon Nero for proper remuneration, the Senate proclaimed Galba emperor. Nero put some poison into a small box and, so armed, fled from his Golden House to the Servilian Gardens on the road to Ostia. He asked such officers of the Guard as were in the palace to accompany him; all refused, and one quoted to him a line of Virgil: 'Is it, then, so hard to die?' He could not believe that the omnipotence which had ruined him had suddenly ceased. He sent appeals for help to various friends, but none replied. He went down to the Tiber to drown himself, but his courage failed him. Phaon, one of his freedmen, offered to conceal him in his villa on the Via Salaria; Nero grasped at the proposal, and rode through the dark four miles out from the center of Rome. He spent that night in Phaon's cellar, clad in a soiled tunic, sleepless and hungry, and trembling at every sound. Phaon's courier brought word that the Senate had declared Nero a public enemy, had ordered his
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arrest, and had decreed that he should be punished ‘after the ancient manner.’ Nero asked what this was. ‘The condemned man,’ he was told, ‘is stripped, is fastened to a post by a fork passing through his neck, and is then beaten to death.’ Terrified, he tried to stab himself; but he made the mistake of testing the poniard’s point first and found it disconcertingly sharp. *Qualis artifex pereo!* He mourned—‘What an artist dies in me!’ As a new day dawned he heard the clatter of horses: the Senate’s soldiers had tracked him down. Quoting a verse of poetry—‘Hark! Now strikes upon my ear the trampling of swift couriers’—he drove a dagger into his throat; his hand faltered, and his freedman Epaphroditus helped him to press the blade home. He had begged his companions to keep his corpse from being mutilated, and Galba’s agents granted the wish. His old nurses, and Acre his former mistress, buried him in the vaults of the Domitii (68). Many of the populace rejoiced at his death and ran about Rome with liberty caps on their heads” (Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, pp.283f).

- e. Durant give this information regarding Domitian: “The revolt of Saturninus was the turning point in Domitian’s reign, the dividing line between his better and worse selves. He had always been coldly severe; now he slipped into cruelty. He was capable of good government, but only as an autocrat; the Senate rapidly lost power under him; and his tenacious authority as censor made that body at once subservient and vengeful. Vanity, which flourishes even in the humble, had no check in Domitian’s status: he filled the Capitol with statues of himself, announced the divinity of his father, brother, wife, and sisters as well as his own, organized a new order of priests, the *Flaviales*, to tend the worship of these new deities, and required officials to speak of him, in their documents, as *Dominus et Deus Naster*—‘Our Lord and God.’ He sat on a throne, encouraged visitors to embrace his knees, and established in his ornate palace the etiquette of an Oriental court....
 - 1) “Against this new development rebellion rose not only in the aristocracy but among the philosophers and in the religions that were flowing into Rome from the East. The Jews and the Christians refused to adore the godhead of Domitian, the Cynics decried all government, and the Stoics, though they accepted kings, were pledged to oppose despots and honor tyrannicides. In 89 Domitian expelled the philosophers from Rome, in 95 he banished them from Italy. The earlier edict applied also to the astrologers, whose predictions of the Emperor’s death had brought new terrors to a mind empty of faith and open to superstition. In 93 Domitian executed some Christians for refusing to offer sacrifice before his image; according to tradition these included his nephew Flavius Clemens.
 - 2) “In the last years of his reign the Emperor’s fear of conspiracy became almost a madness. He lined with shining stone the walls of the porticoes under which he walked, so that he might see mirrored in them whatever went on behind him....Like Tiberius he listened more readily to informers as he grew older; and as the *delatores* multiplied, no citizen of any prominence could feel safe from spies, even in his home....
 - 3) “Domitian made the mistake of frightening his own household. In 96 he ordered the death of his secretary Epaphroditus because, twenty-seven years before, he had helped Nero to commit suicide. The other freedmen of the imperial household felt themselves threatened. To protect themselves they resolved to kill Domitian, and the Emperor’s wife Domitia joined in the plot. On the night before his last he leaped from his bed in fright. When the appointed moment came, Domitia’s servant struck the first blow; four others took part in the assault; and Domitian, struggling madly, met death in the forty-fifth year of his age and the fifteenth of his reign (96). When the news reached the senators they tore down and shattered all images of him in their chamber, and ordered that all statues of him, and all inscriptions mentioning his name, should be destroyed throughout the realm” (Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, pp.292f).
4. Verse 12: "Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."
 - a. Festus conferred with the council, apparently his own group of advisors, and gave response to Paul: "Since you have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go." His statement may imply to Paul that he had not improved his chances of acquittal by making this appeal to Nero, one of the vilest rulers in history.
 - b. Festus would need to get some legal advice on this technical question, thus he sought the counsel of this group of men [his council]. Because this was a question of Roman law, there would have been

no need for him to confer with the Jews who were there.

C. Acts 25:13-27: Festus Communes With Agrippa About Paul.

1. Verses 13-16: "And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring *to have* judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him."
 - a. After an unspecified period of time had passed, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. Drusilla was also their sister. Agrippa sided with the Romans during the war (66-70 A.D.); he lived until A.D. 100. The Herod clan, men and women, were mostly corrupt individuals.
 - b. Festus related Paul's case to Agrippa. He was seeking some input from the king since Agrippa was Jewish, and was presumed to know more about the Jewish situation than did the governor. When he was at Jerusalem, the Jews had asked Festus to declare judgment against Paul.
 - c. He had told them that Roman law forbade condemning a man to death before the accused had faced his accusers, and had had opportunity to put forth a defense. The Romans contributed some precepts to the legal system we have adopted.
2. Verses 17-21: "Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar."
 - a. As Luke had already reported, on the day following his return to Caesarea, Festus convened his court to hear Paul's case. The Jews stood up and brought charges against him which were not those Festus anticipated. Their accusations pertained to Jewish *superstition* and about a certain Jesus, whom the Jews said was dead, but Paul affirmed to be alive.
 - b. Festus claimed to have been doubtful as to how to proceed with the case, and so asked Paul whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried. The governor conveniently omitted any reference to his real aim—to appease the Jews.
 - c. He stated that Paul had made an appeal to Caesar at this juncture, and thus Festus had decided to wait for a good time to dispatch the prisoner to Rome for the disposition of his case by a higher court.
 - d. He referred to Caesar as *Augustus*, but this is not a reference to the original Caesar Augustus. That man had reigned from 27 B.C. to 14 A.D. His name was Gaius Caesar Octavianus, but he had been given the title *Augustus* by the Roman senate when he ascended the throne. This title was also worn by other Roman kings. The ASV translates the word *emperor*, and is used in this instance in reference to the current emperor, Nero. The word is translated from *Sebastou*, a title of respect and honor.
3. Verses 22-23: "Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth."
 - a. Agrippa's interest was kindled, and he announced that he would hear Paul, no doubt because of curiosity, not because he could give a final verdict. The apostle's situation developed in such a way that the Lord's promise was fulfilled, that Paul would bear Christ's name before kings (Acts 9:15). Although he could not circulate freely among the population preaching the gospel as he had done before, nevertheless his influence still was being felt by many. He could even announce later, that there were saints in Caesar's house! (Phil. 4:22).
 - b. The next day, with great pomp Agrippa and Bernice made their entrance into the judgment hall, accompanied by the chief captains and other principal men of the city. At the command of the governor, Paul was brought forth to present his defense before this powerful assembly. A chief captain was the commander over a thousand soldiers; there were several of these *chiliarchs* present; Rome's military presence in Judea appears to be great.
 - c. Coffman remarks, "...One may imagine the ostentatious display of royal apparel, military uniforms,

soldiers at attention, the decorations and flags that adorned the hall of meeting, and, over all, the proud demeanor of the Roman deputy Festus, who would hardly have allowed himself to be surpassed in splendor by his royal guests....Little could any of them have realized that their place in history would turn almost altogether upon the important little man whom the soldiers brought chained into their presence. They did not know this, but Paul knew it; 'The weakness of God is stronger than men' (1 Cor. 1:25)" (pp.474f).

4. Verses 24-27: "And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him."
 - a. Festus began his introductory statement by addressing Agrippa and the other important individuals present. He said that this man, Paul, is the one about whom the multitude of the Jews were greatly concerned, having cried out against him both at Jerusalem and Caesarea, declaring that he had no right to live. Festus continued by saying he had examined the case, and had found him guilty of nothing that called for his execution. He stated further that Paul had made an appeal to the emperor, and that he had decided to send him to Rome so his case could be heard by Caesar.
 - b. Next he states the reason for the present gathering: He must have something to write down as a formal charge, to justify to the higher court why the prisoner was being sent to the emperor. After the present examination, perhaps some charge could be elicited which would make the case sound legitimate to Nero. It seemed unreasonable to send Paul to Rome and have no stated charge alleged against him.
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ACTS 26

A. Acts 26:1-8: Paul Begins His Defense Before Agrippa.

1. Verses 1-3: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently."
 - a. There does not appear to be any legal basis for Paul having to face trial at the court of Agrippa since he had already made his appeal to Caesar. It does seem that Festus was using Paul to satisfy curiosity, his and Agrippa's. Agrippa was more of a figurehead than a real king; his authority was subservient to the will of Rome. The hearing might provide a semblance of a charge which could be used to justify Paul being sent to Caesar's court.
 - b. The occasion gave the apostle the opportunity to present the gospel to those gathered, and we would be poorer if the details of his speech were absent from the scriptures. Agrippa gave Paul liberty to speak for himself, to give a defense. The great man gladly took advantage of the offer. Stretching forth his hand, he called for the attention of the court, and began his statement.
 - c. He stated first that he was happy to provide the answer to the various charges brought against him by the Jewish leaders. He knew that Agrippa was acquainted with the customs and questions that were current among the Jews, and thus was in a position to discern the issue. He would know about the chief differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees.
2. Verses 4-5: "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."
 - a. Paul sketched his religious background, saying that his past life was known to the Jews, especially at Jerusalem, since he spent a good many years in that city. He asserts that the Jews there had known him from his early times, and that they could testify that he had lived as a Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism.
 - b. "The Pharisees were the least likely of all the Jewish sects to be unfaithful to Jewish institutions. It was, therefore, much in Paul's favor that he was able to call even his enemies to witness that from his youth he had lived in the strict discipline of that sect. It was yet more so, to say that he was still a firm believer in the leading doctrine of the party, and to reiterate the assertion made on two former occasions, that it was on account of the hope of a resurrection that he was accused" (McGarvey, p.278).
 - c. Now that he was a Christian, he could find little about that part of his life in which to exult: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:13-15). But Paul lived up to the rigid demands of this sect. His point in this statement was to show Agrippa that he still believed in the resurrection, one of the primary tenets of the Pharisees.
3. Verses 6-8: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"
 - a. The apostle affirmed that it was on account of his belief in the hope of the promise God made to the fathers that he had been accused. The promise was that which was given initially to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) and later restated to him and others as its details were revealed. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).
 - b. The hope of the promise is the resurrection of the dead (Acts 26:8). The ultimate aim of the promise when it is fully realized is the resurrection, which ushers the redeemed into heaven.

- c. The Sadducees hated Paul because he preached the resurrection of the dead. He correctly perceived this to be the central reason for his present dilemma. He here raised a rhetorical question, asking why it should be thought to be incredible that God should raise the dead. In other words, the resurrection of the dead is a reasonable expectation.

B. Acts 26:9-11: Paul Admits His Past Persecution of the Christians.

1. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
 - a. Before his conversion to Christ, while he was yet a Pharisee, he truly thought that he ought to do many things in opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He was not acting hypocritically in this; he fully believed that he was doing the right thing! "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2).
 - b. This shows again that a person can be in full accord with his conscience, and still be steeped in sinful conduct. A clear conscience is desirable, but that condition does not prove one is right.
 - c. A conscience can excuse or accuse (Rom. 2:15). If one has been taught a false system of religion, and practices it sincerely, the result is a good conscience, but a condemned soul! (John 8:32; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 2 John 9). If one has been taught the truth in religion, and practices it sincerely, the result is a good conscience and a saved soul! (Rev. 22:14; 14:13).
2. Verse 10: "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*."
 - a. He gives some specifications of the general statement in verse nine. In Jerusalem, he exercised his opposition to Jesus. He caused many of the saints to be imprisoned, acting on the authority given him by the chief priests. He voted in favor of their execution in some cases. He proved his zeal, therefore, in persecuting and executing followers of Christ.
 - b. He stated these facts openly, although he depicted in other places his chagrin over these actions: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:13-15). Through the intense work of Saul of Tarsus, many saints were persecuted and some were put to death.
3. Verse 11: "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities."
 - a. He found Christians in the various synagogues, and compelled some of them to blaspheme their Lord. He "strove to make them blaspheme" (ASV), which implies he tried to bring it about; the KJV implies that he succeeded.
 - b. The aim of Roman persecutors later was to get Christians to revile Christ, knowing that such an action on their part would cause them to apostatize. This was likely the same result Paul had sought. However, if Jewish Christians could be induced to blaspheme God, they could legally be condemned by the Sanhedrin court.
 - c. His intense hatred for the church led him to persecute the saints even in foreign cities. He may have gone to more cities outside of Palestine than Damascus, but no record is given of it. No one could say Paul was half-hearted in his religion.
 - d. Having gone into this amount of detail about his personal background and past acts of persecution against the church, his audience would be naturally interested in learning what had brought about his conversion to Jesus. Extraordinary forces must have been at work in changing such an avowed enemy into a convert to Christianity.

C. Acts 26:12-18: Paul Relates Some Details of His Conversion.

1. Verses 12-14: "Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks."
 - a. He reports that he had gone to Damascus searching for disciples of Jesus, having obtained written authority from the chief priests to arrest any he found, and return them to Jerusalem for punishment ["As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto

Jerusalem, for to be punished" (Acts 22:5)]. Those who accompanied him on this journey may have been Roman soldiers, since Jews would have had no authority in a foreign land. The letters given Paul by the chief priests would have carried no weight without Roman authority. "Of course, the Sanhedrin 'claimed over the Jews in foreign cities the same power, in religious questions, which they exercised in Jerusalem.' However, it was the death of Tiberius, leading to a loss of Roman control of Damascus during the reigns of Caligula and Claudia, which made it possible for the arrogant Sanhedrin to pursue their goals with such impunity at that particular time. It is not certainly known just who ruled Damascus during this period, but the eclipse of Roman authority for a time is proved by the fact that no coins with the image of Caligula or Claudius have been discovered there, whereas there have been found many with the image of Augustus or Tiberius who preceded them, and many with the images of emperors who succeeded them, thus leaving a gap..." (Coffman, p.178).

- b. At midday, nearing Damascus, a great light shone from above, brighter than the sun at its zenith, shining upon and around Saul and his company. They fell to the ground, as can well be understood. Saul heard a voice speaking to him in the Hebrew language. The time-honored question he was asked was, "Why persecutest thou me?" He was fighting a losing battle, just as oxen do by kicking against the goads.
2. Verse 15: "And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."
 - a. Learning that the speaker was Jesus must have shaken Saul more than anything that had ever touched his life! In one fell swoop, he learned that his violent acts against the saints were contrary to the will of Heaven, that Jesus of Nazareth was actually the long-expected Messiah! Being an honest man, Saul was quick to accept this truth, and make the changes this new knowledge demanded.
 - b. The other accounts show that Saul asked what he was to do. Here, the Lord plainly stated what his great task would be in the future, but in the other accounts (Acts 9 and 22), it was Ananias who related to him what he must do to be saved. What one does through an agent, he still does.
 3. Verses 16-18: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."
 - a. The Lord told Saul what was expected of him. He was to stand up; he had been humbled by the light and the voice. There is a time for humble prayer, but there is also a time for rising up and going to work. Christ stated the purposes for which he had appeared to Saul.
 - b. He had appeared to him to make him a minister and a witness. He could not become an apostle without having seen the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1). This miraculous experience would equip him to become an apostle and a minister (servant) of Christ. The Lord promised that there would be other occasions in which he would manifest himself to Paul (see Acts 18:9; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12). As a witness of the risen Christ, he could give testimony of that fact; as an apostle, he could confirm his testimony by miraculous demonstrations. For proof of this point, see the cases of Paul's preaching in Acts 9, 13, 14, etc.
 - c. The Lord promised in verse 17 that he would deliver Paul from the Jews and Gentiles as he performed his duties. A survey of his experiences in Damascus, Jerusalem, and in Gentile lands shows that Christ fulfilled his promise.
 - d. His mission was detailed in verse 18.
 - 1) He was to open the eyes of men and turn them from darkness to light. He was able to accomplish this only by preaching the gospel of Christ. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4-6).
 - 2) He was to turn them from the power of Satan to God. This is parallel to the preceding thought, and is accomplished by preaching of the gospel. When one heeds the gospel, he turns from Satan to God (Rom. 1:16-17; 8:1ff). "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath

translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14).

- e. The benefits Christ would offer through the work of Paul (and others) included:
 - 1) Forgiveness of sins:
 - a) Matthew 26:28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - b) Acts 10:43: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."
 - c) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - d) Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - 2) Eternal Inheritance:
 - a) Acts 20:32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."
 - b) 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
 - f. These blessings are shared by all who are sanctified by faith which is in Christ. One is sanctified, not by faith only, but by the faith of Christ (Christianity).
 - 1) "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).
 - 2) "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).
 - 3) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17).
 - 4) "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only....For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (Jas. 2:24,26).
4. "On the supposition that Paul here spoke the truth, Agrippa saw that no prophet of old, not even Moses himself, had a more authoritative or unquestionable commission than he. Moreover, the same facts, if true, demonstrated, irresistibly, the resurrection and glorification of Jesus. As to the truth of the narrative, its essential features consisted in facts about which Paul could not be mistaken, and his unparalleled suffering, for more than twenty years, together with the chain even now upon his arm, bore incontestible evidence of his sincerity. But being an honest witness, and the facts such that he could not be mistaken, the facts themselves must be real. It is difficult to conceive what stronger evidence the audience could have had in favor of Jesus, or what more triumphant vindication of the change which had taken place in Paul" (McGarvey, p.279).
- D. Acts 26:19-23: Paul Showed That He Had Only Preached What the Prophets Had Predicted.
1. Verse 19: "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."
 - a. Having related the essential details of the miraculous demonstration he had witnessed on the road near Damascus, Paul stated flatly that he had not been disobedient to that heavenly vision.
 - b. He had fulfilled his obligations. His faithful adherence to the Lord's program of work, which resulted in severe persecution and toil, irrefutably showed the veracity of his message.
 2. Verses 20-21: "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*."
 - a. He had preached, first in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and Judea, and finally to the Gentile population scattered far and wide, that they all should repent and turn to God, and to so live as to demonstrate their repentance.
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- b. No one should have any complaint against such a godly work! Accomplishing this in the lives of multitudes of people would not only help the individuals involved, but would indirectly enhance society and make the world a better place to live. It was because of his efforts to this end that the Jews had apprehended Paul in the temple and were in the process of killing him when the Roman commander rescued him.
 - c. Repentance must show up in our lives. If a change of life is not manifest, repentance has not taken place (Matt. 3:8; Rev. 2:5). Repentance is induced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10) and is followed by a reformed life.
 - 1) Matthew 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:"
 - 2) Matthew 21:28-29: "But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
 - 4) Revelation 2:5: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."
 - d. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4; 5:17; Ps. 119:172; Acts 10:35). Since it is God who has been offended by our sin, we must feel godly sorrow over our offenses, and resolve to follow God's will from henceforth, and *make that change for the better*. This is the Bible doctrine of repentance.
3. Verses 22-23: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."
 - a. Having the assistance of heaven, Paul had continued through the years since his experience at Damascus, testifying to all, preaching only those things which the prophets and Moses had predicted. That Paul was still alive, despite the efforts of the Jewish leaders and mobs, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, was evidence that he had been operating under the protective force of God. This truth must have been evident to Agrippa.
 - b. The Jews accepted the Old Testament Scriptures. In their case, Paul showed to them the fulfillment of the inspired prophecies, thus proving to them that Jesus is the Messiah. The Gentiles were mostly ignorant of the Old Testament, but Paul could also show them how it had predicted many things that were being fulfilled in their day. He bore witness of having seen the resurrected Christ, proving his testimony and his interpretation of the Scriptures by the various miracles he was empowered to perform (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4).
 - c. The Old Testament prophets had predicted that Christ would suffer (i.e., would be slain), and that he would rise from the dead: the first to be resurrected to die no more; and first in point of rank of those who are raised up.
 - 1) Luke 24:46-47: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 - 2) Acts 17:2-3: "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."
 - 3) Colossians 1:18: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence."
 - d. The Old Testament had also predicted that spiritual light would be shown to the Gentiles and Jews.
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-3: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 - 2) Isaiah 62:2: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt
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be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name."

- e. The Jews had charged Paul with dishonoring Moses and the Law; Paul was doing just the opposite. He respected the inspiration by which Moses and the prophets wrote, and had the advantage of seeing and knowing the fulfillment of their words—firsthand.

E. Acts 26:24-32: Some Pointed Words for Festus and Agrippa.

1. Verse 24: "And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."
 - a. With a loud voice, Festus rudely interrupted Paul's presentation, accusing the apostle of having become mad because of his "much learning." Because he could not or would not understand Paul's words, he thought they were equally meaningless to everyone else. It appears that Festus had decided to reject Paul's message as his predecessor had (Acts 24:25-26). That Paul had made a drastic change in his life Festus could not deny; rather, he tried to account for it by saying Paul must be mad.
 - b. The Greek word for *mad* is *mainei*, the word that gives us our words "mania" and "maniac." The word carries the idea of "raving madness" (see Robertson, Thayer).
 - c. There have been many strange ideas commonly held in the past. One that was current in our country until a few generations ago claimed that the human heart would stop beating if the individual traveled more than 40 miles per hour. Festus thought that too much education would drive a person mad.
 - d. When we present truths, carefully gleaned and presented by close reasoning, people think we are crazy. One case of this developed in Mississippi a number of years ago when some sectarian friends were being instructed in the plan of salvation. They claimed that we are saved today in the same way the thief on the cross was saved. When it was pointed out to them that Christ's gospel (his will) took effect after he died, and that henceforth we are saved by the conditions of that will (as taught in Heb. 9:15-17 and Gal. 3:15), these people said, "That is the silliest thing we have ever heard!" Ridicule as an argument is as illogical as it is foolish.
2. Verses 25-26: "But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner."
 - a. The apostle denied the charge of madness, stating that he had been speaking the words of truth and soberness. Even in the face of this crass accusation, Paul maintained his composure, even tendering to the governor an expression of polite regard, addressing him as "most noble (excellent) Festus."
 - b. He said that the king (Agrippa) knew the things Paul had been discussing. These events were not hidden from his view; they had not been done "in a corner."
 - c. The apostle had not relied on assertions and denials to establish his case: he called attention to facts of history, facts and events which even Agrippa could confirm.
3. Verses 27-28: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."
 - a. Addressing Agrippa directly, Paul asked him if he believed the prophets. Before the king replied, Paul stated affirmatively that he knew that he believed. The prophecies specifically indicated were those referred to in verses twenty-two and twenty-three. Agrippa's background and education had instilled in the king an awareness of what the prophets had written.
 - b. Agrippa's reply is arresting. This was a man who had lived in sin for much of his life. The simple presentation of the facts by the apostle drove the truth home to him. Here is a wealthy and influential ruler who was so touched by what Paul taught him that he was near to becoming a Christian.
 - c. Some commentaries and translations are at odds with the statement as rendered in the KJV. They allege that Agrippa's reply was sarcastic. But the statement as here given is clearly the correct one because it fits Paul's rejoinder in verse twenty-nine. Further, the evidence presented by Paul, together with Agrippa's training in the Law and his knowledge of the events and facts of history, would naturally lead to a conviction that what Paul presented was true.
 - d. Agrippa believed what he had heard, but he was not ready to take the steps demanded by that faith. It is so easy to delay obedience until a convenient time, but all too often another favorable opportunity never comes.
4. Verses 29-32: "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: And when they were gone aside, they

talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."

- a. Paul's earnest desire was that everyone who heard his speech that day, were almost and altogether what Paul was (excepting his bonds). Here is a man who would sincerely rejoice when a precious soul obeyed the gospel (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1-3). If our hearts are not touched when one obeys or refuses to obey the gospel, we are not what we ought to be!
 - b. As Agrippa, Bernice, Festus, and the others departed, they discussed Paul's case, agreeing that he had done nothing that was worthy of imprisonment or death. They knew that he was innocent of wrongdoing, and ought to be released.
 - c. Agrippa stated plainly that he could have been set free except for his appeal to have his case heard by Caesar. Much more was at stake, however, than Paul's freedom. He could have been kept from the hands of his enemies had God so willed it; but an essential part of God's plan was for Paul to be taken to Rome: "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11).
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ACTS 27

A. Acts 27:1-5: Paul's Sea Voyage to Rome Begins.

1. Verses 1-2: "And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us."
 - a. Having made an appeal to have his case heard by Caesar, Paul and some other prisoners were placed in the charge of Julius, a centurion of the Augustan band (cohort). [Cornelius was a member of the Italian band]. The intent was to travel to Italy by ship. From his later actions, it appears that Julius was friendly toward Paul.
 - b. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, accompanied Paul. He is later spoken of as a fellow prisoner with the apostle (Col. 4:10). Since he is named separately from Paul and the other prisoners, it may be that Aristarchus was not a prisoner at this time. Luke's use of the pronoun *we* clearly indicated that he was with Paul on this journey.
 - c. The ship was from Adramyttium, a seaport on the western end of Asia Minor, in the province of Mysia, not far from Troas. Apparently, it was on its return home from Caesarea. As it touched at the various ports along the coast, sooner or later the centurion and his prisoners would find another ship that would take them to Italy.
 - d. From Luke's statement that the ship was to sail by the coasts of Asia, it appears that the journey was initially planned to parallel the shore of the Mediterranean.
2. Verses 3-5: "And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia."
 - a. Leaving Caesarea, the ship headed north along the coast, and landed at Sidon, about sixty-seven miles to the north. Here, Julius permitted the apostle to go into the city and partake of the kindness of his friends who resided there.
 - b. Heading toward Asia Minor, the ship traveled from Sidon to the northwest, skirting Cyprus on the east. This maneuver was done to avoid the contrary winds that were adversely affecting the ship. This large island on their left would protect them from the winds.
 - c. Having traversed the sea that bordered on Cilicia, the ship passed Pamphylia and landed at Myra, a city of the province of Lycia. "An additional reason for taking this tack may have been a desire to take advantage of a current which flows westward along the southern shore of Asia Minor, as far as the Archipelago, and greatly favors the progress of westward-bound vessels" (McGarvey, p.282).

B. Acts 27:6-12: The Voyage From Myra in the Ship of Alexandria.

1. Verses 6-8: "And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone. And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city *of* Lasea."
 - a. The centurion, in charge of several prisoners, and having in his company the physician Luke and Aristarchus, located a ship whose home port was Alexandria, Egypt, which was bound for Italy. "Their new vessel was one of the many grain ships which supplied Rome with bread from the granaries of Egypt. She was a vessel of good size, accommodating, on this voyage, two hundred and seventy-six passengers. She had, probably, undertaken to sail direct from Alexandria to Rome; but the same contrary winds which had thus far retarded the progress of the other vessel had compelled her to sail far to the northward of the direct route" (ibid., p.283).
 - b. The sailing was slow because of the winds, and after many days, they had barely gone as far as Cnidus, an island lying about 130 miles to the west of Myra. Leaving Cnidus, they took a south-southwest course which brought them to the island of Crete. Passing off the east coast of Crete, the ship sailed along the southern shore of the island. This course would have given them a little protection from the wind. Passing Salmone (a promontory located at the eastern end of Crete), they came to a place called "Fair Havens," a harbor situated near the city of Lasea, near the half-way point of the island.
2. Verses 9-10: "Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast

was now already past, Paul admonished *them*, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives."

- a. Landing at Fair Havens, where the company apparently waited for a time for the unfavorable wind to calm, a discussion was held regarding where to spend the winter. Luke reports that the time for safe sailing on the Mediterranean was passed. "The Mediterranean was not safe for ancient vessels after September 15 until about March 15" (Coffman, p.499).
- b. The "fast" mentioned was a reference to the Jewish Day of Atonement (Vine, Vol. 2, p.80). See Leviticus 16. The Day of Atonement for the year 60 A.D. fell on September 23, and on October 5 in 59 A.D. (Boles, p.416).
- c. In the process of the discussion, Paul voiced his thoughts on whether to continue the voyage. His counsel was to delay the journey, because he perceived that much injury and damage would be done to the passengers, the cargo, and the ship if they put out to sea again. "I perceive" suggests that his comments were his own, and were not inspired. None of the people aboard were hurt in the later shipwreck.

3. Verses 11-12: "Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there* to winter; *which is* an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west."

- a. The centurion was the man in charge of the ship. He considered Paul's advice and that offered by the ship's owner and captain, but decided to accept the counsel of the latter. The point that decided the issue was the fact that Fair Havens was not considered to be commodious for a winter-long stay. They thought they could sail on to Phenice (Phoenix), a seaport on the southwest coast of Crete.
- b. Luke's description of the harbor at Phoenix is difficult, but apparently is pictured from the point of view of the ship at sea: that the harbor lay to the northwest and southwest, sheltering the harbor from winds blowing from the west and north. The ASV has "northeast and southeast."

C. Acts 27:13-29: The Great Storm.

1. Verses 13-14: "And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon."
 - a. After a time, a gentle south wind arose, giving the sailors hope that they could easily sail along the coast to Phoenix. Things are not always what they seem to be!
 - b. Instead of a smooth voyage to their pleasant winter haven requiring only a few hours of sailing, they suddenly found themselves in the teeth of a great storm, called *Euroclydon* (KJV) and *Euraquilo* (ASV). It drove the ship westward with great force.
 - c. Euroclydon: "The east or northeast wind which drove Paul's ship to shipwreck at Melita (Acts 27:14). The term seems to have been the sailor's term for that particular wind, and Paul uses the word which was used by them on that occasion. The difference in the text is explained by the fact that the term was not in general use and was therefore subject to being changed. The precise name is doubtful, but 'the Euraquilo; is more easily explained as a compound of Greek euros, 'east wind,' and Latin aquilo, 'northeast wind,' hence, euraquilo, 'east northeast wind.' This agrees with the experience of navigators in those waters" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
2. Verses 15-17: "And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive. And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven."
 - a. The ship was caught in the grip of the storm; it could not come about into the wind and so could not get back to shore. The sailors were forced to let her drive before the tempest. They quickly lost control of their ship, somewhat like the unfortunate man who held on to the tether line of a great airship and was lifted too far from the ground to turn loose; his fall to his death was captured on a newsreel camera. However, before long, they passed near the island called Clauda, which offered them a little respite, giving them the opportunity to take certain precautions to strengthen the ship.
 - b. They were able, with difficulty, to take the small boat aboard which was being towed behind the ship. They strengthened the hull by "a process called *frapping* in modern style, which consists in passing

- heavy cables under the hull, and fastening them securely on the deck, to prevent the timbers from parting under the force of the waves" (McGarvey, p.284).
- c. Thirdly, they lowered the sail lest they be driven so far off course as to reach *quicksands* ("Syrtis" —ASV). The ASV also states that the "gear" was lowered, suggesting that the mast, as well as the sail, was lowered. Coffman relates a report of a similar type of ship which was discovered off Cyprus in 1969. Its design let the mast to be pivoted backward, and lowered to the deck (p.502).
 - 1) "The greater and lesser 'Syrtis' were on the north coast of Africa; the one was west of Cyrene, and the other near Carthage; they were the dread of Mediterranean sailors in Roman times" (Boles, p.419). These sandbars were barely underwater.
 - 2) These "were vast beds of sand driven up by the sea, and constantly shifting their position, so that it could not be known certainly where the danger was. As they were constantly changing their position, they could not be accurately laid down in a chart. The sailors were afraid, therefore, that they should be driven on one of those banks of sand, and thus be lost" (Barnes, p.364).
 - 3) Syrtis: "These sandbanks, off the northern coast of Africa, have from early times been regarded as a source of danger to mariners. Virgil refers to them (Aen. iv.40 f). In Paul's voyage, the ship, driven by a tempestuous wind, Euraquilo, was in peril of being cast-upon them" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
 3. Verses 18-20: "And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship; And the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."
 - a. The storm raged on, tossing the ship. Fighting the storm the first day after their respite, they began to lighten the ship by throwing certain things overboard. On the third day they cast overboard the tackling of the ship; Luke states that this was done "with our own hands."
 - b. After many days of enduring the fierce tempest, during which time the sun and stars were not seen, they realized that they were in the grasp of a truly great storm, and began to give up all hope of being spared.
 4. Verses 21-26: "But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island."
 - a. Paul now came to the forefront with a message of encouragement. He gently reminded them that they should have heeded his advice, given before departing from Fair Havens. But he did not dwell on this misfortune. He exhorted them to be of good cheer for there would be no loss of life from their misadventure.
 - b. The Lord had sent an angel to give him a message of hope. He assured Paul that he would live to stand before Caesar, and that God "hath given thee" the lives of all his fellow-travelers. The wording of the statement implies that Paul had been praying in their behalf.
 - c. He told the people to be of good cheer, that he was persuaded that God would do exactly what he promised. But he added that they would all be cast upon a certain island.
 - d. The fulfillment of these statements would serve to verify whatever Paul told them.
 5. Verses 27-29: "But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; And sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day."
 - a. On the *fourteenth night*, probably measured from the time they left Fair Havens, as the ship was being driven up and down (to and fro) through the sea, the sailors perceived at midnight that they were near land. *Adria* was the name then given to that part of the Mediterranean Sea lying between Greece and Italy, and extending southward. *Adriatic* is the name now applied to the Gulf of Venice. A storm such as the one they faced has winds which drive from different directions during its onslaught, thus
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Luke reports that they were driven "to and fro" (ASV).

- b. Believing that they were near land, they sounded, and found the depth of the sea at that place to be twenty fathoms. A fathom is six feet, thus the depth here was 120 feet. A short time later they found the depth had decreased to fifteen fathoms, or 90 feet. The depth of the sea in this area has been confirmed by the British navy (Coffman, p.504).
- c. Another fear grew out of the good news that they were approaching land, the dread that they might be dashed to pieces upon some rocks that perhaps lay near shore. Four anchors were cast off the stern, and they anxiously waited for the daylight.

D. Acts 27:30-44: The Shipwreck.

1. Verses 30-32: "And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off."
 - a. The sailors laid plans to leave the ship under the guise of lowering some anchors from the bow of the ship. What they were doing, however, was lowering the ship's boat, thus to escape, leaving the rest to fend for themselves.
 - b. Paul's standing with the centurion had improved, for that man heeded the apostle's counsel now given. He warned Julius that if the sailors were allowed to leave, there would be no hope for the others to be delivered.
 - c. The soldiers cut the ropes holding the boat, and let it fall away into the sea. This was done no doubt at the command of Julius. They were all truly "in the same boat" now!
 - d. These sailors seem to have been a heartless lot, caring nothing for anyone but themselves. Without the experienced work of the sailors, the ship would surely have been lost. They did not believe what Paul had told them (27:21-26). The promise of deliverance did not favor throwing all caution and common sense away.
 2. Verses 33-38: "And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat. And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea."
 - a. As day was about to dawn, Paul gave them some more good counsel. Nothing could be done until daylight, and they needed food for the strength to do what was to be done then, so the prisoner instructed the company to eat.
 - b. They had been in the control of the storm for fourteen days, and during that time they had fasted. This does not necessarily mean that they had eaten nothing for two weeks, but that they had not eaten regular meals during that time. The word for *fasting* used here means *abstaining*. In severe weather, even "old salts" can become seasick. This very likely was true of those on this little ship. The terrible storm would not allow many normal activities.
 - c. Paul encouraged them all to eat for their own strength, and assured them again that they would all be spared, that there would not be the loss of a hair from the head of any of them. This hyperbole emphasized that all would be spared. If Paul had not been on board this ship, we may be sure that all aboard would have been lost.
 - d. The apostle offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God in the presence of them all. They were all of good cheer, and ate. The number of people aboard is given as 276.
 - e. They lightened the ship even more by casting overboard the wheat, thus giving the ship a higher ride on the water, and would perhaps put it above underwater rocks.
 3. Verses 39-41: "And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves."
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- a. When daylight came, the sailors did not recognize the land. They did see a creek into which they decided to guide the ship, thus to gain a sheltered place.
 - b. They raised the anchors (or cut them free, according to the margin). Ancient ships of that time had two rudders, each attached to a long pole, one on each side of the ship at the stern (see Coffman, pp. 507ff). These poles were tied together during the storm, so as to hold the ship on a straight course. The bands of the rudder-paddles were now loosed, and the mainsail was raised.
 - c. But as they made their way toward land, they came to a place where two seas met, where waves (and perhaps currents) from opposite directions came together. The ship ran aground, and the heavy seas began to damage the stern of the ship.
4. Verses 42-44: "And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land: And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."
- a. The soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners, but Julius wanted to save Paul, thus spared all of them. Those who could swim were told to head for shore, the others who could not swim, took boards and other items with which to make it to land.
 - b. Just as Paul had promised, everyone on board survived, and the ship was lost.
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ACTS 28

A. Acts 28:1-10: Paul and the Company on the Island of Melita.

1. Verses 1-2: "And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold."
 - a. Reaching shore safely following the shipwreck, they learned that the island was Melita. The evidence indicates that it was Malta. It is about ten miles wide and about twenty miles long, and is located about seventy miles south of Sicily.
 - b. Luke styles the inhabitants as *barbarous* people, but they showed themselves to be very hospitable to the shipwrecked men. The term "barbarous" did not carry the stigma to first century Greeks as it does to us today; then it was the term the Greeks used to identify those who did not speak their language; now it carries the idea of uncivilized or uncouth. They kindled a fire, and warmly received them all. Luke reports that the weather was cold, and rain was falling. They must have been extremely uncomfortable in this disagreeable weather.
2. Verses 3-4: "And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."
 - a. Paul certainly was not lazy. He might be expected to be despondent after being falsely accused and imprisoned for two years, and thus be sullen and uncooperative. But the apostle was busy, helping with the fire. As he gathered a bundle of sticks to put on the fire, a poisonous viper was driven out of the bundle by the heat, and bit Paul on the hand. It seemed like he was *snake-bit*—everything he had tried to do for a couple of years had not worked out (as far as human wisdom could see).
 - b. The islanders said among themselves that Paul must be a dangerous criminal (a murderer), so that even though he had escaped from the sea, Justice had seen to it that he was still punished by the snakebite. *Vengeance* (Justice—ASV) is personified. This term (*Dike*) denotes the goddess Justice or Nemesis (Vine, Vol. 2, p.284).
 - c. Modernists charge Luke with making a fatal error in speaking of wood and vipers on Malta, claiming that trees grow only in one place and there are no vipers there. Because present conditions are thus, does not mean these conditions were present back then. The population density is said to be 1200 per square mile now, which accounts for the absence of vipers, but who is to say there were no sticks where Paul landed?
3. Verses 5-6: "And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."
 - a. Paul shook the snake loose from his hand, and went about his activities with no bad effect. This is a case where the Lord's promise (Mark 16:18; Luke 10:19) was fulfilled. The word *beast* in the Greek means *venomous creature* (ASV).
 - b. Paul did not intend to be bitten by the snake. There is no indication that he knew about its presence until he was bitten. Neither this passage nor the others cited above gives any authority for "snake-handling" as a religious activity.
 - c. The natives watched Paul closely, expecting his hand to swell, and then for him to fall dead suddenly. After a time, when it was obvious he was going to suffer no harm, they changed their assessment of the apostle, and considered him to be a god. This case was the reverse of what happened in Lystra (Acts 14). There the people first said Paul was a god, but later stoned him; here these people thought he was a criminal at first, then a god.
 - d. This miraculous demonstration proved to the people that Paul was a very special person, one upon whom the living God had conferred certain powers.
4. Verses 7-8: "In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him."
 - a. Paul lodged in the quarters of a man named Publius, the chief man of the island. It is natural that Paul

- would be treated special, after the population learned about the incident with the viper.
- b. The text says that Paul (*us*: Luke, Aristarchus, and perhaps Julius) was lodged and entertained by Publius for three days. This may mean that they stayed there only three days, or that after three days, Paul healed the father of Publius.
 - c. The father of Publius was ill with a fever and a bloody flux (dysentery). "Malta fever is a malady known in the United States at the present time, caused by drinking infected milk. The word 'dysentery' is a strict medical term used by the physician Luke" (Coffman, p.514). Paul entered the room where the sick man was, and prayed and laid hands on him, and healed him.
 - d. Coffman reports that two inscriptions have been found in Malta bearing the name of Publius, thus confirming Luke's report (p.514).
5. Verses 9-10: "So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary."
- a. News about the miraculous healing of Publius' father spread, and others who were sick came to Paul and were healed. The people bestowed appropriate honors upon Paul and his company, in gratitude for what the apostle had done in their behalf. But they did not receive pay for the miraculous work. "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).
 - b. No mention is made of any preaching and conversions, but one who has studied the Book of Acts will admit that there must have been much of each. In three months (verse 11), the brethren would have had many opportunities to preach. One who has read the history of Paul will readily admit that he must have preached, and that there were conversions.
 - c. When the time came for them to leave, the people gave them such things that were needed for their trip. They had lost all of their possessions in the shipwreck.
- B. Acts 28:11-16: Paul and the Company Journey on to Rome.
1. Verse 11: "And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux."
 - a. After spending the winter on Malta (three months), they found a ship from Alexandria, Egypt, which had also wintered there, and boarded her for Italy. The sign of this ship was "Castor and Pollux."
 - b. "Castor and Pollux were represented, in Greek mythology, as sons of Jupiter, and the patron deities of sailors. Their images, carved or painted on the prow, served the purpose of distinguishing this vessel, as do the names painted upon ships and steamboats at the present day. The ship would now be called the Castor and Pollux" (McGarvey, p.289). In the mythological story, Castor and Pollux were twin brothers.
 - c. The time of their departure would have been about the first of February.
 2. Verses 12-13: "And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days. And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli."
 - a. They landed at Syracuse, where they stayed three days. They went on to Rhegium. With a south wind, they came the next day to Puteoli. Syracuse lay about 80 miles north of Malta, and was the principle city of the island of Sicily. It is called Siracusa today. In ancient days, its population was about 200,000, but today only about 11,000.
 - b. Puteoli: "The imports at Puteoli consisted mainly of Egyptian grain and oriental wares, dispatched from Alexandria and other cities of the Levant (Cicero Pro Rabirio 40; Suetonius, Augustus 98; Strabo xvii. 793; Cicero Pro Caelio 10).....At the height of its prosperity under Claudius and Nero, the town is thought to have contained a population of nearly 100,000. The region in which the town was situated is of volcanic formation, the name Puteoli being due to the odor of the sulphureous springs or to the wells of a volcanic nature which abound in the vicinity. The volcanic dust, called pozzolana today, was mixed with lime to form a cement of the greatest durability, which was weather-proofing against the influence of seawater" [International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft].
 - c. Leaving Syracuse, they "fetched a compass" (*made a circuit*, ASV), and came to Rhegium. This Greek expression is used of "navigating a ship under difficulty owing to contrary winds" (Vine, Vol. 1, pp.191f). Their course was circular, rather than direct.
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- d. The south wind arose, making it possible for them to reach Puteoli in about a day, a distance said to be 180 miles. The route they took was between the *toe* of Italy and the island of Sicily, a very dangerous passage, denoted in mythology as the rock of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis. To miss one by too much a margin was to fall victim to the other. But with a south wind, they made the passage safely and quickly. "**Scylla and Charybdis**, in Greek mythology, two sea monsters dwelling on the opposite sides of a narrow strait, the personification of the dangers of navigation near the rocks and eddies. Scylla was a horrible creature with 12 feet and 6 long necks, each bearing a head with 3 rows of teeth, with which she devoured any prey that came within reach; she lived in a cave on a cliff. Across the strait, opposite her, was a large fig tree under which Charybdis, the whirlpool, dwelt, sucking in and belching forth the waters of the sea three times daily, engulfing anything that came near. When the Greek hero Odysseus passed between them, he was able to avoid Charybdis, but Scylla seized six men from his ship and devoured them. In later times, the geographical position of this dangerous passage was believed to be the Strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily, with Scylla on the Italian side. Scylla, originally a beautiful maiden loved by a sea god, had been transformed into a monster by her jealous rival, the sorceress Circe" (Encarta).
- e. Rhegium is called Reggio today, and Puteoli is now called Pozzuoli. This later city is situated on the north side of the Gulf of Naples. Paul would have been able to see Vesuvius in the distance.
3. Verse 14: "Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome."
 - a. At Puteoli they found certain brethren, with whom they lodged for a week. The apostle could not have stayed there that period of time without the permission of the centurion, who doubtless had much favor toward Paul.
 - b. The name of this place may have derived from the name of certain springs found there, or as Boles suggested, from the foul smell of the waters (cf. putrid).
4. Verse 15: "And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."
 - a. While they were at Puteoli, the brethren at Rome heard of their presence, and since Paul and his company would be traveling to Rome on foot, these brethren came to meet them. It is probable that the brethren in Puteoli sent word to the church in Rome about Paul's situation. The brethren from Rome met him as far south as Appii Forum and The Three Taverns.
 - b. Appii Forum (or The Market of Appius, ASV) was on the Appian Way, about forty miles from Rome. The Three Taverns was about thirty miles from Rome.
 - c. The great apostle, who had tirelessly preached the gospel far and wide, suffering countless hardships and persecutions, neared the seat of the pagan Empire. His meeting with the saints from Rome gave him cause to thank God and to take courage. He had longed to see them, and now his desire was being realized, although not as he had at first anticipated.
 - 1) Acts 19:21: "After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome."
 - 2) Romans 1:11: "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."
 - 3) Romans 15:29: "And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."
5. Verse 16: "And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him."
 - a. The fact that Paul was a *Roman citizen and uncondemned*, together with the natural kindness of his Christian character, caused him to be treated with special care and concern.
 - b. The people of Melita had treated him so; Julius the centurion had respected him; and now in Rome, the captain of the guard permitted Paul to dwell by himself, with only a single soldier as his guard.
 - c. Verse thirty shows that the apostle had his own rented house.
- C. Acts 28:17-22: Paul's Initial Meeting With the Jews of Rome.
 1. Verse 17: "And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the

Romans."

- a. The apostle continued his usual course when entering a new city: he sought out the Jews of the place. He had already made contact with the Christians, and now made a dedicated effort to bring the Jews into the church. His heart's desire continued to be the salvation of his fellow-countrymen.
 - 1) Romans 9:1-3: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."
 - 2) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 - b. Three days after entering the city, he called the leading Jews together, probably at his rented house (cf. verse 23). He began his discourse by explaining his presence in Rome as a prisoner, affirming his innocence of wrongdoing.
2. Verses 18-19: "Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of."
 - a. He had been examined by the Roman authorities, who uncovered no guilt in him, but because the Jews spoke against him, he was constrained to make his appeal to the Roman Caesar. But he bore no malice toward the Jews.
 - 1) Romans 12:17-21: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
 - 2) 1 Peter 2:20-23: "For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously."
 - b. The Romans in Caesarea would have released him, but for the opposition of the Jews.
 3. Verses 20-22: "For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against."
 - a. He stated his reasons for calling them together: to explain his bonds, to meet them and speak with them, and to show that it was because of the hope of Israel that he was imprisoned. The hope of Israel is realized in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 5:1-9).
 - b. These Jewish leaders in Rome stated that they had received no word on Paul from their counterparts in Palestine, either by letter or by oral report. As far as they were concerned, Paul was innocent. However, they wanted to learn from him what he thought, for *this sect* (the church) was spoken against everywhere.
 - c. They had not heard anything yet that was derogatory to Paul, but they had heard much that was disparaging of the church.
 - d. The word *sect* is from *haireseos*, which is from the same word that gives us our word *heresy*. They regarded Christianity as a division of Judaism; Paul saw Christianity as the rightful successor of Judaism.
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his

paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

- 2) Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
- 3) Matthew 5:17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."
- 4) Hebrews 8:13: "In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away."

D. Acts 28:23-29: Paul Meets With the Jews to Show them the Gospel.

1. Verses 23-24: "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."
 - a. The leaders met with him initially (28:17-22); now many of the Jews came to his lodging. Paul expounded and testified regarding the kingdom of God, and sought to persuade them concerning Jesus; this he did by making an appeal to the law of Moses and the prophets.
 - b. Here is another case of how the inspired apostles viewed and used the written word: they knew it was inspired and authoritative; they explained its meaning; they saw in those Old Testament writings proof that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.
 - c. Paul reasoned with these Jews from morning until evening. His exasperation with them (verses 25-28) was not quickly developed. He gave them all the instruction they needed to come to a knowledge of the truth.
 - d. Some of them believed the things Paul presented, but others rejected the same truths. This is the usual case: some will listen, learn and be profited by a lesson, while others in the same audience will reject it and try to refute it.
2. Verses 25-28: "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it."
 - a. When the apostle saw that the reaction of some (perhaps the majority) was to reject the truth, he cited a statement made by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah (6:9-10; cf. Mt. 13:14-15). Notice that Paul affirmed Isaiah's inspiration.
 - 1) Isaiah 6:9-10: "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."
 - 2) Matthew 13:14-15: "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."
 - b. Isaiah was told, in a statement that pointed forward in time to the preaching of the gospel, to go speak

to the people; even though they could see and understand, they would refuse to do so.

- c. The reason was that their hearts were so encased with fat that the truth could not penetrate; and their hearing was so dulled that they would not hear; and their eyes they had closed so as not to see the truth. This appalling condition made it impossible for them to be saved; but it was a self-imposed state of mind.
 - d. Therefore, Paul said that the salvation God offered would be tendered to the Gentiles, who would be more disposed to hear and heed it.
3. Verse 29: "And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves."
- a. Having given this scathing rebuke to the hard-hearted Jews, they departed from his house, but had great reasonings among themselves regarding the facts Paul had presented.
 - b. This case is very much like the one that occurred in Antioch of Pisidia: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:44-47).

E. Acts 28:30-32: Luke's Concluding Remarks.

1. Verse 30: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him."
 - a. For two complete years, Paul lived in his own rented house, and was free to receive anyone that wanted to visit with him.
 - b. We are not told what happened at the end of the two years. The Bible does not cater to the natural curiosity of man.
 2. Verse 31: "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."
 - a. He preached the kingdom of God and taught concerning Christ with full confidence, and without interference from any man. So closes the great Book of Acts!
 - b. The great Book of Acts concludes with the great apostle Paul doing what he loved more than any other activity—preaching Christ and his church.
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Paul the Apostle

Paul was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21), and was imprisoned at Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27) before being sent to Rome (Acts 27). The Book of Acts closes with the apostle having been in prison at Rome for two more years (Acts 28:30-31). What happened at the end of these two years? The following quotation from Thiessen, pp.260-262 gives one view:

"Paul was tried and acquitted. The flimsy charges against him (Acts 25:14-27; 26:30-32) did not convince even a Nero of the Apostle's guilt. Certain expressed purposes of Paul in the Prison Epistles (Phil. 23,24; Philemon 22) and certain references to men and places in the Pastorals (to be noted) enable us to determine his movements and activities after his release with some feeling of certainty.

"From Rome he probably went to Brundisium, crossed the Adriatic, either to Apollonia or to Dyrrachium, and then took the Egnatian Road to Macedonia and Philippi. He probably did not stay long at Philippi at this time, but hastened on to Ephesus and from this as a center he visited Laodicea, Colossae, and other cities in this neighborhood. After spending the biggest part of a year in the East, he probably set out for Spain. There was constant intercourse between the East and Massilia (the modern Marseilles), and so he would have no difficulty in reaching the 'limit of the west.' It is thought that he remained about two years in Spain. During this time, probably, Timothy took up the work at Ephesus. It appears, however, as if somewhere on Paul's way back from Spain to Macedonia Timothy asked Paul to allow him to leave Ephesus and to travel with him once more. But this Paul did not allow (1 Tim. 1:3). Some time after this the Apostle wrote 1 Timothy to his faithful co-worker.

"Timothy, converted under Paul's ministry (1 Tim. 1:2,18) on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23), became the Apostle's assistant on the second journey (Acts 16:1-3) after his ordination to the ministry (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). He was with Paul at Troas, Philippi, Berea, and Athens. From the last place he made a trip to Thessalonica and returned to Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5). Then we lose sight of him for about five years (Plummer). He reappears at Ephesus, on Paul's third journey, and is sent by the Apostle with Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Paul hoped he would get to Corinth also, but it is not certain whether Timothy ever reached that city (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10). He is with Paul again in Macedonia when Paul writes 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:1,19), and must have accompanied him to Corinth, for he sends greetings when Paul writes Romans (Rom. 16:21). He returned with Paul to Macedonia and to Asia, at least as far as Troas (Acts 20:3-6). Then we again lose sight of him for the two years of Paul's Caesarean imprisonment. We next find him at Rome, joining Paul in sending greetings to Colossae, Philemon, and Philippi. From Rome he, undoubtedly, made the trip to Philippi of which Paul speaks (Phil. 2:19-23), after which he again disappears from the record. We may, however, assume that he was with Paul in some of his further ministries in various eastern cities; but it is not likely that he accompanied the Apostle to Spain. Some time during Paul's visit to Spain he probably took up the work at Ephesus. While still at this place he received what we call The First Epistle to Timothy."

A Quotation from Rex Turner, Sr., MSOP, pp.14-18:

"Luke closed his Acts of the Apostle in the following words: 'And he (Paul) abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, and none forbidding him' (Acts 28:30,31). In this conclusion to his Acts of the Apostles, Luke did not say that at the end of the two year imprisonment Paul was put to death, nor did he imply it. In fact the necessary implication is that Paul had been set free....Someone is bound to ask: 'Is there external evidence that bears on the question of Paul's release, or non-release from prison, and if so, what does the evidence show, and how relevant is it?' There is external evidence!

"To illustrate, one source of external evidence is from the writing of Clement of Rome. Clement (A.D. 30-100) wrote the Corinthians, and the salutation reads as follows: 'The Church of God which sojourns at Rome to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth, to them that are called and sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from Almighty God through Jesus Christ,

be multiplied.' In this epistle, written about A.D. 97, Clement admonished: 'Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours; and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him. Owing to envy, Paul also obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned. After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus was he removed from the world, and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience.' Stress should be placed upon the fact that Clement said that Paul came unto 'the extreme limit of the west,' and after his having done so, he suffered martyrdom. Under no circumstances could Rome be counted the extreme west. The clear and unmistakable implication is that Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment, and in turn, that he completed his long avowed purpose to preach the gospel in Spain.

“A second source of external evidence is the Muratorian Fragment. This fragment or canon was discovered by L.A. Muratori (A.D. 1672-1750) in the Ambrosian Library and published by him in A.D. 1740. It was written in Latin and consists of eighty-five lines. Scholars agree that the original form, of which the Muratorian fragment is a copy, was written about A.D. 180-190. That fragment reads: 'Luke compiled for most excellent Theophilus' what things were done in detail in his presence, as he plainly shows by omitting both the death of Peter and also the departure of Paul from the city, when he departed for Spain.' Note should be taken of the fact that his Muratorian fragment explicitly states that Paul left for Spain.

“A third source of external evidence is from the historian Eusebius. His life dates about A.D. 260-340. He wrote as follows: 'Festus was sent by Nero to be Felix's successor. Under him, Paul, having made his defense, was sent bound to Rome. Aristarchus was with him, whom he also somewhere in his epistles quite naturally calls his fellow prisoner. And Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, brought his history to a close at this point, after stating that Paul spent two years at Rome as a prisoner at large, and preached the word of God without restraint. Then after he made his defense it is said that the apostle was sent again upon the ministry of preaching, and that upon coming to the same city a second time he suffered martyrdom. In this imprisonment he wrote his second epistle to Timothy, in which he mentions his first defense and his impending death.' As should be observed, this external evidence is independent. There is no attempt by the author to have it agree with another external evidence, but on the other hand it is in complete agreement with the prior external evidence already submitted.

“A fourth source of external evidence is from the historian Jerome. He wrote from Bethlehem in A.D. 492. In his preface he states that he had no predecessor in his work, but he very properly acknowledged his indebtedness to the church history written by Eusebius. Concerning the apostle Paul, he wrote: 'And because a full account of his (Paul's) life is given in the Acts of the Apostles, I only say this, that the twenty-fifth year after our Lord's passion, that is the second of Nero, at the time when Festus Procurator of Judea succeeded Felix, he was sent bound to Rome, and remaining for two years in free custody, disputed daily with the Jews concerning the advent of Christ. It ought to be said that at the first defense, the power of Nero having not been confirmed, nor his wickedness broken forth to such a degree as the historians relate concerning him, Paul was dismissed by Nero, that the gospel of Christ might be preached also in the west. As he himself writes in the second epistle to Timothy at the time he was about to be put to death dictating his epistle as he did while in chains; 'at my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account.'

“This external evidence is in harmony with the other three sources as quoted. The case is that Paul's writings together with external history make certain the fact that he was released from his imprisonment at Rome, and that 'he preached also in the west,' or Spain. Thus by both internal and external evidence—Paul's release, his visit to Philippi and Ephesus, his visit to the Island of Crete, and his visit to Spain—all of these are confirmed. Paul's second imprisonment and his ultimate death at the hands of Nero are also confirmed. The external evidence as set forth, especially by Eusebius and Jerome, indicates that Paul was put to death just prior to Nero's death. Nero's death occurred on June 8, A.D. 68. Luke

closed his Acts of Apostles at the end of Paul's two whole years of Roman imprisonment, or A.D. 62, and certainly not later than A.D. 63. Now, from A.D. 62 to A.D. 67 or 68 would leave a minimum of five to six years for Paul to make his promised visits and to preach the gospel in Crete and in Spain as well."

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