

that his testimony is true.

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, the which, if they were written one

by one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

are seeking to know the truth in order to be set free from sin will find more than enough evidence in the document of John in order to believe. Those who are seeking to know the person of Jesus in order to pattern their lives after His behavior have sufficient material to follow the behavior of Jesus. The great blessing we have today is that we have more than the document of John. We also have the witnesses of Matthew, Mark and Luke. These witnesses also give their testimony with John that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The give us enough examples of the life of Jesus that encourages us to follow in His steps. Therefore, God expects all men to honestly consider the evidence for the sonship

of Jesus that is recorded in the New Testament. He expects all men to follow the example of Jesus' behavior. For this reason, the Holy Spirit affirms that the word of God is able to furnish the man of God unto all that is necessary for godly living (2 Tm 3:16,17). God's "divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him how has called us to glory and virtue" (2 Pt 1:3). If we ask for more than what God has promised, then we are asking for too much. If we ask for too little, then we are minimizing what God has given us through a knowledge of His only begotten Son who came to deliver us out of death and bring us into eternity.

Luke's Historical Defense Of Christianity

Acts

Author

Luke, a physician, was the writer (See introduction to Lk). He was the companion of Paul on several mission journeys (See the "we" sections of 16:10-17; 20:5 - 21:17; 27:2 - 28:16). Both Luke and Acts were addressed to the same man, Theophilus. These two documents should thus be read together in order to comprehend the complete story the author desires that we understand concerning the effect of Christ on the lives of men and women in the first century (Lk 1:3; At 1:1). Luke wrote "to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us" (Lk 1:1). He wrote two defenses of Christianity in a historical arrangement in order to give a chronological order of events in the life of Jesus (Luke) and the life of the early disciples (Acts). Luke emphasizes those things in the life of Jesus and the disciples that give testimony to the truth of Christianity.

Assuming that Acts, as well as Luke, were written as defense documents to defend Christianity, we would thus assume that Luke was especially chosen by God to be the scribe to write both Luke and Acts. He was chosen not by chance, but by qualification. Paul was going before a Gentile court of some of the most educated men in the Roman Empire. Therefore, Luke was qualified as one who would best write a defense to a Gentile audience. He was a Gentile. He thus knew the Gentile mind of Roman judges.

Luke was also a doctor (Cl 4:14). He was therefore educated for the work of drafting a most eloquent document in Greek for those of a similar "educational class."

Luke was a personal witness to Paul's preaching, miracles and activities. He could thus write from experience, not hearsay.

Luke was probably not a personal eyewitness to Jesus and the gospel event. He could thus write of the life of Jesus from the viewpoint of a secondary witness. He would know what material Roman judges would want who had also not experienced the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

All that would be needed as far as a qualified author to write a defense document for a distant unbelieving court is found in Luke. He is the Holy Spirit's perfect choice to write a defense for Christianity that would defend its truth throughout history.

Purpose

Luke's purpose for writing the document of Acts varies from one interpreter to another. Many have agreed that the nature of the contents of the document are apologetic. In other words, the document was written as a defense document of Christianity on behalf of Paul. This primary purpose for the writing of the book answers several questions. Why does the book close with Paul in prison in Rome? Why is the document primarily about the work of Paul? A "book of Acts" could have been written about John, Matthew, Bartholemew or any of the other apostles. Bible students have wondered why so much was written concerning Paul in the document. Why is Paul's ministry confined to the center of the Roman Empire? Why not North Africa? Europe? China? These and many other questions move us to believe that Luke's intentions are more than providing a simple "history of the early church," "acts

of the apostles," or "work of the Holy Spirit." Such views of Acts are too narrow to answer the many questions concerning the nature of the book.

Suppose for a moment that it was the plan of God to put Christianity on trial before the world in order to distinguish it from all religions of the world for all history. What would we do? We would probably choose the occasion or circumstances that would produce "contests" between Christianity and other religions. We would select key men who would initiate the movement. We would concentrate on "test cases" to prove the truth of Christianity. We would choose the best writer for the defense documents and the highest court of the land before whom our case would be tried. God did all the preceding in the historical development of the church in a world of man-made religions. The historical defense of Jesus and the church is outlined in the documents of Luke and Acts.

The characters for the historical case are all chosen by God. Paul was chosen to produce the occasion for the trial. He was cross-cultural. He was a faithful and religious personality (1 Tm 1:12). He was a determined personality that would not turn back from his commission to stand before kings (At 20:24).

After God made the choice of the character of Paul, He directed Paul into situations and circumstances that would produce "test cases" that could later be recorded to defend Christianity against the onslaught of man-made religions. Throughout his ministry, therefore, God was working in Paul's life to bring him before Caesar's court in order that a historical examination be made of this one called Jesus. It was God's desire to have the highest court of the world confronted by the irrefutable proof that Jesus was more than a man and that Christianity did not originate with men.

Luke and Acts are the most powerful documents available to man for the defense of Jesus and Christianity. God stated to Paul, "... as you testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness in Rome" (23:11). Therefore, the Holy Spirit directed not only the life of Paul, but also the hand of Luke to write Paul's defense for trial in Rome. God wanted Christianity put on trial. Paul was the occasion for God to do this. Therefore, these documents to Theophilus (Luke and Acts) are God's defense to the court and the world that Jesus was who He claimed to be. Those who believed were innocent of all accusations of wrong doing that the world had and would accuse them of doing because of their belief. They believed because of their personal encounters with God. Their belief was based on facts, not upon wishful thinking. And because their belief was based on fact, they could not be held accountable for proclaiming their personal witness of God's intervention into this world through Jesus.

Historical Background

In the last chapter of Acts we find Paul in prison about to stand before Caesar of Rome for his life. The year is about A.D. 61 or 62. Luke is with him. Paul is there because he requested his right as a Roman citizen to be tried before Caesar (25:10-12). He made the request because God had told him that he must bear witness in Rome (23:11). Therefore, he is in Rome because of God's direction in his life. Because he knew of God's vision that he must testify in Rome, he seized the opportunity to defend Christianity before the world and to prove that Christianity was not the invention of over zealous religionists. In Acts 28, therefore, Paul awaits his turn to stand before the court.

Under Roman law one did not personally stand before Caesar to give his personal defense. A mediator was selected who would deliver the defense. It is possible that Theophilus was this mediator on behalf of Paul. Or, Theophilus could have been the Roman official before whom Paul's defense was made. Regardless of what the real case was, Luke wrote Paul's defense, beginning with an inspired record of the origin of Paul's belief (the gospel according to Luke) and the effect that gospel event had on others, specifically Paul (the document of Acts).

We study Acts with excitement as the Spirit guides the hand of Luke to set forth historical evidence to prove that Christianity was not a sect of Judaism. It was not a fable which developed over long years of accumulated legends about a man called Jesus. It was not born out of the imagination of some religious fanatic or holy man in some cave in the wilderness. It was not the invention of a few Galileans. It was in fact, God-ordained, Christ-centered and faith activated. It was proved to be so by the hundreds of miraculous events that thousands of people experienced in its beginning. The miraculous was set forth to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Jn 20:30,21). Luke affirms that this Christ was the manifestation of God on earth. The teaching He brought originated from God. The following historical document, therefore, sets out to prove this divine origin of Christianity.

God used the man Paul to set His case before the world for all time. Therefore, when we look behind the scenes of the trials of Paul, we see God presenting before the world the effect of Christ on the lives of men. Jesus was the cause. Acts is a record of the effect. As we stand with Paul before some of the best judges and rulers that Rome had to offer, Christianity shines forth as the true result of a God who revealed Himself to man through Jesus.

Therefore, as Luke presents to us the life and work of the early Christians, we must not simply look at this as a casual historical narrative of righteous men and women. Revealed herein is the proof of

the Cause. How else can we explain the lives of these heroic sages without a real Christ who touched and radically changed the lives of so many?

Date for the Establishment of the Church

It is difficult to determine the year for the crucifixion of Jesus, and thus, the year for the establishment of the church in reference to our calendar today. In order to come to some conclusions concerning the year of the establishment of the church, however, there are some specific historical facts that we should know. These are historical facts that we cannot ignore, neither can we discount them because of any previous assumptions, or mistakes on the part of past scholarship. It is the objective of the biblical scholar to absorb all known facts concerning a proposition before he makes his final analysis. Therefore, we are challenged with the following points in order that we draw a conclusion for ourselves concerning the date for the establishment of the church.

A. Jesus was crucified during the Passover Feast.

There is little controversy over the fact that Jesus was crucified during the Passover feast of the Jews, though there is some debate over the exact day of the week Jesus ate the Passover feast with the disciples. The Passover lamb was eaten on the fourteenth of Nisan, on Friday evening before the Sabbath. Because the fourteenth of Nisan was determined by the new moon, it would be very difficult to determine the exact day in reference to our calendar today when Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples. The biblical text is not clear as to when Jesus ate this meal with His disciples. Because the New Testament writers left us little information on this subject, we could conclude that the Holy Spirit does not want us to ponder the matter in reference to an exact day, even the exact day of the week Jesus ate the Passover feast with the disciples. Our focus should be on the event, and that He was three days in the tomb as He prophesied (Mt 12:40), with His resurrection early on the first day of the week (Mk 16:9). The important thing to remember is that He was the Passover lamb, and the crucifixion took place during Passover feast of the Jews.

B. Jesus visited Jerusalem on possibly three Passovers.

It is not easy to determine how many times Jesus visited Jerusalem during His earthly ministry. For this reason, it is difficult to determine the length of His earthly ministry. Estimates for the length of the ministry have been everywhere from two and a half to five and a half years. Since the record of the gospel according to John seems to be the best in accounting the number of visits by Jesus to the feast of the Jews, we use this document to establish a possible number of visits Jesus made to Jerusalem.

1. First visit to Jerusalem: Jesus first went up to Jerusalem during His ministry for the Passover that is mentioned in John 2:13. This visit took place after the first signs of Jesus in Capernaum (Jn 2:11). We are not told how long He was into His ministry when He made this trip, but we could assume that it was about six months.

2. Second visit to Jerusalem: There is another "feast of the Jews" mentioned in John 5:1 when Jesus again went up to Jerusalem. However, the difficulty is to determine whether this was the annual Passover feast or another feast of the Jews. Some have suggested that this "feast of the Jews" could have been the feast of Tabernacles that took place in the month Tishi. If this is true, then regardless of John 5:1 being a specific reference to the Passover, reference would be to a second trip of Jesus to Jerusalem to a feast that was an annual feast of the Jews, and thus would represent a year in which a second Passover visit took place in His ministry. However, we do not know if Jesus attended any other feast of Tabernacles except the one that is mentioned in John 7:2. We might assume, therefore, that the "feast of the Jews" in John 5:1 was an annual Passover feast of the Jews. But some have also suggested that the "feast of the Jews" in John 5:1 was the feast of Dedication, or even the feast of Purim. It is difficult to determine which specific feast is intended. However, many biblical scholars believe that John 5:1 was a Passover feast, and thus, Jesus' second visit to Jerusalem.

Another Passover feast is mentioned in John 6:4. Because of the increased hostility that was mounting against Him, however, Jesus did not attend this Passover. John simply recorded, "*He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill him*" (Jn 7:1). Now what complicates the matter is the fact that this may have been the second Passover of Jesus' ministry, not the "feast of the Jews" mentioned in John 5:1. But if the "feast of the Jews" in John 5:1 were a Passover, then John 6:4 was the third, and the John 13:1 Passover the fourth. This would make Jesus' ministry the traditional three and a half years in length.

3. Third visit to Jerusalem: The last feast of Passover that Jesus attended is recorded in John 13:1. This was the feast during which He was crucified. Since John 2:13 was the first Passover visit,

and assuming John 5:1 was a Passover, and thus the second Passover visit, with John 6:4 being a Passover that was not attended, then the John 13:1 would be the third Passover visit.

John specifically records that Jesus attended two mentioned Passover feasts, the one in John 2:13 and the one in 13:1. He did not attend the John 6:4 Passover. If the "feast of the Jews" in John 5:1 is another Passover, then He attended three during His ministry, but over a period of four Passovers, one just after the beginning and the last at the time of His crucifixion. If there were four Passovers during Jesus' ministry, then Jesus' ministry would have been a little over three years in length. Assuming that He was into His ministry several months before the John 2:13 Passover visit, **we conclude that His ministry was as long as three and a half years.**

C. Jesus began His ministry when about thirty years old.

"Now when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age ..." (Lk 3:23). Under Old Testament law, this was the common beginning of the ministry of the priests. The word "about" in Luke 3:23 adds some ambiguity to the matter, but we assume that Jesus was somewhere in His thirtieth year at the beginning of His earthly ministry. We could assume that the Holy Spirit added the word "about" in order for us not to focus on exactly what we are doing here, that is, trying to determine an exact date for the crucifixion and establishment of the church. Nevertheless, when we add "about" thirty with the time of the earthly ministry of the preceding point, we come up with Jesus' approximate age at the time of His death. Jesus would have been about **thirty-three years old when He was crucified.**

D. Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus.

In reference to the Roman Empire, Jesus was born when Augustus was Caesar of Rome. Luke records that a census was taken during this time, which census affected the lives of Joseph and Mary (Lk 2:1-4). It was because of this census that Joseph and Mary made their way to Bethlehem, the prophesied place of birth of the Messiah (Mc 5:2).

E. Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great.

Jesus was born during the latter years of the reign of Herod the Great (Mt 2:1-6). It was Herod who commissioned the slaughter of the Bethlehem babies who were two years of age and under (Mt 2:16). He made this proclamation of genocide in order to make sure that Jesus would be included in the slaughter. However, this does not mean that Jesus was as much as two years old by the time of the slaughter. It simply means that Herod was not sure about the time of birth, and thus wanted to make sure that Jesus was included.

In reference to the birth of Jesus, here are some historical facts that must be considered:

1. The testimony of encyclopedias and dictionaries: Since Jesus was born during the final days of Herod, then it is imperative that we determine the date of the death of Herod in reference to our calendar today. Now keep in mind that the establishment for the birth of Jesus is dated from our modern-day calendars. We are not judging the date from the Roman calendar, though the Roman calendar must be considered in order to determine the date of Herod's life history. As will be pointed out later, there was a discrepancy made in affixing the Roman calendar dates with our modern-day calendar, which discrepancy was noted and corrected over a century ago. But in reference to our calendar today, all secular and biblical encyclopedias and dictionaries establish the date of Herod's death in Jericho the **last of March in 4 B.C.**

The World Book Encyclopedia states, "Herod the Great (73? - 4 B.C.) ruled all Palestine from 37 to 4 B.C." (1976, Vol. 9, p. 198). Other encyclopedias or dictionaries do not contradict this statement. Though first published in 1917, the 1939 edition of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states that Herod died in 4 B.C. (1939, Vol. 2, p. 668). The *New Bible Dictionary* affirms the 4 B.C. date, as well as A. T. Roberston in his renowned *Harmony of the Gospels*. Historically speaking, therefore, one will not find an encyclopedia or dictionary that will disagree with the 4 B.C. date.

2. The record of Josephus: Josephus was a Jewish historian whose work transitioned from the latter part of the first century into the second century. In his *Antiquities*, XVII, 6, 4 he alluded to an eclipse of the moon that occurred shortly before the death of Herod. Thus the birth of Jesus could not have occurred after the death of Herod, or after this eclipse since Jesus was born during Herod's reign. The eclipse establishes the time of Herod's death, which eclipse also helps us to determine the time of Jesus' birth in reference to our calendar today.

Now here are some conclusions to ponder. According to our calendar today, Herod died in **4 B.C.** Jesus was about **thirty years old** when He began His ministry. His ministry was about **three and a half years** in length, which means that He was about **thirty-three years old** when He was crucified. You can place the birth of Jesus somewhere in the **two-year** window of Herod's slaughter of babies.

Add the figures and we come up with the crucifixion and establishment of the church about **A.D. 30** according to our calendar today.

Chapter 1

1 ¶ The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen.

3 To these *men* He also showed Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

4 ¶ And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, “Which,” *He said*, “you have heard from Me;

5 “for John truly immersed with water, but you will be immersed with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Chapter 1

WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTED JESUS

1 The former account I made: Luke wrote a previous letter to the “most excellent” Theophilus whose name means, “dear to God” or “friend of God.” The former account was the letter of Luke. Theophilus was probably a prominent government leader who may have lived in Rome (See comments Lk 1:1-4). **Of all that Jesus began both to do and teach:** The former letter of Luke explained what Jesus did and taught during His ministry on earth. What Jesus had taught He illustrated in His life. The document of Luke, therefore, explained the cause of the effect that is explained in this document. Christ was the cause. The church was the effect. **2 Through the Holy Spirit:** Jesus spoke instruction to the twelve apostles by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He also promised that the Spirit would later guide them into all the truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). However, until His ascension into a heavenly realm of authority with the Father, He personally instructed them concerning the kingdom reign that He would establish in their lifetime (vs 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31; Mk 9:1; see Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). **3 Presented Himself alive:** After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to part or all of the disciples on at least ten different occasions (See Mt 28:17; Mk 16:12,14; Lk 24:34,36; Jn 20:18,26; 21:1,14; 1 Co 15:1-8; see the chronology of the ministry of Jesus in the introduction). By His appearances He gave the apostles positive proof of His resurrection. During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus continued to instruct the apostles. He instructed them concerning His kingdom reign over all things (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2; see comments Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). At this time, His reign over all things was here about to be established. He would receive His kingdom authority when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven (Dn 7:13,14; Cl 3:1; Hb 8:1). It would be announced on the day of Pentecost (ch 2). After the announcement, repentant believers would submit to Jesus’ lordship, and thus, the church would begin. The kingdom reign of Jesus would be manifested on earth through the submission of men to the kingship of Jesus (See comments Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38).

PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

4 Promise of the Father: The promise of the Father would be the coming of the Holy Spirit. During His final meeting with the eleven apostles on the Mount of Olives, a short distance east of Jerusalem, Jesus commanded the apostles to return and remain in Jerusalem (Is 2:3). They were to remain there until they received the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit that was made in Joel 2:28-31. They would be the first recipients of the fulfillment of this promise. Jesus had explained this promise to them during His ministry. During the ministry of Jesus, the apostles received special promises concerning the Holy Spirit that were not meant for all the believers (See Lk 24:47-49; Jn 14:16-18,26; 15:26; 16:13,14). However, from the promise of Joel 2:28-31, God had promised that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh (See comments Mk 16:14-20). The continuation of the giving of the Holy Spirit would occur through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. By the laying on of the apostles’ hands, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given to others (See comments 8:18; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11). **5 Immersed with the Holy Spirit:** By the command of God, John the Baptist had previously immersed the apostles in water for the remission of their sins (Mk 1:4,5). However, Jesus would baptize them in a different manner – “with the Holy Spirit” – and for a different reason – to be “endued with power from on high” (See Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; 24:45; compare Lk 11:13; 12:12; Jn 14:26; 16:12,13). It must be noted that Jesus was the one who baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit did not baptize people with Himself. Though the apostles did not understand what Jesus said at the time this statement was made, this baptism took place on the following Sunday morning after Jesus made this promise. It was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

6 Restore the kingdom to Israel: While still misunderstanding the spiritual nature of the kingdom reign of Jesus, the disciples asked Jesus if He were going to restore the physical nation of Israel to its former independent sovereignty which it enjoyed during the glorious days of Israelite kings as David and Solomon. We must keep in mind that this false hope of the Jews permeated the political and religious thinking of the

7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has set by His own authority.

8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 ¶ And when He had spoken these things, while they were looking, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward

heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white clothing,

11 who also said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in like manner as you have watched Him go into heaven."

12 ¶ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem.

13 And when they had entered *the city*, they

nation. At the time of Jesus' coming, Palestine was an occupied land. The Romans had control of the country. It was the ambition of the Jews, however, to free themselves of Roman rule and once again be an independent nation. But such was not to be. Unfortunately, unto this time in the work of Jesus on earth, the disciples maintained this nationalistic thinking, and thus, during the earthly ministry misunderstood much of the teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom (See comments Mk 10:33-45). However, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, who revealed to them all truth, they fully understood that the kingdom of Jesus was spiritual and within the hearts of men (Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38). **7 It is not for you to know times or season:** Jesus did not at this time correct their nationalistic understanding of the kingdom. He simply delayed the explanation until the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth a few days after this incident (Jn 16:13). They would then realize that the kingdom of Jesus was not as physical kingdoms of this world (Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38). At this time, they had to trust in the Father who was working all things according to His plan (See Mt 24:36; Lk 1:26-33). We must keep in mind, therefore, that the Father was going to establish the kingdom reign of Jesus regardless of the misunderstandings of the Jews as a whole or the disciples in particular. **8** In this context, Jesus is specifically talking to the apostles. He is not directing these statements to all Christians in general. He thus gives them some special promises that He does not intend to be applicable to all the disciples. **You:** The antecedent of the pronoun "you" is the apostles of verse 2. Therefore, Jesus is directing these promises to the apostles. **You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you:** The apostles would soon be given authority to command the miraculous power of God's supernatural environment (2:1-4; see comments Jn 16:13). This would come from God after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Lk 24:49). The Spirit would empower them in the sense that they would be given the authority to command the miraculous work of God. Though the apostles had worked miracles during the ministry of Jesus, they would after their empowerment by the Holy Spirit command the supernatural according to their own choice. Christianity would not be the invention of one man who supposedly received a miraculous experience in some cave or religious monastery. It would be founded upon the miraculous experiences of many different men (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). The apostles would then be Jesus' special witnesses of His

resurrection (vs 22; Lk 24:48). Their witness would begin in Jerusalem and spread to all the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). Luke's argument in recording these statements is to affirm that Christianity had a definite time and place of beginning. It did not result from an evolutionary development of religious thinking as is typical of fables, myths or legends. **Witness to Me:** The apostles would be the special witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (See Lk 24:48; Jn 15:27).

THE DISCIPLES WITNESS THE ASCENSION

9 He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight: After Jesus said these things, He was bodily taken up into a heavenly realm at the right hand of authority (Ep 1:20-22). A cloud received Him out of the apostles' sight as Daniel had prophesied in Daniel 7:13,14 (Ps 68:18; 110:1; Mk 16:19; Lk 23:43; Jn 20:17; see Hb 4:14; 9:24; 1 Pt 3:22). It was necessary that the disciples see Jesus ascend in a cloud out of their sight. This sight would remain in their minds throughout their lives, and thus, they could be a witness to the fact that Jesus did not wander off to a Judean wilderness and die a natural death. Their personal experience of the event made them reliable witnesses. The ascension, therefore, was not founded on hearsay. It was founded on several witnesses who actually experienced it. **10 Two men stood by them:** These were two angels in white clothing who stood beside the disciples as Jesus ascended into heaven (See Mt 28:3; Mk 16:5 Lk 24:4; Jn 20:12). **11** The angels promised that Jesus would come again (See 2 Th 1:7-9). He would come with the clouds of heaven. The phrase "coming in the clouds of heaven" comes from judgment language that is used in the Old Testament. God came in the clouds in judgment upon men in time (Compare Mt 24:30; 1 Th 4:17; Rv 1:7). The angels stated that the apostles must begin the mission of going into all the world which Jesus had commanded them (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). As they went forth, the angels reminded them of the promise of Jesus, that He would come again to receive them unto Himself (Jn 14:1,2).

THE DISCIPLES GO TO JERUSALEM

12 Olivet: This small mountain, or ridge, was located a little over a kilometer east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley (Mt 21:1; Mk 13:3; Lk 22:39; Jn 8:1). After the disciples had worshiped Jesus at the Mount of Olives from where He had ascended (Lk 24:52,53), they joyfully returned to Jerusalem because they now fully believed that He had been raised from the dead.

went up to an upper room where they were staying: Peter and James and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James.

14 These all continued with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

15 ¶ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers (the number of the group was about a hundred and twenty), and said,

16 "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was a guide to those who took Jesus.

17 "For he was numbered with us and had

obtained a part in this ministry."

18 (Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem, so that the field is called in their own language, Akeldama, that is to say, The Field of Blood.)

20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms, '*Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one dwell in it,*' and, '*Let another take his place.*'

21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us –

22 "beginning from the immersion of John

However, they still did not understand the full implications of their commission to all the world. Their understanding of these things would come as a result of the Spirit's work when He came upon them a few days from this last encounter with Jesus (See Jn 14:26; 16:13,14) **Sabbath day's journey:** This was the distance of about a kilometer. It was not a law of the Old Testament, but one of the restrictions that the Jewish religious leaders had bound on the Jews in order to guard the keeping of the Sabbath. The Old Testament law of the Sabbath was to keep people at rest in their homes. The religious leaders simply enacted their own restrictions in order to keep people from going great distances on the Sabbath. **13** All eleven disciples, whom Jesus called apostles (Lk 6:13-16; see Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19), assembled in an upper room where they waited in prayer for the fulfillment of Jesus' promise (See vs 8). These apostles were Peter, James, John (James and John were brothers), Andrew (Peter's brother), Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew (this was possibly Nathanael), Matthew, James (the son of Alphaeus), Simon (a former Jewish terrorist) and Judas (the son of James). **14** Jesus' brothers (Jude and James) and mother were there (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). His brothers now believed in Him, though previously they did not (See introduction to Js and Jd). There were also other women present. These were the women who had ministered to Jesus during His earthly ministry (Lk 8:2,3; 23:49,55). While they waited, all of the disciples continued in prayer to and praise of God (2:1,46).

ANOTHER PERSONAL WITNESS IS CHOSEN

15 Peter stood up: After other disciples had joined the apostles, Peter initiated a desire of the disciples to select someone to take the place of Judas who had betrayed Jesus. It is not stated that Peter's desires were motivated by the direction of God. He is here seen to simply understand that someone must take the place of Judas. **16 Scripture had to be fulfilled:** The prophecy of Psalm 41:9 that one would betray Jesus had been fulfilled (See Mt 26:47; Mk 14:43; Lk 22:47; Jn 18:3). Peter said that since the Holy Spirit inspired prophecy of David was fulfilled, one must be chosen to take Judas' place as a special Christ-sent apostle. **17**

He was numbered with us: Though Judas was counted with the original twelve apostles and took part in their ministry during the earthly ministry of Jesus (Mt 10:1-5), he manifested his true feelings. He did such by allowing the devil to use him, and thus, he disqualified himself by betraying Jesus. Though he was numbered with the apostles, he fell from God's grace, and thus, was lost. **18 Purchased a field:** A field had been bought by the chief priests with the thirty pieces of silver that Judas had received for betraying Jesus (Mt 26:14-26; 27:3-8). After the betrayal, Judas hung himself. After he hung himself, his body fell to rocks below where it burst open (Mt 27:5). **Wages of iniquity:** Money that is acquired in evil ways because of evil motives is considered "wages of iniquity." **19 Field of blood:** Because of Judas' distasteful manner of death, the field which had been purchased with the betrayal money became known as the "Field of blood." This field is believed to be south of Jerusalem in the area of the Valley of Hinnom which was an ancient burial place of the Jews. **20 It is written:** Therefore, Peter reminded the disciples of Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 in saying that someone must take Judas' place as a Christ-sent apostle. Peter's reminder of the prophecy would bring comfort to the disciples in the sense that they would remember that God had known of Judas' betrayal from the beginning of time. Throughout His ministry, Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him. **21 Of these men:** The candidates to replace Judas must come from those who had walked with Jesus during the entire time of His coming and going among the disciples. **22 To that day when He was taken up:** Peter established the time of qualification for a Christ-apostle. This would be from the time of John the Baptist to the event of Jesus' ascension. No one today can qualify to be a Christ-sent apostle because no one today can fulfill this qualification. Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus road in order to give him a personal witness that He had been resurrected (1 Co 9:1). However, though he was a Christ-sent apostle he still said that he was an apostle that was born outside the time Christ-sent apostles were called (1 Co 15:8,9). In his writings he also refers to the twelve as a special group. **Become a witness:** In reference to the life, death, resurrection and ascension

to that day when He was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all *men*, show which of these two You have chosen,

25 “so that he may take part in this ministry

and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, so that he might go to his own place.”

26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Chapter 2

1 ¶ And when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

of Jesus, the apostles walked by fact, not faith. They personally encountered Jesus. And because they had personally been with Jesus they were to be special witnesses to the fact of Jesus and His work throughout the world (vs 8;2:27,32; Lk 24:48; 1 Jn 1:1-3). **23,24** Both Joseph (Barsabas or Justus) (15:22) and Matthias fulfilled the physical qualifications. **They proposed two:** After the disciples selected two, they then called on the Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, to make the decision based upon spiritual qualifications (1 Sm 16:7; Jr 17:10). **25 Judas by transgression fell:** Judas had sinned, and thus, fell from his saved relationship and chosen position of apostleship. Now another was to take up his ministry and do the work of a Christ-sent apostle of Jesus. **His own place:** At the time this statement was made, Judas was in torments in the hadean realm of existence (See comments Lk 16:29-31). **26** After a custom of the Jews to make random decisions, lots were cast (Lv 16:8; Nm 26:55). In trusting that God had directed the casting of the lots, the eleven apostles accepted the results, and thus, brought Matthias into the apostleship as a Christ-sent apostle. Since he was more qualified in character than Joseph, Matthias became a part of those who would initiate the world movement of Christianity by witnessing to the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 12:2, James, who was one of the apostles, was killed. However, after he was killed by Herod, the other apostles did not select another apostle to take his place. Therefore, after this selection of Matthias, no more apostles were added to the original twelve. Paul was a unique apostle who was chosen personally by Jesus for a specific reason.

Chapter 2

This chapter of the New Testament notes the beginning of the New Testament dispensation. This is the beginning, therefore, of the New Testament of Jesus. Jesus lived, taught and died under the Old Testament law. Beginning from the events of this chapter, the New Testament will of Jesus is activated by the official announcement of Peter that Jesus was reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore, one must be cautious when making application of things Jesus spoke before the activation of His New Testament on this day. We must keep in mind that Jesus' ministry was to the Jews in order to prepare them for what took place on and after this day of Pentecost. His message was to the Jews to repent, and thus, prepare their hearts for what took place on this day in A.D. 30.

There has been some discussion concerning the

actual year in which Jesus was born in reference to our calendar today, and thus the year in which the church was established as recorded in this chapter of Acts. Most scholars have agreed that the year for the birth of Jesus would be 6 or 5 B.C., and subsequently the year for the establishment of the church around A.D. 30. These dates are suggested because of some clear events that happened at this time in history.

It is without doubt that Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great (Mt 2:1-6). Since Jesus was born during this reign, our calculations concerning the birth of Jesus must center around Herod's reign, especially the latter part of his reign. Since Jesus was taken into Egypt before Herod died, and returned after his death, then we assume that Jesus was born in the last year of Herod's reign, for Joseph was told that all who had sought to harm Jesus were dead. The Jewish historian, Josephus, recorded the fact that an eclipse of the sun took place shortly before Herod died (Antiquities, XVII,6,4). This is an undeniable marker from which we can calculate time from our calendar back to the events that transpired during the birth of Jesus, and subsequently establish the date for the events of Acts 2. According to this eclipse, Herod died in 4 B.C.

Jesus was two years old or less when Herod commissioned the slaughter of the babies of Bethlehem (Mt 2:16). This does not say that Jesus was two years old at the time of the slaughter. Herod simply wanted to make sure that Jesus was included in the slaughter. We could assume, therefore, that Jesus was in age from a month or two to two years.

Jesus began His ministry when He was about thirty years of age (Lk 3:23). His ministry lasted for three to three and a half years, depending on the number of Pentecost/Passover feasts He attending during His ministry. If He was thirty years old when He began His ministry, and He was born during the last year of the reign of Herod who died in 4 B.C., then His death and the establishment of the church was around A.D.30 according to our calendar today

IMMERSED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 The antecedent of the pronouns in the following verses is found in the last verse of chapter 1. In the original Greek text there is no chapter or verse division between chapters 1 and 2. Therefore, reference in 2:1-14 is to the apostles of 1:26. Luke's emphasis is here on the apostles who were all together in one room. It was upon them that the Spirit came. The time of this event was early Sunday morning, the fiftieth day after the Jewish Passover feast (Lv 23:15,16). **Day of Pentecost:** The day was called Pentecost after the

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind. And it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire being distributed, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability.

5 ¶ Now there were Jews dwelling in Jerusalem, devout men out of every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together. And they were confused because everyone heard them speaking in his

own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, "Behold, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

8 "And how *is it that* we each hear *them* in our own native dialects where we were born?"

9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11 "Cretes and Arabians; we hear them speaking in our languages the wonderful works of God."

Greek word for fifty. Pentecost came the day after seven consecutive weeks from Passover. This was the same as the Feast of Weeks (Ex 34:22; Lv 23:15-21; Nm 28:26ff; Dt 16:9-11). This feast is sometimes called the feast of Harvest (Ex 23:15-21) or the day of Firstfruits (Nm 28:26). The year is around A.D. 30 according to our calendar today. **2 A sound ... as of a rushing mighty wind:** The whole city of Jerusalem suddenly heard a great sound from heaven. It sounded like a mighty wind, though it was not a literal wind. The sound filled the whole house where the apostles were gathered. **3 Divided tongues:** "Divided tongues," which looked like fire, appeared to and sat upon each of the twelve apostles. Such was the Spirit's signal to all present as to whom He had endowed with great power, for only the apostles in this upper room were baptized with the Spirit (See Mt 3:11; 10:20). The divided tongues were the Spirit's reaffirmation that the twelve apostles were the Christ-commissioned apostles through whom He would deliver all truth. Jesus had promised that they would be baptized with the Spirit (1:5). The Spirit is simply giving a visual indication by the "tongues of fire" that He has so immersed them. **4** As a result of this baptism, the apostles were all miraculously inspired by the Holy Spirit. All truth that Jesus had promised was delivered to the apostles (Jn 14:16; 16:13). All things that He had taught them were brought to their remembrance. **Began to speak with other tongues:** By the inspiration of the Spirit, therefore, the apostles began to speak in languages which they had never before studied (Mk 16:17; At 10:46; 19:6). Reference here is to languages, not ecstatic gibberish, for in verses 8 and 11 the context defines that languages are here meant. The promise of Joel 2:28-32 was first fulfilled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. It would be from this outpouring that the Spirit would later go to the other disciples (See comments 8:18; Mk 16:14-20). Therefore, this is the initiation of the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles in order to deliver the miraculous work of the Spirit to those who believe (See comments Mk 16:14-20).

THE APOSTLES WITNESS TO THE JEWS

5 Dwelling in Jerusalem: There were gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 devout

Jews from every nation throughout the Roman Empire. They had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover which took place fifty days before this day of Pentecost. According to the Old Testament law, Jewish males were to come to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost. This was the appropriate time, therefore, on which to begin the new dispensation of time in which we now dwell. **6 When this sound occurred:** The great sound of the coming of the Spirit and the apostles' speaking in every man's language, caused great confusion and wonder among all the residents and visitors of Jerusalem. **Heard them speak in his own language:** They heard the apostles miraculously speaking in the native languages of the foreigners who were in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover and Pentecost. **7 Galileans:** The ones who were speaking were the apostles who were men known to be from Galilee (vs 11). However, people wondered why these Galileans could clearly speak without accent the languages of foreign countries of which they were not native. The miracle of the speaking in languages, therefore, was upon the apostles, not on the audience who heard. **8 Each in our own language:** The apostles even spoke in the dialects of foreign languages, for the Greek word used here by Luke is *dialektos* which refers to dialects. The apostles spoke in the dialects of those Jews who had been scattered throughout the world by wars of conquering armies. There were also in Jerusalem those Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism. The apostles also spoke the gospel in their languages. These apostles were speaking in languages that people could understand. They were not speaking some gibberish that was the result of an emotional hysteria. **9-11** Those in the audience were Jews of the Dispersion (See Js 1:1). They were Jews that had been scattered throughout the Roman world through the captivities of Assyrian and Babylonian empires. There were present Parthians, Medes and Elamites who had come from east of the Tigris River. They were descendants from those taken in the Babylonian Captivity of 586 B.C. (See 2 Kg 17:6; 25:11). There were Jews from Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia and Pamphylia of Asia Minor. From north Africa there were visitors from Egypt, Cyrene and Libya. A great number had come from Rome. Jews from Arabia were there, even those from the island of Crete. After the conversion of many of these visiting Jews, they

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, "What does this mean?"

13 Others mocking said, "These men are full of new wine."

14 ¶ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said to them, "You men of Judea and all you who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.

15 "For these men are not drunken as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the

day.

16 "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 *'And it will come to pass in the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.*

18 *And on My men and women bondservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And they will prophesy.*

would return to their home countries to preach the gospel in synagogues throughout the Roman Empire. **Proselytes:** These were Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism. Jews and proselytes from all the Roman Empire were present in Jerusalem in order that God establish His new covenant with Israel and all nations. All these things He had promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Is 2:1-4). These visitors heard the miraculous speaking of the apostles in the language of their home countries. **We hear them speaking in our own tongues:** Herein is the purpose for the miraculous gift of languages. The gospel could be communicated quickly to all the world without the long process of learning languages. With the gift of languages the early evangelists could go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature in his own language in a short period of time (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). Speaking in languages, therefore, was not a signal of spirituality. The gift of languages was for the practical purpose of world evangelism (See comments 1 Co 12,14). **12** The miracle of the apostles' speaking in different languages thus fulfilled its purpose. Men recognized the miracle and sought an explanation for the phenomenon. **13 Others mocking:** As always, there were those who would not accept the testimony of this miraculous event. Their explanation for the phenomenon was that these men were drunk with sweet wine. These accusers could possibly have been the same religious leaders who had fifty days before crucified Jesus. They begin here to explain away the continual miraculous events surrounding the change from the old wineskins of the Old Testament era to the establishment of the kingdom reign of Jesus and establishment of the church.

PETER ANNOUNCES THE KINGDOM REIGN

14 Peter standing up: When Peter stood up, the eleven who were already speaking allowed him to address the audience concerning the death, resurrection and kingdom reign of Jesus upon the throne of David. Peter was the one whom Jesus promised would have the keys of the kingdom, and thus, the privilege of making the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus (Mt 16:18,19). **15 These are not drunk:** Peter first explained that since it was only 9:00^{am}, the eleven could not be drunk. It was too early in the morning. **16 This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:** Peter went on to affirm that the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 had been fulfilled by the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit on this day of Pentecost. The miraculous

event of verses 1-14 was the fulfillment of Joel 2. **17** In order to remind the Jews of the prophecy of Joel 2, Peter quoted the Greek Septuagint translation of Joel 2:28-31. **In the last days:** Peter and the apostles were already in the last days when this outpouring occurred because it was "in" the last days that this event took place. Therefore, the term "last days" refers to the last days of the Jewish nation. **On all flesh:** Joel had prophesied that in the last days of the Jewish nation, God would pour out His Spirit upon all classes of people, not just aged Jewish prophets as in the Old Testament. In this new age sons and daughters would miraculously proclaim the truths of God. Young and old would command the power of the supernatural environment of God. Others would receive the blessing of the miraculous work of the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands (See comments 8:18; Rm 1:11). The promise of Joel 2:28 (vs 39) was first fulfilled in a miraculous manner in the apostles. It was then fulfilled in the group of all believers as the promise of the Spirit went to those who obeyed the gospel in the first century. The results of this fulfilled promise extended to all Christians through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (See vss 38,39; comments Mk 16:14-20). We must also understand that the fulfillment of Joel 2:28 was not fulfilled with only the outpouring of the Spirit in verses 1-4 upon the apostles and a few select disciples on whom they laid their hands. Every believer in the first century with whom the apostles had contact through the laying on of hands also had a right to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See comments Hb 6:4-6). Since Jesus had earlier commanded that they freely give as they had freely been given to in reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit, we must assume that wherever the Christ-sent apostles went forth, they imparted the miraculous gifts of the Spirit upon those who obeyed the gospel. **Visions ... dreams:** See 9:10; 10:3,13,17; 11:5; 16:9; 18:9ff; 22:17ff; 23:11; 27:23. **18 On my menservants and on My maidservants:** Even the classes of men and women servants would work miracles. They would preach or teach by inspiration the marvelous word of God. **Prophecy:** This would be inspired preaching, singing, prayer and teaching (See comments 1 Co 12,14). **19,20 Wonders in heaven above:** The apocalyptic language which was used in the Old Testament to signify the downfall of nations was used by Joel to show the end of the Jewish nation (Is 13:9,10; 34:4; Jr 31:31ff; Ez 32:7; MI 4:1,5,6; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24,25; Lk 21:25; Rv 6:12). **21 Whoever calls on the name of the Lord:** Calling on the Lord would be the

19 *And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke.*

20 *The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious day of the Lord comes.*

21 *And it will come to pass that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

22 ¶ *"You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved by God among you by miracles and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.*

23 *"He was delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, and you by lawless hands have crucified and killed.*

24 *"But God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.*

25 *"For David says concerning Him, 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, so that I should not be shaken.*

26 *Therefore, my heart rejoiced and my tongue was glad. Moreover, my flesh will also rest in hope*

27 *because You will not leave My soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see decay.*

28 *You have made known to me the ways of life. You will make me full of joy with Your presence.'*

29 *"Brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.*

30 *"Therefore, being a prophet he knew that God had sworn to him with an oath that of the fruit of his body, He would seat one on his throne.*

plea of those who repentantly converted to Jesus by obedience to the gospel (Rm 10:13). When one recognizes his inability to save himself, he will call upon the grace of God for salvation.

22 A Man attested by God: On the day of Pentecost, Peter continued to proclaim that Jesus was divinely proven to be the Son of God by mighty deeds, wonders and signs which He did before thousands of people (See Jn 3:2; 5:6; At 10:38). His miraculous works were not done in secret. Everyone knew of His works (26:26). The wonders stimulated amazement in the minds of people. The signs signalled that God was with Him (Jn 3:2; 20:30,31). The purpose of miracles in the life of Jesus, therefore, was to testify to the fact that Jesus was sent from God. He was more than a good teacher of Israel. He was the Christ and Son of God (See comments Mt 16:13-16). **23 Determined purpose and foreknowledge of God:** God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit planned the scheme of redemption before the creation of the world. The Son carried out His fore-ordained death, burial and resurrection (Mt 26:4; At 3:18; 4:28; see Rv 13:8). However, God used the sinful acts of man in crucifying the Son in order to accomplish His redemption scheme for the atonement of man's sin. Though Satan had worked against the scheme of redemption, God turned the work of Satan against him in order to bring into existence the mystery of redemption that had been planned before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8). **Lawless hands:** God used the wickedness of Satan that was carried out in the behavior of evil men in order to accomplish the redemption of man (3:18; 4:28; Mt 26:4; Lk 22:22). God used the Jewish religious leaders who violated Old Testament law to have Jesus delivered over to the Romans for execution. **24 Whom God raised up:** Though crucified and buried in a Roman sealed tomb, God, the Father, raised Jesus from the dead (Rm 8:11; 1 Co 6:14; 2 Co 4:14; Ep 1:20; Cl 2:12). Jesus was bodily raised up in

order to give hope to those who obey the gospel that they will be raised when He comes again (Rm 6:5; 2 Co 5:1-8; 1 Th 4:13-18). **25** David prophesied of the resurrection of Jesus (Ps 16:8-11; see 1 Pt 1:10-12). The Lord was portrayed to be eternally before the face of Deity. He is now at the right hand of the Father (Hb 8:1) and is reigning over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22). **26** Though the flesh of Jesus would die, He would have hope of resurrection. **27** The Father would not allow Jesus' soul to stay in the hadean world of disembodied spirits. Nor would Jesus' flesh be allowed to deteriorate away. After being in Paradise in the hadean existence (Lk 23:43), Jesus was raised from the dead. The point here is that Jesus in soul and spirit did not remain in the tomb. His body was there but He was in Paradise (See comments 2 Co 12:1-4). **28** Jesus knew He would be resurrected because He had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again (Jn 10:17,18). He knew He would go back to the Father from whom He had come (Jn 14:28; 16:17,28).

29 The patriarch David: Peter then contrasted the death of David with the death of Jesus. David was still dead (13:36). Jesus still lives. Christianity is based on the fact of a living Founder. Christians do not worship the tomb of any dead patriarch or founder. They worship a risen Lord who is reigning in heaven as head over all things. **30 God had sworn:** Since David was an inspired prophet, he knew that God would resurrect One to sit upon his throne, which throne received authority from heaven (2 Sm 7:12-16; Ps 110:1; 132:11; 89:3,4; see Lk 1:31-33). Therefore, Jesus went to sit on the throne of heaven (Hb 8:1). David knew that when God swore with an oath it was as if it had already happened. **31 Spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ:** Since David foresaw the seating of One upon his throne, he prophesied of the resurrection of Jesus (Ps 16:31; 132:11; At 13:35). He prophesied that Jesus' soul would not be left disembodied in the hadean abode of the dead

31 “Foreseeing this, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see decay.

32 “This Jesus God has raised up, to which we all are witnesses.

33 “Therefore, being exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you now see and hear.

34 “For David did not ascend into the heavens. But he says himself, *‘The Lord said to*

my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand

35 until I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”

36 “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

37 ¶ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”

(Ps 16:10; see Is 53:10). Jesus' body would not decay in order to return to dust. **32** *We are all witnesses:* Peter affirmed that he and the other apostles personally witnessed Jesus after His resurrection (1:8; 3:15; Lk 24:48; see 1 Co 15:6). The strength of the apostles' witness to the resurrection of Jesus is seen in the testimony of their persecuted lives. They suffered great persecution because of their beliefs. One of Luke's arguments throughout Acts to the validity of Christianity is the fact that the apostles and early disciples who personally experienced Jesus and the manifestation of the supernatural through miracles, willingly suffered persecution for their beliefs. They willingly suffered death because they believed in the fact of the miraculous manifestation of God through Jesus.

33 At the very moment he was speaking, Peter affirmed that Jesus was reigning as King at the place of all authority in heaven (5:31; Hb 8:1; 1 Pt 3:22). His kingdom reign had been established in the heavens. Neither here nor anywhere else in the Scriptures is revealed another kingdom reign of Jesus that is yet to come. The totality of His reign is now expressed in His present authority as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). *The promise:* Peter affirmed that he and the eleven had received the miraculous gift of the promised Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26; 16:13). This reference to the promise, therefore, refers to the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Though there was the promise of salvation through the revelation of the mystery of God, it would be consistent throughout this sermon of Peter to affirm that the promise in Peter's speech also refers to the coming of the Spirit as prophesied in Joel 2:28. *Which you now see and hear:* The fact that the promise here refers to the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, is evidenced by the fact that Peter emphasizes the event of something that was seen and heard. Those in the audience could not deny the claims of Peter for they were all witnessing the miraculously divided tongues which had come upon the apostles. They were hearing the gospel preached through miraculously inspired languages. Herein is the definition of true miracles. They can be “seen and heard.” True miracles are revealed to the senses of man, and thus, are not hidden (See comments 4:14-16). **34** Peter stated that David was still in his tomb. He was not resurrected and did not ascend to heaven as the One he called Lord in the prophecy of Psalm 110:1. David prophesied that the Father had said to the Son to sit on His right hand of authority. The Father as Lord said to David's Lord, who was Jesus his descendant, to sit at His right hand (Ps 68:18; Mt 22:44; Lk 23:43; Jn 20:17; 1 Co 15:25; Ep

1:20; Hb 8:1). **35** From the right hand of the Father, Jesus reigns in a position of all authority. He will reign until the last enemy, which is death, is destroyed (See comments 1 Co 15:24-28). **36** *God has made this Jesus ... Lord and Christ:* Peter proclaimed that this Jesus the Jews had crucified had been made Lord of all things (Mt 28:18; 1 Pt 3:22). He was the anointed One, the Messiah of the Jews. He was the Messiah for which all Israel had been waiting for centuries. Peter thus concludes by warning those in Jerusalem who had crucified Jesus, that Jesus is now in heaven and He is there with all authority of a lord in control of all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:6-11; 1 Pt 3:22). The fact that He is now Lord of all things should move sincere people to submit to His lordship.

37 *Now when they heard this:* When those in Peter's audience who were sincere, heard of the lordship of Jesus and the fulfillment of prophecy which proclaimed Him to be the Messiah, they were smitten in their hearts. They were grieved and moved to do what they had to do in order to save themselves from the just punishment they deserved for crying out for the crucifixion of Jesus. *What shall we do:* The multitudes knew that Peter and the other apostles had been with Jesus. They knew, therefore, that only the apostles knew what they must do (See 16:30). **¶38** *Repent:* Peter said that each one who believed must repent. All must change their hearts, thinking and lives in response to God's grace that was revealed through Jesus (8:19; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Lk 13:3; 24:47). However, their belief and repentance would not take care of their sin. Belief and repentance were their response to what they should do in reference to the Savior of the world. This response must lead one to do that which God requires as a manifestation of remorse for one's sin. **Be immersed:** The Greek word that is used here (*baptizo*) means “to dip,” “plunge,” “immerse” or “overwhelm.” Every person who responds to God's grace that was revealed through Jesus on the cross (Ti 2:11), therefore, must be immersed in water (Jn 3:23) in order to unite with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Cl 2:12). In doing this, one comes into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Since Jesus died for us, we must die for Him (See 2 Tm 2:11,12). The people to whom Peter preached had to crucify themselves in a spiritual manner as they had physically crucified Jesus (Rm 6:6; Gl 2:20). Their obedience to the gospel resulted in remission of all their past sins (22:16; 1 Pt 3:21). They were thus born again of the water and Spirit (See comments Jn 3:3-5). Peter affirms here that upon their

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many

obedience they would also receive the blessing of the gift of the Holy Spirit which God had promised He would pour out upon all flesh. Their obedience to Peter's command to be baptized, therefore, was not a legal work in order to earn salvation. Their immersion would be a response to God's grace as it was revealed through Jesus whom they had crucified. **In the name of Jesus Christ:** Jesus was in heaven with all authority at the time Peter made these statements, and thus, it was by His authority that people are baptized (8:16; 10:48; 19:5; see comments Mt 28:19). **Remission:** This same Greek word is used in Mt 26:28. It is at the point of immersion that one contacts the blood of Christ, and thus, receives from God the remission of sins. It is God who remits one's sins by His grace. One does not obligate God to forgive sins through the action of immersion. Forgiveness of sins is the result of the free gift of God's grace. **Gift of the Holy Spirit:** This has been a greatly discussed statement and one that must first be understood in the context of Peter's audience. Peter's explanation must be accepted in the context of prophecies which led to the event of verses 1-4 and his statement of verses 16,17 concerning the fulfillment of the promise of Joel 2:28. Therefore, in view of "the promise" of the following verse 39 which refers us back to Joel 2:28 when the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit was made, it is consistent to affirm that Peter here refers to the Holy Spirit being poured out on "all flesh." Specific reference in the context is to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit which was openly given to the apostles on this day of Pentecost. However, we must also affirm that the result of this outpouring affected others through the laying on of the apostles' hands in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See comments 1:8; 8:18-20; Mk 16:16-20; Lk 24:49; 1 Co 12-14). Joel prophesied that the Spirit was to be poured out upon "all flesh." We must affirm, therefore, that all the work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation originated first with this outpouring in Acts 2. Originally, however, the Spirit gave miraculous power to the apostles and to the ones on whom the apostles personally laid their hands (8:18). By His own initiative the Spirit also came upon the Gentile household of Cornelius in order to prove a point to the Jewish Christians (See comments At 10; 1 Co 12:11). Joel 2:28 is definitely a prophecy of a miraculous reception of the Spirit. This understanding harmonizes with what Jesus promised both in Jn 7:37-39 and Mk 16:16-20. This also harmonizes with the conversion of the Samaritans in 8:12-20. The Samaritans did not receive the Spirit until the apostles had laid hands on them (8:17,18). This is also in agreement with 19:1-7 in the conversion of some Ephesians who did not receive the Spirit until Paul, an apostle, laid his hands on them after they had been baptized in the name of Jesus (19:2-6; see comments Gl 3:3ff). We must conclude, therefore, that this miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit ceased when all the Christ-sent apostles died. It ceased because only the apostles could transmit to other people the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands (See 8:18-20; Rm 1:11; 2 Tm 1:6). **Gift:** Notice that where the term "gift" is generally used in

reference to that which the Holy Spirit gives, it is in the context of the miraculous activity of the Spirit such as prophesying, speaking in languages and the other miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See 11:16,17; 10:44-46; see comments 8:18-20). In the New Testament the singular word "gift" would refer to the whole of the promise which was first poured out on the apostles. The plural word "gifts" of the Holy Spirit would refer to individual miraculous powers which resulted from the outpouring (1 Co 12:8ff). Only the Christ-sent apostles could give these gifts to others (8:18; compare the parallel use of the word gift in passages as 10:45-47; 11:17; Rm 12:6; 1 Co 12:4; Ep 4:8, 2 Tm 1:6). Peter's emphasis in his Pentecost lesson includes this fulfillment of the miraculous benefits of the Joel 2 prophecy. The secondary emphasis is on the indwelling of the Spirit in God's family that would not be defined with the word miraculous. This indwelling of the Spirit comes as a result of the obedient individual's choice and allowance of the Spirit to rule and guide one's life by the Spirit-inspired word of God. This would be a real and actual indwelling of the Spirit since the Spirit would be directing the life of the obedient by one's voluntary submission to the word of God. Therefore, the promise of Joel 2:28 would also include a non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit which continues with the believers until the final coming of Jesus. This belief is sustained by a literal understanding of passages as 1 Co 6:19 and Rm 8:9. Thus, the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh on Pentecost. The Spirit manifested His works in the first century through those whom He chose (1 Co 12:7,11). Though the word-confirming miraculous manifestations of the Spirit have ceased, His present indwelling will continue until Jesus comes again. This does not mean that God has ceased to work. He continues to work in the lives of Christians, which work is perceived by faith. Regardless of our understanding of verse 38 and all its implications concerning the work of the Spirit, one must affirm that all the work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation of time finds its beginning in Peter's affirmation that the promise of Joel 2:28 was fulfilled on Pentecost A.D. 30. Though we may not understand all the implications of the outpouring of the Spirit and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we do know that the Spirit will do what His work is in the life of the Christian regardless of our understanding of His work. His work in our lives is not controlled or limited by our understanding of His work. We do not presume to know all the workings of the Holy Spirit. Our limited knowledge of how God works does not limit His work in our lives. **39 The promise:** Paul wrote, "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Co 1:20). "Now to Abraham and His Seed were the promises made" (Gl 3:16; see Hb 6:12; 11:13). In these passages reference is made to promises in the plural. God made several promises to the fathers concerning the coming of the dispensation that Peter is here announcing. Therefore, there is no need to make the promise here to that which is discussed in verse 33. There was the promise of the Holy Spirit that would go to those who obeyed the gospel (See comments Mk 16:14-20). Some have affirmed that Peter here refers to

as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

40 ¶ And with many other words he testified and exhorted, saying, “Save yourselves from this perverse generation.”

41 Then those who received his word were immersed. And the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the

the promise of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on the apostles (vss 1-4). This would be the promise that was poured out on this very day upon the apostles (vs 33). Peter would thus be affirming that the promise of the Spirit was to all classes of people. All who would repentantly seek salvation in Christ would receive the blessings that would come as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this day. Both Jew and Gentile would receive the Spirit and all spiritual blessings (Ep 2:13). Though the manner by which they would receive the Spirit was not explained by Peter, they were promised that they would partake of the blessings of the Spirit. The fulfillment of this promise again moves us back in history to the prophecy of Joel 2:28, a unique prophecy in the Old Testament where God made a specific promise concerning the outpouring of the Spirit that would signify the beginning of a new dispensation. Jesus reaffirmed this promise to the apostles in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4. Peter announced its fulfillment at the beginning of this sermon in verses 16,17. Here he would be reaffirming that its fulfillment was to those of his immediate audience and to those who were “afar off.” Since the promise of verse 33 referred to the event of the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles, then it is affirmed by some that in order to be consistent we must affirm that the promise of the Spirit here would go beyond the apostles to all flesh. It is true that the promise of the Spirit was to all flesh. All that the Spirit would do in this dispensation since the outpouring in verses 1-4 and thereafter, was in fulfillment of the promise of God in reference to the Spirit’s work. However, since there were many promises of God concerning this dispensation of God’s work, we must not limit Peter’s use of the word promise in this context solely to the promise in reference to the Spirit. Since Peter is discussing remission of sins, and thus salvation, in this context he is talking about promises in reference to our salvation. **Afar off:** Those “afar off” would be the Gentiles and other immersed believers upon whom the apostles would later lay their hands in order that they receive the blessings of the outpouring of the Spirit as promised through Joel 2:28 (See 8:18-20; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11; 2 Tm 1:6). The promise of the Spirit in Joel 2:28 would go not to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles. The fulfillment of promises in reference to our salvation would go forth to all the world and to every nation (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). **As many as:** All Christians of all history receive the blessings of the promises of God. Through the miraculous outpouring and working of the Holy Spirit in the first century, the church was firmly established and the word of God was openly confirmed as God’s will for man (Mk 16:17,20; Hb 2:3,4). As a result of this outpouring, men were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the word of God. Therefore, the word of God which we have as a guide in life resulted from the promise which God made through Joel and was fulfilled in the first century. Though the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit ceased in the first century (1 Co 13:8-10), the Spirit continues to work on the hearts of men today through the preaching and

teaching of His word. He continues to dwell within the hearts of those who obediently submit to the instructions of His word. He continues to work in the lives of those who have submitted to the instructions of the Spirit-inspired word of God (See comments 20:32; 1 Co 9:18,19; Rm 8:9). Every aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit in Christianity, therefore, is a fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit that God made in the Old Testament (See Gl 3:14; Ep 1:13). All the promises of God in reference to our salvation have been fulfilled through Jesus (2 Co 1:20). **Our God will call:** God calls men unto Him by the preaching of the gospel (2 Th 2:14; see Rm 10:13,14). He sanctifies them by the word of truth as men bring their lives into conformity to God’s word (Jn 17:17; 1 Pt 1:21,22).

THE CHURCH BEGINS

40 With many other words: A few days before this day of Pentecost Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Dn 7:13,14; 1 Tm 6:15). On this day, Peter publicly announced for the first time in history this kingdom reign of Jesus (See Mt 16:18,19). After the initial message of the gospel, He continued to preach. He testified to the works of Jesus and urged people to respond to the lordship of the reigning King. **Be saved:** Men and women must voluntarily respond to God’s conditions for their salvation. God will not submit one to His will. As free-moral people, we are accountable to ourselves in reference to our response to the gospel (Ph 2:12,13). It is not the Holy Spirit who will save one. People must decide for themselves to respond to the gospel by obedience (4:4). **41 Gladly received his word were immersed:** Those who receive the messengers of Jesus also receive Jesus (Lk 10:16; Jn 13:20). Therefore, when one receives the preaching of the word of God, he receives Jesus when he obeys the word. On this day, all those who willingly and joyfully responded to the grace of God that was revealed through the gospel were immersed for the remission of their sins. They were immersed, not as a work, but as a response to the gospel of God’s grace. About 3,000 people submitted to the lordship of Jesus in their response to God’s grace through the gospel. They were added to the community of believers by God as a result of their immersion into Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27; 2 Tm 2:10). This obedience to the gospel brings the Father, Son and Holy Spirit into the life of the obedient who seek to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:3-9). **About three thousand:** The church of Christ (the called out assembly of God’s people) was now established. These who were immersed were the first souls who had submitted to the announced kingdom reign of Jesus. When the word of the kingdom was preached, men and women responded to the lordship of Jesus. The respondents on earth to the kingdom reign of Jesus in heaven, therefore, is the church on earth. The church is the assembly of those who have been called out of the world by their voluntary obedience to the gospel (See comments Mt 16:18,19). **Souls were added:** God is the one who adds to His flock (See vs

apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul. And many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 Now all who believed were together and had all things in common.

45 And they sold their possessions and goods, and divided them to all, as everyone had need.

46 And continuing daily with one accord in

the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and sincerity of heart,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Chapter 3

1 ¶ Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth

47). Whenever one obeys the gospel in the right way and for the right reasons anywhere in the world, he is added to the universal church of Christ, and thus, the brother or sister of all those who have also done the same. It is God's work to both determine the conditions upon which the brotherhood of believers is established and to add to His flock those who submit to those conditions. **42 They continued steadfastly:** Those who submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus continued in unity with the apostles by submitting to the apostles' inspired teaching. The believers continued in (1) the apostles' teaching (Mt 28:20), (2) unity – fellowship – with the apostles (1 Jn 1:3), (3) the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:14-23; 1 Co 10:16; 11:23-25), and (4) prayers (1 Th 5:17). **43 Wonders and signs:** The apostles were miraculously confirmed to be messengers of God (See Mk 1:20; Hb 2:3,4). People feared because of the great manifestation of the presence of God through the miracles of the apostles. **44** All those who had submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus and had humbled themselves to His lordship remained together as one (1 Co 1:20; Ph 1:27; Ep 4:4-6). They were God's community of new creatures (2 Co 5:17). They were called out of the world by their obedience to the gospel (1 Th 2:12; 2 Th 2:14). Because of their mutual love of one another, they shared their possessions (4:32-37; 5:2). **45** Some Jews who were now Christians had journeyed long distances in order to come to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost. They were now growing low on provisions because they continued learning at the apostles' feet. Therefore, resident Christians of Jerusalem sold their possessions in order to raise money for these visiting Jews. This was done in order that they continue in Jerusalem to receive more teaching from the apostles before they returned to their home countries to proclaim what they had heard and experienced. The resident disciples understood the commission of Jesus, and thus, were benevolent toward those who would take the gospel to all the world (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; see Is 2:1-4). The resident Jewish Christians also believed Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus, disinvested their interests in order to accomplish the mission of Jesus throughout the world (See comments Mt 24).

46 In the temple: The new converts to Christianity continued evangelism in the temple courtyard (Lk 24:53). This place of evangelism evidently continued for some time after the establishment of the church (5:42). It was the place where the religiously dedicated came, and thus, offered an ideal opportunity for the preaching of the gospel. Christians would do well today to go to where religious people go. Every opportunity should be

taken to preach the gospel. **Breaking bread:** They shared common meals with one another in their homes. They praised and thanked God for their food (20:7; 1 Co 10:16). Fellowship meals were a common practice of the early church. During such love feasts the Lord's Supper was celebrated (See comments 1 Co 11:17-34). **47** The disciples gained respect from the unbelievers because they served and praised God with holy living. **The Lord added:** Every day more people submitted to the lordship of Jesus by obeying the gospel. People obeyed the gospel daily because the gospel was being preached daily (5:42). Their names were recorded by God in the book of life, and thus, they were added to the community of the submitted believers. The church was composed of a community of believers who had submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus which Peter first announced on this day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Therefore, on this day the church was established when people submitted to the lordship of Jesus. The church is thus the manifestation on earth of the kingdom reign of Jesus in heaven. Those who submit to the kingship of Jesus, obey the King's word. World evangelism began on this day as men and women from all the world obeyed the gospel and were prepared in teaching to take the gospel to all the world. When these first converts returned to their homelands from which they had come for this particular Passover and Pentecost in Jerusalem, world evangelism took place in a short time. The global body of Christ rapidly expanded throughout the world as those first converts returned home in order to share with their friends and relatives what they had experienced and learned in Jerusalem (See Is 2:1-4). God's first messengers to preach the gospel to the world, therefore, were those who were the first converts in the context of Acts 2. In the following year another Passover/Pentecost occurred when other Jews came to Jerusalem. The apostles were there waiting for them as they did for several years after this initial conversion in A.D. 30.

Chapter 3

A CRIPPLED MAN IS PUBLICLY HEALED

1 God's testimony of the truth of Christianity continued after Pentecost. For some time after the establishment of the church in Acts 2 Christians went to the Jewish temple to teach that Jesus was the Messiah. They did this primarily to preach and teach to those who gathered there during set times as this time of prayer at 3:00^{pm} (2:46; 5:42; see Dn 6:10; 9:21; Lk 1:10). On one occasion, Peter and John went to a regular time of prayer the disciples had in the temple courtyard. On

hour.

2 And a certain man *who was lame* from his mother's womb was carried to the temple, whom they laid daily at the gate that is called Beautiful, to ask alms of those who entered into the temple.

3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms.

4 Then Peter, fixing his eyes on him with John, said, "Look at us."

5 And he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

7 And he took him by the right hand and

lifted *him* up. And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 And leaping up, he stood and walked. Then he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

9 Now all the people saw him walking and praising God.

10 And they knew that it was he who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

11 ¶ Now as the lame man, who was healed, held to Peter and John, all the people, full of amazement, ran together to them at what was called the Porch of Solomon.

12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered to the people, "You men of Israel, why do you

their way, they encountered a crippled man. **2** The crippled man in the temple area was over forty years old (4:22). He had begged daily on the steps before the temple gate called "Beautiful." Everyone knew of him for he continually begged for food and money from those who went by him into the temple. This was one of those individuals Jesus had not healed on His visits to the temple. The healing of this crippled man was thus saved for this occasion when Peter and John healed him.

3 When this man saw Peter and John, he asked for something to be given to him. We wonder if he had asked of Jesus for something during one of Jesus' three trips to Jerusalem during His ministry, or even before Jesus began His ministry. **4 *Fixing his eyes on him:*** Peter asked the man to give them his direct attention. With an intense gaze, as is indicated by the Greek text, Peter and John demanded the attention of this man who had been crippled for forty years (4:22). They were not calling on him to have faith, but to focus on them for something other than a contribution of material things. **5 *Expecting to receive something:*** The man responded to Peter, expecting that Peter and John were about to give him some food or money. **6** Peter responded by saying that he had no money; he had no gold or silver. He also was poor (See comments Ph 4:12). But Peter did have the authority to command God's miraculous power which was more valuable than money. Freely he had received the authority to heal so freely he healed (Mt 10:8). Therefore, by the authority of Jesus' name, Peter unleashed the healing power of God upon the man. Peter did not call for an expression of faith on the part of the crippled man. He simply healed him. Nowhere in the Bible is faith in God made a condition upon which a miracle was worked. God's power is not determined by the faith of men. **7** When Peter raised the man up by his hand, his crippled ankles and feet were instantly healed. This miracle, as all miracles, was instantaneous and visible for all (Mk 1:41,42). **8** The healed man was so jubilant that he jumped and leaped everywhere. He praised God for his healing because he knew that the source of his healing did not originate with Peter and John. **9 *Saw:*** Everyone saw the excitement of the man

(4:16,21). A miracle is here defined as an event that can be perceived through the senses. True miracles were not hidden from the sight and sound of men. Though God can work within an individual to bring about health, such work would not be called a miracle according to the biblical definition of a miracle as explained by incidents as the miracle in this context (See comments Js 5:13-15). The religious world today confuses the biblical definition of a miracle in reference to the work of God today in the lives of disciples. God continues to work, but there is a difference between what is defined as a "miracle" in this and other biblical texts, and the work of God today to answer our prayers for the restoration of health or His changing of events in history. **10** Everyone knew that it was the man who had begged from them every day for many years as they came and went from the temple (See Jn 9:8). Luke's recording of this particular miracle was for the purpose of giving evidence that this miracle could not have been the work of someone who worked magical tricks. The fact that the crippled man was so well-known adds to the fact of his healing. Many people did not see the actual healing take place. Because they had not seen the healing by Peter, they were now completely puzzled as to how he could walk. ***Filled with wonder and amazement:*** True miracles cause this response from the multitudes, not just a few who already believe in the miracles. It was the purpose of miracles to stimulate some response. The response came from those who beheld the miracles, not simply from those who already believed.

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF POWER

11 *Held on to Peter and John:* The healed man clung to Peter and John. He wanted to be with them because he was so grateful for his healing (See Lk 8:38). ***People ran together:*** As a result of the healing, an amazed multitude of people hurriedly gathered around Peter and John at the place in the temple area called Solomon's Porch. They wanted an explanation for the healing. Herein is revealed one purpose for miracles. Miracles were meant to arouse the attention of unbelievers in order that the gospel be preached (Mk 16:17,20). **12** After all the miraculous wonders which

marvel at this? Or why do you look so earnestly at us as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man walk?

13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go.

14 "But you denied the Holy and Just One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.

15 "And you killed the Prince of life, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

16 "And on the basis of the faith in His name, this man, whom you see and know, was made strong. Yes, the faith that *comes* through Him

has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 "And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

18 "But those things that God before had announced by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

19 "Therefore, repent and be converted so that your sins may be blotted out, in order that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

20 "And that He may send Christ Jesus, who was before appointed for you,

21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things that God has

the apostles had previously worked in the city, Peter asked the people why they would believe that such power could personally originate from them. Peter stated that they were mere men. No man had miraculous power that originates from himself. Man is only given the authority to command supernatural power which originates from God alone. So herein is reaffirmed the purpose of miracles. They were to confirm the true messengers of God (See Mk 16:20; Jn 3:2; 20:30,31; Hb 2:3,4). **13 You delivered up:** Peter thus took the opportunity to convict the Jerusalem multitude for their crucifixion of Jesus. They were responsible because they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah that their fathers had looked forward to receiving. The very people to whom Peter now speaks were only a few weeks before wildly bitter against Jesus (See Mt 27:20; Mk 15:11-14). Their rage had driven them to crucify Jesus. **14 You denied the Holy One and the Just:** Jesus was holy before God and stood just before Pilate. Nevertheless, the Jews had rejected the Holy and Just Jesus, who was the Messiah (Ps 16:10; Is 45:21; Zc 9:9). Instead, they asked Pilate to free Barabbas (Mt 27:20; Mk 15:11-14; Jn 18:40; At 13:28). They had the murderer released and the Mediator crucified. **15** They had crucified the One who was the Prince of eternal life (2:30-36). Nevertheless, God did not allow Jesus' body to decay away in a tomb outside Jerusalem. He did not allow His spirit and soul to remain in hades. Therefore, the Father raised Jesus from the dead (2:24; Ep 1:20). **We are witnesses:** Peter and John, as well as the other apostles, were witnesses of Jesus after His resurrection because He had appeared to them after the resurrection (1:22; 2:32). **16 Through faith in His name:** Peter said that it was his faith in the authority of Jesus that made it possible for him to heal the crippled man (See comments Mt 9:22; Lk 17:6). In other words, the faith which they had in Jesus resulted in the healing (See 4:10; 14:9). The faith was with Peter and John, not with the crippled man. The condition for the crippled man's healing was not his faith in God.

CALL TO REPENTANCE

17 You did it in ignorance: Peter reminded the

audience that if those who were visiting Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified had really understood that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, they would not have joined the crowds who refused to accept Jesus. Therefore, they would not have cried out for the crucifixion of Jesus (Lk 23:34; Jn 16:3; 1 Co 2:8; 1 Tm 1:13; see At 13:27; 17:30). Even if the resident religious leaders actually understood that Jesus was God on earth they would not have crucified Him. **18 He has thus fulfilled:** God used the ignorance of the people and the wickedness of Jesus' enemies to carry out His eternal plan to save man. All these things God had foretold through the prophets (26:22; Ps 22; Is 50:6; 53:5; Dn 9:26; Hs 6:1; Zc 13:6; 1 Pt 1:10-12; Lk 24:44). The cross was not an accident that occurred as a result of the Jews' rejection of Jesus (See Jn 1:11). It was in the foreknowledge of God that Jesus go to the cross for the salvation of all men (See Ep 1:3-14; 3:3-5). **19 Repent therefore and be converted:** Peter commanded the people to turn to God in sorrow and submit to His conditions for their salvation (2:38; 26:20; Lk 13:3). God would forgive all their sins upon their obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:3-6). **Times of refreshing:** If they were baptized for the remission of their sins, they would become new creatures (Rm 6:3-6; 2 Co 5:17). They would become new creatures by coming into a covenant relationship with Jesus (26:20; see comments Jn 3:3-5). If they were born again they would be spiritually revived in their relationship with God (See 22:16). **20** They must repent and turn to God through obedience to the gospel in order to receive Jesus who was prophesied by the prophets to be the Savior of the world (Ps 111:9; Is 53; Jr 25:5,6; 30:10; Dn 9:24-26; Mt 3:1). **21 Restoration of all things:** Jesus is now reigning (1 Tm 6:15) and will reign on David's throne from heaven until the last enemy, death, is destroyed (1 Co 15:24-28). Peter proclaimed that men must be restored to a reconciled spiritual condition as Adam had with God before his sin in the garden of Eden. This would happen when men accepted Jesus as the Messiah and Savior. After men and women have responded to the gospel throughout this dispensation of time, Jesus will then come to do away with this world in order to bring the saved into a

spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

22 “For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘A prophet will the Lord your God raise up to you from your brethren, like me. Him you will hear in all things whatever He will say to you.’

23 ‘And it will come to pass that every soul who will not hear that prophet, will be destroyed from among the people.’

24 “Yes, all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold these days.

25 “You are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant that God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed.’

26 “When God raised up His Servant Jesus and He sent Him to you first to bless you by

turning every one of you away from his iniquities.”

Chapter 4

1 ¶ And as they spoke to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came upon them,

2 being disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

4 But many of those who heard the word believed. And the number of the men was about five thousand.

5 ¶ Now it came to pass on the next day that their rulers and elders and scribes,

new heavens and earth (See comments 2 Pt 3:13). **22 A Prophet:** Moses prophesied that Jesus would be a prophet, and like himself, a leader of many peoples (7:37; Dt 18:15,18,19). Moses urged the Jews, as Peter did his audience, to listen to this prophet. Peter thus identifies the prophesied Prophet of the Old Testament to be Jesus. **23** Moses had instructed Israel that they were to listen to the Prophet (See Jn 5:46). If they did not, then they would be cut off from God. Those who would not be obedient to Jesus, therefore, would be cut off from God's people. **24 Foretold these days:** Beginning with Samuel, all the prophets confirmed what Moses had prophesied concerning these days of the Messiah (See 2 Sm 7:12; Is 53; Ps 22; Lk 24:44). There are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Jesus and His work. God's scheme of redemption is interwoven throughout the Old Testament in that all prophecies pointed Israel toward the salvation that would come through the Messiah. **25 Sons of the prophets:** They were heirs of the promises that were made through the prophets (See 2:39; Rm 9:4,8; 15:8; see comments Gl 3:26-29). God had made a covenant with Abraham that He renewed with Isaac and Jacob (Gn 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Jesus, who was the blessing that was promised to come through Abraham's seed, would be a blessing to all who would obey Him. **26** Because the prophecies were first made to the Jews, Jesus came first to the Jews (Mt 15:24; Jn 4:22; At 13:46; Rm 1:16; 2:9,10). Those who will voluntarily obey Jesus will turn away from sin (Is 42:1; Mt 1:21).

Chapter 4

TRUTH VERSUS THE RELIGIONS OF MAN

1 Came upon them: On the particular occasion, Peter and John were speaking to the people that Jesus was the resurrected and reigning Lord of all things. However, as they were speaking the Jewish religious rulers came to stop their preaching to the people. **Sadducees:** This group was particularly upset about

the preaching of the apostles because they did not believe in the resurrection (See Mt 22:23). **2 Greatly disturbed:** These leaders were exasperated with the apostles' preaching of Jesus as Lord and the peoples' acceptance of the apostles and their teaching. Their positions of leadership in Jerusalem were endangered by the apostles' proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Multitudes were accepting their message, and thus, accepting their spiritual leadership. **3 Laid hands on them:** Because it was late in the evening, the religious leaders physically took Peter and John and placed them in custody until they could be questioned and threatened the following day.

RAPID CHURCH GROWTH

4 The truth of Christianity was manifested by its growth in the face of much opposition. During these early beginnings of Christianity, multitudes of people were submitting to the lordship of Jesus. They were turning away from the invented religions of man and submitting to the lordship of Jesus in their lives. At this time in the history of the church the number of disciples was about five thousand men, which meant that the total group, including women, could possibly have been well over ten thousand disciples. Luke frequently mentions the growth of the church in Acts in order to prove a point (See 5:14,42; 6:7; 8:4; 9:31,42; 11:19; 12:24; 13:49; 14:27; 15:35; 19:20). The point is that religions of men do not grow rapidly as the church grew after its establishment in Acts 2. One can answer the rapid growth of the church only on the basis that God was miraculously proving the message of the disciples (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4).

CHRISTIANITY IS FOUNDED ON THE SUPERNATURAL

5,6 Rulers, elders and scribes: The day after Peter and John were arrested, the combination of all the Jewish religious power structure of the Sanhedrin gathered to confront and suppress the evidence of the lame man who was healed by Peter and John. **Annas**

6 and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together in Jerusalem.

7 And when they had set them in *their* midst, they asked, "By what authority or by what name have you done this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "You rulers of the people and elders of Israel,

9 "if we this day are judged for a good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he has been made whole,

10 "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by Him this man stands here before you whole.

11 "He is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, who has become the chief cornerstone.

12 "And there is salvation in no other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

13 ¶ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they marveled. And they took note of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And seeing the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the Council, they conferred among themselves,

16 saying, "What will we do to these men?"

... **Caiaphas:** See comments Lk 3:2; Jn 1:49; 18:13.

John and Alexander: These were relatives of Annas and Caiaphas. **7** In the meeting hall of the Sanhedrin the religious leaders surrounded Peter and John in order to interrogate them concerning the healing of the crippled man. In their questions to the two apostles, they wanted to know the source of their power and the authority of their actions. A similar question had been asked of Jesus by those who falsely accused Him (Mt 21:23). In their confrontation with the work of God in the apostles' lives, these religious leaders did not deny that a miracle had been worked. The problem was that their position of prominence in the community was being threatened by the prominence of the apostles. They cared more for their position of authority than the healing of a poor lame man. Religious leaders whose positions in the community are threatened by the word and work of God will often rise up with unreasonable opposition against those who preach the truth. Nevertheless, the truth must be preached regardless of the opposition of those who do not love the truth (See 2 Th 2:10-12).

8 In the face of opposition and having been filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter delivered an inspired message to these persecutors of the church (Lk 12:11,12; Mt 10:17-19; see Mk 13:11; Lk 12:11,12; 21:14,15). The boldness of great church leaders is revealed in the midst of opposition. **9,10** Peter was direct in his speech. He was not intimidated. He stated that it was by the authority of Jesus that this act of kindness was done. The source of Christian varification by miracles was above man. He preached the gospel event by identifying it as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (2:22; 3:6,16; 1 Co 15:1-4). By the same power that Jesus was raised from the dead, the crippled man was healed. The conclusion to his argument was obvious. Since they had healed the crippled man, God was with them. **11** **The stone which was rejected:** The cornerstone in construction in ancient times was the marker by which the measurements of the building were determined. Jesus was the prophesied guiding rule of life. The Jewish

leaders should have received this guiding rule in order to lay the foundation for God's house (Is 28:16; Ps 118:22; Mt 21:42; Rm 9:32ff; Ep 2:20; 1 Pt 2:4-7). However, they rejected Him (Jn 1:11). **12** **Nor is there salvation in any other:** Regardless of their rejection, Jesus is the only authority through whom men can be reconciled to the Father (Is 42:1,6; Dn 7:24; Mt 1:21; At 10:43; Jn 14:6; 1 Tm 2:5,6). All other religions were useless in man's struggle to acquire eternal life. Neither can men change the truth of God and the church to suit their own desires (Gl 1:6-9). Men must come to God on the terms which God demands through Jesus. Men must be willing to do that which God requires for salvation (See comments Mt 7:21-23).

THE APOSTLES MANIFEST BOLDNESS

13 **The boldness of Peter and John:** The Jewish leaders marvelled at the confidence and boldness that Peter and John manifested. They manifested such even though they were men which had not been trained or influenced in the Jewish religious schools (See Mt 11:25; 1 Co 1:27). Such confidence and boldness could be understood only upon the basis that they had actually experienced a supernatural revelation of God through Jesus. Their behavior clearly manifested that they had been in the company of Jesus and had been influenced by His teaching. Because Jesus had invested His life and teaching in them, they were a testimony for Jesus to all those with whom they had contact. **14** **They could say nothing against it:** Even these unbelievers and murderers of Jesus could not deny the public miracle of a true healing. And so it is with true miracles. They cannot be denied, even by unbelievers. For this reason, true miracles must be manifested to the senses of those who behold the miracles. **15,16** Everyone in Jerusalem had either heard of or seen the healing of the crippled man (3:11). Nevertheless, the religious leaders were so hardened of heart that they would not accept Jesus, though they realized that a remarkable miracle had occurred. **17** **Severely threaten them:** In order to silence their preaching, the religious leaders resorted to

For indeed, a notable miracle has been done by them *and is* apparent to all those who dwell in Jerusalem. And we cannot deny it.

17 “But in order that it spread no further among the people, let us sternly threaten them so that they speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

18 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you more than to God, you judge.

20 “For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard.”

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way that they might punish them, because of the people, for all glorified God for what was done.

22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was worked.

23 ¶ And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

24 Now when they heard this, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord, and said, “Lord, You *are* God, who have made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,
25 “who through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of our father, Your servant David, said, ‘*Why did the nations rage and the people devise futile things?*

26 *The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.*’

27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel,

28 “to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done.

29 “And now, Lord, behold their threats and

intimidation against Peter and John. They agreed among themselves to threaten Peter and John in order to make them afraid to speak their convictions (5:40).
18 By their presumptuous Jewish legal authority, they commanded the apostles not to preach Jesus (5:28,40).

19 The apostles made the religious leaders understand that it was their own personal decision, not God's, to judge whether or not they should preach Jesus (5:29). Since they had personally experienced the work of God in their lives and the lives of multitudes who were healed, they could not but speak what they had seen and heard. **20** *We cannot but speak*: The apostles affirmed that they had no choice concerning what they preached. They knew the facts of Jesus and the resurrection. Since their faith in the future was based on the facts of the past, they had to speak what was true, for they had seen and heard the Son of God (See 1:8; 2:32; 22:15; 1 Jn 1:1-3). They preached the facts that they had personally experienced. We preach by faith in the facts that have been recorded in order to produce faith (Rm 10:17). Because they walked by fact in the things they personally experienced, we walk by faith in their testimony.

21 The public's knowledge of the apostles' work saved them on this occasion. They had publicly stood up and proclaimed Jesus. Therefore, all the people glorified God because of the apostles' word (See Mt 21:26; Lk 20:6,19; 22:2). The religious leaders knew the public's favor of the apostles. Therefore, they had to let them go in order to save face and prevent opposition against themselves. **22** The strength of the miracle of healing the lame man was in the fact that everyone who had frequented the temple knew the healed man, for he had begged there for many years. This was not a miracle which was secretly worked. It was one that was witnessed by a great number of people. It could not

even be denied by those who opposed Christianity. True miracles cannot be denied. They can be witnessed and confirmed by many people.

THE DISCIPLES GROW BOLDER

23,24 *They went to their own*: After their release, Peter and John went straight to the company of the disciples. Though the disciples were meeting in homes throughout Jerusalem, they knew the homes to which they could go. When the disciples heard of the apostles' bold stand before the intimidating religious leaders, they praised God in prayer. They were reassured that the God that had created everything could easily deliver the saints from religious oppression (Ex 20:11; 2 Kg 19:15; Ne 9:6; Ps 146:6). **25,26** David had prophesied that the unbelieving nations would rage against God's work (Ps 2:1,2). *Why did the nations rage*: Political leaders would stand against Christians who sought to carry out God's work to proclaim the good news to all. Those who walk in darkness will always wage war against the sons of light. They will do such because the preaching of the truth manifests the shame of those who refuse to live according to God's will. **27** The leadership of Israel, Rome, the unbelieving world, and the nation of Israel, stood against Jesus and His disciples (Lk 22:2; 23:1,8). Regardless of such great opposition, the church continued to grow. **28** *Determined before to be done*: God used the wicked motives and deeds of Jesus' enemies to carry out His foreplanned scheme to offer Jesus as the Passover Lamb for the sins of man (2:23; 3:18; see Is 53; Ps 22). God uses Satan's work to work against Satan. Because of this work of God, all things are working together for good (Rm 8:28). **29** Though Peter and John manifested great boldness, they and the disciples asked God to grant them more boldness that they continue to proclaim Jesus in the face of hostile

grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word

30 “by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”

31 Now when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together. Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they spoke the word of God with boldness.

32 ¶ Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. And no one said *that* any of the things that he possessed was his own. But they had all things *in* common.

33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

34 Nor was there any among them who

lacked, for as many as were owners of land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold

35 and laid *them* at the apostles' feet. And distribution was made to everyone according as each had need.

36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is translated, The Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,

37 having land, sold *it* and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

Chapter 5

1 ¶ But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

2 And he kept back *some* of the price, his wife also being aware *of it*. And he brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

opposition (4:13,31; 9:27; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; Ep 6:19). They knew that because the world hated Jesus, it would hate them (Jn 15:18,19). **30** The disciples asked God to continue confirming the preached word by His manifestation of the supernatural power of His existence (Mk 1:20; At 2:22,43; 5:12; Hb 2:3,4; 1 Co 2:4). **31 Shaken:** God answered their immediate prayer with a miraculous manifestation of His presence. The earth quaked. The Holy Spirit continued to inspire their preaching which they did with great boldness. **Filled with the Holy Spirit:** The definition of being filled with the Spirit here is the same as verse 8. Such resulted in the disciples speaking by inspiration the word of God.

THE DISCIPLES MANIFEST LOVE AND UNITY

32 One heart and one soul: The disciples maintained unity among themselves which was the blessing of God because of their common obedience to the gospel and common cause (See 5:12; Rm 15:5,6; 1 Co 1:10; 2 Co 13:11; Ep 4:4-6; Ph 1:27; 2:2; 1 Pt 3:8). They continued to be together and enjoy a common fellowship with one another (5:12; Rm 15:5,6; 2 Co 13:11; Ph 1:27; 2:2). The Judean church practiced the sharing of their possessions in order that the physical needs of all Christians be met (See comments 2:44,45). **33** God continued to miraculously confirm the apostles' witness that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead (1:8; Mk 16:16-20; Hb 2:3,4). As a result, people of the community showed great favor toward the disciples. The people believed the apostles' message of the gospel. **Witness:** See 1:22; Lk 24:48. **Grace:** This same Greek word is translated "favor" in 2:47. Therefore, the disciples here have gained great favor in the eyes of the multitudes. However, the misguided and self-deceived religious leaders harshly opposed them. **34** In the Christian community no one went without what was necessary for living. Because they knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies (See Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21), and because of

their loving care for one another, they sold their possessions (2:45). **Sold:** Luke does not tell how they should sell their possessions. They simply sold their material possessions in order to raise funds for the work of the church. Not everyone sold their houses, for they met in the homes of the members throughout the city. **35** The money of the sales was brought to the apostles in order that distribution be made to all who had need (5:2). **36** Barnabas was a Jewish Levite who also had the name, Joses. His name was changed to Barnabas (13,14) which means "son of exhortation" (11:22,30; 12:25; 13-15; 1 Co 9:6; Gl 2:1,9,13; Cl 4:10). Joses' name was changed by the apostles because he had a gift of encouraging people. As a Levite, Barnabas owned a heritage of land in Palestine (Compare Ex 18:20,21; Jr 1:1; 32:6-15). However, he knew that the Old Testament system was over. The Old Law had died on the cross and all Christians were made dead to all other religious laws by the body of Christ (Rm 7:4; Cl 2:14). He thus sold his inheritance and gave the total price of the sale to the care of others. These Jewish Christians were making a great sacrifice because land ownership was a strong custom and law of the Old Testament. Their fellowship with one another was manifested in the fact that they sold their lands in order to minister to the needs of the church as a whole.

Chapter 5

GOD UNLEASHES PUBLIC JUDGMENT

1,2 On this occasion, Ananias and Sapphira used a common brotherhood work of loving fellowship as an occasion for selfish ambition and recognition in the church. The occasion is that Ananias and Sapphira sold one of their possessions and held back part of the money when they made a contribution for the benevolent needs of the church. Their sin was that they said to Peter and the church that they had contributed everything they had received from the sale of the possession. They thus lied concerning their

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land?"

4 "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your own authority? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God."

5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came on all those who heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wrapped him up and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" And she said,

"Yes, for so much."

9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and will carry you out."

10 Then she fell down immediately at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things.

12 ¶ And by the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

13 And the rest did not dare join with them, but the people highly esteemed them.

contribution. **3** **Lie to the Holy Spirit:** When one lies to the church as Ananias and Sapphira did, he is being filled with the motives and actions of Satan (Mt 4:10; Lk 22:3; Jn 13:2,27). The lie of Ananias and Sapphira, therefore, was not actually to Peter or the church. It was to the One with whom Peter had been filled, the Holy Spirit. **4** **Was it not your own:** Actually, Ananias and Sapphira did not have to sell their possession. It was their choice concerning the selling of the possession and the amount that should be contributed. Though selling of possessions and distributing to the needy was an example of the church which was approved by the apostles, it was not a binding example (See 4:32-37). However, the proud motives of Ananias and Sapphira to be recognized by the church moved them to do the deed of lying to God. **5** **Fell down and breathed his last:** As a result of Ananias' deception, he was immediately struck dead by God. The reason for this immediate punishment was evidently to manifest for the rest in the church for all time that God will reign justice upon sin. One must not feel that he will escape punishment for sin simply because his sin is not disclosed. **Great fear came upon all:** As a result of Ananias' death, the church became greatly afraid. The fear of God that was manifested in the hearts of the church on this occasion must be carried on throughout its existence here on earth. The purpose of the immediate punishment is manifested in the fact of the great fear that came upon the church. **6** **Buried him:** After Ananias was dead, his body was wrapped according to Jewish custom (Jn 19:40). This judged brother was then carried away for burial.

7 Three hours after Ananias died, Sapphira came into the presence of those who had just witnessed the death of her husband. She was unaware of Ananias' death because no one told her what had happened. **8** Knowing that the example of God's judgment must be imprinted upon the minds of the disciples for all time, Peter presented the occasion for Sapphira to join her husband in deceit and death. Those who join with sin must also suffer the consequences of sin. **9** She tested

the Spirit by thinking that God does not know evil plans and deceitful hearts (Mt 4:7). The fact is that God knows our hearts. **10** She also lied, and thus, fell immediately dead before the apostles and the church. Though judgment is not immediate in the church today as in this case, judgment will come when Jesus comes again (2 Th 1:7-9). God is saving up wrath for final judgment upon all those who would seek to deceive His flock for their own selfish ambitions as Ananias and Sapphira (Rm 1:18; 2:5; 1 Th 1:10; Rv 6:16). There is no room in the church for leaders to use the church as the occasion to exercise their desires to be prominent among men (Compare comments 8:22-24; 3 Jn 9,10). **11** **Great fear came upon all:** The example of immediate judgment in this case accomplished its purpose. Fear came upon all who heard of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira (See 2:43; 5:5; 19:17). **Church:** This is the first time after the establishment of the church on the day of Pentecost that the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is here translated "church," is used in reference to the community of God. The word refers here to God's called out assembly of people who have submitted to the lordship of Jesus. The word is also used in 19:32 in reference to a general assembly.

GOD CONFIRMS THE APOSTLES

12 **Many signs and wonders:** Throughout the early beginnings of the church, God continued to confirm with miracles the apostles and their preaching (2:43; 4:30; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12; Mk 1:20; 2 Co 12:12; Hb 2:3,4). The disciples preached and taught every day from Solomon's Porch of the temple where they regularly met as a brotherhood of believers (3:11; 4:32).

13 **None of the rest dared join them:** No one who knew the works of the apostles dared claim the authority and position of the apostles because they understood that the apostles were men from God (2:43; 4:21). None tried to imitate their miraculous works. In these first months of the existence of the church it was God's intention to firmly establish the apostles as the source from which truth for the church must come. The people

14 And all the more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

15 As a result, they brought out the sick into the streets and laid *them* on beds and pallets so that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There also came a multitude *out* of the cities around Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were afflicted with unclean spirits. And they were all being healed.

17 ¶ Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation.

18 And they laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

19 But during the night the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,

20 “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”

21 And when they heard *this*, they entered into the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest came and those who were with him. And they called the Council together and all the Senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 ¶ But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,

23 saying, “Truly, we found the prison se-

had before feared the Jewish religious leaders (Jn 9:22). Now they fear the apostles. **14 Added to the Lord:** Those who were old enough to believe the witness of the apostles were added to the Lord by God upon obedience to the gospel (See Rm 6:3-6). Added to the Lord is the same as being added to the body of believers (2:41,47). Men and women, or adults, were obeying the gospel by immersion for remission of sins (2:38). The history of the church here indicates that when the members of the church are doing the work of Jesus, the church grows. **15** God gave great miraculous testimony to all the apostles (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). He allowed unique healings to take place by their hands in order to reaffirm that they were God's special witnesses of Jesus and His resurrection (See 19:12). The atmosphere of people's attitudes in Jerusalem was of great excitement. It was as in the days of Jesus' personal ministry (See Mk 1:32-34). **16 They were all healed:** This was certainly the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to the apostles in John 14:12. “*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also. And greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*” People came from all the area cities around Jerusalem. They brought their sick, even those who were possessed with unclean spirits (See comments Mt 4:24; Mk 16:17,18). Therefore, the apostles were miraculously confirmed to have authority and power over every manifestation of Satan. As a result, great multitudes were drawn to the preaching of the apostles.

THE APOSTLES ARE UNJUSTLY ARRESTED

17 The high priest rose up: This was either Annas or Caiaphas (4:6). The popularity and power of the apostles became too much for the religious leaders of the Jews who loved to be first among the people (See comments Mt 23:6,7; 3 Jn 9,10). The high priest and Jewish Sadducees recognized that their leadership positions were being threatened by the apostles. Their guilt over the murder of Jesus was continually brought before public eyes by the preaching of the apostles who proclaimed that they had crucified Jesus (See 2:23). As a result these pompous religious leaders were jealous, intimidating, and possibly, some were stricken with guilt

for having an innocent man put to death (See 4:2; 6:7; 13:45). **18** The religious leaders' jealousy was too great for them to remain silent. Therefore, these frustrated men unleashed their indignation upon the apostles by arresting and imprisoning them (See 4:3; 16:37; Lk 21:12). Instead of being led to repentance, they were led to continued rage against Christ and His church. **19 An angel ... opened the prison doors:** See 5:19; 8:26; 10:3; 12:7,23; 27:23. God would not allow Satan's work through jealous religious leaders to stop the momentum of the growth of the church. He thus sent His angel on this unique occasion to release the apostles from jail. **20 Words of this life:** The angel who freed the apostles told them to continue their public proclamation of the words that lead to the abundant life (Jn 6:63,68; 10:10; 17:3; 1 Jn 5:11). **21 They entered the temple ... and taught:** The apostles set an example of bravery and boldness by continuing their preaching. When faced with opposition in a hostile environment they did not keep silent. **Council:** This was the Sanhedrin which was the highest council of religious leaders of Israel. **Sent to the prison:** Unaware of the apostles' escape, the religious leaders sent for the apostles whom they planned to judge publicly before all religious leaders of Jerusalem. However, an angel of God had foiled their evil intentions. Prayers had been answered and the apostles were freed. Thus God's work of preaching Jesus and establishing the church continued, regardless of the opposition of all the powers of the Jewish religious organization. Christians must never underestimate the power that is available to them. It is this power of God that is unleashed through persistent prayers that are based on faith. It was their prayers that brought the power into action in this situation (See Js 5:16).

THE APOSTLES RESIST MURDER PLOTS

22,23 The Jewish prison officers confirmed to the self-appointed delegation of self-righteous religious leaders that the persons upon whom they would release their frustration had escaped. Even the guards of the prison had not witnessed the angelic jail break of God's messengers. They simply reported that the prisoners were not in jail. **The guards:** These were Jewish civil

curely shut and the guards standing before the doors. But when we opened up, we found no man inside!"

24 Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the result would be *to this*.

25 Then one came and told them, "Behold, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people."

26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they might be stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they

set *them* before the Council. And the high priest asked them,

28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you that you should not teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us!"

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men.

30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed and hanged on a tree.

31 "God has exalted Him to His right hand

officers, not Roman guards. **24** *They wondered what the outcome would be:* The chief priest and captain of the temple were now worried. Those they sought to intimidate into subjection and submission were now in a position of popularity with the people that could be used to intimidate them (4:21). However, the apostles would not digress to use such worldly tactics as those who opposed them and Jesus (Jn 9:22). They simply continued with their mission of preaching the gospel (Mk 16:15,16). **25** Though under threats and intimidation by the Jewish authorities, the apostles continued preaching and teaching (5:42). The examples of the apostles here must be noted. They preached those things that they had seen and heard. They preached upon the foundation of facts, and thus, their bravery and boldness can be answered only on the basis that they had actually experienced the unveiling of the supernatural world of Deity in Jesus (See Jn 3:2). The abrupt change in their lives and the boldness of their preaching can be answered only in the fact that they actually experienced the Son of God. They walked by the fact that they had experienced the miraculous work of God in their lives. They walked by sight. We walk by faith in the fact that they actually experienced the work of God. Our faith is thus based on the recorded word of what historically happened in their lives (See Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17).

OBEYING GOD NOT MAN

26 *They feared the people:* With a delegation of temple soldiers, the captain was cautious when he again brought the apostles to the Jewish hierarchy of leadership. He, as the religious leaders, feared the people. God would not allow happen again what He allowed to happen in order to take Jesus to the cross. He would not allow the religious leaders to do as they pleased to have the apostles either jailed or killed. The religious leaders now feared the same crowds they had previously motivated to cry for the crucifixion of Jesus (Mt 21:26). **27,28** The apostles would not be intimidated by the threats of the religious leaders (4:17,18). The apostles reminded them that the blood of the prophets had now come upon them because of their rejection of Jesus. Not only had the blood of the prophets come upon them, but also the blood of Jesus (2:23,36; Mt 27:25). All the blood of innocent prophets who had been killed by ungodly religious leaders who manifested the same corrupt motives as this council,

would and did come upon them (Mt 23:35). As their fathers had killed the prophets, they had killed Jesus. Therefore, they would not escape just judgment. The blood of Jesus was upon their shoulders because they had personally carried out the attack of religious men against the work of God. *Filled Jerusalem with your doctrine:* And so it should be with the work of the church in any village, town or city throughout the entire world. The presence of true Christians in any area should result in the same that happened in Jerusalem (vs 42). **29** *Obey God rather than men:* Peter stood up to their threats. He affirmed that the preaching of the gospel could not be stopped by the unjust censorship of men who had ungodly motives (4:19). Man's unjust laws will eventually pass away, but God's law will continue throughout eternity (Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:25). **30** *You murdered:* These religious leaders were the murderers of Jesus. However, their evil deed was used by God to bring about the salvation of man. God raised Jesus up (3:13,15; 22:14; Ep 1:20). **31,32** *Him God has highly exalted to His right hand:* God highly exalted the Son to David's throne as King of kings and Lord of lords (2:33-36; Lk 1:30-33; Ep 1:20-23; Ph 2:9-11; 1 Tm 6:15). Through Jesus, God now gives remission of sins to those who repent and obey Jesus' death, burial and resurrection (Lk 24:47; Rm 6:3-6; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14). The apostles were personal witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (1:8; 2:32; 3:15; Lk 24:48; Jn 15:27). The Holy Spirit gave His miraculous witness through the apostles (2:43; 5:12,15,16; Jn 15:26). Even the group of the obedient worked miracles. They did so if they had hands laid on them by the apostles in order to receive miraculous gifts of the Spirit (Mk 16:17,18; At 8:18). God was miraculously confirming Christianity as true, and thus opposed to either Jewish traditionalism or religions that had been formed after the misguided desires of men. *Hanging on a tree:* See 10:39; 13:29; 1 Pt 2:24; compare Dt 21:22,23. See comments Gl 3:13,14. *To give repentance ... and forgiveness:* God gives repentance by making known to man the occasion for man's repentance and the direction in his life to which he must turn. Through Jesus God has revealed His will that all men must repent. When repentance that leads to obedience is carried out in the life of any man, God forgives sin (See 2:38; 3:26; 13:38; Lk 24:47; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14). *The Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him:* As on other occasions, the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit

to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

32 “And we are His witnesses of these things, and *so* also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”

33 ¶ When they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart and plotted to kill them.

34 Then one in the Council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law respected among all the people. And he commanded them to put the apostles out for a short time.

35 And he said to them, “You men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do concerning these men.

36 “For some time ago Theudas rose up, boasting himself to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined them-

selves with him. But he was killed, and as many as followed him were scattered and brought to nothing.

37 “After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the taxing. And he drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.

38 “And now I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone. For if their purpose or this work is from men, it will come to nothing.

39 “But if it is from God, you cannot overthrow it, lest you even be found fighting against God.”

40 And they agreed with him. And after they called the apostles and had beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

through the early messengers of God is used as an open manifestation that God was with His people in confirming His word (See comments Mk 16:14-20; Hb 2:3,4; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13). It was the work of the Spirit to confirm the word of these early disciples (Mk 16:20). By the laying on of the apostles' hands, the early Christians received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See comments 2:38; 8:18; Rm 1:11; 1 Co 12). From this context it is also seen that every immersed believer had a right to receive from the apostles these miraculous gifts (See comments Mk 16:16-20). The miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, permeated the establishment and existence of the first century church. This was the purpose for the giving of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner. After the early church was firmly established, however, the miraculous activity of the Spirit was no longer needed (See comments 1 Co 13:8-13). When the need for the miraculous gifts ceased, the gifts ceased.

THE CHURCH IS THE WORK OF GOD

33 *They were furious:* The Sanhedrin council reacted to the apostles with defiance and rage. They reacted as any arrogant leaders who claimed to have dictatorial authority over their fellow man. They were furious (See 7:54). They plotted in order to murder the apostles as they had murdered Jesus (Mt 12:14; Jn 7:19). However, the humble hearted on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 were cut to the heart when they heard that they participated in the execution of an innocent man (2:37). But these arrogant religious dictators responded with indignation and envy. They now plotted how they might murder the twelve apostles.

34 *Gamaliel:* Gamaliel was a teacher of the Jewish law. He was the grandson of Hillel, a well-known teacher of the Old Testament law who emphasized the mercy of the law. After the tradition of his grandfather, Gamaliel was one of the greatest contemporary religious teachers of the Jews (22:3). On this occasion he contained the outrage of the offended council. Because of his tolerant attitude, he counseled for

mercy, not rage. **35** A murder plot was thus squelched by the wise counsel of this great religious leader. **36** Gamaliel reminded them that Theudas was a former insurrectionist against Rome. He proclaimed himself to be a deliverer of oppressed Israel. However, he was killed and his followers scattered. **37** *Theudas:* It is not known who this insurrectionist was. During these years of Roman occupation of Palestine, there were many who rose up to lead small bands of Jews in rebellion against Rome. All such rebellions were brutally suppressed by the Roman armies. *Judas:* Judas of Galilee also led a similar rebellion against Rome. However, he also was slain and his followers dispersed. Josephus, an ancient Jewish historian who lived during these years, mentions that Judas led a rebellion against the Romans because of a census that was ordered by Augustus and carried out by Quirinius. **38** Gamaliel wisely counseled to let history make a similar judgment with the apostles and Christianity. If the apostles were seeking selfish goals, their work would come to the same end as the work of Theudas and Judas. If they were calling for insurrection against Rome, they would reap Rome's swift suppression. **39** *Be found to fight against God:* If the work of the apostles was truly of God as the apostles proclaimed, then men could not stop it lest they be found fighting against God (7:51; 9:5). Every evangelist of God must be assured that his work is of God. By living and preaching the word of God, one's assurance that he is working for God's cause will bring boldness.

40 *They agreed with him:* Fortunately, the enraged council agreed with Gamaliel. But to satisfy their immediate resentment and frustrations with the apostles, the council had them beaten. Before letting them go, they again threatened them not to preach and teach by the authority of Jesus whom they were claiming was raised from the dead. **41** *Counted worthy to suffer shame for His name:* The apostles could not be discouraged. Instead of mourning over their experience and predicament with the council and subsequent beating, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to

41 Then they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

Chapter 6

1 ¶ Now in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the

Hebraic *Jews*, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution of *food*.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

3 "Therefore, brethren, look out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may designate over this business.

4 "But we will give ourselves continually to

suffer persecution for the sake of Jesus' name (See 14:22; Mt 5:10-12, Rm 5:3; 2 Co 12:10; Ph 1:29; Hb 10:34; Js 1:2; 1 Pt 4:13-16; Js 1:2,3; see Mt 10:17; 23:34). Their persecution by misguided religious leaders and miraculous confirmation by God were actually two evidences that proved they were on God's side. Satan was being crushed under their feet though he was raising all his forces against the church. However, in view of 14:22, struggle for one's faith is an essential part of spiritual growth (See comments 1 Pt 1:6,7). **42 Daily ... teaching and preaching:** Regardless of the persecution, public preaching and teaching continued daily in the temple courtyard where religious minded people continued to meet (2:46; 4:20,29). They preached that Jesus was the Messiah who fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah (9:22; 17:3; 18:5; 18:28). As a result, the number of Christians continued to multiply throughout all Palestine (See 4:4). The early disciples' work in the temple area was for the purpose of preaching Jesus as the Messiah, which proclamation was to the unbelieving Jews. It was not to Christians, for Christians already believed in Jesus as the Messiah. This meeting in the temple, therefore, was evangelistic, not edification for the church.

Chapter 6

WISE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

Luke records in this context the leadership skills of the apostles that they used in order to nurture the leadership of the church to carry on their own work. The following situation arose after the disciples had been in existence for at least four or five years. During these early days of existence, the widows were being cared for without the designation of any committees to do the distribution. However, when a problem of racism developed among the disciples, it was necessary that an unprejudiced group of men make sure that the regular distribution of supplies equally go to all widows of the church.

1 While the number of disciples was growing in Jerusalem, a problem arose in the church that manifested the great wisdom of the apostles to allow the members of the local church to direct and carry out their own affairs in areas of opinion. The situation also manifested the apostles' desire not to have the church centered around their leadership nor to be viewed as lords over the church. **Arose a complaint:** The occasion was that the Greek-speaking Jewish widows were being neglected in the common distribution of the

churches' contributions for its widows (See 4:32-37). The Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews who were born outside Palestine (9:29; 11:20). The Hellenists who are under consideration in this context had moved to Jerusalem and were residents in the city and members of the church. It is evident from the situation that develops here, that the Judean-born Jews were somewhat prejudiced against those Jews who were not born of natural citizenship in Palestine. Some brethren, therefore, justly complained about the matter of the Hellenist widows being neglected in the daily distribution (Compare Ph 2:14; 1 Pt 4:9). Racialistic feelings between the Judean-born Jews in Palestine (Hebrews) and the Greek-speaking Jews who existed in the society could not be allowed to exist in the church. **2 The Twelve:** The apostles are still in Jerusalem at the time this problem develops. However, they remained in Jerusalem since the time of the establishment of the church in Acts 2 in order to minister to those Jews who were continually coming to Jerusalem for the Jewish feasts. Those who would come to Jerusalem would be taught that Jesus is the Messiah (At 5:42). Those who were converted while in Jerusalem would later return to their own countries and preach the gospel (See Is 2:1-4). It was through this method of world evangelism that the apostles were able to preach the gospel to the world (See comments 19:8-10). **Summoned the multitude:** The problem of distribution was first presented to the apostles. However, because the apostles had been given the God-ordained work of preaching and prayer, they called on the church to make the necessary decisions concerning the work of benevolent distributions. At this time in the early establishment of the church, the apostles' work was evangelistic and not serving tables. It would have been wrong for them to leave their designated ministry in order to serve tables. Therefore, they wanted the church to carry out the decisions and work concerning the administration to the widows. The apostles did not wish to tell the church what to do in this matter. It was their duty to stay with their God-commissioned work of preaching the word and prayer. **3 Seek out from among you seven men:** The apostles gave general direction to solve the problem. A plurality of men was to be chosen. These men had to be directed by the Spirit-inspired word of God in the sense that they had given themselves over to submission to God (See 2:4; 4:8; 6:3; 11:24). They had to be men of great wisdom (See 1 Co 12:8). They had to be men who had a good reputation in the church (10:22; 16:2; 1 Tm 5:10). **Over this business:** These men would be delegated responsibility by the church to make

prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. Then they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

6 And these they set before the apostles. Now when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

7 So 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.

8 ¶ And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, *including* Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke.

11 Then they secretly stirred up men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God.”

12 And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes. Then they came upon

decisions concerning the distribution of funds or supplies to the widows (See 1 Tm 3:8-13). What these men would do, therefore, was to work on behalf of the desires of the church to accomplish the work of the church. These men were not designated as officials of the church to exercise authority contrary to the wishes of the church. Their designation by the church was to serve the church. The church thus delegated to them the responsibility to carry out the work of the church to distribute to the widows. **4** The apostles refused to allow their God-ordained direction of work to pray and preach to be detoured by that which others could do. Neither were they appointing a committee which would be under their direction. They were asking the church to give this group of men the responsibility to lead in this matter of distribution to the widows. This work had been carried out since the establishment of the church. The justification for the seven men, therefore, was necessary only when the distribution problems developed. The group was to exist only until the problem was sorted out. After the problem was solved, the distribution could thus resort back to how it was accomplished before the existence of the committee. Committees, therefore, do not exist in order that the work of the church exist. They exist only for the purpose of expediting what Christians should be doing in the first place. When Christians are individually doing that which they are to be doing, there is no need for committees.

5 Pleased the whole multitude: The entire church was given the responsibility of making the decision, and thus, the entire church agreed with the apostles' suggestion because they understood the apostles' work. The men who were to accomplish this specific work were subsequently chosen by the whole church. Representatives from both Judean-born Jews and Greek-speaking Jews were chosen to be servants in this work. Stephen (6:8 - 7:60), Philip (8:4-40; 21:8), Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a Gentile proselyte, were chosen as servants of the church to accomplish this specific work of the church. **6 Laid hands on them:** The church set the selected men before the apostles in order that the men be identified before the church. The apostles simply laid hands on them for the purpose of signifying to all the church that these men be publicly announced before all that they have the responsibility of the distribution. **7 The word of God spread:** As a result of this wise decision on the

part of the apostles, the church grew (12:24; Cf 1:6). The word of God was proclaimed throughout the region. Even Jewish priests obeyed the gospel (See Jn 3:2; 12:42). Therefore, when Christian leaders do the right things the church grows (See 4:4). The church grew because the apostles maintained their God-ordained work of prayer and preaching in order to fulfill the commission of Jesus to evangelize the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). It grew when disagreements were cared for by the leadership in order that members focus their attention on evangelism. When churches are at peace within, they focus better on taking the gospel to the lost.

STEPHEN TESTIFIES TO JESUS

8 Full of the Spirit and power: The apostles had imparted miraculous gifts to Stephen. He was one of the original seven men chosen by the church to minister to the widows (vs 5). The apostles had imparted to Philip the authority to command the miraculous work of God in order that he be able to confirm the spoken word with miraculous deeds (See comments Mk 16:14-20; Hb 2:3,4). **9 There arose some ... disputing with Stephen:** The opposition arose from the Libertines or Synagogue of Freedmen which consisted of liberated slaves. A delegation of Jews and proselytes from north Africa, Cyrenians and Alexandrians, with those of Cilicia and Asia, also withstood the preaching of Stephen. **10 Not able to resist:** Regardless of their opposition, they could not make valid arguments against the wisdom of the Spirit who was speaking through Stephen (Ex 4:12; Is 54:17; Lk 21:15). **11 Secretly induced men:** These enemies of truth did a common thing that wicked men do when they cannot refute the arguments of sound reasoning. They bribed men to slander and discredit their opposition (See Mt 26:59,60,65; Mk 2:7). They bought men with support in order to preach against those who were preaching the truth. **Blasphemous words:** The men who were bribed by the religious leaders accused Stephen of blasphemy. Under the Old Testament law blasphemy was punishable by death (Lv 24:16; Dt 13:6-10; see Mk 14:64). **12 They stirred up the people:** These blinded religious legalists incited the religious leaders of Jerusalem to seize Stephen and stop his testimony. They brought Stephen before the Sanhedrin council and accused him of blasphemy against God, Moses and the temple (“holy place”). **13**

him and caught him, and brought him to the Council.

13 Then they set up false witnesses, who said, "This man does not cease to speak words against this holy place and the law.

14 "For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses delivered us."

15 Then all who sat in the Council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it was the face of an angel.

Chapter 7

1 ¶ Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

2 And he said, "Men, brethren, and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran.

3 "And He said to him, 'Get out of your coun-

try and from your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.'

4 "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, he moved him into this land in which you now dwell.

5 "And He gave him no inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to put his foot on. But when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.

6 "And God spoke in this way, that his seed would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would be brought into bondage and mistreated four hundred years.

7 'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage will I judge,' said God, 'and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place.'

8 "And He gave him the covenant of cir-

False witnesses: False witnesses were brought forward to distort what Stephen was actually preaching (See Mk 14:56,57). Such is the tactic of those who are religiously misguided. They resort to slander because they are not interested in the facts of what their opposition is saying. In this case, they twisted Stephen's words in order to stir up prejudicial opposition against him by accusing him of blaspheming God, Moses and the temple. **14** Stephen had affirmed that the Jews had rejected the law of God in order to keep their religious customs (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They had confused their traditions with the actual law of Moses. They also misunderstood the purpose of the law of Moses. They thought the Old Testament law was God's final law of His covenant with man. They failed to see, however, that the law was a means to an end. The end was Christ (Mk 5:17,18; see comments Gl 3:21-29). Therefore, instead of looking for the Christ, they fought to maintain their positions in the institutional religion which they had invented after the tradition of the fathers. However, Stephen continued with the proclamation of the prophecy of Jesus that the temple would be destroyed, which prophecy would be fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24; Mk 13:2). **15** Stephen's persecutors were relentless because he preached to them that for which they were guilty. However, God stood with him in this hour of trial as He will stand with everyone who will stand for Him (See 18:9,10; 23:11). God's presence with Stephen was evidenced by the glowing face of Stephen as he stood boldly before these misguided and arrogant religious leaders. It was probable that even Saul of Tarsus was in this group of accusers. If he were, then certainly these events stayed with him as he began and continued his ravaging of the church. Years after his conversion, he would certainly have recalled this event, and thus, willingly accepted the same treatment from misguided religious people. In fact, Paul would teach the churches he established that through many

tribulations we will enter the kingdom (14:22).

Chapter 7

PROPHECY FULFILLED IN JESUS

1 The high priest gave Stephen the opportunity to defend himself against charges of blasphemy by demanding that he explain his teaching.

2,3 Brethren: Reference is to the Jews as brethren in the flesh. **Listen:** Stephen began his defense by revealing that the God of glory appeared to Abraham while he still lived in Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia (Gn 11:31,32; 12:1-3; Ne 9:7). By faith Abraham was told to journey to a land which he did not know (Hb 11:8,9). **4** Therefore, Terah, Abraham's father, and Lot his nephew, went to Haran where Terah eventually died (Gn 11:27-31). From there Abraham journeyed to the land of Canaan. **5** Abraham was only a sojourner in Canaan. However, God promised that one day He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants (Gn 12:1-3,7; 13:15; 15:3,18). But at the time God made the promises, Abraham had no children to carry on his family name. **6 A foreign land:** Though God did not identify the foreign land at the time, He told Abraham that his descendants must first sojourn in a strange land. This strange land was later identified as Egypt (Gn 15:13,14; 47:11). In fact, Abraham's descendants (the children of Israel) would be residents in Egypt for approximately four hundred years (Ex 1:8-14; 12:40,41; Gl 3:17). **7 They shall come out:** At the end of their captivity in Egypt, God brought judgment upon Egypt for their oppression of His people (Gn 15:14; Ex 6:6). Israel, therefore, was delivered from bondage in Egypt in order to serve God in Canaan (Gn 15:16; Ex 3:12; Ja 3:1-17). **8 The covenant of circumcision:** God made a covenant with Abraham while he was in Canaan (Gn 15:18; 24:7). Circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign of this covenant (Gn 17:9-14,21). This covenant was continued with the son and grandson of Abraham,

cumcision. And so *Abraham* begot Isaac and circumcised him the eighth day. And Isaac *begot* Jacob, and Jacob *begot* the twelve patriarchs.

9 ¶ “And the patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. But God was with him,

10 “and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11 “Now there came a famine and great affliction over all the land of Egypt and Canaan. And our fathers found no food.

12 “But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 “And on the second *visit* Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family was made known to Pharaoh.

14 “Then Joseph sent and called his father

Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five souls.

15 “So Jacob went down to Egypt. And he died, he and our fathers.

16 “Then they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

17 “But when the time of the promise drew near that God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt

18 “until another king arose who did not know Joseph.

19 “This *king* dealt treacherously with our people and ill-treated our fathers, forcing them to throw out their babies so that they would not live.

20 “In that time Moses was born. And he was well pleasing to God, and nurtured in his father’s house three months.

21 “Now when he was set out, Pharaoh’s

Isaac and Jacob. The twelve sons of Jacob eventually brought forth the twelve tribes of Israel (Gn 29:31 - 30:24; 35:18-26). Abraham was a Gentile when God called him, for the nation of Israel did not exist. He was called outside this special covenant while being an uncircumcised Gentile.

THE HERITAGE SAVED THROUGH JOSEPH

9 Sold Joseph into Egypt: Because Jacob showed favoritism to his son Joseph, Joseph’s brothers were jealous and thus sold him into captivity (Gn 37:4-28). He was eventually taken to Egypt. **God was with him:** Though the sale of Joseph appeared to be unfortunate for Joseph at the time, in God’s plan it was good for Israel (Gn 39:2,21-23). God wanted to send a forerunner to Egypt in order to prepare the way for Jacob and his sons who would eventually follow (Gn 45:7). Joseph became a cultural bridge for Israel when they came into the land of Egypt. **10 Gave him favor and wisdom:** God was with Joseph in Egypt (Gn 41:38-44). As a result, Joseph found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh and eventually was made governor over all Egypt and Pharaoh’s house (Gn 41:38-44). **11** As time went by, God used a great famine in Egypt and Canaan to begin the providential transportation of Jacob’s household to Egypt (Gn 41:54; 42:5). God providentially took Israel into Egypt for two reasons. First, the twelve sons of Jacob had to develop into a nation in the protection of the land of Goshen. Second, the wickedness of the Canaanites in Palestine had not yet developed to the point where God would be found just for their destruction by the armies of Israel. **12** God worked behind the scenes in a manner unknown to Jacob at the time in order to get Israel out of Canaan and to Egypt (Gn 42:1,2). He did this in order to remove Jacob’s family from the influence of the wickedness of the Canaanites. During the time of Israel’s captivity, the wickedness of the Canaanites increased in the land of Canaan. **13** When Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt to ask for food relief

because of the famine in Canaan, Joseph made himself known to his brothers (Gn 45:4,16). **14** Jacob and all his relatives were subsequently called to Egypt by Joseph (Gn 45:9,27). Pharaoh gave to Israel the best of the land in Egypt, the land of Goshen (Gn 47:6,11). There were seventy-five in all, counting Joseph and his sons, who now composed the family of Jacob in Egypt. Seventy actually came with Jacob out of Canaan (Dt 10:20; see Gn 46:27; Ex 1:5). **15** Jacob and his sons, the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, all died in Egypt (Gn 46:1-7; 49:33). **16** After the captivity, the bones of the patriarchs were carried back to Shechem in Canaan and buried. They were buried in a place that Abraham had originally purchased as a burial site (Gn 23:1-16). However, Jacob had repurchased the land in Hebron for his personal burial site. The burial site was called Machpelah (Gn 33:18,19; 50:13).

DELIVERANCE THROUGH MOSES

17 Time of the promise drew near: When the end of the four hundred years of captivity in Egypt drew to a close, the Israelites multiplied greatly (Ex 1:7-9). **18 Who did not know Joseph:** A new king that was not of the Hyksos Dynasty under which Joseph served, became Pharaoh of Egypt. This new Pharaoh did not know Joseph nor show Israel any favors (Ex 1:8). **19 Dealt treacherously:** The new Pharaoh of Egypt victimized Israel and enslaved them. He sentenced Israel’s babies to death in order to stop the multiplication of Israel (Ex 1:22). **20 Moses was born:** Moses, Miriam and Aaron were born to Amram and Jochebed (Ex 2:1,2; 6:20). Moses was in his father’s house for three months before he was laid by his mother in a basket and placed in a river (Ex 2:2-4). **21 Pharaoh’s daughter ... brought him up:** Pharaoh’s daughter found Moses in the river and took him to be her own son in the house of Pharaoh (Ex 2:5-10). We must assume that God’s providential care was working in this case in order to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity many

daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son.

22 “And Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 “Then when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

24 “And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him who was oppressed. And he struck down the Egyptian,

25 “for he supposed his brethren would have understood that God by his hand would deliver them. But they did not understand.

26 “And the next day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren. Why do you wrong one another?’

27 “But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?’

28 ‘Will you kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’

29 “Then at this saying, Moses fled and be-

came a foreigner in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

30 “And when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 “When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight. And as he drew near to closely see it, the voice of the Lord came to him,

32 “saying, ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ Then Moses shook with fear and dared not look.

33 “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

34 I have seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt. And I have heard their groaning, and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.’

35 “This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of an angel who appeared to him

years later when Moses would return from Sinai in order to be God's spokesman to free the nation. **22 All the wisdom of the Egyptians:** As Moses grew up, he was trained in all the engineering skills, philosophy and religions of Egypt. He became a great speaker and a great worker in Egyptian society. Though he grew up in a land of idols he came to believe in the one God of Israel and to understand that Israel was God's people.

23 Visit his brethren: When Moses was forty years old (Ex 2:11; Hb 11:24), he went out among his Jewish brethren who were oppressed as slaves in Goshen of Egypt (Ex 2:11,12). **24 Seeing one of them suffer wrong:** While visiting his fellow Jews, Moses witnessed an unjust treatment of an Israelite slave. He was enraged when he saw the mistreatment of an Israelite at the hand of an Egyptian taskmaster. He subsequently killed the taskmaster and buried him in a secret place, thinking that no one saw him. **25 He supposed that his brethren would have understood:** At this time, Moses possibly thought that Israel would recognize him as a deliverer. However, they rejected him because they only saw him as one of the taskmasters of Israel. **26-28** The following day after Moses had killed the taskmaster, he tried to reconcile two Israelites who were fighting among themselves (Ex 2:13). But the one who did his neighbor wrong would not submit to his mediatorship. He, as well as others, knew that He had killed the Egyptian. **29 Moses fled:** Because his killing of the taskmaster was now known to many, Moses forsook the riches of Egypt (Hb 11:24-26) and fled Egypt to the area of Midian where he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, a Midianite priest (Ex 2:15,21). He had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Ex

2:22; 4:20; 18:3,4).

30 For forty years Moses learned how to live in the desert of Sinai. We must assume that God was preparing him to lead the nation of Israel in this region for forty years. **An angel:** On Mount Sinai the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush (Ex 3:1-10). Some Bible students believe that this was the Son of God who was at work with the nation of Israel before His incarnation (See vs 35). **31 Marvelled at the sight:** The bush burned but was never consumed. As Moses drew near to the bush, the Angel of the Lord spoke to him. **32 God of your fathers:** Moses trembled with great fear as the voice identified Himself as the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex 3:6,15). On this occasion Moses realized the direct presence of God. As a man, this realization moved him to great fear. **33 Holy ground:** The Lord commanded Moses to take off his sandals because he was on ground that had been set apart for this special encounter (Ex 3:5-10). **34 The oppression of My people:** The Lord said that He was aware of Israel's suffering. He had thus come close to deliver them from Egyptian bondage. He would deliver them through Moses whom He would send to Egypt.

35 Moses ... they rejected: When Moses went to Egypt, Israel did not at first accept him as their deliverer. Nevertheless, the Lord had sent Moses to be both a lawgiver and deliverer of Israel. Jesus would be the same for Israel in the years to come (Dt 18:15; At 3:22,23). As Israel first rejected Moses, so they were rejecting Jesus at the time of Stephen's preaching. **The Angel who appeared to him in the bush:** We must assume that before His incarnation, Jesus was not idle with the work of the Godhead among men. Stephen

in the bush.

36 “He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

37 ¶ “This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘A prophet will the Lord your God raise up to you from your brethren, like unto me.’

38 “This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us.

39 “Our fathers would not obey him, but rejected *him*. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt,

40 “saying to Aaron, ‘*Make us gods to go*

before us. As for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’

41 “And they made a calf in those days and offered sacrifice to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 “Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets, ‘*O house of Israel, did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness?*

43 *You took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures that you made to worship. And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*’

44 ¶ “Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, speaking to Moses that he should make it ac-

here gives credit to the Angel for appearing to Moses in the burning bush. In Exodus 3 reference is first given to the “Angel of the Lord” for appearing in the bush (vs 2). However, it was the Lord God who called out of the bush to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Acts 7:38 says that the “Prophet” (Jesus) was with the Angel who spoke on Mount Sinai. Therefore, we would assume that before His incarnation, the Son of God was working as a part of the Godhead in the affairs of Israel. **36** Regardless of the rejection of Moses by some in Israel, through Moses God delivered Israel from bondage by miraculous power (Ex 12:41; 14:21). Because of their refusal to trust in God and to enter the promised land, Israel was condemned to wander in the wilderness for forty years (Ex 16:1,35). **Wonders and signs:** See Ex 7-10. Miracles as wonders caused the beholders to marvel concerning the work and power of God. As signs, they indicated that there was supernatural power behind the event of the miracle. **37 A Prophet:** Moses prophesied of the Prophet, the Christ, who would be like him. He would be a lawgiver and a deliverer (Dt 18:15-19; At 3:22,23). Jesus was this Prophet. However, Israel treated Jesus as they treated Moses on his initial delivery of the nation from captivity (Gl 3:19). **38 He who was ... with the Angel who spoke:** Before His incarnation, Jesus was with Moses on Mount Sinai and spoke to him out of the burning bush (Ex 3). He was with Israel in the wilderness. **Living oracles:** The Old Testament law was given to Israel through Moses (Rm 3:2; compare Hb 5:12; 1 Pt 4:11). **39 Our fathers ... rejected:** Stephen said that Israel’s rebellious forefathers rejected the Lord (Jesus) at Mount Sinai as they were rejecting Jesus again even as he spoke (Ps 95:8-11; see Ex 16:3; Nm 11:4,5; 14:4). They rejected Moses as a mediator, and on this occasion, they were rejecting Jesus as their mediator with God. **40 Make us idols:** Israel had been affected by the idolatry of Egypt. They sought to trust in gods which they had created after their own image (Ex 32:1,23; Dt 9:16; Ps 106; 19; compare Is 44:9-20). Stephen’s audience had done the same. They had created a religion that conformed to

their own traditions and behavior (Mk 7:1-9). They subsequently deceived themselves into believing that God would condone their religious behavior (See comments Cl 2:20-22). **41 Offered sacrifices to the idol:** Israel formed their concept of God into an idol, to which they gave their worship and submission. While in Egypt they had been infected with the spirit of idolatry. Their faith was in gods they had created after the imagination of their own minds. **42,43 God ... gave them up:** God turned away and gave them up to follow after their own gods and their own religious behavior because they had given up the true God of heaven (Am 5:25-27; Rm 1:24-28). While in the land of promise, Israel digressed to form religion after their own desires, sacrificing even their children to Moloch whom they had conceived to be a true deity (1 Kg 11:7; 2 Kg 17:16,17; 21:3,6; 2 Ch 33:3-5; Jr 8:2; 19:13; see Dt 4:19; 17:3). Because they grew ignorant of the true and living God, they created their own gods and religion which agreed with their evil deeds (Hs 4:6). **Moloch:** This was the god the Amorites created after their imagination, and the one to whom children were offered as sacrifices (See 1 Kg 11:7; 2 Kg 17:17; 21:6). **Remphan:** Egypt, among other countries, worshiped the star which was the planet Saturn. In the same manner, Stephen’s audience had rejected the will of God by going after their own religion. As a result of their apostasy, God condemned Israel’s forefathers to Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (Jr 25:9-12). During the ministry of the apostles, Israel was again being cast off because of her rejection of Jesus. She was again headed for the judgment of destruction, which judgment would occur in A.D. 70 with the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24).

44 The tabernacle: Stephen continued to state that through a cloud which gave witness to His presence, God manifested that He was with Israel. He was with them in the tabernacle that Moses had constructed according to the God’s plans (Ex 25:40). The tabernacle was with them during their forty years in the wilderness (Ex 33:7; Hb 8:5). **45-47** This very tabernacle was taken with them from the wilderness

ording to the pattern that he had seen.

45 “And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua into the land of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, until the days of David,

46 “who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.

47 “But Solomon built Him a house.

48 “However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says,

49 *‘Heaven is My throne and earth is my footstool. What house will you build for Me?’* says the Lord. *‘Or what is the place of My rest?’*

50 *Has My hand not made all these things?’*

51 ¶ “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. You always resist the Holy Spirit. You are doing just as your fathers.

52 “Which one of the prophets have your

fathers not persecuted? And they have slain those who announced before the coming of the Just One, of whom you have now become the betrayers and murderers,

53 “you who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*.”

54 ¶ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart. And they gnashed at him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up intensely into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

56 And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice and covered their ears, and ran upon him with one accord.

58 And they threw *him* out of the city, and

wanderings into the land of Canaan. Through Joshua's leadership, Israel drove out the Canaanites (Ps 44:2; Ne 9:24). The Canaanites were kept out of the land until the time of David (2 Sm 6:2-15). However, David sought to build a dwelling place for God, a temple as the nations around them. But God would not allow David to build the temple because he had been the occasion for the death of many people (1 Ch 22:7,8). Therefore, Solomon, David's son, built the temple in Jerusalem (2 Sm 7; 1 Kg 6; 8:20,21). **48 Does not dwell in temples:** Israel was wrong in thinking that they could place the God of heaven in a construction which had been made by the hands of man (17:24; See 1 Kg 8:27; 2 Ch 2:6; 6:18). It is not possible to construct out of the things God created a dwelling place for the Creator of all things. Churches who have created a god that is limited to the facility of some church building have imagined a god who is confined to building materials. See comments Jn 4:20-26. **49,50** God said that He created man and the worlds (Is 66:1,2; Ps 102:25). How could that which is created build a dwelling place for the One who creates? Such would be impossible. If we lead ourselves to believe that God seeks to dwell in “sanctuaries” which we create, then we have created a god who is limited to the confines of men's creations.

51 Stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart: Stephen compared the stubborn attitude of his immediate accusers with those of Israel who had rejected Moses and the prophets (Ex 32:9; 33:3; Dt 10:16; Is 6:10). Even at the time he was speaking they continued to fight against the work of the Holy Spirit through inspired men (See 1 Th 5:19). **52** Their fathers rejected God's prophets who prophesied of Jesus (See Lv 26:41; 2 Ch 36:16; Ez 44:7; Jr 6:10; Mt 21:35; 23:35). These Jewish leaders were still rejecting God's prophets. They were the ones who actually murdered Jesus (3:14), and were at this time, rejecting Stephen who was speaking to them by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. **53** Even though they had miraculously received

the oracles of God through angels (7:38; Gl 3:9; Hb 2:2), Israel would still not obey even at the time of Stephen's preaching. We must understand that the traditional religious beliefs of men are always stronger than the truth of God (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12).

STEPHEN IS MURDERED BY THE JEWS

54 The religious leaders of the Sanhedrin clearly understood the implications of Stephen's lesson. He was identifying their rebellious actions against Jesus. This made them furious (5:33). Hate was stirred in their hearts because their hearts were rebellious against God's law. This case illustrates what men often do when confronted with the truth of God. They take their frustrations out on those who are the messengers of the truth. **55 Full of the Spirit:** See 4:8,9. Though faced with death, Stephen would not be intimidated. Because he was filled with the Holy Spirit, God allowed him to miraculously see into heaven. He saw God's glory and Jesus standing beside the Father. Jesus stood up for this special martyr for the Christian faith. **56 I see the heavens opened:** Stephen was privileged to be given a direct vision from God. As a result, He boldly proclaimed the vision to those who were about to kill him. He said that Jesus was standing at the right hand of God (Dn 7:13,14). **57** The religious leaders could no more stand the powerful witness of Stephen. They cried out. They stopped their ears. As an enraged mob, these supposedly “dignified” religious leaders raced upon and grabbed Stephen. The lesson from this recorded incident is clear. Surely the Holy Spirit wanted recorded for posterity this case where religiously misguided men violently released their frustrations with the truth by attacking those who were the messengers of God.

58 They threw Stephen out of Jerusalem's city limits and proceeded to stone him. At the time, there was a young witness of this spectacle who did not throw stones, but stood watching as murderers threw their

stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

60 And he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Chapter 8

1 ¶ And Saul was consenting to his death. Now at that time there was a great persecu-

tion against the church that was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.

4 ¶ Therefore, those who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.

6 And the people with one accord gave at-

garments at his feet. His name was Saul, a man born in Tarsus and was one of the Jewish military authorities in Jerusalem. ***Cast him out of the city:*** The hypocrisy of these religious people is here manifested. They wanted to keep the law by not stoning Stephen in the city (See Lv 24:10-16; Nm 15:35,36; 1 Kg 21:13; compare Hb 13:12). Such is the behavior of legalistic religionists. They will condone wicked behavior because they have kept the legal points of their law which they have created after their own beliefs and traditions. As long as the requirements of the law are kept, one is allowed to release the wickedness of his heart in ways that do not conflict with his established religious codes (See comments in introduction to G1). **59** The enraged multitude then proceeded to stone Stephen. Stones thus smashed against Stephen's body as he praised God. Though dying, his attention was not on the vicious crowd, but on Jesus. He called on Jesus to receive his spirit after death. **60 *Do not charge them with this sin:*** As Jesus on the cross, Stephen characterized his Master by asking forgiveness for those who ignorantly carried out this human tragedy (Mt 5:44; Lk 23:43). His spirit of forgiveness manifested the nature of Jesus in his heart and the principle of Christianity that serves as the foundation upon which spiritual growth is maintained. Stephen's death finalized his ministry, though his martyrdom continues as a testimony to all who would take a stand for Jesus. His legacy was sealed as the Holy Spirit relates to us that Stephen fell asleep amidst a fury of angry, but misguided religious zealots. ***He fell asleep:*** See Mt 9:24; Mk 5:39; Jn 11:11,12; 1 Co 15:18,51; 1 Th 4:13,14.

Chapter 8

THE CHURCH GROWS UNDER PERSECUTION

1 Saul (7:58), who would later be called by his Greek name, Paul, consented with the Sanhedrin to the stoning of Stephen. His official approval made him also guilty (11:19). Beginning with Stephen's death, a zealous hostility of the Jews was launched against the church. Subsequently, a great persecution of the church began in all Judea and spread throughout Palestine. Christians were scattered everywhere as they fled from the persecuting Jews who were led by Saul. However, the apostles bravely remained in

Jerusalem in order to evangelize those Jews who continually traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feasts. **2** In the meantime, devout men had taken Stephen's body, buried it and lamented over the loss of this great soldier for Christ. **3 *Made havoc of the church:*** Saul ravaged the church (1 Co 15:9; Gl 1:13; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13). He went into the homes of Christians, dragging mothers and fathers to prison because of their belief in Jesus. He viewed the church as an enemy of the Judaism that he had been taught since childhood. Therefore, he set all his energies against what he believed to be an apostasy from God. ***Entering every house:*** Because the early church met in the homes of the members, Saul entered houses to destroy the church. However, after his conversion he went house to house to build the church (20:20).

THE CHURCH IS ESTABLISHED IN SAMARIA

4 *Went everywhere preaching the word:* Throughout the turmoil of the church, God used Satan's persecution of His children as a tool for evangelism. Though the Christians were under the great persecution of Saul, they continued to preach wherever they went (Mt 10:23). The persecution did not detour them from their responsibility of preaching the gospel to the world. What often happens in times of peace is that Satan uses the indifference of Christians to destroy the zeal of the church. The persecution of the church in hostile environments, therefore, is often a stimulant to intensify the commitment of Christians to carry out their responsibility to evangelize the world. **5 *To the city of Samaria:*** Philip, who was one of the original seven (6:5; 21:8), fled Jerusalem and went down to the city of Samaria. The Samaritans were a racial mix of people between Jews and Gentiles. In Samaria, Philip stood before the people and preached the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. See comments 1 Co 15:1-4. **6** A great number of people listened to what he had to say. ***Hearing and seeing the miracles:*** They heard and saw the miracles which God worked through him in order to confirm his preaching (Mk 16:17; Hb 2:3,4). These miracles, therefore, could be perceived by the senses of men. His authority over Satan was manifested in his casting out demons (See comments Mt 4:24). **7** The people heard the crying of exorcised demons. They saw people restored to complete health.

tention to those things that Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles that he did.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed. And many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

9 ¶ But there was a certain man called Simon, who formerly in the city practiced magic and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great.

10 They all, from the least to the greatest, gave heed to him, saying, "This man is the great power of God."

11 And they were giving heed to him because he had for a long time astonished them with his magical arts.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching

the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were immersed, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself also believed. And when he was immersed, he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs that were done.

14 ¶ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,

15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16 For as yet He had fallen on none of them. They were only immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they laid hands on them, and they

They had never before seen something as this. No one had ever worked miracles in their area. **8** As a result of Philip's preaching and working of miracles, the entire city was full of joy. The miraculous work of God manifested the presence of God, and the message of the gospel brought joy to their hearts.

A SORCERER IS CONVERTED

9,10 *Previously practiced sorcery:* Simon was a man of deception. He was a sorcerer, or witch, who claimed to have miraculous powers. However, he was actually practicing magic. His magical tricks were so convincing that he had deceived the entire city of Samaria into believing that he could do miraculous wonders. But they were not miraculous because God never gave Satan any power to allow his agents to work miracles in order to prove his cause. Simon simply worked magical tricks and claimed that he was someone great. Because he had convinced even the most intellectual of the city, the residents claimed that he was the great power of God on earth. **11** *They heeded him:* They listened to Simon because they thought he was doing miraculous wonders. For a long period of time Simon had astonished the people with his magical arts. People can be deceived into believing something to be miraculous, and believe such for a long time. Even an entire village can believe such works to be miracles. We must never underestimate the deceptive works of individuals who seek a following. Neither should we underestimate the willingness of individuals to believe such deceptions (See comments Mt 24:24). True miracles were never accepted to be such by the unanimous belief of the multitudes. Every individual of the multitudes believed the occurrence of a miracle because of the power of the manifestation of the miracle. No group of men ever had to make a decision as to whether a miracle had occurred. **12** When the people saw true miraculous works by the hand of Philip, they were convinced that they should follow what Philip was saying because his miraculous works confirmed his message (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Those who were

able to perceive and understand both the preaching and miracles of Philip, were baptized under the authority of the kingdom reign of Jesus. *Men and women:* Only adults were baptized. No infants are mentioned in this case of baptism simply because infants are not proper candidates for baptism. **13** *Simon ... was amazed:* Even Simon was convinced that Philip was working true miracles. He was so convinced that he was also baptized for remission of his sins (2:38; 22:16; Mk 16:16). As a master of magical arts, Simon gave testimony that true miracles are different than the trickery of men who seek to deceive people. Both Simon and the Samaritans, therefore, gave their testimony that even a master of sorcery cannot perform miracles. Their obedience to Philip's message proved that Christianity originated from true supernatural means. It was not based on the trickery of those men who have deceived so many throughout the world. Luke gives this account, therefore, as a witness from a master of sorcery that true miracles were worked by the hand of Philip.

SIMON THIRSTS FOR POWER

14,15 The Samaritans were baptized by Philip, but they had not yet received the Holy Spirit (See comments 2:38,39; 19:1-6). Therefore, the Christ-sent apostles who were still in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria in order to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who had been baptized (2:38; 19:2). When they arrived in Samaria, Peter and John prayed for the new converts in order that the Spirit choose to come into their lives and endow them with miraculous gifts. **16** *Fallen upon none of them:* Emphasis in the context is on the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands. The text is not discussing the indwelling of the Spirit, whose presence is in every Christian. *Immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus:* See comments Mt 28:19,20 (At 10:48; 19:5). **17** *They laid hands on them:* Peter and John had come in order to carry out one of the major works of the Christ-sent apostles, that is, to lay hands on baptized believers in

received the Holy Spirit.

18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give me also this authority, so that on whom I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money.

21 "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

22 "Therefore, repent of this your wickedness and pray the Lord that, if possible, the

thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 "For I perceive that you are full of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

24 Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me so that none of these things that you have spoken come upon me."

25 And when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

26 ¶ And the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.

27 And he arose and went. And behold, a

order that they receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit (6:6; 19:6; Rm 1:11). **18,19** *When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given:* The apostles had freely received miraculous power, and in this cause, they were freely giving it to all in the church (Mt 10:8). For this reason they came to Samaria. This was one of the works which God had given them to do. Therefore, Simon recognized that it was only through the apostles, not Philip, that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given. Though Philip had hands laid on him by the apostles to receive the Spirit, he could not lay hands on others in order that they receive the Spirit in order to work miracles. Only the Christ-apostles could do this. It was their work. When the apostles died, therefore, there ceased the transmission of the laying on of hands in order to impart miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. **He offered them money:** Because of Simon's unconverted thirst for position and power among the people, he asked to buy this ability. He wanted this gift so that he could impart the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to others. He therefore sought with money to purchase and control the work of God in order to regain his position among the people. **20** *Your money perish with you:* Peter condemned Simon for his belief that he could buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. God's work cannot be bought. If Simon persisted in his evil motives and scheme he would be condemned. **The gift of God:** The term "gift" here refers us back to the "gift" of 2:38. This gift is here explained in a context of miraculous activity. This context, therefore, is a good commentary of 2:38 since we must view our understanding of words in the document of Acts from the book itself. Theophilus had only Luke and Acts to define what was meant by Luke's use of words in writing the two documents (See 11:16,17). **21** *Neither part nor portion:* Simon could never be a Christ-sent apostle. He sought for the position, but this work could never be his work (See comments 1:21-26). **Your heart is not right:** Though Simon was baptized, his heart was still not right with God (See Jn 17:9). His heart was filled with selfish ambition. **22** *Your wickedness:* Simon's selfish ambition and thirst for power was wickedness from which he had to repent. One would do well to meditate on these words of Peter if he seeks to lead the church. God would forgive Simon if he were truly

repentant of such selfish ambition and desire to rule over the people of God. **Repent:** Simon did not have to be rebaptized. He had to change his heart to conform to the submissive manner of Christianity (See comments Mk 10:44,45; Ep 5:21; 1 Pt 5:6,7). **23** *Poisoned by bitterness:* Bitterness is in the heart of someone who has lost that which he so coveted. Simon was bitter because he had lost his position of greatness among the people and had to submit himself to the leadership of Philip and the apostles. His bitterness had poisoned his mind (Hb 12:15). He was consumed by iniquity. These are hard words by which the Holy Spirit here warns everyone who would seek to be a leader in the church. Church leaders should thoroughly examine their hearts. **24** *Pray to the Lord for me:* Because of Peter's stern rebuke, Simon realized the wickedness of his pride and asked the apostles to pray for him (Js 5:16). **That none of these things:** In the record that is given here, Luke does not mention the things that Peter said would come upon Simon. However, we could assume that the power of a Christ-sent apostle could be used to cause blindness or some other physical punishment to come upon this sinning member of the church (See comments 13:9-12; 1 Co 5:5; 1 Tm 1:20). We must remember that Ananias and Sapphira fell dead before Christ-sent apostles (5:1-11). **25** Peter and John continued in Samaria to give their personal testimony to the resurrection of Jesus (1:8). They delivered more revelation from God to the people. On their return to Jerusalem they preached in the villages of Samaria along the way.

A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS CONVERTED

26 This is a special conversion in God's work of world evangelism. Luke includes this case in order to witness to the fact that even government officials obeyed the gospel. He also records this account to show how God intended to begin the church in Africa. **An angel of the Lord:** In the following conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the angel of the Lord did not go himself to the eunuch. God does not send angels to do the work of evangelism. In this case, He sent a preacher to communicate the word of God. Philip, therefore, arose in obedience to the angel's command to go to a desert place in order to encounter this prospect. **27** *He arose and went:* Without questioning, Philip

man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28 was returning and sitting in his chariot. And he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and join this chariot."

30 And Philip ran up and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31 And he said, "How can I, except someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb silent before its shearer, so He did not open His mouth.*"

33 *In His humiliation His judgment was taken away. And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.*"

34 And the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?"

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, he preached Jesus to him.

36 And as they went along the road they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, *here is water!* What hinders me from being immersed?"

37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.")]

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand

immediately left Samaria. He went to a road that extended seventy-five kilometers from Jerusalem to Gaza. When he arrived, he found a man who had come over 1,500 kilometers from Ethiopia to worship God in Jerusalem. This man was now returning to Ethiopia (See Ps 68:31; 87:4; Is 56:3; Zp 3:10). **A eunuch:** He was a eunuch, which was a special social order that demanded the great physical commitment of castration in order to join. He was a government official of great responsibility who had been given extensive authority over the treasury of the nation of Ethiopia. He was submissive in his appointed role under Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians. He was an honest man and unaffected by government corruption. **28 Reading Isaiah the prophet:** The eunuch was an educated man. He could read, and thus, was sitting and reading in his chariot a scroll of Isaiah on his return from worshipping in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem he had undoubtedly encountered Christian teachers who were teaching daily in the temple that Jesus was the Messiah (5:42). He loved God's word for he evidently paid a large sum of money to be able to own a hand-copied scroll of the book of Isaiah. **29 Then the Spirit said:** The Holy Spirit did not directly teach the eunuch, nor did the Spirit help him to interpret the Scriptures (See comments 2 Pt 3:15,16). The Spirit sent the preacher Philip to the eunuch in order to help him understand the Scriptures and to tell him what he had to do to be saved. **30 Do you understand:** In obedience to the Spirit, Philip ran to the chariot of the eunuch. He did not approach the eunuch with an arrogant attitude. He simply asked a question to begin a discussion concerning the Bible. **31 How can I:** The eunuch was confused concerning the interpretation of Isaiah 53 which he was reading. The Jewish teachers in Jerusalem had said that Isaiah prophesied about himself. However, in Jerusalem the Christians, when the eunuch had surely encountered in the temple courtyard, affirmed that Isaiah was talking about the crucified Messiah whom they identified as Jesus (5:42). In any case, the eunuch realized that he needed further instruction. **32,33 The Scripture which he read:** The

eunuch was reading Isaiah 53:7,8 which was a prophecy that Jesus would be led to crucifixion as an innocent sheep is led to slaughter and an unknowing lamb to the shearer. Jesus, in His humiliation as the Son of God, submitted to the cross because He knew that it was for the salvation of man.

34 Of whom does the prophet say this: The eunuch was confused as to whether this passage was speaking of Isaiah as the Jewish Rabbis taught, or if it were a prophecy of Jesus as the Christians in Jerusalem affirmed (5:42). **35 Preached Jesus to him:** Philip then took this opportunity to complete the eunuch's knowledge of Jesus. The subject of Philip's preaching was Jesus (1 Co 1:23; 2:2; Gl 6:14). It is God's system of evangelism to use preachers and teachers of the word of God in order to communicate the gospel (See Rm 10:14,15). **36 What hinders me from being immersed:** After Philip had declared the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the eunuch realized that according to Philip's instructions, he must obey this good news by immersion in water for the remission of his sins (2:38; See comments Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4). **37** (Some ancient manuscripts do not contain the statements of this verse. However, the Western Texts, as well as the translations into Latin contain the statements. Because the verse is not included in some texts, it is left out of some translations.) **If you believe:** Philip is not asking for a public confession. He is asking if the eunuch believes what he has just heard. The eunuch's request to be immersed indicated his belief in Jesus. **38 Commanded the chariot to stand still:** The eunuch knew that he had to immediately obey God. Philip took him down into the water and immersed him (Rm 6:4; Cl 2:12) for the remission of sins so that he might come into a covenant relationship with Jesus (2:38; 22:16). **39 The eunuch saw him no more:** The Holy Spirit then instructed Philip to go to other areas. His brief encounter with the eunuch was enough to send the gospel message on to Africa through the voice of a well-qualified person as the eunuch (Ps 68:31). The eunuch responded to the gospel without ever seeing a

still. And they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he immersed him.

39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip so that the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

Chapter 9

1 ¶ And Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest.

2 And he asked from him letters to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any

of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus. Then suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.

4 And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

6 "But arise and go into the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the sound, but seeing no one.

8 And Saul arose from the ground, and when

miracle, and now, he had the responsibility to be faithful without miracles as he returned home to Ethiopia. **Went on his way rejoicing:** The eunuch was very excited about his belief and obedience to Jesus. His sins were washed away (22:16). He was in Christ (Gl 3:26,27). He was saved (2 Tm 2:10; 1 Pt 3:21). He went on his way to Africa rejoicing over his obedience to the One who was now reigning over all things. **40** Philip continued his evangelistic work of preaching wherever he went. He was found at the city of Azotus where he also preached. From the desert to Caesarea he preached in every village along the way. As Jesus, he preached from village to village in order to proclaim the message of the gospel.

Chapter 9

SAUL'S CONVERSION

(At 22:4-11; 26:9-18)

Through the inspiration of Luke, the Holy Spirit now turns in Acts to recording the conversion of another great leadership personality with the same character qualifications as the eunuch. His Hebrew name was Saul. His Greek name was Paul. God considered him to be faithful to his beliefs (1 Tm 1:12). God desired to have Saul working to preach the gospel message cross-culturally to the Gentiles (See comments Gl 2:7-10). God chooses this man in order to direct his ministry throughout the Gentile world. God's purpose is to have the gospel preached in areas where Christianity will be set against pagan beliefs. Therefore, Paul's conversion begins with a supernatural intervention from heaven. This manner of conversion will be necessary in order to give Paul evidence for his new beliefs. It is thus not without purpose that God calls Paul through special means. Luke will concentrate on the life and work of the converted Paul throughout the remainder of this document. His purpose for doing such is founded on the fact that at the time of writing, Paul is in Rome on trial for his life. The document of Acts is thus a defense document for Christianity on behalf of Paul. Luke's argument with the record of Paul's conversion which

Paul recounted in his defense on two occasions during his ministry, is mentioned here as a defense of Paul. In other words, the changed and committed life of Paul can be answered only on the basis that he experienced the following revelation of Jesus on a road to Damascus.

1,2 Breathing threats and murder: After the death of Stephen, Saul continued to ravage the church (Gl 1:13,14). He finished his persecution work in Jerusalem and then headed toward Damascus. He received authority from Caiaphas, the chief priest in Jerusalem, to imprison Christians in Damascus who had submitted to the Way of Jesus (22:5). **The Way:** This was a common term that was used to refer to Christianity (See 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; compare 16:17; 18:15,16).

3 Came near Damascus: Damascus was at least a six-day walking journey from Jerusalem. Thus Saul had time to think about what he was doing to the church. When he and his company were outside Damascus, a sudden and bright light from heaven shined around him.

4 Why are you persecuting Me: Jesus said to Saul out of heaven that he was personally persecuting Him because he was persecuting His body, the church (Mt 10:40; 25:40,45; Lk 10:16; Jn 15:1-5). **5 To kick against the goads:** A goad was used to direct an ox in the right direction. Saul realized that it was a voice from heaven, and thus, referred to the voice as Lord. His conscience had been bothering him because Jesus said that he was fighting against things he was questioning in his own mind. Saul knew what Christians believed. He knew of the evidence they claimed concerning who Jesus was. He simply fought against the evidence in order to maintain his traditional religion, and surely, his position in the Jewish leadership. **6 What do You want me to do:** Saul accepted the authority of Jesus who was speaking. Therefore, he was not disobedient to the command of Jesus to go to Damascus to receive further instructions. He later told King Agrippa, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (26:19). This statement reveals the purpose of the work of God through the miraculous encounter of Paul with Jesus on the Damascus road. The encounter

his eyes were opened, he could see nothing. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* to Damascus.

9 Now he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

11 And the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go to the street that is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for he is praying.

12 "And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much

evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem.

14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go your way, for he is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

17 So Ananias went his way and entered into the house. And putting his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord who appeared to you on the road as you came has sent me so that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 Then immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales. And he received his sight and arose and was immersed.

was meant to give Paul visible evidence that Jesus was truly resurrected from the dead. The experience of his personal encounter with Jesus would thus be the foundation of his ministry to preach the gospel. **7 *Hearing a voice:*** Those who were with Saul had also fallen to the ground. They were speechless. They had heard the sound of the voice, but they did not understand what was said by Jesus. Acts 22:9 says that they "heard not the voice." The Greek word in 22:9, though the same as the one used in this context, is in the accusative voice in 22:9. The meaning in 22:9, therefore, is that they did not hear with understanding. Here in 9:7 the word for voice is in the genitive and can be translated "sound." The meaning here is that they heard the sound of the voice but they did not understand what the voice was saying. **8 *He saw no one:*** Saul was blinded by the glory of the light (22:11). Therefore, he arose from the ground and was led by hand into Damascus. **9 *Three days:*** For three days God left Paul alone for prayer and fasting in order for him to rethink his life. We wonder concerning the great mental anguish this harsh persecutor of the church went through as he recalled all the pleas and cries of those disciples of Jesus he had persecuted. God wanted the event on the road to sink into Saul's mind before he was baptized because Saul would recount this event for the rest of his life. It would be a testimony that his conversion was the result of a miraculous encounter with God.

A PREACHER IS SENT

(At 22:12-16)

10,11 *Go to ... Saul of Tarsus:* A devout Jewish Christian by the name of Ananias was called by the Lord through a vision to go to Saul (22:12). Saul was residing at the house of Judas which was located on a street named Straight. **12** Saul had already been told by Jesus that one was coming to restore his sight. He had also seen a vision of Ananias coming to him. **13,14 *How much harm he has done:*** Ananias was first hesitant about going to Saul because he had heard of the great persecution Saul had launched against the

church. Ananias had even heard that Saul had authority in Damascus to imprison the saints of God. ***Saints:*** These were living Christians. They were those who had been sanctified by the blood of Jesus (1Co 1:1). **15 *Go:*** Jesus reassured Ananias by telling him that Saul was a uniquely chosen worker for a unique work. Because of Saul's faithful personality and leadership abilities, Jesus chose and commissioned him to give testimony of Jesus before the Gentiles, world kings and the Israelites (21:14; 25:22,23; 26:1; Rm 1:1,5; 11:13; 1 Co 15:10; Gl 1:15; 2:7,8; Ep 3:7,8; 1 Tm 2:7; 2 Tm 1:11). **16 *Suffer for My name's sake:*** Before he was baptized, Jesus explained to Saul all the persecutions through which he had to go in order to accomplish his divine mission (See 20:22-24; 2 Co 4:11; 11:23-28; 12:7-10; Gl 6:17; Ph 1:29,30; see comments Lk 14:25-35).

17 *Ananias went:* After being reassured of his safety, Ananias went to the house of Judas to see Saul. As a fellow Jewish brother, Ananias greeted Saul and laid hands on him in order that he receive his sight. However, on this occasion Jesus directly filled Saul with the Holy Spirit (2:4; 4:31; 8:17; 13:52). **18 *Fell from his eyes:*** When Ananias laid hands on Saul, something as scales immediately fell from Saul's eyes and he was again able to see. Ananias asked him why he tarried to be baptized in order to wash away his sins (22:16). This is a good question to ask anyone who has heard the gospel. Saul obeyed the gospel by being immersed for the remission of sins (2:38; Rm 6:3-6). In verse 17 Ananias told Saul that he was sent by the Lord to accomplish two things: (1) He was sent to restore Saul's sight. (2) He was also sent that Saul might be filled with the Holy Spirit. When Ananias came, he first laid hands on Saul to restore his sight. He then baptized him for the remission of his sins (22:16). We could conclude that he was filled with the Spirit after he was baptized. For this reason, Ananias did not come to lay hands on him in order that he be filled with the Spirit. Saul was filled with the Spirit in the same manner as those in 4:31. **19 *Received food:*** Saul then ended his fast, ate food and was strengthened. He stayed in Damascus for a few

19 Now when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples who were at Damascus.

20 ¶ And immediately he preached Jesus in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

21 But all who heard *him* were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that intent, that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

22 But Saul increased more in strength and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

23 ¶ Now after many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him.

24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they were watching the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

26 ¶ And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to associate with the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecian Jews. But they attempted to kill him.

30 When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

31 ¶ Then the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and they were edified. And walking in the fear of the

days, meeting with the disciples and testifying that Jesus was the Messiah.

PAUL GOES TO WORK

20,21 *Immediately he preached the Christ:* Saul did not waste time in carrying out his Christ-commissioned apostleship. He went straight to the Jewish synagogue and began preaching Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. The Jews were startled at his sudden change of belief and life. Such a sudden change in behavior could not be explained without a supernatural happening in the life of Saul. Luke wants to understand that men as Saul do not naturally make such rapid changes in belief and behavior. We can understand Paul's rapid change only in the fact that he experienced something on the Damascus road. **22**

Confounded the Jews: Regardless of Jewish opposition, Saul increased in boldness. He proved from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah (5:42; 9:22; 17:1-3; 18:28). After this initial preaching and confrontation with the Jews, Saul journeyed to Arabia for a period of time (Gl 1:15-17). He then returned to Damascus and preached the sonship of Jesus. It is probable that Paul's journey to Arabia for communion with God (Gl 1:17,18) took place before the events that begin with this verse, but after his temporary preaching period of verses 20,21. We could assume, therefore, that he spend three years in Arabia.

PAUL ESCAPES TO JERUSALEM

23 *Plotted to kill him:* As the Jews and Saul murdered Jesus in Jerusalem, so they now laid a plot to murder the converted Saul (23:12; 25:3; 26:21; 2 Co 11:26,32). This was the beginning of a ministry during which Paul (Saul) would have many murder plots laid against him. Here, the Jews continually watched the gates of the city in order to find him. **24,25** However, Saul found out about the plot. The disciples saved Saul's life by letting him down the wall of Damascus in a

basket in the middle of the night. The forgiving spirit of the disciples is certainly manifested here. The disciples whom Saul came to persecute are now seeking to save his life.

26 *Tried to join the disciples:* Saul returned to Jerusalem in order to correct previous wrongs he had done to the church. However, the disciples in Jerusalem were still afraid of him (22:17-20; 26:20). They had not heard of all the preaching he had done in Damascus. **27** *Barnabas took him:* When Saul came to Jerusalem, Barnabas (4:36; 13:2) received him and took him to Peter, with whom he stayed fifteen days (Gl 1:18). Saul also met with James, one of the brothers of Jesus, who was a church-sent apostle (Gl 1:19). Barnabas told everyone how bold Saul had been in his preaching during the time he worked in Damascus.

28,29 Saul stayed in Jerusalem, talking with the apostles and brethren concerning the things of the kingdom of heaven. He debated with the Greek-speaking Jews (Hellenists) (6:1; 11:20) who would not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Because of their blinded arrogance against Christians, these Hellenists tried to murder Saul in order to stop him from preaching (2 Co 11:26). **30** Again, the church saved Saul from death by taking him to Caesarea. This could be the Caesarea which was about one hundred kilometers northwest of Jerusalem (See 22:17-21). However, in view of Gl 1:21, this Caesarea may have been the one called Caesarea Philippi which was near Mount Hermon. The disciples then sent him back to his homeland of Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia in Asia Minor (Gl 1:21; see At 15:23,41; 23:16; Rm 16:7,11,21). He also went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, preaching and teaching the gospel. Paul possibly stayed in these regions from five to ten years evangelizing his homeland. After this period of evangelizing his family and homeland, Barnabas went to Cilicia in order to bring him to Antioch in order to prepare him for the mission that Jesus had given him on the Damascus road.

Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

32 ¶ Now it came to pass as Peter passed throughout all *those regions*, he came down also to the saints who dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.

34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you whole. Arise and make your bed." And he arose immediately.

35 And all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

36 ¶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, who by translation is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable works that she did.

37 Now it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the

disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent to him two men, asking *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him into the upper chamber. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the coats and garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all out, and kneeled down, and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes. And when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 Then he gave her *his* hand and lifted her up. And when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

43 And it came to pass that he stayed many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

PEACE FROM PERSECUTION

31 *Peace and were edified:* When Saul was converted God had gained the leader of the persecution force against the church in Palestine. As a result, all the church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed an atmosphere of peace (5:11; 8:1; 16:5). The church was built up in the Lord. Christians walked in the commandments of the Lord (1 Jn 1:5-10) and in the comfort which proceeded from the Holy Spirit because they were walking after the will of God. The church thus grew (See 4:4). When in times of peace, the church is able to grow. Evangelism freely goes on when Christians can work freely among any particular nation in peace.

PETER'S MISSIONARY JOURNEY

32 Peter made several preaching tours throughout the southern regions of Palestine. He traveled about forty-five kilometers northwest of Jerusalem to the city of Lydda and stayed with the brethren. **33** In Lydda he met a man named Aeneas who had been confined to his bed for eight years because he was paralyzed. **34,35** By the miraculous power which proceeded from Jesus Christ, Peter healed Aeneas. In this case of healing, the marks of a true miracle can be seen. The man was truly paralyzed. He was truly healed. ***He arose immediately:*** One identification of a true miracle is that it happens immediately. It is not delayed over a long period of time. Neither does the malady reoccur. As a result of this miracle, all in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord because they knew that the man was truly paralyzed. This would also identify a true miracle. It is known to be such by those who observe. There is a public response to its occurrence.

PETER RAISES DORCAS

36 *At Joppa:* The coastal seaport city of Joppa was about sixty kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. In

Lydda there was a sister in Christ by the name of Tabitha, whose Greek name was Dorcas. She was a very benevolent sister who spent her time in helping others (See 1 Tm 2:10; Ti 3:8). **37** Unfortunately, Dorcas became very ill. As a result of her illness, she died and was prepared for burial. She was then laid in an upper room where she was remembered for her good works.

38 Since Peter was in Joppa, the brethren in Lydda sent two brothers to implore Peter to come and help them. **39 *Peter arose and went:*** Without hesitation, Peter arose and went to Lydda with the two brethren. When he arrived, he went immediately to where they had laid the body of Dorcas. Those at the house mourned over the loss of such a great servant of God. They showed Peter the great works that she had done, which works were a testimony to her benevolence. **40 *Peter put them out:*** Peter put everyone out of the room where Dorcas was lying. Only he and Dorcas were in the room (See Mt 9:25; Mk 5:40). As a Christ-sent apostle, Peter had the authority to raise the dead, which he did as he commanded Dorcas to rise. **41 *He presented her alive:*** When Dorcas arose, Peter took her by the hand and presented her to her friends who had mourned over her death. This particular case of a miracle was certainly an awesome event in the history of early Christianity. The friends (witnesses) were with the body for some time. There was no question that she was dead. But she was raised from the dead. **42** As a result of this most publicized miracle, many in the region of Joppa obeyed the gospel. Luke wants us to understand that true miracles affect entire communities. They are not believed by a select few who are grasping for a miracle to substantiate their weak faith. They are believed by all, for even unbelievers cannot deny them (4:16). **43** This miracle accomplished the purpose for which miracles were allowed to be worked by the disciples of Jesus (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). It produced

Chapter 10

1 ¶ There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,
2 a devout *man*, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave many alms to the people, and always prayed to God.
3 About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God coming in to him, and saying to him, "Cornelius."
4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.
5 "And now, send men to Joppa and call for Simon whose surname is Peter.
6 "He is staying with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. [He will tell you what you must do.]"
7 And when the angel who spoke to Cornelius had departed, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of those who

waited on him continually.

8 And when he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 ¶ On the next day, as they went on their journey and drew near to the city, about the sixth hour Peter went up on the housetop to pray.

10 And he became very hungry, and wanted to eat. But while they made ready, he fell into a trance.

11 And he saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet descending to the ground by four corners.

12 In it were all kinds of four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts and creeping things, and birds of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter. Kill and eat."

14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

15 And the voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed, you must

wonder in the minds of those who beheld it. It thus opened a door of opportunity for the preaching of the gospel throughout the region. Peter thus stayed in the house of a brother named Simon in order to continue preaching. Simon was a tanner by profession.

Chapter 10

A ROMAN OFFICER IS CONVERTED

In the following case of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, God worked several unique things in order to move the evangelistic efforts of the Jews from the culture of the Jews to the Gentiles. The uniqueness of the following events affirms that God is doing something in reference to Cornelius for a specific purpose. Therefore, since these events take place as a unique conversion experience, we must look for the purpose for which God specifically sends Peter to Cornelius and his household.

1,2 Cornelius was a Centurion, a commander of one hundred Roman soldiers. His command was in the Italian Regiment which was made up of 600 to 1,000 soldiers. He was a devout man who was obedient to God's will. He was benevolent toward the poor and a spiritual leader of his family and friends. He was also a prayerful man who had a good reputation in the community where he lived. However, he was not saved, nor could he be saved by his good works (See comments 11:14). **3** Around 3:00^{pm} one afternoon Cornelius saw clearly in a vision an angel coming to him. **4** Though Cornelius was afraid, the angel reassured him by saying that his prayers and benevolent deeds had not been unnoticed by God. **5,6** Because God does not send angels to communicate to people His will (8:26; Gl 1:6-9), He commissioned this angel to instruct Cornelius to send to Joppa to get Peter who was staying

in the house of Simon, the tanner (See comments Rm 10:14,15; 1 Co 1:21; 2 Co 4:7). Because Cornelius was not saved, he needed to send for someone who would instruct him concerning what he must do to obey God. The angel said that when Peter came he would instruct him on what to do to be saved (11:13,14). **7,8** Cornelius immediately called for two of his household servants and a devout soldier. He explained to them all he had experienced and what the angel had said. He then sent them to find Peter.

PETER SEES A VISION

(At 11:4-12)

9 It was the next day after Cornelius had seen the vision at about 12:00pm, that Peter went up to the top of a house in Joppa to wait for lunch which was being prepared. **10** While the food was being prepared he fell into a trance. A trance was a state of mind where one was mentally freed from the confines of the body in order to perceive that which was beyond the physical world (11:5; 12:11; 22:17; see Nm 24:4,16). There is no biblical definition of a trance. We can only assume that God influenced the mind of an individual in order to allow one to perceive something in a manner that was more vivid than a dream. **11** In the trance in which Peter was, heaven was opened. Something like a great sheet was lowered from heaven by the corners. **12** In the sheet-like object there were all kinds of four-legged animals. There were wild beasts and creeping things, even birds. **13** A voice then told Peter to kill and eat any of the animals. **14** But as a Jew who had never eaten something that was classified as unclean according to the Old Testament law, Peter said he would not eat anything unclean. **15** The voice reminded Peter that God is the one who determines what is either clean or unclean. **Unclean:** The Jews, under the Old Testament

not consider common.”

16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up again into heaven.

17 ¶ Now while Peter was perplexed in himself what this vision that he had seen meant, behold, the men who were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.

18 And they called and asked whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, was lodging there.

19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are seeking you.”

20 “Arise therefore, and go down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.”

21 Then Peter went down to the men and said, “Behold, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?”

22 And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, a just man, and one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was directed by a holy angel to send

for you *to come* to his house, and to hear words from you.”

23 Then he called them in and lodged *them*. And on the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 ¶ And the following day they entered Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, “Stand up. I myself also am a man.”

27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.

28 Then he said to them, “You know that it is an unlawful thing for a man who is a Jew to keep company with or come to one of another nation. But God has showed me that I should not call anyone common or unclean.

law were forbidden to eat certain animals that were considered unclean (Lv 11:1-47; 20:25; Dt 14:3-20; Ez 4:14). However, Peter here was not to question God's instructions. The law had been changed (See vs 28; Mt 15:11; Mk 7:19; Rm 14:14,17,20; 1 Co 10:25; 1 Tm 4:4; Ti 1:15). **16** This same act in the vision occurred for Peter three times in order to emphasize that God did not consider any meat unclean. We must assume, therefore, that there are no unclean foods today. Christians can eat all meats.

PETER GOES TO CAESAREA

17,18 *Peter wondered within himself:* Peter understood what occurred during the vision. However, he did not understand what it meant. He did not understand that several miraculous events were occurring in order that God open the door to the evangelization of the Gentile world by the Jews. It was at this time that Cornelius' messengers arrived and were calling for Peter at the door. At the time all these events were happening in the Jewish environment of Palestine, God was also preparing Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. The case of Cornelius prepared the Jewish Christians to accept the coming ministry of Paul to the Gentiles. **19, 20** *The Spirit said to him:* The Holy Spirit told Peter that there were men searching for him. He must go with them without asking any questions. Peter knew that something unique in history was occurring, however, he did not completely understand. Therefore, the Spirit reassured him that what was happening was of God. **21,22** Peter greeted the men who had been sent from Cornelius. He asked them to explain why they were there. They briefly explained the appearance of the angel to their master and the instructions which the angel had given to him.

23 Peter invited the three men to stay overnight. They departed for Caesarea the next morning. When they left the next morning, six Jewish brethren of the Joppa church also went with them. They went with Peter because he was going to the house of a Gentile (11:12). It was not lawful according to Jewish custom that Jews eat in the house of a Gentile. Therefore, Peter took witnesses with him in order to confirm the events that were happening (See vs 28).

PETER MEETS CORNELIUS

24 Caesarea was a coastal city about fifty-five kilometers north of Joppa. When Peter and his company arrived, they found Cornelius anxiously waiting for them. He had already called all his family and friends together for a group hearing of what Peter had to say. **25,26** *Cornelius ... fell down at his feet and worshiped:* When Peter approached Cornelius, Cornelius fell down at his feet and worshiped him. However, Peter would not allow such because he realized that he was only a man and not one to receive worship which should be extended only toward God (See 14:14,15; Rv 19:10; 22:8). Though he was a Christ-sent apostle, Peter still would not allow anyone to bow down to him. Worship is to be directed only toward God. **27,28** Peter was encouraged when he was so many who had gathered together. *How unlawful it is:* He reminded Cornelius that according to Jewish custom it was not lawful for Jews to associate with other races or tribes in the manner that he was so doing at this time (See 11:3; Jn 4:9; 18:28; Gl 2:12). His actions of meeting in the house of a Gentile that was against custom,, illustrates the fact that disciples of Jesus must be willing to overlook any custom that would hinder the preaching of the gospel to the lost. *God has shown me*

29 “Therefore, I came *to you* without any objection as soon as I was sent for. Therefore, I ask for what reason you have sent for me?”

30 Then Cornelius said, “Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour. And behold, a man stood before me in shining clothes,

31 “and he said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered in the sight of God.

32 ‘Therefore, send to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodged by the sea in the house of Simon a tanner.’

33 “Immediately, therefore, I sent to you, and you have been kind to come. Now therefore, we are all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded you by the Lord.”

34 ¶ Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.

35 “But in every nation he who fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

36 “The word that *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ – He is Lord of all –

37 “that word, *I say*, you know. That *word* was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the immersion that John preached:

38 “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 “And we are witnesses of all things that He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they also killed by hanging *Him* on a tree.

40 “Him God raised up the third day and granted that He be manifested,

41 “not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.

42 “And He commanded us to preach to the

that I should not call any man common or unclean: Peter said that God had shown him that it was not in the power of man to determine what was either right or wrong in such social matters. Man has no right to be racially prejudiced (vs 14,35; 15:8,9). At this time in these events Peter was beginning to understand the meaning of the vision, though he did not understand all the implications of what it meant. **29** Though Peter knew that what he was doing was contrary to Jewish custom, he came to Cornelius' house without objecting to the Holy Spirit's instructions. He asked for Cornelius to fully explain why he had sent for him and why everyone was gathered together. **30-33** Cornelius explained to Peter what happened when the angel appeared to him. He explained that four days previous to this encounter an angel had stated that God took notice of his spirituality and good deeds. The angel had instructed him to send for Peter and that Peter would explain what he must do to be saved. Both Cornelius and Peter had obeyed God to bring about this special meeting. Now Cornelius wanted to know what God had instructed Peter to tell them.

GOD DIRECTS EVANGELISM TO THE GENTILES

34,35 **In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality:** Peter began his message to the assembled group of Gentiles by saying that God does not show special consideration to any race, tribe or class of people in society (See Dt 10:17; 2 Ch 19:7; Jb 34:19; Rm 2:11; 10:15; Gl 2:6; Ep 6:9; Cl 3:25; Js 2:1-9; 1 Pt 1:17). God accepts any person of any race who will be reverently moved to obey His commandments and do good works toward one's fellow man. **36** Peter stated that faithful preachers were sent out to all Israel to

preach the gospel of peace (Is 57:19; Mk 16:15,20). **He is Lord of all:** The message was that Jesus is now Lord over all things (Mt 28:18; Rm 10:12; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). Men must submit to His lordship by obedience to the gospel (2:37,38). **37** Cornelius and his household had already heard some things about Jesus because the message was proclaimed first by John the Baptist and then was spread throughout all Judea where they lived (8:4). **38 Anointed:** God had proved Jesus to be the Messiah through fulfillment of prophecy. He empowered Him through the Holy Spirit to be able to work miracles in His humble state of being a man on earth (Lk 4:1,14; Jn 3:2; 8:29). Jesus was able to cast out demons and work every good work which was against the kingdom of Satan (Mt 4:23). **39** The apostles were witnesses of the miraculous works of Jesus as well as His resurrection (1:8; 2:23). It was the unbelieving Jews who caused the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross (2:23; 3:13; 5:30; 13:29; 1 Pt 2:24). God had used their wicked means to accomplish the gospel event. **40 Him God raised up:** Though crucified, God would not allow Jesus' body to decay away to the dust of the earth. Therefore, He was raised from the dead (2:24). **41** God chose those to whom Jesus would appear and be credible witnesses of His resurrection (See Lk 24:30,41-43; Jn 21:13). Such appearances guaranteed for all time that Jesus was not still buried in some tomb in Palestine. He lives! He was resurrected to even eat and drink with the witnesses of the resurrection (Lk 24:30,41-43). **42 He commanded us to preach to the people:** Herein is Peter's reference to the command of the great commission. After His resurrection Jesus commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mt 28:19,20; Mk

people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* the Judge of the living and the dead.

43 “To Him all the prophets bear witness, that through His name everyone who believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”

44 ¶ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word.

45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out also on the Gentiles.

46 For they heard them speak with languages and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

47 “Can anyone forbid water, that these

should not be immersed who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?”

48 And he commanded them to be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

Chapter 11

1 ¶ Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 So when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were of the circumcision contended with him,

3 saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the

16:15,16). God wanted all the world to know that Jesus now rules over all things. Jesus will judge both those who are living when He comes and those who have died (17:30,31; Rm 14:9; 2 Tm 4:1; 1 Pt 4:5). **43** All the prophets prophesied of Jesus (Ps 22; 110:1; Is 42:1; 53:11; 61:1; Jr 31:34; Dn 7:13,14; 9:24; Hs 6:1-3; Zc 7:12,13; 13:1; Mc 7:18; Mt 4:2; Lk 24:44). There are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the life and ministry of Jesus. All these prophecies have been fulfill. Jesus went to the cross in fulfillment of prophecy, and now He is the only one through whom salvation is possible (2:38; 4:12; 22:16; Jn 3:16; 14:6; Rm 10:11).

THE GENTILES ARE ACCEPTED

(At 11:15-17; 15:7-9)

44 *The Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word:* When Peter began to speak these words (11:15), the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all those who were present who could hear the words of Peter. The purpose for this spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to give a special divine and miraculous signal that the Gentiles must have the gospel preached to them. This event was unique in the sense that such had not happened since the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:1-4 when the Spirit came upon the apostles (11:15). The purpose of this outpouring of the Spirit is explained in 11:18. The purpose was to give a divine demonstration to the Jews that the Gentiles had a right to hear and obey the gospel. The Gentiles should have all the privileges of the gospel, including the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit's miraculous outpouring on this household was God's proof to the Jews that the Gentiles were just as important in His plan of salvation as the Jews. God was telling the Jews that they must accept this fact. **45** *Those of the circumcision ... were astonished:* The six witnesses who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38) had come upon the Gentiles in a similar manner as it came on the apostles when the church was first established (11:17; see 15:8,9). Except for the events of Acts 2:1-4, this was the only time that something as this had happened since

Pentecost. Their surprise also indicates that such an outpouring had not been experienced since the day of Pentecost. **46** *They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God:* The visual evidence that the Spirit had been poured out upon them was the fact that they magnified God through inspired foreign languages that they had never studied. This was God's signal that the church must make special efforts to evangelize the Gentiles. **47** *Can anyone forbid water:* Peter asked if there would be any who would object that these now be baptized for remission of sins, since God had already indicated by the outpouring of the Spirit that they be accepted. Therefore, the outpouring of the Spirit upon the household of Cornelius did not save them, for they had to be baptized for the remission of their sins (2:38; 22:16). **48** *He commanded them to be immersed:* Peter commanded that they be immersed in order to wash away their sins (22:16). *In the name of the Lord:* They had to be immersed under the authority of the name of Jesus and into a spiritual relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). Cornelius and his household then asked Peter and his company to stay with them for a few days of Christian fellowship and teaching.

Chapter 11

PETER RETURNS TO JERUSALEM

1 The news of the great miraculous event and conversion of the household of Cornelius had already traveled throughout all Judea before Peter returned to Jerusalem to explain what had happen. The news of the event was astounding to the churches because nothing as this had happened in the church since the establishment of the church on Pentecost several years before. **2,3** *Contended with him:* When Peter came to Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians who were still misguided by the racism concerning the Gentiles, confronted him. They confronted him for breaking Jewish tradition by going into the house of a Gentile. They contended with Peter for even sitting down at the same table and eating with someone other than a Jew (See 10:28; Gl 2:12). The fact that they so contended

beginning, and explained *it* in order to them, saying,

5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying. And in a trance I saw a vision, a certain object descending like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky. And it came even to me.

6 "When I gazed on it intently and was observing it, I saw four-footed animals of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the air.

7 "Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Arise, Peter. Kill and eat.'

8 "But I said, 'Not so, Lord. For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered into my mouth.'

9 "But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed, you must no longer call common.'

10 "And this was done three times, and everything was drawn up again into heaven.

11 "And behold, at that moment there were three men already at the house where I was *staying*, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

12 "And the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house.

13 "And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house who stood and said to him, 'Send men to Joppa and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter,

14 'who will tell you words by which you and all your house will be saved.'

15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.

16 "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed immersed with water, but you will be immersed with the Holy Spirit.'

17 "Therefore, if God gave them the like gift as *He* also gave to us after having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand against God?"

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted repentance to life to the Gentiles."

19 ¶ Now those who were scattered abroad

with Peter is evidence that the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the house of Cornelius was to move the Jewish brethren into evangelization of the Gentile people. They must move out of their culture into the culture of the Gentiles.

PETER EXPLAINS CORNELIUS' CONVERSION

4-18 Peter explained to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that while he was in Joppa he had received a special vision from God concerning what he must do. He carefully explained the vision concerning the sheet-like object that descended from heaven with four-legged animals, wild beasts, creeping things and birds. **Kill and eat:** He explained that a voice out of heaven told him to kill and eat any of the animals that he saw. But he told the voice that as a Jew who was faithful to the Old Testament law, he had not and would not eat anything unclean. **You must not call common:** Peter stated that the voice said that what God has cleansed one must not call common. To emphasize the point, the coming down of the sheet-like object happened three times.

Three men stood before the house: At the conclusion of the vision, the three men whom Cornelius had sent arrived at the door of Simon, the tanner. The Spirit told Peter not to question, but to go with the men. Knowing the predicament of going to a Gentile house, Peter said that he took six Jewish witnesses with him. When they arrived at the house of Cornelius, Cornelius explained to Peter and the six witnesses everything that had happened. Cornelius explained how an angel appeared in his house. The angel told him to send for Peter because Peter would give him instruction on how to be

saved. **As I began to speak:** Peter then explained to the Jerusalem Jews that as he began explaining how one must understand and obey the gospel, the Holy Spirit came upon all who were in the house of Cornelius. Cornelius and his household began speaking in languages that they had never before studied. This was God's signal that the Jews must preach the gospel to the Gentiles. God had accepted them, therefore, they must not reject their duty to preach the gospel to them. **I remembered:** The manner of how the Spirit came upon them reminded Peter of the Lord's promise during His ministry that the Spirit would come upon the apostles. Peter was also reminded that the Spirit did come on the apostles in a baptismal manner in the beginning of the church (Mt 3:11; At 1:5). The fact that the event sparked Peter to remember what had happened to him and the apostles several years before, indicates that such had not happened in the church since the event of Acts 2 on Pentecost. Though this outpouring of the Spirit did not save Cornelius, Peter explained how it happened and how he commanded them to be baptized for the remission of sins. In fact, Peter explained that if God gave them the same miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit that they had received when they believed, who was he to withstand such a powerful testimony of God that the Gentiles be accepted into the church. **They glorified God:** When Peter finished his explanation, everyone rejoiced. They proclaimed the reason for the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentile household of Cornelius. It was most evident that God wanted the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles (See Is 42:1,6; 49:6; Lk 2:32; Jn 11:52; Rm 10:12,13; 15:9,16). The purpose of the

after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to no one except the Jews.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them. And a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church that was in Jerusalem. And they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

23 Then when he came and had seen the grace

of God, he was glad. And he encouraged them all that with purpose of heart *that* they remain *faithful* to the Lord.

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And many people were added to the Lord.

25 ¶ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul.

26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass for a whole year that they assembled with the church and taught many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

27 ¶ Now at this time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

event was to convince the Jewish Christians that they must make every effort to communicate the gospel across cultures to the Gentiles. They must bypass cultural behavioral practices and traditions that would separate them from fellowshiping with the Gentiles (See comments 15:16-21).

GROWTH EVIDENCES GOD'S PRESENCE

19 Luke explains here the continued scattering of Christians that resulted from the persecution in Judea after Stephen's death (8:1-4). Christians traveled as far as Phoenicia, the island of Cyprus and Antioch in Syria. However, most of those who went out were still preaching the gospel primarily to the Jews (6:1; 9:29).

20 The city of Antioch was composed of Gentiles and Greek-speaking Jews. In Antioch the Christians preached to and converted many of these Greek-speaking Jews. Many Gentiles were also converted. **21** *The hand of the Lord was with them:* God went with these Christians and confirmed their preaching and teaching by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Such was a fulfillment of Jesus' promise that their word would be confirmed by miraculous works (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). As a result of their preaching and God's confirming of the word, the church grew everywhere. **22** The Christians in Jerusalem heard of the great number of conversions in northern Palestine. In order to exhort the new converts, they commissioned Barnabas, a man gifted in exhortation, to go to Antioch (See 4:36,37; 9:27; Gl 2:11-21). Through Barnabas, therefore, the church intended to build up and encourage the Gentile brethren of the church.

23 When Barnabas came to Antioch he was overwhelmed by the growth of the church. He thus encouraged the Christians to remain faithful to the Lord.

24 The preaching of Barnabas was effective because he was a man with a good character. He preached by inspiration of the Spirit and manifested a spirit of great faith. The greatness of his character was manifested in the effectiveness of the response of people to his preaching (See 4:4). The effect of one's preaching is always enhanced by the dedicated life of the one preaching. **25** *Barnabas departed for Tarsus:* After a period of time in Antioch with the church which was primarily composed of Gentiles, Barnabas realized the

need that one with the abilities of Saul was needed in Antioch. He realized this because he knew that God had chosen Paul to be a special apostle to the Gentiles. He thus departed for Tarsus in search of Saul. Some Bible students believe that it had been five to ten years from the time of Paul's conversion in Damascus to the time Barnabas brings him from Cilicia. **26** *Brought him to Antioch:* When Barnabas eventually found Saul and brought him to Antioch, they grounded the new church of Antioch in the faith by teaching for a period of about one year. During this year people of the community started calling the disciples Christians because the community saw that they identified themselves with the teaching and behavior of Christ (26:28; 1 Pt 4:16). This was the first time disciples were referred to as Christians. Bible students have discussed for years the origin of the name Christian. Some have contended that this was the new name prophesied by Isaiah that should be used to refer to the followers of Jesus (Is 62:2-4,12; 65:15). In the context of what happens here in Antioch, it seems that the name "Christian" was given in a derogatory manner, that is, the followers of Christ were called Christians because they functioned as a group who separated themselves from the commonly accepted religious practices of the community. However, if this were the manner by which God wanted to give the new name to the disciples, such would have happened. We must keep in mind that the disciples were not referred to as Christian for several years after the establishment of the church. The most common New Testament term that is used in reference to the followers of Jesus is simply "disciple." However, this term is not unique in reference to Christians. The term disciple was simply a reference that was given to anyone who was a follower, learner and apprentice of a teacher. The name Christian means that one is "of Christ," and thus, a disciple of Christ is one who learns from Christ by enrolling himself as an apprentice of the life and teachings of Christ.

PROPHECY OF FAMINE

27,28 *Prophets:* During the time Barnabas and Paul were in Antioch, inspired preachers came up from Jerusalem to Antioch (2:17; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9; 1 Co 12:28; Ep 4:11,12). One of the prophets, Agabus,

28 Then one of them named Agabus stood up and signified by the Spirit that there would be a great famine throughout all the world. And this came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

29 Then the disciples, everyone according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judea.

30 This they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Chapter 12

1 ¶ Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hands to harass some of the

church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

4 And when he had seized him, he put *him* in prison and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending after Passover to bring him out to the people.

5 ¶ So Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was earnestly made to God for him by the church.

6 ¶ Now when Herod was about to bring him

prophesied that there would be a devastating famine throughout the Roman Empire (See 21:10). This famine would happen during the reign of Claudius Caesar of Rome who ruled from A.D. 41 to A.D. 54 (18:2). According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, the famine began in A.D. 44 and extended through to A.D. 48. The worst of the drought was centered in Judea. **29 The disciples ... determined to send relief:** The church throughout all the areas where it had been established made special contributions and sent the money to the churches of Judea (Rm 15:26; 1 Co 16:1,2; 2 Co 9:1). **30** The contributions were sent to the elders of the church in Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (12:25). From the elders of the church in Jerusalem, distribution was made throughout the region of Judea. This cooperative effort on the part of Gentile churches manifested the Gentiles' concern for Jewish churches. It also manifested the fellowship Christians had for one another regardless of their race. The famine became an occasion for the one body of Christ to function as a universal organism. Though members were scattered throughout the world, they nourish any part of the body that was suffering. This was a historical lesson that confirmed the oneness of the body, though not all the members were in one location, or assembled together in one building.

Chapter 12

PETER IS ARRESTED

1 Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, died in A.D. 44. Therefore, the date of the following events happened a short time before A.D. 44. Herod Agrippa's three children were Drusilla (24:24), Herod Agrippa II (25:13), and Bernice (25:13). **To harass some from the church:** At this time in the early beginnings of Christianity, Herod took it upon himself to afflict some of the church with another persecution. **2 He killed James:** Herod killed the apostle James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee (Mt 4:21; 20:20-25; Mk 10:35). James is thus the first martyred apostle. We are not told why God allowed the death of James at the hand of Herod. Luke gives this record in order to remind us that all of us are subject to the hostile environment in which we dwell. It may be that God allowed this death in order to manifest that in the matter of life and death, He

showed no respect of persons in reference to the apostles. The death of James took place over ten years after the church was established in A.D. 30. Therefore, the special ministry of the Christ-sent apostles was coming to a close, for James had completed his ministry. The apostles' ministry now was to suffer martyrdom for Jesus. **3 Saw that it pleased the Jews:** Herod saw that this murder greatly pleased the Jews who lived in Jerusalem. He thus proceeded to do the same to Peter as he had done to James. At the time, many Jews had journeyed from distant lands and assembled in Judea because it was the time of the Unleavened Bread which followed Passover (Ex 12:12,13,29,30; Lv 23:5-8; Dt 16:1-8). Those who knew James knew that he would have been an innocent man. The events of this Passover and Pentecost, therefore, seem to be parallel to the death of Jesus who was also innocent of any crimes, and yet, was executed by the religious leaders of Jerusalem. It could be, therefore, that God allowed the death of another innocent man (James) at the time of Passover and Pentecost in order to excite the religious sensitivities of the Jews that they be more receptive to the gospel. **4 Four squads of soldiers:** Peter was arrested and imprisoned. He was placed under the security of four different groups of guards who watched his cell around the clock in four shifts. Two of the guards were placed inside the cell beside Peter and two were placed outside the cell. He was also put in chains. It was Herod's intentions to thoroughly guard Peter in order to bring him out and placed before the people after the Passover Feast.

GOD'S POWER PREVAILS

5 Constant prayer was offered to God: The church earnestly and continually prayed for Peter (See 2 Co 1:11; Ep 6:18; 1 Th 5:17; 1 Pt 1:22). They did not want him to be killed as James was killed by Herod. The brethren knew that if it were God's will Peter could be freed. They had surely prayed for James. However, it was not God's will that he be delivered from Herod. On this occasion, it was God's will that Peter be delivered. God thus answers their prayer for Peter to have him delivered from Herod. **6** The night before Herod was going to bring Peter out before the Jews, God answered the prayers of the saints. Though Herod had taken every precaution to secure Peter, God's power was

out, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains. And the guards in front of the door were watching the prison.

7 And behold, the angel of the Lord came to *him*, and a light shone in the prison. And he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off from *his* hands.

8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and bind on your sandals." And so he did. Then he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me."

9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that it was true what was done by the angel. But he thought he was seeing a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them by itself. And they went out and passed down one street, and immediately the angel de-

parted from him.

11 And when Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people."

12 ¶ Now when he had considered *this*, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.

14 And when she recognized Peter's voice, she did not open the gate because of joy, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" But she kept insisting that it was so. Then they said, "It is his angel."

16 But Peter continued knocking. And when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were

greater. Christians must remember that the power of man does not compare with the power of God. There is power in prayer simply because the power of God is able to accomplish exceedingly abundantly more than we can imagine (Ep 3:20). **7 An angel of the Lord:** That night an angel appeared in the cell (See 5:19). The guards became as men who were dead (See Mt 28:4). The bright light did not awaken the calmly sleeping Peter who had little worry concerning his dim predicament. Therefore, the angel had to strike him on the side and lift him up. When did strike him, the chains of iron miraculously fell from Peter's wrists and ankles. **8 Follow me:** The angel told Peter to put on his sandals and garment, which he did without question. Peter followed the angel out of the prison. **9 Thought that he was seeing a vision:** Peter thought he was seeing a vision as the experience he had when the sheet-like vision appeared to him with the animals before he went to the house of Cornelius (10:11-17). This in some way would explain the experience of a vision. The vision is so real that it is difficult for the individual who experiences it to distinguish the experience from a real-life experience. Therefore, he obeyed what he thought was only a vision, and thus, followed the angel out of the cell. **10** When they were past all four guards, they came before a strong iron gate which led to the city. God's power easily opened the gate. As they went down the street in the darkness of the night, the angel immediately left Peter's side. **11 Now I know for certain:** It was at this time that Peter finally came to himself. He then realized that he was not experiencing a vision. He was thoroughly awake. He realized that it was God's great power that delivered him from Herod and his death which the Jews expected. He was free. **Sent His angel:** As on many other occasions when God had specific plans for different individuals, He sent an

angel to deliver Peter out of this prison (See Ps 34:7; Dn 3:28; 6:22; Hb 1:14). **Delivered me:** See Jb 5:19; Ps 33:18,19; 34:22; 41:2; 2 Co 1:10; 2 Pt 2:9. God had greater plans for Peter and his wife.

PETER ENCOURAGES THE SAINTS

12 Peter immediately went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, which house was evidently one of the common meeting places for the saints (vs 25; 13:5,13; 15:37,38; 2 Tm 4:11; 1 Pt 5:13). Mark was the nephew of Barnabas (See introduction to Mk). The Christians had gathered in this house to pray for Peter. These Christians believed in the power of prayer, and thus, continued in prayer for Peter that God deliver him from Herod's prison. **13-15** When Peter knocked on the door, Rhoda answered, but did not open the door. When Peter identified himself, Rhoda recognized his voice. However, because of her great excitement she ran to tell the disciples without letting Peter in. When she reported to the disciples that Peter was at the door, they did not believe her. They actually doubted the answer of their prayers to have Peter released. Nevertheless, Rhoda kept telling them that it was Peter. **It is his angel:** They believed that it could possibly be Peter's angel (See Mt 18:10; Hb 1:14). The Jews believed in the concept of a guardian angel (See Gn 48:16; Mt 18:10). This belief was evidently carried over into the thinking of some Christians in the first century. This belief is one that has interested Christians for centuries. There is no theological difficulty in believing such, especially in view of statements as Hebrews 1:14. "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" In this context, the disciples may have assumed that Herod had already killed Peter, and thus, his angel came to notify them. **16** While the disciples considered these

astonished.

17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go tell these things to James and to the brethren." Then he departed and went to another place.

18 ¶ Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that *they* should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there*.

20 ¶ Now Herod was highly displeased with the people of Tyre and Sidon. But they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend,

they asked for peace, because their country was fed by the king's *country*.

21 Now on a set day, Herod, dressed in royal clothing, sat on his throne and made an address to them.

22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not a man!"

23 And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory. And he was eaten by worms and died.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 ¶ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, taking with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Chapter 13

1 ¶ Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers:

things, Peter patiently kept on knocking at the locked door. When the brethren finally opened the door they could not believe what they saw. As a result of their surprise, they loudly praised God. **17** When Peter had calmed them down, he explained to them how God had miraculously delivered him from all of Herod's security. He told the disciples that they must now go and tell James, the brother of Jesus and all the brethren (15:13-21; Gl 1:19; Js 1:1). Peter then left them and went to another house where brethren were also meeting and praying. From Mary's house, therefore, brethren went to all house where the church commonly met.

HEROD UNLEASHES HIS FRUSTRATION

18 *No small stir among the soldiers:* If prisoners escaped under guard, it was Roman law that the guards should suffer the punishment that was due the prisoners (Compare 16:27; 27:42ff). Therefore, the next morning there was great fear among the guards concerning the whereabouts of Peter. They knew that some of them would have to pay the price for the escape of Peter. **19** Herod thoroughly questioned the guards, but they had no explanation for what had happened. *That they should be put to death:* Herod had the guards killed. Because he was humiliated before the Jews in Judea for not producing Peter to be killed, he retreated to the seaport city of Caesarea.

20 Tyre and Sidon were seaport cities about two hundred kilometers north of Jerusalem. For some reason Herod was angry with these two cities. But the people of Tyre and Sidon had made Blastus, Herod's chamberlain, their friend. Through him they asked Herod to restore peace with them because their food supplies came from the territory over which Herod reigned.

21 The Jewish historian, Josephus, also records that Herod had a great festival at this time. He records that the people praised Herod as a god. Luke explains that Herod pompously presented himself in a beautiful

garment. He sat on his throne and delivered a speech to the people. **22** *The voice of a god and not of a man:* The people ignorantly praised pompous Herod as a god (See 14:11-15). They may possibly have done this in order to appease his wrath. Nevertheless, because of his arrogance, Herod accepted their praise and worship. **23** *The angel struck him:* An angel of the Lord struck Herod with worms. He was struck down because he did not give glory to God (Ps 115:1), but accepted such glory for himself. Herod Agrippa I subsequently died in A.D. 44. The lesson from the angel striking Herod with worms should be remembered by any who would seek to accept any glory that should be given to God alone.

24 *The word of God grew and multiplied:* By the death of Herod, God had again relieved the church of a second great persecutor and persecution. He had converted the first persecutor (Saul) because Saul had a faithful heart (1 Tm 1:12-17). He killed the second (Herod) because he had an arrogant and proud heart (vss 21,22). In both cases, when the leading persecutor was removed, the church had peace and subsequently grew (See 4:4). In times of peace, the church was able to grow because evangelists could freely and openly proclaim the message of the gospel. It is for this reason that Christians should pray for peace in order that they might lead lives of active evangelism in their communities.

25 Paul and Barnabas had left earlier for Judea, taking with them famine relief contributions from the Gentile churches. When they had completed this mission (11:30), they returned to Antioch of Syria. They took with them the young John Mark who was from Jerusalem (See comments in introduction to Mk).

Chapter 13

JESUS IS PREACHED TO THE GENTILES

Antioch of Syria was the third largest city of the Roman Empire. It was the ideal location from which the

Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

4 ¶ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they departed to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as *their* ap-

prentice.

6 Now when they had gone through the whole island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,

7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the deputy away from the faith.

9 Then Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,

10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* en-

gospel could go out to the unbelieving Gentile world. Therefore, the Holy Spirit chose this predominantly Gentile church in Antioch to accomplish a major evangelistic work. **1 Prophets and teachers:** Barnabas (4:36,37), Simeon (Niger), Lucius of Cyrene in north Africa (Rm 16:21), Manaen, who grew up with Herod Antipas, and Saul (Paul) were inspired preachers and teachers of the church in Antioch. **2 As they ministered:** The emphasis here is that their ministry and fasting were ongoing activities. In ministering to the church they ministered to the Lord. In their ministry to the Lord, they fasted (14:23). Their fasting was thus a part of their ministry (See Lk 2:37). The fact that their fasting was coupled with prayer manifested that they were serious about God working in their lives as they ministered. Their prayers and fasting manifested that they were serious about world evangelism, and thus, God gave them a serious evangelistic outreach. **Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work:** During one of their fasts, the Holy Spirit called through them the two preachers Barnabas and Paul. These two preachers had special talents for mission work, and thus, the Spirit called them to do a specific cross-cultural work of evangelism among the Gentiles (Gl 1:15; 2:9). **3** After the Spirit made known to them what their work was, the entire church then fasted and prayed for Barnabas and Paul for the special mission the Spirit had revealed to them. **Laid hands on them:** The church commissioned them to carry out the Spirit-inspired mission work of going to Asia Minor. After much fasting and prayer, they were thus sent away on this most important missionary journey to the Gentiles.

JESUS IS PREACHED IN CYPRUS

4 The Holy Spirit directly sent out Barnabas and Paul. He did so in order to initiate evangelism among the Gentiles. They thus went from Antioch to the port city of Seleucia, where they sailed to the island of Cyprus, the homeland of Barnabas (4:36). **5 Preached the word of God in the synagogues:** When Barnabas and Paul arrived at the port city of Salamis of Cyprus, they went straight to the synagogue of the Jews to preach Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Jesus had come

to the Jews first. It was the custom of the early evangelists, therefore, to also go to the Jews first. They did this by going to the places where the Jews regularly met. This was the synagogue. God had scattered the Jews throughout the world through the captivities of Assyria and Babylonia. Therefore, there were Jews throughout the Roman Empire in the first century who became the foundation upon which the first evangelists went forth to preach the gospel (See Js 1:1; 1 Pt 1:1). **John as their assistant:** On this first journey, John Mark, Barnabas' cousin, went along as an assistant of Barnabas and Paul (Cl 4:10; see "Author" in introduction to Mk).

6 The evangelists preached throughout the island of Cyprus to the villages until they came to the seaport of Paphos, the seat of Roman government on the island.

A certain sorcerer, a false prophet: In Paphos they encountered a worker of magical tricks. He was a Jewish sorcerer named Bar-jesus, who was also called Elymas. Bar-jesus was a false teacher and a worker of deception (See 8:9). **7 An intelligent man:** Sergius Paulus was the Roman proconsul on the island. Though he was an intelligent man, he had been led astray by the magical tricks of Bar-jesus. One must never underestimate the ability of men to deceive other men. Neither should one underestimate his ability to be deceived (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). Because of his honest integrity, Sergius Paulus wanted to hear what Barnabas and Paul had to say. **8 Elymas ... withstood them:** Bar-jesus stood against the preaching of the two evangelists. He wanted to dissuade this government official from hearing the gospel and believing in Jesus. Those who have been led astray by the deceptions of Satan will always stand against those who preach the gospel. **9 Filled with the Holy Spirit:** Reference here is not to a non-miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Luke wants us to know that the power of the Holy Spirit is upon the apostle Paul to put to silence any opposition that Satan might present to the work of God through him (See comments Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Paul became irritated with the opposition of Bar-jesus. And since he was filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul leveled his eyes on Bar-jesus in order to unleash the power of the Holy

emy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the right ways of the Lord?

11 “And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.” And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness. And he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what had happened, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

13 ¶ Now when Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia. But John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia. And they went

into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Men *and* brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.”

16 Then Paul stood up and motioning with *his* hand, said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen.

17 “The God of this people chose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it.

18 “For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness.

19 “And when He had destroyed seven na-

Spirit. **10 O full of all deceit and all fraud:** Paul did not give Elymas any credit for working any miracles. He correctly affirmed that Elymas was full of deceit. He was a fraud. Since Paul made this inspired assessment of Elymas and his work, then we conclude that Elymas, as all such workers, worked no miraculous powers that were supposedly given to him by Satan. In other words, the things that he claimed to be of supernatural origin were actually works of fraud. His works were only magical tricks which he claimed to be miraculous happenings and were perceived by innocent people to be miraculous. He had deceived intelligent people into thinking that his magical tricks were miraculous works. He was thus full of fraud. In behaving after such deceitful ways, he was thus of Satan who leads men to believe in lies (Jn 8:44; 2 Th 2:9-12). In behaving after the desires and manner of Satan, Elymas made himself an enemy of all that was right. Paul asked if he would ever cease behaving and practicing the work of Satan. The answer to the question would be that he would not. Therefore, Paul took action on this agent of Satan's work. **11 The hand of the Lord is upon you:** The time had come for God to prove His messengers and message to be greater than the magical tricks of deceived and arrogant men (See Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Through the authority which God had entrusted the Christ-sent apostles, Elymas was struck blind for a period of time (See 1 Sm 5:6). Paul had been given the authority to unleash the power of the supernatural environment of God. It was this power that set aside natural laws, and thus, Elymas immediately went blind. From this case and others (see 6:1-7), it seems that the apostles were given authority to strike physical punishment in the flesh of those who opposed the truth (See comments 2 Co 12:19 - 13:4). **12 The proconsul believed:** The result of this event was profound. Sergius Paulus was convinced. He was astonished at the true miracles of the evangelists and their teaching. There is no comparison between true miraculous happenings and those magical tricks that are performed by those who profess to work the miracles of God (See comments At 8:9-13).

PREACHING IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA

13 The prominence of Paul was now confirmed. Luke defended him as a prominent proclaimer of the Christ and one to whom God had given great authority to command the supernatural work of God. The three evangelists then left Cyprus and arrived on the mainland of Asia Minor at the port of Perga in Pamphylia. **John ... returned to Jerusalem:** Unfortunately, the young John Mark became discouraged with the demands of the work, and thus, did not proceed with Paul and Barnabas (15:38). He possibly returned to the comforts of Jerusalem to be with his mother. We do not know all that happened which led Mark to turn from his commitment to go with Paul and Barnabas into unevangelized areas. We do know, however, that after his maturing, he was later profitable to Paul for the ministry (2 Tm 4:11). **14** When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Antioch of Pisidia, they again went to the religious center of the Jews. They went to the synagogue to announce that the Messiah had come. They did not go to the synagogue to worship on the Sabbath (16:13; 17:1). They went there because that was where many of the religious Jews were gathered. Evangelists should always go where religious people gather in order to seek an opportunity to preach the gospel. **15 Any word of exhortation:** After the traditional Jewish practice of reading the Old Testament law (Gn through Dt) and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue asked if Paul and Barnabas had any encouraging words to say. It seems to have been a custom to allow visiting people the opportunity to speak. Since Paul and Barnabas knew this, this helps us understand why they made it a common practice to go to the synagogues when they visited cities. Evangelists should seek every opportunity to teach those who are interested in studying the Bible.

16 On this occasion Paul addressed the Jews. In the audience there were also many Gentile proselytes who regularly met in the synagogue. **Paul stood up:** The Greeks and Romans stood while speaking (17:22) but the Jews sat down (Lk 4:20). **17 Chose our fathers:** He began his speech by stating that God

tions in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot –

20 “*which all took* about four hundred and fifty years. And after these things He gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet.

21 “Then they asked for a king. So God gave to them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

22 “And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David to be their king, to whom He also gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.’

23 “From this man’s seed, according to prom-

ise, God raised up for Israel a Savior, Jesus, **24** “after John had first preached before His coming the immersion of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 “And as John was completing his course, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not *He*. But behold, there is One coming after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’

26 “Men *and* brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and whoever among you fears God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

27 “For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and

chose the fathers from whom the nation of Israel came (See Gn 12:1-3; Dt 7:6,7). When Israel was in Egyptian captivity, God sent Moses to deliver them (7:17). After four hundred years of bondage they were brought to freedom (Ex 14:30). **18 He put up with their ways:** Because they refused to enter immediately into the land of Canaan, God condemned them to forty years of wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai until all who were over the age of twenty died in the wilderness (Nm 14:33,34). The older culture of Israel who had grown up in Egypt had to be taken out of Israel in order to allow a new generation to emerge. It was this new generation of Israel that eventually conquered the promised land of Canaan. **19 Distributed their land to them:** After the forty years in the wilderness and by the leadership of Joshua, God worked through the army of Israel to destroy seven Canaanite nations in the land of Palestine (Dt 7:1). Through this destruction, God purged the land of idolatrous cultures. Though Israel did not completely purge the land, God gave the land to Israel in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Ja 14:1,2; 19:51; see Gn 12:1-3). **20 He gave them judges:** From the beginning of their Egyptian captivity to the time Israel possessed the land after it was distributed out to the tribes, 450 years had passed. During these years God worked through judges in order to keep Israel from turning away to worshiping gods which they created in their own minds after the influence of the people they failed to remove from the land of Canaan (Jg 2:16). Samuel was their last judge (1 Sm 3:20). **Four hundred and fifty years:** In 1 Kings 6:1 it is recorded that in the 480th year after Israel came out of captivity, Solomon began to build the temple. By comparing Paul’s 450 years here after the exodus when Samuel began his ministry, with the 480 years mentioned by 1 Kings 6, there is a difference of 93 years. Account can be given for these years, however, if the years when Israel was ruled by a foreign power are not counted. This was a customary accounting of time by the Nazarites (Compare Nm 6:12; Jg 3:8,14; 4:3; 6:1; 13:1). Paul’s 450 years could also mean that he included the years of captivity in Egypt (7:6), the period of wilderness sojourning in Sinai (about 40 years), and the time until Israel possessed the land after its conquest and distribution of about ten years. **21 They asked for a king:** Israel clamored for a king after they had been in the land for several years (1 Sm 15:23-28). They wanted to be like the nations around them.

Though it was not God’s original plan that Israel be ruled by an earthly king, He allowed them to make Saul their first king. It was God’s original plan that He remain the heavenly king of Israel and rule from heaven. Israel accepted this system of government for forty years in the wilderness and for about three hundred years in Canaan (1 Sm 10:20-24). **22 Removed him:** When Saul left God, God left him. Because he forsook the will of God, he was subsequently rejected as king over Israel (1 Sm 13:1,14; 15:23-28; Is 44:28). **A man after My own heart:** The throne was given to David because David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sm 13:14; 16:1-13; Ps 89:20). He was a man who understood the grace and mercy of God toward people and sought to do the will of God out of a pure heart. **23 According to the promise:** God promised David that in the future He would raise up one of his descendants to sit upon his throne (2 Sm 7:12; Ps 132:11; Is 11:1,10; Jr 23:5,6; Zc 3:8; Mt 1:21). Paul announced that Jesus was the One God had raised up and seated on David’s throne (Lk 1:30-33; At 2:29-35). Jesus was thus the Messiah of Israel. **24 After John had first preached:** The resurrection and ascension of Jesus took place after the death of John the Baptist. The Jews on this occasion had heard that John preached that Israel should repent and be baptized for remission of sins (Mt 3:1; Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3). John’s message of repentance and baptism was to prepare Israel for the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. **25 There comes One after me:** John would not allow the Jewish people to make him the Messiah. He said that they must look for one who would come after him (Mk 1:7; Jn 1:20,27). **26 To you the word of this salvation has been sent:** All the things which John had previously preached had reached their ears. Paul affirmed that he and Barnabas had been sent by God to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus was the Prophet to whom Moses said they must give heed. **Word of this salvation:** It was the word that they spoke which was the medium through which the gospel was communicated (See 17:14; 1 Co 15:1-4; Js 1:21; 1 Pt 1:22,23). Therefore, it was the word of salvation. **27 Did not know Him:** Paul explained that Jewish residents of Jerusalem and their religious rulers did not fully understand who Jesus was because they were blinded by their prejudices (Lk 23:34). They twisted the prophecies of the prophets who clearly pointed them to Jesus as the Messiah (Compare comments 2 Pt

their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor the voices of the prophets who are read every Sabbath, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *Him*.

28 “And though they found no grounds for death *in Him*, they asked Pilate that He should be killed.

29 “Now when they had fulfilled all that was written about Him, they took *Him* down from the tree and laid *Him* in a tomb.

30 “But God raised Him from the dead.

31 “And He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.

32 “Now we declare to you the good news – that promise which was made to the fathers,

33 “God has fulfilled the same to us their children in that He has raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘*You are*

My Son. This day I have begotten You.’

34 “And concerning *the fact* that He raised Him up from the dead no more to return to decay, He said on this, ‘*I will give You the sure mercies of David.*’

35 “Therefore, He says also in another *Psalm*, ‘*You will not allow Your Holy One to see decay.*’

36 “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers and saw decay.

37 “But He whom God raised up saw no decay.

38 “Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins,

39 “and by Him all who believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 “Beware therefore, lest that come on you

3:15,16). By condemning Jesus to the cross they actually fulfilled God's promise that Jesus would be the Savior of the world. God turned the evil work of Satan to crucify Jesus into the fulfillment of prophecy that Jesus would die for the sins of the world (See Is 53; Ps 22). **28 Found no cause for death in Him:** Jesus was innocent. No cause for death could be found in Him (Mt 26:65,66; 27:22-24; Lk 23:22). Nevertheless, unbelieving Jews asked for his death because He threatened their religious positions. **29 When they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him:** In putting Jesus to death, the religious leaders of Jerusalem were fulfilling all prophecies concerning His atonement on the cross (Lk 18:31; 24:44). The disciples then took Jesus from the cross and buried him in the newly prepared tomb of Joseph of Aramathea (Mt 27:57-61). **30 Raised Him up:** God would not allow Jesus' body to decay into dust. He was raised by the power of God (Ps 16:10,11; Hs 6:2; Mt 12:39,40; 28:6; Ep 1:20). **31 He was seen:** In order to prove His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the apostles for forty days after His resurrection and before His ascension (Mt 28:16; At 1:3). He appeared to numerous people on different occasions in order to prove that He had been raised from the dead (1:3,11; 1 Co 15:1-8). However, the twelve apostles became His special witnesses of His life, death and resurrection (1:8; 2:32; Lk 24:48). **32 We declare to you glad tidings:** Paul stated that he had now brought to them the good news that was centuries before promised to Abraham (Gn 3:15; 12:3; Gl 3:8). This was the good news of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (1 Co 15:1-4). **33 God has fulfilled:** God had fulfilled the promises to the fathers (2 Co 1:20; Lk 24:44). The promise of the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus who had brought the blessing of salvation to all who would believe on Him. Jesus was the Son of God who had been brought forth for the salvation of all (Ps 2:7). **34 He raised Him from**

the dead: Unlike the forefathers, Jesus was raised never to die again (See comments 1 Co 15:20-22). He has thus bought and guaranteed with His blood the blessing of God's grace which was declared through David (Ps 16:10; Is 55:3). **35** This blessing of grace is made sure because Jesus will live forever as the surety of our salvation (See Ps 16:10). His body is not dead in a tomb. He is living in heaven (Ep 1:20-22; Hb 8:1). His eternal existence guarantees the eternity of all those who believe in Him and obey the gospel. **36 David ... fell asleep:** Paul contrasted the eternity of Jesus with David who had died. David's grave still existed at the time of Paul's preaching. However, the grave of Jesus was empty. **37 Saw no decay:** Since Jesus was raised from the dead, His body was not allow to decay away to dust (2:25-31). **38 Forgiveness of sins:** It was through and because of the resurrected Jesus that forgiveness of sins was preached to all men. **39 Everyone who believes is justified:** One could not keep the Old Testament perfectly in order to save himself. Even good works under the Old Testament law could not save because no one could do enough good works in order to deserve salvation or atone for one sin (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11). Under the Old Testament law, animal sacrifices could not take away sin (Hb 10:1-4). Therefore, while living under the law, men lived with the dilemma of not being able to atone for sin through either good works or animal sacrifices. It was good news to honest Jews that the grace of God was manifested through Jesus (Ti 2:11). One is now justified through obedient faith in response to the grace of God (Rm 5:1,2). **40,41 Beware:** Paul warns that one must not fall into the same sin of willful ignorance and arrogance that the murders of Jesus committed when they nailed Him to the cross (2:23). Habakkuk had prophesied that they would do such, which thing they did (Hk 1:5). When people are religiously misguided, they will do that which is contrary to the will of God.

which is spoken in the prophets,

41 *'Behold, you despisers, and marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work that you will in no way believe, though a man declare it to you.'*

42 ¶ And when they went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles kept begging that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 ¶ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes,

they were filled with envy, and contradicting and blaspheming. They opposed those things that were spoken by Paul.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 "For so has the Lord commanded us, 'I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles so that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

48 Then when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were disposed to eternal life believed.

49 So the word of the Lord was published

MANY GENTILES BELIEVE

42 *The Gentiles begged that these words might be preached:* Truth seekers want to hear the preaching of the word of God. The Gentiles who were proselytes to Judaism were very receptive to what Paul had preached because they realized the bondage of the traditional religion of the Jews (See comments Mk 7:1-9). However, they expressed their receptivity only when the oppressing and intimidating Jewish leaders had left the synagogue. **43** *Continue in the grace of God:* They asked that Paul and Barnabas return to preach again the following Sabbath. Upon hearing these words, Paul and Barnabas urged the people to continue in the favor of God by being receptive to His word (See Ti 2:11; Hb 12:15; 1 Pt 5:12). **Proselytes:** These were Gentiles who had been converted to the Jews' system of religion (See 2:10; 6:5; Mt 23:15). Though it was a mission of Israel under the Old Testament law to proclaim the praises of God to the Gentiles (see 1 Pt 2:9), by the time of Jesus' ministry, the Jews in Palestine had created an institutional religion after their own traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

44 The message which Paul and Barnabas had preached spread throughout the whole city. Therefore, when the next sabbath came Paul was ready to continue his teaching. The Jews on the following sabbath discovered that Christianity was not a part of Judaism. They discovered that it did not grow out of Judaism, neither was it a sect of Judaism. The religious leaders saw that the multitudes intently listened to Paul and Barnabas. They were thus filled with envy. Such is often the case when those who feel superior in a system of institutional religion are rejected by those who are more interested in truth than personalities (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). **45** *Filled with envy:* A few years before, this same envy had moved proud religious leaders in Jerusalem to crucify Jesus. This envy was now working against Paul and Barnabas who were preaching Jesus (1 Pt 4:4). As a result of their envy, these arrogant and hard-headed Jews began to publicly disrupt the preaching of Paul (vs 26; 18:6; Dt 32:21; 1 Pt 4:4; Jd 10). **Blaspheming:** They publicly spoke against

the words of Paul and Barnabas, saying that they were speaking against the teachings of God. However, they were not teaching against the word of God. What Paul and Barnabas were preaching contradicted the legal system of religion that was taught by the Jews. When they saw the people turning from their religious leadership to Jesus, they were stirred to jealousy. They were more interested in maintaining a following than in hearing the gospel. **46** *Paul and Barnabas grew bold:* Paul and Barnabas continued to remain bold, and because they did they continued to speak. They said that it was necessary that the gospel first be preached to the Jews (3:26; Mt 10:6; Rm 1:16; see 18:6; 28:28). But since the Jews in Antioch had rejected the gospel, it would be taken to the Gentiles (Ex 32:10; Dt 32:21; Is 55:5; Mt 21:43; Rm 10:19). Therefore, the Jews had judged themselves by their rejection of the gospel (Ex 32:10). They had been given an opportunity to believe and obey the gospel. However, they rejected the gospel, and thus, Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles (18:6). When men reject the gospel, evangelists must turn to the receptive of the community. In this case, the receptive of the community were the Gentiles. The Jews had become satisfied with their religion which they had formulated after the traditions of the fathers (See comments Mk 7:1-9). **47** *Light to the Gentiles:* Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6 and 42:6 (Lk 2:32). Isaiah had prophesied of the light would be sent to the Gentiles (See Jn 8:12). It was to the Gentiles that Paul and Barnabas said they must turn in Antioch since the Jews rejected the gospel. In this way, Paul used the Old Testament Scriptures to prove to the Jews his ministry to the Gentiles (9:15,16). Unfortunately, the Jews, as the church often becomes, were so introverted that they lost their mission to proclaim God to the Gentiles (See comments 1 Pt 2:9).

48 *The Gentiles ... were glad:* The Gentiles in the city were again excited about what Paul and Barnabas were doing. They were first receptive to the message (See 17:11). They were then receptive to the ministry of preaching specifically to the Gentiles. They had grown weary of the burdens of Jewish traditions (See 15:10).

throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the leading men of the city, and raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their district.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them and came to Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 14

1 ¶ Now it came to pass in Iconium that they went together into the synagogue of the Jews. And so they spoke so that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and embittered their minds against the brethren.

3 Therefore, they stayed there a long time speaking boldly in the Lord, who gave testi-

They were tired of being intimidated by the self-righteous and arrogant attitudes of the Jewish religious institutionalism. They saw deliverance from both institutional religion and self-righteous leadership in the message of grace and faith that was preached by Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, all those who had a receptive attitude, gladly received their preaching and obeyed the gospel by immersion for remission of sins (2:38; Rm 6:3-6). **Disposed to eternal life:** The translation here is better read, "disposed to eternal life." Before creation God determined that all who would freely choose to believe and obey the gospel would become a part of the group (the church) that would be destined for eternal life in heaven. Therefore, all in Paul's audience who were disposed, or of an open-hearted disposition to individually accept the gospel which he was preaching, would become a part of this group who were destined for heaven (See Rm 8:28,29; Ep 1:5,11; 2 Th 2:13; 1 Pt 1:20; Jd 4). **49 The word ... was being spread:** As a result of the receptivity of the Gentiles, the church grew tremendously among the Gentiles in the region of Antioch (See 4:4). The church grew because of the preaching of the word of the Lord throughout all the region. **50 The Jews stirred up ... women ... men of the city:** Satan would not remain quiet while he was being crushed under the feet of great men who were preaching the gospel. Therefore, Jewish opposition again arose against the church. The Jewish religious leaders felt greatly threatened. They stirred up the civil leaders of the community against Paul and Barnabas, and thus, had them driven out of town (7:52; 2 Tm 3:11). When evangelists are doing their work they must always be looking out for the schemes of Satan that will arise against them. Satan never remains idle when the gospel is being proclaimed. **51 They shook off the dust from their feet against them:** Paul and Barnabas indicated to the Jews, by shaking the dust off their feet (See Mt 10:14; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; 10:11), that they had relieved themselves of the responsibility of preaching to these stiff-necked religious people who were more concerned about preserving their religious institutions than the truth. The evangelists thus turned from the unreceptive of the community to the receptive. This is a difficult decision that all evangelists must often make. **52 The disciples were filled with joy:** Before Paul and Barnabas left for Iconium, they laid hands on the newly converted Gentiles in order that they receive miraculous gifts of the Spirit, especially the gifts of prophecy (See comments 8:18; Rm 1:11). They did this in order that they continually be edified with inspired preaching, teaching, singing and prayer (Mt 5:12; Jn 16:22; 1 Co 14:15). **Filled ... with the Holy Spirit:** See 2:4; 4:8,31;

9:17; 13:9. Since the disciples were filled with an indwelling of the Spirit at the time of their baptism, this statement of being filled with the Spirit refers to something else. They were filled with the Spirit when the apostles had laid hands on them in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (See comments 2:38,39; 8:18; 1 Co 12:8ff). Thus in the presence of a Christ-sent apostle, they were given gifts both for edification of the body, but also to enhance their evangelistic outreach to a lost world.

Chapter 14

THE ICONIANS BELIEVE IN JESUS

1 Paul and Barnabas left Antioch and walked about twenty kilometers southeast of the city of Iconium. **Synagogue:** They again went to the Jews first in order to give them the first opportunity to hear that the Messiah, who had been promised to the Jews, had come (See 13:5,15). They also went to the Jews first because the Jews believed in the God who had made the promises to the fathers concerning the Messiah. The receptivity of the Jews in Iconium was great. Open-hearted Jews and proselytes believed. The Gentiles in this city were also receptive (18:4; Jn 7:35; Rm 1:14,16; 1 Co 1:22). When considering Paul's going to the synagogues on his mission to preach the gospel, we must keep in mind that the same Jews who were connected with these synagogues had already heard of Jesus. Those Jews who returned from the Passover/Pentecost feasts since the establishment of the church in Acts 2 related to those of the synagogues what they had heard and experienced from the apostles who stayed in Jerusalem over fifteen years after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30. **2 Unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles:** As in every location to which the evangelists went, there were those Jews who refused to believe. These unbelievers agitated the Greeks to reject Paul and Barnabas and the message they were preaching. **Poisoned their minds:** One's mind is poisoned when he believes the slander of others, and thus, partakes of their sin. Evangelists must always be on guard against religious leaders who will poison the minds of others concerning their word and work. **3 Stayed there a long time:** Because of the receptivity of open-hearted Jews and Greeks, the evangelists stayed in Iconium for several weeks regardless of the persecution. They boldly spoke the message of the gospel. God allowed both Paul and Barnabas to work miraculous signs in order to confirm their preaching (4:29; 5:12; 20:32; Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4; see 5:12; 8:18,19; 13:11; 14:3; 28:8). **4 The city**

mony to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided. Some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.

5 And when there was an attempt made both by the Gentiles and by the Jews with their rulers to mistreat and stone them,

6 they became aware of *it* and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 ¶ And there sat a certain man at Lystra without strength in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb who had never walked.

9 This man heard Paul speaking. *Paul* then looked intently on him, and perceiving that

he had faith to be healed,

10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up on your feet." And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the language of Lycaonia, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men."

12 So they called Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the leading speaker.

13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the people.

14 But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of *it*, they tore their clothes and ran in among the people, crying out

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing

was divided: Some believed and some did not believe. Nevertheless, the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, who had been sent out by the Antioch church in Syria, continued their preaching. They were bold and persistent in their work. **The apostles:** The Greek word *apostolos* is here used in a generic sense, which means, "one sent." Paul and Barnabas are referred to here as church-sent apostles for they were sent out by the Antioch church (vs 14; 13:2,3; Ph 2:25). Biblical students must distinguish between Christ-sent apostles and church-sent apostles. The twelve who were specifically sent out by Jesus were given special responsibilities. They were to give their personal witness to the resurrection of Jesus (1:8; 2:23,24). They had authority to impart miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (8:18). On the other hand, the church-sent apostles were simply sent out by the churches to preach the gospel. We call them missionaries or evangelists. **5 Abuse and stone them:** The unbelieving Jews and Greeks made an attempt to murder the church-sent apostles by stoning them (2 Tm 3:11; 4:7). **6,7 Fled to Lystra and Derbe:** Paul and Barnabas heard about the attempted murder. They were not going to senselessly die at the hand of religiously misguided men who refused to believe the truth. Therefore, they fled to the cities of Lystra and Derbe. Regardless of the threats, they continued preaching wherever they went. They were determined to complete their mission. Successful mission efforts are accomplished by those who are determined to overcome all obstacles, including persecution, in order to preach the gospel to the lost. God can do great things through brave men and women.

UNBELIEVERS SEE THE SUPERNATURAL

8 Who had never walked: In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas encountered a man who had been crippled since birth. Everyone knew the man for he had been in such a condition for all his life (See 3:2). Luke mentions this specific case of healing in order to give Theophilus verifiable evidence that Paul was not a religious fake-healer as the sorcerers of the religious world. In Paul's defense before a Roman court, this healed man and any witnesses could be called to testify in Rome on behalf of

Paul. **9** This man listened intently to Paul's message. He believed. **10 Had faith to be healed:** His belief was in Paul that he could heal him. The faith was not in reference to belief in God. Faith in God was never used in the first century as a meritorious condition upon which one was healed. Because this man believed in the power of God in Paul, Paul shouted so that everyone could hear, "Stand up straight on your feet!" The man instantly stood up on completely healed legs and feet. Thus was manifested the evidence of a true miracle. Such was instantaneous and viewed by all. **11 The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men:** The people of Lystra were astounded. They thought Paul and Barnabas were gods who were visiting in the flesh of man. They recognized the miracle to be supernatural. They had never seen anything like this before (Compare 8:10; 28:6). All that happened in this case of healing defines a true miracle. Miracles were not subjectively perceived by beholders in the sense that they had to determine whether a miracle occurred by questioning the healed. Neither did miracles need to be explained by those who were healed. All miracles were confirmed as such by those who beheld the miracle. **12 Zeus:** As a result of their religious fanaticism, they called Barnabas Zeus (Jupiter), who was the principal god of all Greek gods. **Hermes:** Because Paul was the principal speaker of the two, they called him Hermes (Mercury), who was the god of eloquent speech among Greek gods. **13 Intending to sacrifice:** On this wondrous occasion the priest of Zeus began the ceremonies to offer sacrifices with the people to Paul and Barnabas. Tremendous excitement was in the air to honor Paul and Barnabas as gods.

14 They tore their clothes: The two church-sent apostles tore their clothes in fear of receiving worship that is due to God alone. They ran among the overjoyous multitudes, pleading with them to stop. **15 We also are men:** Paul and Barnabas shouted that they were also men with the same physical nature and like emotional passions (10:25,26; Js 5:17; Rv 19:10). They had preached that the Lystrians turn from useless idols which they had made for themselves to represent their false gods. One must notice how Paul and Barnabas

these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all things that are in them,

16 “who in past generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 “Nevertheless, He did not leave Himself without witness in that He did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

18 And with these sayings they scarcely restrained the multitudes from offering sacrifice to them.

19 ¶ Then Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium, who, having persuaded the people,

stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

20 However, as the disciples stood around him, he rose up and came into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 ¶ And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch,

22 confirming the souls of the disciples *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and *teaching* that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had designated elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom

would not allow men to reverence them as they had revered false gods. No New Testament Christian ever let himself be placed in a position of worship by the people. **The living God:** The living God is in contrast to all idols, relics or anything that men would consider with superstition and reverence (1 Th 1:9). An idol is the physical representation of the deity one has created after his own image. The living God of heaven is the one who created man after his image (Gn 1:26,27; see comments 17:22-29). **Made heaven and earth:** See 4:24; 17:24; Gn 1:1; Ex 20:11; Ps 146:6; Rv 14:7. **16 Walk in their own ways:** They proclaimed that before Jesus came, God allowed men to stumble in religious chaos (Ps 81:12; Mc 4:5; 1 Pt 4:3). But now He wants all to turn from idolatrous gods to the true and living Son of God (17:30). **17 He did not leave Himself without witness:** God never left Himself without evidence of His existence in the created world (See comments 17:24-27; Rm 1:20; see Ps 8; 19:1,2). All of the orderliness of the seasons, plant and animal life give evidence to the fact that there is a Creator of all things. Even our hearts were made religious by God in order that we seek a Supreme Being who is greater than our existence (17:27,28). **18 Could scarcely restrain the multitudes:** Because of Paul's and Barnabas' preaching, the Lystrian people were thus restrained from offering sacrifices to them.

STONING OF PAUL

19 They stoned Paul: The unbelieving Jews who had been following Paul and Barnabas eventually arrived from Antioch (13:45,50; 14:2-5; 1 Th 2:14). They had followed Paul and Barnabas in order to stop their preaching. They easily persuaded the fickle multitudes of Lystra to turn against the ones they were before trying to sacrifice to as gods. As in the time when Jesus was crucified, these misguided religious people were easily persuaded by the unbelieving Jews to murder Paul (See Mt 21:9; 27:22). Therefore, they stoned him. They dragged his body out of the city and left him for dead. **20 The disciples gathered around him:** By this time, conversions had already happened in this part of southern Galatia. The disciples evidently thought that Paul was dead. They stood around him in shock. But

Paul regained consciousness, stood up and walked into the city to dress his wounds. The young man Timothy was probably among this crowd of disciples (2 Tm 3:11). On the following day, with bruises and healing cuts, Paul walked about eighty to ninety kilometers over to the city of Derbe. He would not stop preaching Jesus because of hardships for he knew that men must obey the gospel in order to be saved (2 Co 11:23-26; 2 Tm 3:11). His determination to continue is evidence that he truly experienced a personal encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road before he obeyed the gospel.

GOD WORKS AMONG THE GENTILES

21,22 Preached the gospel ... made many disciples: The church was established in Derbe when many heard and obeyed Paul's message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15,16; 1 Co 15:1-4). Though Paul and Barnabas had been persecuted in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, they bravely returned to those cities and encouraged the new converts. **Exhorting them to continue in the faith:** They exhorted the new disciples to remain in the faith of Jesus' lordship (15:32,41; 16:40; 18:23; 20:1,2; compare Rm 1:11; 16:25; 2 Th 2:17; 3:3). Paul and Barnabas taught and practiced in their lives the principle of suffering for godly living. They taught the principle that Christians must through many tribulations enter into the eternal kingdom reign of God in heaven (See Mt 10:38; Lk 22:28; Rm 8:17; 2 Tm 2:12; 3:12). **23 Appointed elders:** They designated elders in the church of every city (See Ti 1:5). These men were possibly the converts of Jewish brethren who had been godly men for many years, though here they had been disciples of Jesus for only a short time. The words "presbyters," "bishops," and "pastors" are also used in the New Testament to refer to these men who are to care for the flock of God (See comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:5ff). In this case, as well as in other churches, there was a plurality of men designated to be pastors of the church. Nowhere in the New Testament is there a case where a single pastor maintained control of a single group of disciples. Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted with the new Christians and entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had believed (20:32). **In every**

they believed.

24 ¶ And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia.

26 And from there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they fulfilled.

27 And when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

28 And there they remained a long time with the disciples.

Chapter 15

1 ¶ And certain men who came down from Judea taught the brethren, "Except you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this question.

3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the

church: Some find it difficult to determine whether the word "church" is used here to refer to all the disciples as a whole in each of these cities or used to refer to specific groups of disciples in each city. If it is used in a general sense to refer to the church as a whole in each city, then a plurality of elders was designated to care for all the disciples who were meeting in the homes of members throughout each city. If the denominated church definition is intended, then elders were designated for every individual assembly of disciples in each city. If Titus 1:5 is a commentary of this verse, then the general meaning would be correct. In this case, therefore, Paul and Barnabas would have designated elders of the church as a whole in the cities of Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Antioch. Without reading any preconceived interpretations into the text, this is exactly what the text says. The biblical student must be cautious about reading any present religious denominational structures into the Scriptures. A church is not defined by the ability of all the members to meet together at the same place on Sunday morning. This context would refer to all members of the body in each of the cities that are mentioned. **24,25** From Antioch Paul and Barnabas walked through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. They preached in Perga and went on to Attalia. **26** From Attalia they sailed to Antioch of Syria from where they had been commissioned by the church to preach to the Gentiles. Their mission was completed. They had been away from Antioch for two to three years. **27 Gathered the church together:** When they arrived in Antioch the whole church was gathered together to hear the great reports of the two evangelists (See 15:4,12). The church-sent apostles reported everything that God had done. They told of the new converts and the marvelous miraculous works of God. As a result of the reports, the disciples rejoiced over the news, realizing that there was tremendous receptivity in the Gentile nations (1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12; Cl 4:3; Rv 3:8). Evangelists must always keep in mind that it is one of their works to report to the church what God is doing among the nations. It is a means by which the church is edified. **28** Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch about two years. It was around A.D. 50 when Paul received a revelation from God to go to Jerusalem (See comments Gl 2:1,2). This was the trip to Jerusalem for the purpose of confronting those who had come in to spy out our liberty in Christ.

Chapter 15

CHRISTIANS REJECT JEWISH LEGALISM

1 Legalism is the teaching that one can deal with one's problem of sin either by keeping God's law perfectly or doing good works. If one sins, it is taught that one can atone for sin by doing good works. The Jews believed that one could justify himself by keeping ordinances of the Old Testament law and atoning for transgressions by meritorious deeds. In the following events, the early disciples faced this theology which was coming into the church through Jews who did not understand the grace of God, or considered the grace of God as a license to sin (See Jd 4). **Unless you are circumcised ... you cannot be saved:** Certain Jewish brethren came to Antioch of Syria and were teaching the church that Gentile Christians must legally keep the Old Testament law of circumcision in order to be saved (See Gl 3:1; 5:2; Ph 3:2; Cl 2:8,11,16; see introduction to Gl). **Circumcised:** See Gn 17:10; Lv 12:3. **2** The date of this meeting was around A.D. 50. Those who sought to bind circumcision on the Gentiles had come to Antioch and caused division by pressing their beliefs on the church (See comments Gl 2:1-10). The division, therefore, was caused by some who enforced on the disciples that which God had not bound (See Rm 16:17,18; Gl 5:1,2). **Should go up to Jerusalem:** The Antioch church determined to send Paul, Barnabas, Titus and certain other brothers to Jerusalem in order to meet with the apostles, elders and the Jerusalem church concerning the problem of Jewish legalism. It had been fourteen years since Paul had been to Jerusalem (Gl 2:1). He went on this trip by direction of the Holy Spirit to formally meet with the apostles who were still there. He also went to meet with the elders of the church. **3 Sent ... by the church:** The Antioch church financially made it possible for Paul to go because God had personally called him to go (Gl 2:1,2). **Describing the conversion of the Gentiles:** On the way to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas reported to the disciples in Phoenicia and Samaria all that God had done in Asia Minor on their missionary journey (14:27; 15:12). As a result, there was great joy among the disciples over the conversions among the Gentiles in Asia Minor. Disciples who are mission-minded will rejoice over the reports of great things God does among

Gentiles. And they caused great joy to all the brethren.

4 ¶ And when they came to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and elders. And they reported all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."

6 ¶ Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

7 And when there had been much debate, Peter rose up and said to them, "Men *and* brethren, you know that a good while ago God made a choice among us, that by my mouth

the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8 "And God, who knows the hearts, testified to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as *He also did* to us.

9 "And He put no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by the faith.

10 "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

11 "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we will be saved in the same way as they."

12 ¶ Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring what

the nations. These are the type of disciples who make up churches that invite evangelists to come and report concerning the things that are happening in mission areas throughout the world. **4 *Received by the church:*** When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, they were greeted by the apostles, elders and the church. They again reported on God's work in Asia Minor, as is one of the works of evangelists (See 14:27). **5 *Sect of the Pharisees who believed:*** Some of the Pharisees who had been baptized had not put off the burden of either their former institutional thinking or the Old Testament law. Therefore, they sought to bind on the church that which God had not bound. Specifically in this situation, they sought to bind circumcision and ceremonies of the Old Testament law. In doing such, they caused division in the church. They rose up and tried to intimidate believers to be circumcised in order to be saved. Titus, who was an evangelist with Paul, was a Gentile. Paul flatly refused the demand of the Jewish brothers that Titus be circumcised (See comments Gl 2:3). Paul would not allow the Judaistic teachers to bind a legal religious command of the Old Testament law on Titus or anyone else. Christians must stand firm not to allow religious traditions to be bound on the church as law. It is not wrong to do things traditionally. However, it is wrong to allow the traditional way of doing things to become a law that is binding on the consciences of members of the church.

EXHORTATION OF PETER

6 The Christ-sent apostles and elders of the church, with the entire church, came together to discuss the problem of those who were seeking to bind Old Testament laws and Jewish religious traditions on the church. This matter affected the entire church, and thus, everyone was involved in the matter (See Gl 2:14). In matters as this, leaders are not to make decisions behind closed doors, and then hand dictates to the church. **7** Much disagreement arose during the meeting. But Peter stood up and reminded all that it was through him that God had by vision about ten years previous to this meeting officially and miraculously said to go preach to the Gentile household of Cornelius (10;

11). **8 *Knows the heart:*** See 1:24; 1 Ch 28:9. ***Giving them the Holy Spirit:*** God poured out on Cornelius and his household the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit (10:44-48; 11:15-17). **9** In the case of Cornelius, God was showing that He does not favor Jews over Gentiles (10:34,35; Rm 2:11; 10:12; Ep 6:9; Cl 3:25). Though there are differences in culture or heritage, there is no distinction of race with God. Therefore, there should be no racism among His children. ***Purifying their hearts:*** God purified the hearts of Cornelius and his household by their obedience to the faith, not by works of the Old Testament law (22:16). When their personal faith in God's grace moved them to obey the gospel by immersion for the remission of their sins, God purified them by the blood of Jesus (2:38; see 10:15,28; 1 Co 1:2; 1 Pt 1:22). ***By the faith:*** The Greek article is present in the text here, and thus, the reading should be, "Purifying their hearts by the faith" (See Jn 17:17; Js 1:21; 1 Pt 1:22,23). The faith is that body of truth to which they gave themselves as opposed to the error of the religions that they had created after their own desires or traditions. It was their obedience to the faith, the truth of the gospel (Gl 1:6-9), that resulted in the purifying of their souls (See comments Js 1:21; 1 Pt 1:23). **10 *Why do you test God:*** Peter reminded them that the Jewish forefathers could not bear the burden of religious traditions that were cast upon their consciences by their heritage and religious leaders (Mt 23:4; Gl 1:5). Therefore, in Christ all are made free from the law of works because by works of law no one can be saved (See comments Gl 2:16; Rm 3:20). By again demanding works as a means of justification we would be testing the grace of God, for by grace we are saved (See comments Ep 2:1-9). **11 *Grace of the Lord Jesus:*** Through the grace that was revealed in Jesus (Ti 2:11), Christians have been set free from the law of works (Gl 5:1). Both Gentiles and Jews are now saved by grace, not works of law or merit (Rm 3:4,24; 5:15; 2 Co 13:14; Ep 1:7; 2:1-10; 3:2; Ti 2:11; 3:4-7).

TESTIMONY OF PAUL AND BARNABAS

12 *God had worked ... among the Gentiles:* The success of Paul's and Barnabas' work among the nations was proof that God accepted Gentiles without

signs and wonders God had worked among the Gentiles through them.

13 ¶ And after they stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Men *and* brethren, listen to me.

14 "Simeon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

15 "And with this the words of the Prophets agree, as it is written,

16 *'After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David that is fallen down. And I will build again the ruins of it. And I will set it up,*

17 so that the rest of mankind may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does these

things,

18 *and makes them known from the beginning of the ages.'*

19 "Therefore, my judgment is that we not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

20 "but that we write to them that they abstain from things polluted by idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood.

21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

22 ¶ Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas named

circumcision and the works of the law. Their acceptance was evidenced by the signs and wonders that were done through their hands in their mission work to the Gentile nations (14:27; 15:3,4; see Mk 16:14-20; Hb 2:3,4). The argument of Paul and Barnabas is that the Pharisaical brethren should not set themselves against God's approval of the Gentile Christians who have had miracles worked among them by the hand of God. Since they had been saved by the grace of God without works of the law, then no man has any right to bind on them where God has not bound.

EXHORTATION OF JAMES

13,14 James, the Lord's brother (12:17; Js 1:1; see introduction to Js), then stood up and referred again to Peter's experience at Cornelius' house. God made an official statement with that event. That statement was that the Gentiles were accepted into the church without their obedience to any Old Testament law or Jewish religious tradition. **15,16** *The prophets agree:* The truth that God saved people without conforming to circumcision and the works of the law was prophesied by Amos who foretold the building of the spiritual tabernacle, the church (Am 9:11,12; see Is 2:2-4; 49:6; Mc 4:1-4). In James' quotation of Amos 9:11,12, verse 11 emphasizes the fact that it is God who has built the fallen tabernacle. It was not the work of man by his self-righteousness. Since the work is of God, then it is God who makes the invitation to all men to come unto the tabernacle (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). **17** Amos stated that the Gentiles would come into this spiritual tabernacle. It is the Lord, not man, who has made this possible. Therefore, the Pharisees have no right to bind conditions for salvation that have not been bound by God (See comments Mt 16:18,19). **18** *Known to God from eternity:* James concluded that we should not work against God's prophecies and plans which have always been known by Him. **19** *Should not trouble:* James affirmed that the Pharisaical brethren should not frustrate the new Gentile converts by requiring them to submit to religious burdens which even the Jews could not bear. **20** *Write to them:* James suggested that a

special letter be written to the Gentile churches in order to relieve their concerns over this matter and to instruct them concerning the influences of the unbelieving cultures in which they lived. The Gentiles should stay away from anything associated with idolaters who conducted ceremonies that included the drinking of blood (See Gn 35:2; Ex 20:3,23; Ez 20:30; 1 Co 8:1; 10:20,28; Rv 2:14). They should keep themselves sexually pure and stay away from immoral sexual activity that was also associated with idolatrous worship (1 Co 6:9; Gl 5:19; Ep 5:3; Cl 2:20-23; 3:5; 1 Th 4:3; 1 Pt 4:3). They should not eat those animals which they knew had been strangled in reverence to an idol (Lv 2:17; 14:17; see 1 Co 10:23-33). They should not drink blood which again was associated with idolatry. **21** The Old Testament law of Moses that was read in every Jewish synagogue (13:15,27) had instructed the Jews to abstain from these things. But such knowledge was not continually taught to the Gentiles as it was to the Jews.

LETTER TO GENTILE CHRISTIANS

22 The apostles, elders and entire church agreed upon the preceding inspired proclamation which had come through the preaching of inspired men. It is worthy to note here that the entire church participated in this activity. Decisions were not made behind closed doors and handed down to the church. Since the decision affected the church, the church had a part in making the decision to write the letter. Barsabas (1:23) and Silas, who were leaders in the church in Jerusalem, were chosen to take the letter to the Gentile churches with Paul and Barnabas. **23-29** *They wrote this letter:* A paraphrased rendition of the letter that was written could be as the following:

The apostles, elders and church of Judea send their greetings to the brethren in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.

We write because we have heard that there are some who went out from us on their own will and frustrated you with their divisive teachings by seeking to bind on you those things which God has not bound. We

Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

23 And they wrote this *letter* by them: “The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greetings to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.

24 “Since we have heard that some went out from us, to whom we gave no commandment, have troubled you with *their* words, unsettling your souls,

25 “it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 “men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 “Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who will also tell *you* the same things by word *of mouth*.

28 “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things:

29 “that you abstain from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. If you keep

yourselves free from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

30 ¶ So when they were sent away, they came to Antioch. And when they gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

31 When they read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.

33 And after they had stayed *there* for a time, they were sent away in peace from the brethren to those who sent them.

34 [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.]

35 Paul and Barnabas also continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 ¶ And after some days, Paul said to 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 are doing.”

37 And Barnabas desired to take with them

have heard that they are making you feel guilty before God by teaching that you must be circumcised and that you must obey other Old Testament laws in order to be justified before God. We want you to know that these people have received no such instructions from us or the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we have discussed this matter and have thus felt it necessary to send Barsabas and Silas, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul to inform you of our thinking. We know that Paul and Barnabas are sincere in their work because they have risked their lives for the sake of preaching Jesus Christ. Barsabas (Judas) and Silas will verbally confirm what we in Jerusalem believe on this matter. In agreement with the revelation of the Holy Spirit we do not want to lay upon you any religious traditions or rules of the Old Testament law. The following are those necessary things the Spirit has revealed that you do: Stay away from things pertaining to idols, such as drinking blood in idol worship, strangled animals in sacrifice to false gods and sexual immorality. If you continue to stay away from such practices of idolatry you will do well. Farewell

Since the letter did not go into any theological discussions concerning why they should observe the points of the letter, we must assume that the letter came from the direction of the Spirit. It was inspired teaching, and thus the document was considered Scripture.

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

30 *They came to Antioch:* After the letter was written and the meeting adjourned, Paul, Barnabas, Barsabas and Silas left Jerusalem to take the letter to Antioch. When they arrived in Antioch they gathered the church together and read the letter. Again it must be emphasized that the matter affected the entire church, and thus, the entire church participated in the writing and reading of the letter. **31** *They rejoiced:* When the

Gentiles of this church heard what was in the letter, they were greatly relieved and encouraged. The were encouraged because they did not have to submit to the intimidation of legalistic judaizing teachers or to the intimidation of the idolatrous neighbors among whom they lived. **32** *Exhorted and strengthened the brethren:* As inspired preachers, Barsabas and Silas exhorted and encouraged the church with the preaching of God's word. The church was greatly strengthened by their preaching because the source of their teaching was the word of God. At this time in the history of the church there were no written New Testaments as we have them today. God had to inspire men to speak forth His word by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17). **33** After a period of time, Barsabas and some other brethren were sent back to Jerusalem to report to the apostles how the Gentile brethren had received the letter. *Apostles:* The apostles were still in Jerusalem, which was around A.D. 50. Compare comments 2:47. **34** Silas chose to stay in Antioch. **35** Paul and Barnabas also stayed in Antioch. They, with other preachers and teachers, continued to teach the brethren in all the area of Antioch.

BEGINNING OF TWO MISSION TEAMS

36 *Let us go back and visit our brethren:* Paul initiated plans to return to those churches he and Barnabas had formerly established on their first journey together (chs 13,14). He wanted to return and see how they were spiritually and numerically growing. If the Galatian letter was written after the first missionary journey, and before the one proposed here by Paul, then it would possibly be Paul's desire here to return to these

John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul did not think it good to take with them the one who departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

39 And the disagreement was so sharp between them that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus,

40 and Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Chapter 16

1 ¶ Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And

behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* a Greek.

2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

3 Paul wanted to have him go with him. So he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those regions, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to observe that were decided upon by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.

5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 ¶ Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and having been

churches and see what impact the Galatian letter had on the brethren (See introduction to Gl). **37 Barnabas was determined:** In determining who would go with them, Paul disagreed with Barnabas about taking John Mark, for Barnabas had made up his mind to take him (See 12:12,25; 18:5; see "Author" in introduction to Mk). **38** Paul insisted that John Mark not go with them. He knew that they were going again into difficult areas where only strong and mature men should go. In the face of such danger, John Mark had previously manifested a lack of courage. **39** Regardless of Paul's opinion, however, Barnabas saw something in John Mark which he believed would develop into a mighty soldier that Paul would later recognize (See Cl 4:10; 2 Tm 4:11). Therefore, Barnabas decided to take John Mark and revisit the churches in his homeland of Cyprus. **40-41** Paul took Silas to revisit the churches of Asia Minor. Paul's initial plan would thus be completed, that is, all the newly established churches in Cyprus and Asia Minor would be revisited and strengthened (16:5). The Antioch brethren again financially supported this mission work. The church thus sent out two mission teams for world evangelism. It is in matters as this that we understand that the Holy Spirit allowed the early evangelists to form opinions concerning their work. There were disagreements. However, by honoring one another's liberty in Christ, in unity of belief they carried out the mission of the Master to evangelize the world. Though brethren may decide to do things differently and go to different areas, the unity of the faith must be maintained in a spirit of love among brethren (Cl 3:12-15).

Chapter 16

WORLDWIDE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

1,2 A certain disciple: When Paul and Silas came to Lystra they found a young man who had a good reputation among the churches of Iconium and Lystra. His name was Timothy (19:22; Rm 16:21; 1 Co 4:17; 16:10; Ph 1:1; 2:19; 1 Th 3:2; 2 Tm 1:2,5; 3:15). He was the son of a cross-cultural marriage between a Jewish

woman and a Greek father. He had been taught the Old Testament Scriptures from childhood by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tm 1:5; 3:15). Timothy was a young man of great faith (See "Author" introduction to 1 Tm). **Well spoken of:** One of Timothy's qualifications as a young man was that he had a good reputation among the churches as a faithful worker for the Lord (See 10:22; 22:12). **3** Because of his great personal works among the disciples in Iconium and Lystra, he was asked by Paul to join their mission team effort to establish churches among the Gentiles. In order to identify better with the Jews to whom they would preach, and to prevent unnecessary cultural opposition, Paul had Timothy circumcised (See 1 Co 9:20-22; Gl 2:3; 5:2). In submitting to such, Timothy manifested his commitment both to the work and to doing that which was necessary to accomplish their evangelism among the Jews.

4 Went through the cities: Paul, Silas and Timothy continued on with their mission journey. They read the letter to all the brethren which had been sent out from Jerusalem (15:19-21,28,29). It was one of the works of these evangelists to edify the church. Traveling evangelists are to be involved in both edifying existing churches and establishing new churches. **5** As a result of their teaching, the churches were greatly edified, and thus, grew both spiritually and numerically (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 15:41; compare 20:32; 1 Th 2:13). When churches are edified with the word of God, they grow (See 20:32).

DETOUR TO MACEDONIA

6 When Paul, Silas and Timothy had passed through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia (Gl 1:1,2), they wanted to personally go to Asia. **Forbidden by the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit would not allow them to go to Asia because this was not the time for Paul to go into Asia. Neither did the Spirit want them to personally go into the region. Asia would be evangelized by others. God wanted Paul to carry out his ministry in a specific region. For this reason, He directly works through the Holy Spirit in order that Paul be led to those areas where

forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia,

7 and after they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia. But the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

8 And passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia was standing and pleading to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 ¶ Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a

straight course to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis,

12 and from there to Philippi, which is the principal city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

13 Now on the Sabbath we went out of the city to a riverside where prayer was customarily made. And we sat down and spoke to the women who had assembled.

14 Now a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, heard us. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household were

churches could be planted that would give evidence to the validity of Christianity. Therefore, this was the wrong time and method of work to reach Asia. We do not know this until we get to 19:8-10 where Paul stayed two years in Ephesus. During the two years in Ephesus he taught in the school of Tyrannus. As a result of this teaching work for two years, all Asia heard the word. The time Paul spent in Asia, therefore, was the right time. The method of his teaching faithful men to teach others also was the right method (2 Tm 2:2). **7,8** Because they could not go into Asia, the mission team went on to Mysia. They then planned to go into Bithynia which was a province of Asia. **The Spirit did not permit them:** The Spirit told them that it was not the time to go to the provinces of Asia, for there was a greater call to go somewhere else. The Spirit did not reveal to Paul why he should not go to Asia. Paul would later learn that all Asia would be evangelized by his teaching in the School of Tyrannus (19:8-10). Because they could not go into Bithynia, Paul, Silas and Timothy went on to Troas, after passing by Mysia. **9** In Troas Paul saw a vision. Through the vision God called Paul to go into Macedonia without having to explain to him that he could not go into Bithynia or Asia. **10** Before they went on to Macedonia (2 Co 2:13), Luke, the physician and the writer of Acts, joined the mission team. It is now "we," not "they," as Luke records that they know that God wants them to go to Macedonia. Throughout the narrative of Acts where Luke changes from "them" to "us" or "us" to "them" we can determine when he joins and leaves the company of Paul.

THE PHILIPPIANS BELIEVE IN JESUS

11,12 After sailing from the seaport city of Troas, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke came directly to the island of Samothrace, and then, to Neapolis the next day. They walked about fifteen kilometers over the hills and eventually came to a plain where the city of Philippi was located (20:6; Ph 1:1; 1 Th 2:2). This city was a principal city of the province of Macedonia, of which Amphipolis was the capital. Philippi was named after Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. It was a Roman colony which meant that it was a Roman military

outpost for veteran soldiers. This also meant that it had its own autonomous government; it was free from taxation. Those who lived in the city had the same legal privileges as residents of Italy. Paul, Silas and Timothy stayed in this city only a few days. Luke stayed longer.

13 Where prayer was customarily made: Some religious women of the city customarily met on the Sabbath for prayer. They had a place of meeting outside the city and by the river. The four missionaries went there to meet with these religious people. Wherever religious people meet is where evangelists should go to teach the word of God. **14 Lydia heard us:** One of the women who met at the place of prayer was named Lydia. Luke explains that she had a very open heart. She had traveled to Philippi from Thyatira (Rv 1:1; 2:18,24) and was selling cloth that had been dyed with a purple dye that came from a shellfish of Thyatira. She was a business woman that was not from this area. It is worthy to note that in her travels with her work, she did not fail to meet with those who prayed and worshiped God. **The Lord opened her heart:** She was a worshiper of God. As Paul preached, his words touched her heart. The Lord thus opened her heart in that she was receptive to the preaching of God's word. She was of a disposition to hear the word of God, and thus, her heart was opened to the preaching of God's word. **15 She and her household were immersed:** She and all her household who were old enough to hear and believe on Jesus were baptized. There were no infants in this household simply because no mention is made of such in the record. Those who were candidates to be baptized here were old enough to hear and give heed to the preached word of God. After she was baptized, Lydia begged the evangelists to stay in her house while they were in the city (See 9:43; 10:6; 16:34; 17:5; 18:7; 21:16; Rm 12:13; 1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:8; 1 Pt 4:9). She desired Christian fellowship and encouragement for she knew that they would eventually travel on to other areas in order to preach the good news of Jesus which she had heard. Those who assume their responsibility to teach others will thirst for the word of God. When one is filled with the word of God, their is a desire within his heart to tell what he knows.

immersed, she begged *us*, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she persuaded us.

16 ¶ Now it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation."

18 And she did this for many days. But being greatly annoyed, Paul turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out the same hour.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace before the authorities.

20 And they brought them to the magistrates,

saying, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city."

21 "And they teach customs that are not lawful for us to accept nor to observe, being Romans."

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them. And the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods.

23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they cast *them* into prison, commanding the jailor to keep them securely.

24 Having received such a command, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 ¶ But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God. And the prisoners heard them.

26 Then suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors

UNJUSTLY BEATEN AND IMPRISONED

16 *Went to prayer:* Paul and Silas continued to go to the riverside to meet with the group that had prayer (vs 13). *A certain slave girl possessed:* In Philippi there was a young slave girl who had a spirit of divination. The Greek word here is that she had "a spirit of Python." She was thus a false prophetess associated with the temple of Delphi. She was owned by certain wicked men who greedily used her supposed ability to spoke falsely for their own profit (See Lv 19:31; 20:6,27; Dt 18:11; 1 Sm 28:3,17; 2 Kg 21:6, 1 Ch 10:13; Is 8:19). When the evangelists, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, were on their way to prayer, they were met by this slave girl. **17** The girl continued to follow the evangelists and was persistent in her proclamations about their work. She proclaimed to all that these men were the servants of the Most High God who proclaimed the way of salvation (Compare Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; Lk 4:41; 8:28). *The way of salvation:* See 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:22.

18 *She did for many days:* Though Paul was patient for some time with the outcries of the woman, he became irritated with her nonsense. He thus commanded the spirit to come out of her, which it did that very hour (Mk 16:17).

19 Paul's exorcism of the possessed girl caused no few problems. The girl's greedy owners saw that they had lost a source of great profit. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace where the city officials customarily met for official judgments. Their source of great profit was lost, and thus, they turned on those who had destroyed their business through the work of the possessed girl. **20** They falsely accused Paul and Silas before the magistrates. *Exceedingly trouble our city:* These greedy merchants accused that the evangelists were upsetting the city (17:8). However, the evangelists were not upsetting the city. It was the owners of the slave girl who

were upset because they had lost a source of profit. Because they were upset, they were upsetting the city.

21 *Teaching customs which are not lawful:* The evangelists were accused of teaching new customs to Roman citizens which were contrary to Roman law. The evangelists were here actually being slandered. They were accused of teaching a religion that violated Roman law. But Luke wants Theophilus to understand that the Christianity that was taught by Paul was not contrary to Roman law. The slanderers of Christianity would only twist the teachings of the evangelists in order to make it appear that the evangelists were teaching things that were contrary to the civil law of Rome. **22** *Commanded them to be beaten:* The whole Roman population in the city was put in an uproar because they thought that Roman law had been broken. The magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas. They commanded them, contrary to Roman law, to be beaten (2 Co 6:5; 11:23,25; 1 Th 2:2). Their beating was contrary to Roman law for Paul, a Roman citizen, had not yet tried in a court of law. The irony of the events here is that Paul is accused of teaching against Roman law, and subsequently, punished by misguided civil leaders who violate Roman law by beating him. **23,24** When they had beaten them with many stripes (2 Co 11:25), they threw Paul and Silas into prison. *The inner prison:* The jailor was commanded to keep them securely in stocks in the most secure part of the prison in order that they not escape.

A JAILOR IS CONVERTED

25 *Praying and singing hymns to God:* Though Paul and Silas had been beaten and thrown in jail, they were still in good spirits. They were singing praises to God as the jailor and other prisoners listened. **26** *A great earthquake:* God suddenly caused a great earthquake to change the course of events (See 4:31).

were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

27 And the jailor of the prison, awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

29 Then he called for a light and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.

30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 Then they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved."

32 And they spoke to him the word of the Lord, and to all who were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he was immersed, he and all his *household*.

34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them, and rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

35 ¶ Now when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."

36 And the jailor of the prison told these words to Paul, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."

37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown *us* into prison. And now do they throw us out secretly? No in-

The earthquake shook the foundation of the entire jail. The cell doors were all opened and the shackles of all prisoners were miraculously loosened (5:19; 12:7,10).

27 Was about to kill himself: The jailor was suddenly awakened from his sleep by the earthquake. It was dark and he could see nothing. However, he realized that the prison cell doors were all open. He therefore assumed that all the prisoners had escaped. Knowing that under Roman law he would be executed for allowing prisoners to escape, he drew his own sword and was about to kill himself (12:19; 27:42). **28 Do yourself no harm:** Paul shouted to him out of the dark that he do himself no harm, for all the prisoners were still there. We are not told how many prisoners were there, but they were certainly different than prisoners who would have taken the opportunity to flee. They had obeyed the law of the land by not escaping. They had possibly fallen under the influence and teaching of Paul and Silas, and thus, heeded their instructions not to escape. **29 He called for a light:** The jailor immediately called for a light to verify what Paul had said. He was so thankful that the prisoners had not escaped that he fell down before Paul and Silas. **30 What must I do to be saved:** The jailor had heard of the evangelists' teachings. He had heard their teaching in songs. Now he wanted the belief which moved them to be so joyful in such awful circumstances (2:37; 9:6; 22:10).

31 Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: Paul told the jailor that only in Jesus is there salvation (4:12). The jailor must believe in this Jesus who is both Lord and Christ (2:37; 13:38,39; Jn 3:16,36; 6:47; Rm 10:9-11; 1 Jn 5:10). Obedient response to this belief would lead to the salvation of both himself and his entire household.

32 Spoke the word of the Lord to him: Paul and Silas thus told the jailor and all his family all the things they must do in order to be saved. It was the word of the Lord that motivated the jailor and his household to do that which was necessary to receive remission of sins (2:38; 22:16; Mk 16:16; 1 Pt 3:21). **33** When the jailor heard the great news of the death of Jesus for his sins and the resurrection for his hope, he could not wait until morning

in order to do what he had been told to do to be saved. In that same hour of the night all of them went to where he could wash and dress Paul's and Silas' wounds from the beating. He and all his believing household were then baptized for the remission of their sins (2:38; see comments Rm 6:3-6). **34** The jailor then took the the evangelists to his house where he fed them. Because he and his family had believed in God, they greatly rejoiced over their salvation. With the conversion of the jailor and his household, there were now two households that composed members of the church in Philippi, Lydia's and the jailor's. The church was now a small group of dedicated individuals who through unusual circumstances had obeyed the gospel. There were two wage earners in the church, Lydia and the jailor. Lydia was an expatriate and the jailor had a government job. Though they were Christians for only a short time (vs 12), they sent support to Paul, Silas and Timothy when they went on to Thessalonica (See comments Ph 4:15-17).

ROMAN MAGISTRATES PUBLICLY APOLOGIZE

35 Let those men go: Paul and Silas went back to the prison for the remainder of the night. When morning came, the magistrates, not knowing the events of the night, told the jailor to let them go. **36** The jailor then told Paul and Silas the message of the magistrates that they were free to go and should go in silence and peace. It seems that they wanted the evangelists to leave the city without embarrassing themselves concerning their error of punishing Romans who had not been officially tried.

37 Let them come themselves: Paul knew that the magistrates had broken a Roman law which made them worthy of severe punishment. They had publicly beaten and imprisoned Roman citizens (22:25-29) who had not been found guilty by an orderly trial. Therefore, Paul, as a Roman citizen, sought to teach the magistrates a most valuable lesson, as well as, let it be known to the whole city that they were innocent. The Philippian church also had to be seen as a group of people who were not lawbreakers. Therefore, Paul demanded that the town

deed! Let them come themselves and get us out.”

38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates. Now they feared when they heard that they were Romans.

39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought *them* out, and asked *them* to depart from the city.

40 And they went out of the prison and entered into *the house of* Lydia. So when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Chapter 17

1 ¶ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue

of the Jews.

2 And Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.”

4 And some of them were persuaded and joined with Paul and Silas, a great multitude of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

5 ¶ But the Jews, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace and gathered a company. And they set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the

rulers personally come to the prison and release them.

38 They were afraid: The magistrates were very fearful of the situation. They knew that they were now the ones who had actually broken the law and were worthy of severe punishment. **39 Pleaded with them:** The situation had now changed. The city officials came and pleaded with Paul and Silas to quietly leave lest their unjust punishment become known to higher government officials. They realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that they had unlawfully punished him. They also realized that Paul and Silas were the ones who were actually abiding by Roman law, and were thus, unjustly accused. Therefore, the magistrates brought Paul and Silas out of the city and asked them to quietly leave. **40** Paul, Silas and Timothy then went to the house of Lydia and encouraged the brethren. They departed for Thessalonica, leaving Luke to work in building up the small group of disciples. The church in Philippi was now composed of two households and Luke. There were possibly ten to fifteen in this small church. They were a poor church, having at one time contributed to others out of their deep poverty (See comments 2 Co 8:1-3). Nevertheless, when the evangelists left Philippi for Thessalonica, the Philippian disciples sent support to them in order to bear fruit by the preaching of the gospel to those who had not yet heard in other areas (See comments Ph 4:15-17). This small, poor and young church, therefore, was supporting evangelists from its very beginning. Such is a good example for all churches. God expects every disciple to make every effort to preach the gospel to all the world.

Chapter 17

COMMUNITY LEADERS BELIEVE IN JESUS

1 They: Notice that the pronoun of the narrative changes to “they”, thus indicating that Luke remains in Philippi while the other evangelists continue on to Thessalonica. On their way to Thessalonica, Paul, Silas and Timothy walked the great Roman Egnatian road which passed through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia. **Thessalonica:** They came to the city of Thessalonica which was named after the sister of

Alexander the Great (20:4; 27:2; Ph 4:16; 1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:1; 2 Tm 4:10). It was the capital city of Macedonia. **2**

His custom was: When they arrived in Thessalonica, Paul carried out one of his principal methods of evangelism. He preached to the Jews in the synagogue, because he knew that in their frequent trips to Jerusalem they had already heard of Jesus (Lk 4:16; At 9:20; 13:5,14; 14:1; 16:13; 19:8). The dispersion of the Jews throughout the ancient world laid the foundation for the preaching of the gospel. The early evangelists took advantage of going to these Jewish synagogues in order to proclaim the fulfillment of messianic prophecies in Jesus. **Reasoned with them from the Scriptures:** In his preaching Paul referred to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah (Is 53; Ps 22; 1 Th 2:1-16). We would learn from this that evangelists must be skilled in teaching prophecy as a means to evangelize unbelievers. **3 The Christ had to suffer and rise again:** He applied Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah to Jesus who suffered and died, but was raised from the dead (Lk 24:26,46; At 18:5,28; Gl 3:1). Paul said that the Messiah was this Jesus of Nazareth whom the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had rejected. Contrary to the teaching of the Jewish leaders, the Messiah was to suffer, die, be resurrected and ascend to heaven. He was not to reign on this earth. **4 Were persuaded:** Some of the Jews were convinced. Many of the devoted Greeks and women who were the wives of leading men in the city joined Paul and Silas. The Gentile believers turned from their idolatry to the living God (1 Th 1:9,10).

5 But the Jews: The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica became envious of Paul and Silas. Their envy indicates that they lost their power of religious leadership over the Gentiles in the city. They thus recruited some trouble makers who stayed around the marketplace. Through these ungodly men they stirred up a mob against the evangelists. They attacked the house of Jason who was one of the believers. They wanted to find Paul and Silas, but failed to do so at Jason's house (See Rm 16:21). The mob could not find Paul and Silas because they had been hidden by the brethren. Therefore, the mob violently dragged Jason

people.

6 And when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here also,

7 "and Jason has received them. These all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

8 And they stirred up the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

9 Now when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they let them go.

10 ¶ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more noble-minded than those

in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.

12 Therefore, many of them believed, and also not a few of the prominent Greek women, as well as men.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul in Berea, they came there also and stirred up the people.

14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea. But Silas and Timothy remained there.

15 And those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens. And then he left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

and some of the other brethren before the rulers of the city and proclaimed that they had caused confusion in all the Roman Empire (See 16:20). **6 Turned the world upside down:** The reputation of bold evangelists and the tremendous impact of Christianity upon societies had reached Thessalonica before the arrival of Paul and Silas. It was at this time that the impact of the gospel was making its way throughout the Roman Empire even before the coming of the early evangelists. Rather than being turned upside down as proclaimed by these unbelievers, the world was being turned right side up by the preaching of the gospel. **7 Contrary to the decrees of Caesar:** These false accusers distorted the kingship of Jesus, saying that He was an earthly king as Caesar of Rome (See Lk 23:2; Jn 19:12; 1 Pt 2:13). Luke wants Theophilus to know that as in Philippi, so here in Thessalonica, Paul did not violate any Roman law or teach anything that would be an insurrectionist theology against Rome (See 16:38,39). World governments must recognize this. The teachings of Jesus were not meant to be a new civil government. They were meant to guide those in government (See Rm 13:1-7). **8,9** When the mob and rulers heard the accusations, they were greatly troubled. But they could not find Paul and Silas. Therefore, they made Jason and the other brethren pay bond in order to guarantee that they would not cause further disturbance in the city. One of the conditions for the return of this bond payment to the officials was probably that Paul and Silas had to leave town, which thing they did. However, the seed of the kingdom had already been planted in the hearts of those who would carry on with the preaching of the gospel (See comments 1 Th 1:6-10). Evangelists must not believe that the growth of the church depends on their abilities. It is God who gives the increase. The power of conversion is in the gospel (Rm 1:16), and the power of edification is in the word of God (At 20:32; Hb 4:12).

JEWES BELIEVED IN JESUS

10 Because of the seriousness of the situation at

Thessalonica, the brethren sent Paul and Silas off to Berea by night. Timothy may have stayed a brief time in Thessalonica in order to build up the church. Upon arrival in Berea, as their custom was, Paul and Silas headed immediately for the synagogue (See vs 2). **11 Searched the Scriptures daily:** The Jews in Berea were more fair-minded than the Jews in Thessalonica. They willingly received the preaching of Paul and Silas. They daily investigated the Old Testament Scriptures to see if what Paul and Silas said was true (Is 34:16; Lk 16:29; Jn 5:39). From the example of the Bereans, and the testimony given here by the Holy Spirit through Luke, we understand that true nobility in the sight of God is that one allow God to speak to him through His inspired word. Those who do not allow God to speak to them through the Bible will be misled either by their emotions, traditions, or their teachings (See comments Lk 1:1-4; Ep 4:11-16). **12 Many of them believed:** As a result of the Bereans' study of the word of God, many discovered that the things that the evangelists said concerning Jesus as the Messiah were actually true. Many of the wealthy and influential Greeks and women believed and obeyed the gospel. **13 Stirred up the crowds:** When the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching over in Berea, they went there and stirred up the people against him. **14 Sent Paul away:** The brethren in Berea then sent Paul away by sea. However, Silas and Timothy stayed behind in order to build up the body of Christ. **15 Conducted Paul ... to Athens:** Paul was brought on his 375 kilometer journey to Athens by some of the Berean brethren who knew the way. Silas and Timothy evidently joined Paul later in Athens. However, a short time after Timothy arrived, Paul sent him back to Thessalonica in order to edify the new converts (1 Th 3:1-3). Silas may have been sent to either Philippi or Berea (18:5). After Paul reached Corinth and stayed there for at least a year and a half, Silas and Timothy again rejoined him (18:5). When these two evangelists came, he was greatly encouraged.

16 ¶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he observed that the city was full of idols.

17 Therefore, he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout *Gentiles*, and daily in the marketplace with those who happened to be present.

18 Then also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this idle babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange gods," – because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching *is* about which you speak?"

20 "For you bring certain strange things to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean."

21 (Now all the Athenians and foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else than to tell or to hear some new thing.)

22 ¶ Then Paul stood in the midst of Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious.

23 "For as I passed by and observed your objects of worship, I found an altar with this inscription, 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore, the One whom you worship in ignorance, Him I declare to you.

24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and

PAUL MEETS GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

16 At first, Paul was alone in Athens. Athens, Greece was the center of ancient philosophy. Three to four hundred years before, this city was the home of some of the greatest philosophers of the world. Well-known ancient philosophers as Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno once resided and taught in Athens. The culture, therefore, was based upon the thinking of some of the greatest philosophers of the ancient world. **Paul waited:** While Paul was waiting for Timothy and Silas to rejoin him, he was provoked by the ignorance of the Athenians in their idol worship, for it was a city full of idols (See 2 Pt 2:8). The culture was permeated with Greek mythology and philosophy. It was the location of the great Parthenon which was a pagan temple that is still located there today. **17 He reasoned in the synagogue:** He thus debated with the Jews in the synagogue who worshiped the true God (See vs 2). He affirmed that Jesus was the Messiah. **And in the marketplace:** Paul also reasoned daily in the marketplace with anyone who happened to be there. In every situation and on every occasion Paul seems to find some place to preach Jesus (See 5:42). **18 Epicurean and Stoic philosophers:** Paul encountered some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in his daily discussions. The Epicureans, after their founder, Epicurus (342-270 B.C.), believed that pleasure was the source of happiness in life. The Stoics, after their acclaimed founder, Zeno (340-265 B.C.), believed that man was the center of all things and that men should be self-controlled and self-sufficient. The Stoics denied the immortality of the soul of man. The philosophies of the Epicureans and Stoics exalted man in importance to the exclusion of all else. These philosophers, therefore, debated with Paul because their basic philosophies of life were contrary to the nature of what God would have men believe and do (See comments Mt 6:24; Mt 22:37-40). Paul first preached to them the very foundation upon which Christianity is based, that is, Jesus and His resurrection (1 Co 15:1-4). These philosophers thought this to be a strange philosophy because the concepts of Paul's preaching contradicted the materialistic and naturalistic beliefs of both the Stoics and Epicureans. The concept of resurrection was not a part of their

thinking or their philosophy.

19,20 Brought him to the Areopagus: The Athenian philosophers then brought Paul to the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, in order to have him officially lecture his thoughts at this common location of public debate. What Paul was speaking was something they had never before heard. They were curious. The Areopagus was a large structure that overlooked the marketplace of Athens and served as a court and place of public discussion. **21 To hear some new thing:** It was a pastime of the Athenians to sit and listen to any new philosophy. When they perceived that Paul was speaking something that was entirely different from their past philosophers, they wanted to hear exactly what he believed.

SOME PHILOSOPHERS BELIEVE

22 You are very religious: Paul stood up and addressed the Athenian philosophers. He stated that he perceived that in all things they were very religious, or at least very superstitious in their beliefs. They were people who considered religious matters as a philosophy of life. They were intellectual enough to reason that there is something beyond the existence of men and the material world. **23 To the Unknown God:** Paul had witnessed the objects which they had made to express their belief in gods that they had created after their own image. One inscription on an altar read, "To the Unknown God." Thus the Athenians yearned after the Deity they could not identify but reasoned must exist (Compare Rm 1:20). They were not satisfied with any of the gods they had created in their own imagination. They at least realized that there must be a God greater than the imagination of man. This God must be greater than the gods they invented as a result of their superstitious beliefs and philosophical reasoning. They referred to this God as the "unknown God." It was this "unknown" God that Paul declared to them. **24 God who made the world:** Paul said that this was the God who created the universe and everything in it (14:15; Gn 1:1,26,27; Dt 10:14; Ps 115:16; Mt 11:25; Hb 11:3). He is the controller of all things. **Does not dwell in temples:** Since He created all things, Paul said, then He is greater than all things. Things of this world cannot

earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

25 “Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands as though He needed anything, since He gives life to all, breath and all things.

26 “And He has made of one *man* all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

27 “so that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might grope after Him and find Him, though He is not far from every one of us;

28 “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’

29 “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like unto gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

30 “And the times of this ignorance God has overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 “because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by *the Man* whom He has ordained. He has given proof to all *men* by raising Him from the dead.”

32 ¶ And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said, “We will hear you again concerning this.”

contain the God who created all things of this world. Men cannot build temples with the things He created in order to make a dwelling place for Him (7:48-50; 1 Kg 8:27). The true and living God is not confined to the constructed sanctuaries of men. **25** This God cannot be worshiped by things that are made by the hands of men because He is the one who gives life and breath to all things (Is 42:5). He is the One who created the things which men seek to use to represent Him in idolatrous worship. The one true God was not created by man, but God created man (Compare Ps 50:9-12; see Gn 2:7; Nm 16:22; Jb 12:10; Zc 12:1). **26** *Of one blood every nation:* From the first man Adam, God brought into existence all men who have lived on the earth (Gn 3:20; Dt 32:8; Jb 12:23; Dn 4:35). The brotherhood of the human race, therefore, depends upon this one true God as the One from whom all men of the earth have come. All men, therefore, must believe in this one true God in order to establish brotherhood among all men. **Determined ... times:** God established the natural seasons of the year (See Ps 104:19). He established the order of heavenly bodies. The orderly occurrence of all things in the material world has been established by God. We conclude from the orderly design of all things, therefore, that there was a Designer above that which exists (See Ps 8). Order cannot come from chaos. God both created and set in order that which was created (Rm 1:20). Therefore, rational men conclude that there is an eternal Being behind that which we perceive. **Boundaries of their dwellings:** God made man a cultural and social being. Since all men are cultural and social, all men naturally group themselves according to their cultural likenessness in order to establish boundaries of society throughout the world. **27 Grope for Him and find Him:** Men were created with a religious nature in order that they should seek after God (See Rm 1:20). This God is never far away (14:17; Dt 4:7; Ps 139:7,10; Jr 23:23,24). He is not a God of location. He is omnipresent, that is, He is present at all places at all times. God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and spirit is not confined to physical locations. **28 In Him:** Metaphorically speaking, all humanity is in God since God is omnipresent (See Cl 1:17; Hb 1:3). We cannot escape His presence. We cannot live outside His

domain. In Him all humanity dwells and is thus able to exist, for without the existence of God no man could continue existence. Therefore, we exist because of Him (Compare 2 Th 2:7-9). **Poets:** Reference here is either to Aratus of Tarsus, a Stoic philosopher (270 B.C.) or to Cleanthes of Assos (300-220 B.C.). Other Greek philosophers would have also come to this logical conclusion. The philosophers of Greece reasoned correctly that men had to have originated from a God who created all things (Gn 1:26). **29 The Divine Nature:** God is not physical as man. He does not have eyes, arms and legs. He is spirit and a spirit does not have a physical form (Jn 4:24). In our efforts to understand and relate to God, believers should be cautious about creating a god after their own physical being. Though we are created after the image of God, we must not conclude that the image of God is physical. The Divine Nature is spiritual, and thus, not after the physical form of man. The image of God after which we have been created is spiritual. **We are the offspring of God:** Since we originated from God, it is foolish to think that we can now originate God after the form of some idol we make after our imagination (Is 40:18,19). God is greater than the imagination of man that is expressed in idols. God is far greater than man He created. It is impossible, therefore, for man to fully comprehend God. **30 Times of ignorance:** God has overlooked the times when men foolishly sought after Him through idols (14:16; Rm 3:25). Since His revelation through the Son of God He commands all men to now turn to Him (Ti 2:11,12). We must turn to God through Jesus (4:12). **Repent:** See 2:38; 26:20; Lk 13:3; 24:47; Ti 2:11,12; 1 Pt 1:14; 4:3. **31** The reason for repentance is that a time is coming when God will judge the world through Jesus (10:42; 5:22,27; Rm 2:16; 14:10; 2 Tm 4:1). God proved that He will do this by raising Jesus from the dead (2:24).

32 Some mocked: Some in the audience immediately reacted to the concept of the resurrection. They mocked. On the other hand, Paul stimulated the interest of those who were seeking for truth. **33,34** After he delivered his message on Mars Hill (the Areopagus), Paul left the wondering crowd of philosophers. With him went some who believed what he had said. Dionysius

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 However, certain men joined him and believed. Among them *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Chapter 18

1 ¶ After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth.

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all Jews to leave Rome. And he came to them.

3 And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for by trade they were tentmakers.

4 ¶ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5 And when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul was compelled in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

6 And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* upon your own heads. I *am* clean. From now I will go to the Gentiles."

7 So he departed from there and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Titius Justus, *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next to the synagogue.

8 Then Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were immersed.

9 Then the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak. And do not hold your peace.

10 "For I am with you and no man will at-

and a woman named Damaris, with some others, continued with Paul. Thus, a few converts were made in the city where some of the world's greatest philosophers originated. No matter what twisted philosophies may be taught in any society, there are always truth seekers present (18:10).

Chapter 18

MANY CORINTHIANS BELIEVE IN JESUS

1,2 *Went to Corinth:* From Athens it was a short walk of about ninety kilometers over to Corinth. **He found ... Aquila ... Priscilla:** In A.D. 49 Claudius Caesar (11:28) had expelled all Jews from Rome. Among those who were expelled were two Jews by the name of Aquila and Priscilla. Aquila, who was born in Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, came to live in Corinth where they set up their work of making tents (Rm 16:3; 1 Co 16:19; 2 Tm 4:19). **3** *Of the same trade:* When Paul came to Corinth he stayed with Aquila and Priscilla because he also was a tentmaker. As he did most of the time throughout his missionary journeys, Paul worked making tents to support himself while he preached to establish the church in Corinth (20:34; 1 Co 4:12; 9:14; 2 Co 11:7; 12:13; 1 Th 2:9; 4:11; 2 Th 3:8). What he lacked in supporting himself in the work in Athens and Corinth, the churches in Macedonia supplied (2 Co 11:9). **4** *Reasoned in the synagogue:* While in Corinth Paul continued one of his methods of evangelism, that is, preaching the gospel in the synagogues (9:20; 13:5,14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:2; 19:8). It was in the synagogue where the Old Testament was continually read, and thus, a foundation was prepared for a reaffirmation of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, since many of the Jews had already heard of Jesus on their Passover/Pentecost trips to Jerusalem.

5 When Timothy and Silas came from the newly established Macedonian churches (17:14,15), they brought good news of the churches' spiritual growth and

the Christians' desire to see Paul (See comments 1 Th 1:6-10; 3:6-10). **Compelled by the Spirit:** As a result of the coming of his fellow evangelists and the report concerning the Macedonian churches, Paul was greatly encouraged in his spirit to preach (18:28; compare 2 Co 11:8,9; Ph 4:15). He thus testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah for whom they had been waiting.

6 *Opposed him:* As in most synagogues where he preached, there were those Jews in Corinth who rejected what Paul had to say (13:45). **Blasphemed:** They said that what he was saying was not from God, and thus, must be from Satan (See comments Mt 9:3; 12:31). Therefore, since Paul had given these Jews a chance to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, he let it be known to them that he had relieved himself of his responsibility to preach to them (Lv 20:9,11,12; 2 Sm 1:16; 1 Kg 2:33; Ez 18:13; 33:4,6,8; see 13:51). He did the same thing with them that he had done in Antioch of Pisidia (13:46-51; see Ne 5:13; Mt 10:14). He stopped preaching specifically to the unreceptive Jews in Corinth and began preaching to the receptive Gentiles in the area (13:46-48; 28:28). **7** *One who worshiped God:* Paul left the synagogue and went to meet in the house of Justus with those who were willing to listen. Justus was a devout man, and one who continually worshiped God. Since his house was connected to the synagogue, it became a natural place for the disciples to meet. **8** *Crispus ... believed:* Though many Jews rejected the preaching of Paul, Crispus, who was the ruler of the synagogue, also believed (See 1 Co 1:14). With his household, many of the other Corinthians believed and obeyed the gospel. We must not assume that there were infants in this household because the text says nothing about infants. All who were baptized were those who could hear and believe.

9,10 There were many people seeking truth in Corinth who would believe if they had the chance to hear the gospel. Therefore, the Lord provided a special

tack you to hurt you, for I have many people in this city.”

11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 ¶ Now when Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,

13 saying, “This *man* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”

14 Now when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or wicked crime, O Jews, there would be a reason why I should put up with you.

15 “But if it is a question of words and names and your law, look *to it* yourselves, for I will not be a judge of such *matters*.”

16 And he drove them from the judgment seat.

17 Then they all took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

18 ¶ Now Paul still remained *there* a good while. Then he took leave from the brethren and sailed for Syria, and with him *were* Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut off, for he had made a vow.

19 Then he came to Ephesus and left them there. But he himself entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent.

21 But he bid them farewell, saying, “I will return again to you, if God wills.” Then he sailed from Ephesus.

vision for Paul in order to encourage him to continue preaching in the city. The Lord encouraged Paul by saying that no one would harm him in the city while he was there (See Mt 28:20; Jr 1:18,19). The Lord said that sincere people in Corinth, who needed to be saved through their obedience to the gospel, must have the opportunity to hear. God would not send an angel or the Holy Spirit to preach to the truth-seekers in Corinth (See comments 8:26). They would be able to hear only if Paul continued to preach. Every evangelist must assume that in every city to which he goes, there are those who are seeking the truth. With great patience he must seek these people, for when they hear they will obey the gospel. **11** As a result of the Lord's encouragement, Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half. **Teaching the word of God:** This is the work of the evangelist in reference to the church (See comments 6:2; Mt 23:8). The evangelist must preach Christ to the lost and he must also edify the saved through teaching the word of God (Mt 28:19,20).

12 Gallio: Archaeological discoveries prove that this man ruled as governor of Achaia during this period. When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews determined to stop the effectiveness of Paul's evangelistic work in Corinth. They thus brought him before the place of judgment in the city. **Judgment seat:** In the Roman law system, when official judgments were made, they were made from the one who sat upon the judgment seat. **13** They accused him of teaching things that were contrary to their law, that is, that they must worship God after the means of another religious law. They thus accused Paul of insurrection against the Roman government. **14 O Jews:** Now when Paul was about to defend himself before Gallio at the judgment seat, Gallio rebuked the Jews for bringing Paul before him concerning a matter of their own law. Gallio was neither interested in their law nor in this case. **15** He was impatient with the Jews, and thus, told them to settle this matter among themselves, for he had no desire to make judgments concerning such religious

matters (See 23:29; 25:19). **16,17** Gallio subsequently drove the Jews out of the judgment hall. The Greeks then released their frustrations on Sosthenes who was now the new ruler of the synagogue, since Crispus was converted to Christianity. The mob of Greeks thus beat Sosthenes before the judgment seat of Gallio, while Gallio, who cared nothing for what happened, possibly looked on.

PAUL RETURNS TO ANTIOCH

18 Took leave of the brethren: After the events before the judgment seat of Gallio, Paul continued preaching in Corinth for a short time. With Aquila and Priscilla, he eventually sailed for Antioch of Syria (Rm 16:3,4; 1 Co 16:19). When they came to Cenchrea, he had cut his hair off because of a vow which he had made to God (See 21:23,24; Nm 6:1-21). We are not told what vow he had made. However, in this case we do see Paul keeping one of the laws of the Old Testament which he had freedom to do. **19,20** When he arrived in Ephesus he entered the synagogue and preached Jesus as the Messiah (17:2). Though the brethren asked him to stay longer in Ephesus, Paul was hastening on to Jerusalem, and thus, did not tarry in Ephesus. **Left them there:** Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus and journeyed on to Jerusalem. Therefore, the church was initially established in Ephesus by Paul, Aquila and Priscilla. Paul was there only a short time. However, the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla became the evangelistic force to start the church in Ephesus. **21 Keep this coming feast:** Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for the great Jewish feast when many Jews would be there. This was probably Passover and Pentecost (See 2:1). He told the brethren that if it were God's will, he would return to Ephesus (Js 4:13-15; see Rm 1:10; 15:32; 1 Co 4:19; 16:7; Hb 6:3).

22 Paul sailed from Ephesus and went to Caesarea in Palestine where he greeted the church. **Gone up and greeted the church:** From Caesarea he went up in altitude to Jerusalem where he met the church and

22 ¶ And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

24 ¶ And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord,

knowing only the immersion of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

27 And when he desired to go to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote the disciples to receive him. And when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,

28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

fulfilled his vow (vs 18). His desire was to be in Jerusalem for the coming feast that is mentioned in verse 21. We would correctly assume, therefore, that he went up to Jerusalem as explained in this verse, in order to keep the Passover/Pentecost feast of the Jews. **Went down:** After the feast in Jerusalem, he returned to Antioch of Syria where he had started his second missionary journey.

A THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY BEGINS

23 This one verse in Acts mentions the initiation of the third missionary journey. Paul stayed some time in Antioch and then decided to go into Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen the churches that had been established in these areas. This was one of the key works of an evangelist (14:22; 15:32,41). It was a work that was important at this particular time in the early development of the church because of the threat of Jewish legalism (See comments in ch 15 and in introduction to Gl). The early New Testament churches had no New Testaments by which to be guided in belief and behavior. Therefore, one of the important works of the early evangelists was to continually visit and instruct the churches. We would conclude that such a ministry is continually needed in view of the fact that teachers who have spent years in study of the word must move among the disciples in order to instruct and edify.

THE WORK OF APOLLOS

24 A certain Jew named Apollos: While Paul was traveling through Galatia, Phrygia, Achaia and Macedonia, there was a young preacher who came to Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt (See 1 Co 1:12; 3:4-6,22; 4:6; 16:12; Ti 3:13). He was a Jew named Apollos who was born in and grew up in the city of Alexandria of Egypt, which city was named after Alexander the Great who founded the city in 332 B.C. **Eloquent man:** He was a well educated man, possibly having graduated from one of the many educational institutions of Alexandria. **Mighty in the Scriptures:** Apollos had a good knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. Having lived in Alexandria as a Jew, he would have been able to speak Coptic (the language of the area), Greek (the language of commerce of the Roman Empire), Hebrew (the scholastic language of the Scriptures), and possibly Aramaic (the spoken language of the Jews of Palestine). **25 Instructed in the way of the Lord:**

Apollos had been instructed according to God's word, though his knowledge of the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies was limited. **He knew only the immersion of John:** He had heard only by word of mouth the preaching of John the Baptist concerning the Messiah. Nevertheless, what he knew he spoke forth accurately with great fervor (Rm 12:11). He spoke and taught accurately those things of the Lord which he had been taught by others. Nevertheless, he had heard only of the baptism of John which was unto repentance and for remission of sins (See 13:24; 19:3,4; Mt 3:3; Mk 1:4,5).

26 Speak boldly in the synagogue: Apollos knew enough to speak boldly in the synagogue concerning the Messiah about whom John had spoken. **They took him aside:** When the humble tentmakers of Aquila and Priscilla (18:2) heard him preach, they determined that he needed to complete his knowledge of the Messiah. He needed to hear of Jesus. Therefore, they privately took him aside and explained to him that Jesus had come and that men must now be baptized under the authority of His name in order to be saved. They did not make a public matter out of their teaching of Apollos. Though he had taught something in public that was not true, they still corrected him in private. They evidently allowed him to make any public corrections of what he had taught. **27** After being instructed by these two tentmakers, this great evangelist desired to go to Achaia, specifically Corinth, and preach. **The brethren wrote:** The brethren in Ephesus wrote a letter to encourage the disciples in Corinth to receive him (1 Co 16:3; 2 Co 3:1; Cl 4:10; see Ti 3:13). This was one practice of brethren in the New Testament to make a statement of the faithfulness for a traveling evangelist. When Apollos later arrived in Corinth of Achaia, he carried out one of the works of an evangelist which was to encourage and strengthen the church. **28 Showing from the Scriptures:** Apollos was a powerful man both in public debate and in knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. He vigorously refuted the Jews in Corinth in public discussion. He proved from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Messiah (Lk 24:44; At 9:22; 17:3; 18:5). Since he had only the Old Testament Scriptures, he was able to use the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Bible students today should be able to do the same. Every disciple should know that prophecies by heart that prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

Chapter 19

1 ¶ Now it came to pass while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions came to Ephesus. And finding certain disciples,

2 he said to them, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" And they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

3 Then he said to them, "Into what then were you immersed?" And they said, "Into John's

immersion."

4 Then Paul said, "John indeed immersed with the immersion of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Jesus."

5 When they heard *this*, they were immersed into the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them. And they spoke with languages and prophesied.

7 There were in all about twelve men.

Chapter 19

EPHESIAN DISCIPLES BELIEVE ON JESUS

1 Apollos had left Ephesus and traveled on to Corinth by the time Paul traveled through Asia and had come to Ephesus. **Finding some disciples:** In Ephesus he found about twelve men who were followers of Jesus, but they had been immersed with the immersion of John the Baptist (Mk 1:4,5; Lk 7:29; Jn 1:15,26,27; At 18:25). These may have been disciples that Apollos had taught or had been taught by some to which he had preached, but had not received instruction concerning baptism in the name of Jesus for remission of sins. However, it is more likely that they were disciples of John the Baptist. They could have either personally been immersed by John on a visit to Judea or immersed by someone who was a disciple of John. If so, they would have been meeting together for several years before Paul found them on this trip. Luke refers to them as disciples in the sense that they had followed Jesus as the Messiah because of the teachings of John the Baptist. In the latter part of His ministry, John had taught concerning Jesus, which teaching was eagerly received and preached by men as Apollos from north Africa. It is also significant to see that the church had been established in Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla by the time Paul arrived on this journey. **2** When he first arrived in Ephesus, Paul did not know that the disciples had been baptized only unto John's baptism. **Did you receive:** Since it was a part of his work as a Christ-sent apostle to freely impart the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to all believers (See Mt 10:8), Paul questioned them as to whether or not they had received any miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit since they were baptized. He asked this because it was a work of the Christ-sent apostles to lay hands on disciples everywhere they went in order that all believers receive the Holy Spirit (See comments 8:16-18). These disciples responded that they had heard some things about Jesus through the preaching of Apollos. However, they answered Paul when he spoke of the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh that they had not heard of this great event of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles (2:1-4). They had not heard that the Spirit was to be received by the laying on of the apostles' hands (8:18; Rm 1:11). We must also note that Paul asks for that which was a visible evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The "reception" of the Spirit was something that could be perceived. It could be assumed, therefore, that Paul is here talking about the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit that could be visually discerned, thus he speaks of

the miraculous giving and receiving of the Spirit. This case, as well as the one described in 8:14-17, could be a commentary on what the phrase "receive the Holy Spirit" means in 2:38. Acts 8:14-17 teaches that by the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was "given" and "received." Here Paul lays his hands on these disciples as Peter and John did in 8:17. As a result, these baptized believers received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. They thus partook of the promise of 2:38 (See comments 8:38,39; 8:14-18). **3 Into what then were you immersed:** Since these disciples had not heard of the reception of the Spirit, Paul was then led to question them concerning their baptism, for he knew that they had been baptized. They responded by saying that they had been baptized only into John's baptism. **4** Since John's baptism was valid only until the official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, Paul knew that they had been baptized for the wrong reasons because they had been baptized into John's baptism after the day of Pentecost. John had said that believers must be baptized in the name of Jesus who would come after him. John's baptism (1:5; 11:16; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:15,27,30) was only in preparation for the coming of Jesus in whose name all must now be baptized (Mt 28:19; At 8:12,16; 10:48). **5** When these disciples heard this, they willingly accepted the fact that they had been baptized for the wrong purpose. **Immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus:** This was not a statement to be said at the time of the baptism. It was something that was done (See comments Mt 28:19; compare Cf 3:17). They were baptized again under the authority of Jesus who was now reigning as King of all things (2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48). This is the only case in the New Testament where people were rebaptized. It is significant to notice that they were rebaptized when they realized that they were initially baptized for the wrong reasons. This also brings into question the baptism of the apostles and others who were baptized by John's baptism before Acts 2. They probably did not have to be rebaptized for remission of sins again since they were initially baptized when the baptism of John was valid (See comments Mk 1:4). **6,7 Laid hands on them:** After they were baptized they received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of Paul's hands (8:17,18; Rm 1:11; see Mk 16:17-20). As a result of the laying on of the apostle's hands, these disciples spoke in different languages. They also preached and taught the word of God by inspiration. This case again affirms the fact that all who were baptized in the first century had a right to the laying on of the Christ-apostles' hands in order to receive the

8 ¶ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *about* the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

10 And this continued for two years, so that all those who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 ¶ And God worked special powers by the

hands of Paul,

12 so that from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them and the evil spirits went out of them.

13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took *it* upon themselves to call over those who had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

14 And there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, who were doing this.

gifts of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the promise of Joel 2:28 (See comments 2:38,39). This is clearly affirmed in the case of 8:14-17 as well as here. As Jesus had instructed the apostles, freely they received such power and freely they were to give to others (Mt 10:8). If one fails to see the plenteous giving of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands in the first century, he will fail to fully understand the nature of the first century church. One purpose of the miraculous gifts was to build up the church. Christians had no Bibles to study. Therefore, it was the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit, specifically the gift of prophecy, to build up the church until the New Testament Scriptures were written and distributed among the churches (See comments 1 Co 12). Therefore, to assume that these gifts were sparsely given throughout the churches by the apostles would be assuming something that was contrary to the very purpose for which the gifts were given in the first place. We must remember that the promise of Joel 2:28 was for all flesh (2:16,17; see comments Mk 16:14-20; At 2:16,17,38,39). The promise of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit came only by the laying on of the apostles' hands, and thus, the miraculous gifts cannot be imparted today because all Christ-sent apostles have died. And besides this, Christians do not need the gifts simply because they have been given the full revelation of God through the completed inspiration of the Bible (2 Pt 1:3; Jd 3; Rv 22:18,19). We commend the church today to the power of the word of God in order that disciples be built up on the foundation of the knowledge of Jesus (20:32; Hb 4:12; 2 Pt 3:18).

CHRISTIANITY PREVAILS OVER FALSE RELIGION

8 Into the synagogue: When Paul arrived in Ephesus he boldly debated with the Jews in the synagogue. He proved from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (17:1,2; 18:4; 28:23). **Things of the kingdom of God:** He persuaded many Jews that Jesus was now reigning as King of all things upon the throne of David and at the right hand of the Father in heaven (See comments Mt 16:18,19; Cl 1:13). The Jews thought that the Messiah would reign over an earthly kingdom (See comments 1:6). However, Paul argued from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Messiah would reign over a spiritual kingdom (Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38). **9 Some were hardened:** Some were defiant (7:51; Rm 2:5). They

were hardened in the sense that the occasion of the preaching of Paul gave them the opportunity to reject his message. They thus blasphemed against the Way of Christianity (9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14) by saying that it was a false religion (2 Tm 1:15; 2 Pt 2:2; Jd 10). **He departed from them:** After the Jews had manifested their unreceptivity, he took the disciples from the synagogue to meeting in homes. He changed his ministry to teaching in the hall or school of Tyrannus. It is possible that during this time Paul is in Ephesus that he wrote the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Co 16:5-9). **10 All who dwelt in Asia heard the word:** Paul continued his teaching in this school for two years. As a result of his teaching others the truth, all those in Asia heard the word of God as members went out from the Ephesus church to all the region of Asia. This method of evangelism was quite successful since disciples were trained who were both of the Jewish and Greek cultures (See 2 Tm 2:2). The occasion of Paul's teaching in this school in order to evangelize all Asia explains why the Holy Spirit did not want him to personally go into either Asia or Bithynia in 16:6,7.

TRUE MIRACLES VERSUS MAGICAL TRICKS

11 Unusual miracles: At the same time Paul was teaching, God allowed special miracles to be worked through his hands (14:3; see comments 5:15; Mk 16:14-16; Hb 2:3,4). **12** Even handkerchiefs and aprons which had been brought into contact with Paul's body were taken to the sick in order to heal them (See 2 Co 12:12). There was no power in the handkerchiefs and aprons. The power was from God through Paul. Evil spirits left those in whom they indwelt (Mt 4:24). A simple touch of a handkerchief or apron that had come into contact with Paul's body, was able to cast these evil spirits out. God allowed these special miracles in order to produce a confrontation between true supernatural powers and the deceptive works of sorcerers in the city of Ephesus. **13 Itinerant Jewish exorcists:** There were some traveling Jewish exorcists in Ephesus who claimed to be able to cast out demons. They saw that Paul was successful in doing such by the authority of Jesus. Therefore, they attempted to do the same. These exorcists counterfeited Paul's miraculous works because they had never before cast out any demons (Compare Mt 12:27; Lk 11:19). **14 Seven sons of Sceva:** There were in Ephesus seven sons of Sceva who was a Jewish chief priest. These false exorcists

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know. But who are you?"

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and overcame them. And he prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all, both Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus. Then fear fell on them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many who believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.

19 Many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all. And they counted the price of them and found it *to be* fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So the word of God grew mightily and

prevailed.

21 ¶ After these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit *that* when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus. But he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 Then about that time there arose a great disturbance concerning the Way.

24 ¶ For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines for Diana, was bringing no little profit to the craftsmen,

25 whom he called together with the workers of similar occupation, and said, "Sirs, you know that by this craft we have our wealth.

26 "Moreover, you see and hear that not only

tried to cast out demons by the authority of Jesus' name.

15 Who are you: The evil spirit said to the sons of Sceva that he knew Paul but he did not know these who pretended to have supernatural authority. He recognized the authority in Jesus but stated that the sons of Sceva had no such authority. **16** Therefore, the demon-possessed man from whom they were attempting to cast out a demon, leaped on these fake exorcists. He overcame them and tore off their clothes. They subsequently ran out of the house naked and wounded. **17 This became known:** As a result of this most unusual event, fear came upon all in the city (Lk 1:65; 7:16; At 2:43; 5:5,11). They had never before seen a demon cast out (See comments Lk 8:34-37). The fact of the miraculous exorcism that Paul worked was visibly different than the magical tricks of the presumptuous exorcists of the city. The residents of Ephesus saw the authority of Paul and thus magnified the One whom he preached. They saw that Paul truly commanded the power of the supernatural as opposed to those who claimed to have miraculous power, but actually, only worked magical tricks. **18 Came confessing and telling their deeds:** Those who believed, came confessing that the things which they claimed to be supernatural were actually only magical tricks. They told everyone how they had worked magic in order to deceive people into believing that they could command the supernatural. **19 Practiced magic:** Magic in religion is practiced for the purpose of deceiving men. Miracles are worked by the power of God in order to prove that men are represented by a Higher Power (See Jn 3:2). **Burned them in the sight of all:** Many of those in Ephesus who had practiced magical tricks brought the books of instruction of their magic and burned them before everyone. They wanted everyone to know that such things were useless and had no supernatural power or effect upon men. The cost of all these books at the time was approximately two million U.S. dollars.

20 As a result of all the events of Paul's miracles and the

public burning of the books of magic, the number of disciples in Ephesus grew (6:7; 12:24). When men saw the conviction of those who committed themselves to the truth, they were convinced that Christianity was the true religion because it originated from a true Christ (See 1 Th 1:9). **Grew mightily:** See 6:7; 12:24; 13:49; 19:20.

FALSE FAITHS FALL BEFORE CHRISTIANITY

21 Paul purposed ... to go to Jerusalem: By direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul now planned to go to Rome (18:21; 23:11; Rm 1:13; 15:22-29). God is working in his ministry in order to get Paul to the highest court of the world. God wants Christianity put on trial before the world. However, Paul first wanted to revisit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (20:1-3) and then go to Jerusalem (20:1-3). **22** He wanted to stay in Ephesus for a short time longer in order to take advantage of some great evangelistic opportunities that opened up to him (1 Co 16:8,9). Therefore, he sent Timothy and Erastus (Rm 16:23; 2 Tm 4:20) before him into Macedonia and Achaia (See 1 Co 4:17; 16:10). They were to go before him in order to edify the church and prepare for his coming.

23 Great commotion about the Way: While in Ephesus great opposition was led by Demetrius against the Way, the community of believers (9:2; see 1 Co 15:32). **The Way:** See 9:2; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14,22. The opposition in Ephesus came from those whose religious businesses were threatened by the preaching of the gospel in the community (See 16:19-24). **24** Demetrius was a silversmith in Ephesus who made silver shrines for the fertility goddess Diana, or Artemis. He and others made a great amount of money by making these idols that were sold to visitors who came to Ephesus to worship at the temple of Diana. **25** When this business was weakened by the great conversion of many Ephesians to the faith, he called together all those who were associated with the business of making idols.

at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods.

27 “So not only is this our craft in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised, and she be dethroned from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worship.”

28 And when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

29 So 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 theater.

30 And when Paul wanted to go into the as-

sembly, the disciples did not allow him.

31 Then some of the officials of Asia who were his friends sent to him, pleading *with him* that he not venture into the theater.

32 Therefore, some cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused. And most of them did not know why they had come together.

33 And they brought Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.

34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, all with one voice for about the time of two hours cried out, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

35 And when the town clerk had quieted the people, he said, “Men of Ephesus, what man

When the financial security of religious leaders is threatened by the truth, one can always expect opposition. **26 This Paul:** The effect of the preaching of Paul was throughout all Asia, and thus, Paul was known for exposing the fallacy of idol worship and those who made money through the marketing of false religion. Demetrius reminded them that their business was endangered by the preaching of Paul. This was not only true in Ephesus, but also in all Asia. Many had been turned away from idol worship. Demetrius was right by saying that many had been turned away from worshiping gods that had been created after the image of man and formed into idols by the hands of men (See Dt 4:18; Ps 115:4; Is 44:10-20; Jr 10:3; At 17:29; 1 Co 8:4; 10:19; Rv 9:20). **27 The temple of the great goddess Diana:** The temple of Diana in Ephesus was truly a great structure. People throughout the Greek and Roman worlds passed through and marvelled at its magnificent size and architecture. The Greek name for this god was Artemis and the Roman name was Diana. Scholars believe that the idol of Artemis (Diana) was a fallen meteorite that was set up for worship in this great temple. The temple was one of the most famous temples of the ancient world. It was known as one of the seven wonders of the world. It was the largest marble temple ever constructed and was the center of immoral idol worship. It served as a center of banking, schooling, religion and culture for those in Ephesus and much of the western part of Asia Minor. It was here that the Ephesians and those of the area worshiped the false goddess Artemis (Diana). This great false religion was now under attack by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, those who made their money selling idols to the worshipers, were now in financial trouble.

28 This trade of ours in danger: When the business owners and workers of the idol trade heard what Demetrius said, they were furious. They cried out with hysteria that the great goddess Diana is the goddess of the Ephesians. **29 The whole city was filled with confusion:** The idolaters’ hysteria spread to

the whole city of Ephesus. A confused mob of people soon developed and rushed into the theater of Ephesus which would seat over 25,000 people. They had seized Gaius (20:4; Rm 16:23; 1 Co 1:14; see 3 Jn) and Aristarchus (20:4; 27:2; Cl 4:10; Pl 24) who were two of Paul’s traveling companions. **30 Paul wanted to go in to the people:** In order to rescue his two friends and to address the mob with the gospel, Paul wanted to go in among the fanatic mob of people to preach. However, the local brethren knew the fanaticism of this cult because many of them had once been worshipers of Diana. Therefore, they restrained Paul, knowing that the mob would beat him to death if he went into the theater. **31** Even some of the officials of Asia who were Paul’s friends, sent word that he should not go into the theater and address the people. **32 The assembly was confused:** The crowd of people was totally confused. Most had only joined in the mob simply because of the excitement. They did not know why everyone had gathered together. Such assemblies are typical of some churches today who encourage their members to lose all sobriety in a fit of hysteria and confusion (See 1 Co 14:33-40). **Assembly:** The Greek word here is *ekklesia*. It is a word that means a called out assembly. It is the word that was used by the Holy Spirit in most cases of the New Testament to refer to the church. Where it is used in reference to the community of God it is translated in English translations with the word “church.” Here it is used in its generic meaning. **33** There were Jews in the assembly who despised idolatry. They tried to put Alexander forward in order to explain that Paul, a Jew, was not associated with them, for they also opposed him. Alexander tried to quiet the people in order to make a defense. **34** When the crowd found out that Alexander was a Jew, the anti-Jew multitude defiantly cried out for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”

35 The city clerk: The secretary of Ephesus, who was an Ephesian executive officer, finally quieted the mob. He reminded the people that Ephesus was the official keeper of the image of Diana. The image of

is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Artemis and of the *image* that fell down from heaven?

36 “Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash.

37 “For you have brought here these men who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.

38 “Therefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him, have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.

39 “But if you want anything concerning other matters, it will be determined in a lawful assembly.

40 “For we are in danger of being called in question for this day’s uproar, since there is no cause by which we may give an account of this disorderly gathering.”

41 And when he had spoken these things, he

dismissed the assembly.

Chapter 20

1 ¶ And after the uproar had ceased, Paul called to *himself* the disciples and embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia.

2 Now when he had gone over those regions, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece.

3 And he stayed *there* three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

4 And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, *the son of* Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

5 These going ahead, waited for us in Troas.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread. And in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Diana which they worshiped had fallen down from the sky. The object was probably a meteorite that the people thought was sent from the gods. **Zeus:** This was the principal god of all Greek gods. **36** The town secretary said that since these facts cannot be denied, they should be quiet and not do anything rash. **37** He reminded them that neither Gaius nor Aristarchus were temple robbers or blasphemers of the goddess Diana. **38** If Demetrius and those in the idol trade had any complaint against them, the clerk said that they should settle such in an orderly court of law, not in an unlawful assembly as this mob. **39,40** The clerk then warned them that all were in danger of causing an unlawful uproar that would bring the Roman government down upon them. If they continued they might cause a riot in the city that was against strict Roman law. **41** After the clerk warned them of these things, the assembly willingly dispersed when he had dismissed them.

Chapter 20

THE DISCIPLES PREACH IN GREECE

1 Departed to go to Macedonia: When the uproar in the temple of Diana in Ephesus had ceased, Paul assembled the disciples together for a farewell meeting. He then left for the province of Macedonia to visit the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica. On the way, however, he visited Troas, where he waited for Titus whom he had earlier sent to Corinth (2 Co 2:12,13). However, when Titus did not arrive, he went on to Macedonia (2 Co 7:5,6). During this time Paul also visited Illyricum (Rm 15:19ff). We must also keep in mind that while Paul made this trip through the region to which he had formerly gone, he was collecting a

contribution for the Gentile churches in Judea who were suffering from a famine (1 Co 16:1,2). **2 Encouraged them with many words:** It was the work of the evangelist to edify the brethren by teaching the word of God. After encouraging the Macedonian churches, Paul went to Greece, or Achaia. **3** He stayed in Corinth for three months, during which time he probably wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome. **The Jews plotted against him:** He then intended to return by ship to Antioch of Syria. However, he again discovered a murder plot against him by the Jews (9:23; 23:12; 25:3; 2 Co 11:26). Because the plot was to kill him at sea, he decided to return by land through Macedonia. **4** Representative evangelists from different churches went with him. These were men who were probably sent with Paul to take the famine relief contribution of the Gentile churches to Judea (See 1 Co 16:1-3). Because of the great amount of money, it was wise to have with him a great company of men. Sopater was from Berea. Aristarchus (19:29; 27:2; Cl 4:10) and Secundus were from Thessalonica. Gaius (19:29) was from Derbe. Timothy (16:1), Tychicus (Ep 6:21; Cl 4:7; 2 Tm 4:12; Ti 3:12) and Trophimus (21:29; 2 Tm 4:20) were from Asia. **5** These men went before Paul into Asia. Luke rejoined Paul in Philippi where he had earlier stayed on Paul’s previous visit there (16:40; 17:1). **6** After the Passover, or days of Unleavened Bread (Ex 12:14,15; 23:15), Paul and Luke went down to the Philippian seaport of Neapolis and sailed five days against headwinds to Troas (See 16:11). They met there Sopater, Aristarchus and the other evangelists. **We stayed seven days:** Having arrived late on Sunday after most Christians had returned home from their assemblies, they waited for the following Sunday when the saints

7 ¶ Now on the first *day* of the week when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul spoke to them, intending to depart the next day. And he continued his message until midnight.

8 Now there were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, sinking into a deep sleep. And as Paul continued speaking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."

11 When he had come up again and had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even until daybreak, he departed.

12 Then they brought the young boy in alive. And they were not a little comforted.

13 ¶ And we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, intending there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go on foot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed from there and came the next *day* opposite Chios. On the next *day* we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. And the next *day* we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus because he did not want to spend time in Asia, for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 ¶ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church.

18 And when they came to him, he said to them, "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

gathered again at their particular places of assembly to celebrate at the table of the Lord.

unfortunate event did not end in tragedy, their faith in Jesus was reconfirmed by the miracle of Paul.

THE DISCIPLES PREACH IN TROAS

7 First day of the week: Here, as in 1 Co 16:1, reference is to Sunday which was the day on which Christians in the first century regularly assembled together for mutual edification. In reference to Roman time, the first day of the week began at midnight. As was their common practice in Troas, the disciples had come together to partake of the Lord's Supper (See 2:42; Mt 26:26-28; 1 Co 11:23-34). **Spoke:** The Greek word here is from *dialegomai* which means to dialogue or discuss. In other words, Paul had a discussion with the disciples. It as a time for questions and answers. **8,9** The upper room where they were meeting was well lighted. However, a young man named Eutychus was sitting in an open window of the upper room. As Paul spoke, Eutychus was overcome with a deep sleep, and subsequently, fell from the window. He fell from the third story and was evidently killed instantly. **10** However, after everyone was silenced and moved away from the body of the young man, Paul embraced him. He was restored to life by God's supernatural power which Paul commanded when he touched the young man's body (See comments 1 Co 12:12). As would be expected, everyone was exceedingly amazed and overjoyed by the miracle. Paul was once again proved to be a Christ-sent apostle. **11 Broken bread and eaten:** After the resurrection, everyone went back to the third floor room to enjoy their common fellowship meal that was eaten at the time of the Lord's Supper. They met with one another until sunrise on Monday morning. Paul then left for Assos. **12 They were not a little comforted:** Paul's teaching certainly brought a great deal of encouragement to these disciples. The entire church was also greatly comforted because of the raising of Eutychus from the dead. Not only were they overjoyed because the

PAUL TRAVELS FROM TROAS TO MILETUS

13 Luke and the company of evangelists (vs 4) went on board ship and left Troas for Assos before Paul. **Intending himself to go on foot:** Paul possibly wanted to walk the twenty-five kilometers from Troas to Assos in order to be alone and rest. **14** After Paul arrived in Assos, Luke and the company of evangelists met him. Paul then boarded the ship with them and together they continued on to Mitylene, the capital of Lesbos. **15** They sailed another day to the mainland of Asia at a point opposite the island of Chios. The following day they went to the island of Samos. They eventually came to Miletus. **16 Hurrying to be at Jerusalem:** Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem in order to be there for the Passover and Pentecost feasts. He knew that many Jews from all over the world would also be visiting the city at this time of year. This would be his last chance to evangelize his own countrymen. Therefore, in order not to be delayed in Ephesus by the warm fellowship of the church, he decided to meet with the Ephesian elders in Miletus.

PAUL ENCOURAGES ELDERS

17 From Miletus Paul sent a message forty kilometers away to Ephesus that the presbyters (elders) of the church come to him at Miletus for their last meeting together. **Elders:** The Greek word here is *presbuteros*. The words "elders" and "bishops" are often used to translate this word. These are those designated spiritual leaders of the church who have the responsibility of shepherding the flock of God (See comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:7ff; 1 Pt 5:1-6). **18** When the elders arrived Paul poured out his heart to them, reminding them of his work and behavior in their midst in order to firmly establish the Ephesian church (See ch 19). **19 Humility:** See 2 Co 10:1; 11:7; Ep 4:2; Ph 2:3.

19 “serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and temptations that happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

20 “how I kept nothing back that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

21 “testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 “And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

23 “except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry that I

have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 “And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

26 “Therefore, I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*.

27 “For I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God.

28 “Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that He has purchased with His own blood.

29 “For I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 “Also from your own selves will men

Serving the Lord with ... tears and trials: With many tears Paul had served the Lord in ministering to the needs of the church amidst many trials. Though greatly opposed by the Jews he faithfully worked in order to establish the church (9:23; 20:30,31; 2 Co 2:4; 11:26; Ph 3:18; 2 Tm 1:4). **20 I kept back nothing:** He had preached and taught all truth that they needed in order to be obedient disciples of Jesus (vs 27). He ministered to them with both public preaching and private teaching. He counselled in their own homes where they met for assemblies. He had taught in the school of Tyrannas in order to evangelize all Asia (19:8-10). **21 Repentance ... faith:** He was impartial, preaching and teaching to both Jews and Gentiles repentance in order to be reconciled with God and faith in Jesus for salvation (18:5; 19:10). In every way Paul had been a faithful evangelist working among the flock of God in order to firmly establish the Ephesian church. **22 Bound in the spirit:** Paul was now determined in His own mind to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost (19:21). He had no idea what would transpire on this last visit to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he sensed his destiny to be in Jerusalem for the purpose for which he was called. In view of the course of his ministry (9:15,16), it seems that Paul knows that he is now destined to give his witness to Christianity before kings. **23 Chains and tribulations await me:** Paul knew that persecutions awaited him wherever he went (9:16; 21:4,11-14). He reasoned that on this trip to Jerusalem there would be persecution. **24 None of these things move me:** He would not allow hardships to deter him from his work of preaching the gospel (See 2 Co 12:10ff; compare 21:13; Rm 8:35; 2 Co 4:16). Evangelists who understand their work must not allow Satan to use hardships to deter them from their destiny. **That I may finish my ... ministry:** Paul would not be deterred from his God-ordained mission (9:15,16). Persecutions did not and would not stop him. He considered the accomplishment of his mission more important than his own life (See 21:13,14; Rm 8:35; 2 Co 4:16). He had received a ministry from Jesus and he was determined to finish it (Gl 1:1; 2 Tm 4:7). He firmly

believed that he must preach the marvelous grace of God to as many people as possible before the end of his life. And so should be the mission of every evangelist.

25 See my face no more: Paul assured the elders, whom he had known for many years, that they would not see him again. He had preached the kingdom reign of God among them, and thus, they would need to see him no more. They were now responsible to God for themselves. Every established church must accept its responsibility to function independent of outside guidance and support. **26** Because he had completed his work with them, he was free from being responsible for their salvation because he had taught them all of God's requirements for salvation. He had thus accomplished his duty of teaching them (See 18:6; 2 Co 7:2; Ez 3:18-21). **27 The whole counsel of God:** Paul had taught them all that was necessary in order to be saved and to live a holy life before God (vs 20). Though at this time they did not have the written word of God, all truth that God had revealed for the churches had been verbally delivered to the church (Jd 3). **28 Take heed to yourselves:** Paul warned that the Ephesian elders must watch out for themselves. They must care for the spiritual well-being of the flock of God's disciples. They had been made shepherds of God's flock (1 Pt 5:1-4), and therefore, they must care for the sheep, knowing that the sheep belong to God and not to them. Jesus, not any man, had purchased the flock with His own blood (Rm 3:25; 5:9; 1 Co 6:20; 11:25; 12:28; Ep 1:7,14; 2:13; Cl 1:14,20; Hb 9:12-14; 1 Jn 1:7; Rv 5:9). Since the flock belongs to the one who purchased it, church leaders should be cautious about stealing the sheep of God by being lords over the flock (1 Pt 5:1-4). **Overseers:** Emphasis here is not on authority, but on responsibility. They were to shepherd the flock in order to care for the needs of the sheep (See 1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:9; see comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:6). Shepherds look out over the flock in order to determine the needs of the sheep. To oversee means to look over in order to be perceptive of the needs that would demand one's work as a servant. **29 Savage wolves will come in among**

arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

31 “Therefore watch, and remember that for a period of three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

32 “And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace that is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

33 “I have coveted no man’s silver or gold or clothes.

34 “You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.

35 “I have showed you all things, that by laboring as this you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how

He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

36 ¶ And when he had said these things, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept aloud and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him,

38 sorrowing most of all because of the words that he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Chapter 21

1 ¶ Now it came to pass that after we had departed from them and set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara.

2 And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.

you: Men with selfish ambition would eventually enter the church. They would care more for themselves than the church. The elders must be cautious not to become lords over the flock (See 1 Pt 5:1-4). Paul knew that eventually elders would start lording over God’s flock. They would steal God’s sheep in order to carry out their personal desires to lord over their fellow man (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). **30 From among yourselves men will rise up:** Those who would ravage the flock would come from the elders themselves (Compare Mt 7:15; Jn 10:21; 2 Pt 2:1). They would arise in order to lead men after their own beliefs and desires (Compare 1 Tm 1:19,20; 2 Tm 1:15). Lording elders would not be concerned for the flock because they would desire to have disciples following themselves and not Jesus (1 Tm 1:20; 4:1-6; 2 Tm 1:15; 3:1-13; 2 Jn 9,10; 3 Jn 9,10; See Rm 16:17-20). **31 Watch:** The Ephesians had received the benefit of Paul’s longest resident work as an evangelist. For a combined period of about three years he had earnestly and tearfully exhorted and counselled them (19:8-10,22; 24:17). In his instructions here he sees an apostasy from among the elders who will assume authority in the church in order to lead the church astray. Rv 2:2-6 seems to indicate that these men took this warning seriously, though by the time Rv 2:2-6 was written the Ephesus church had already lost her first love.

32 I commend you to God and to the word: Paul entrusted the Ephesian elders to the guidance of the revealed word of God. It would spiritually build them up if they allowed God to work in their lives through His word (2 Tm 3:16,17; Hb 4:12). If they remained faithful to the word of God, they would receive the result of their faith which was the salvation of their souls in heaven (Hb 9:15). God’s people must be entirely dependent on the word of God for direction. Emotions and traditions must never be allowed to be the foundation upon which the direction of the church is founded. Both will lead men astray from the truth (See comments Lk 1:3,4). **Word of His grace:** It is the grace of God that motives one into action and growth (See comments Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10). **33 Coveted no one’s silver:** Paul closed by

reminding them that he had not preached to them for money (See 1 Sm 12:3; 1 Co 9:12; 2 Co 7:2; 11:9; 12:17; 3 Jn 7,8). The sincerity of his work was never determined by the money he received. He did not preach for money. **34 These hands have provided:** He had worked making tents in order to support himself while he worked as an evangelist in Ephesus and many other places (18:3; 1 Co 4:12; 9:11-15; 2 Co 11:7-12; 12:13-16; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:7-12). He provided support for himself and also for fellow evangelists who were working with him. In fact, it seems that most of the time while on his missionary journeys, Paul supported himself by making tents. **35 By laboring like this:** He had given them an example that one should work with his own hands in order to support himself, and also, be able to help the poor (See 11:30; Lk 6:38; Rm 15:1; Gl 2:10; Ep 4:28; 1 Th 5:4; see comments 2 Th 3:6-12). They must remember that Jesus’ principle of life was that it was better to give to others than to receive for one’s self. One of the purposes for which one works, therefore, is to give to others. When one becomes a Christian, his purpose for work changes. It changes from working for selfish reasons in order to help others. One’s work to support himself is also for the purpose of supporting others.

36,37 When Paul completed his message to the Ephesian elders, he and the elders bowed to their knees and prayed (See 7:60; 21:5; 1 Tm 2:8). They hugged, kissed and wept with one another (21:13). **38** The Ephesian brethren knew that they would see Paul no more. After the meeting the elders escorted Paul to the ship. They returned to Ephesus and Paul continued on his journey. He went to Jerusalem where he was arrested and eventually taken to Rome for trial. There is no indication that he saw the Ephesian elders again.

Chapter 21

PAUL CONTINUES TOWARD JERUSALEM

1-3 Paul and Luke sailed directly to the island of Cos which was about sixty kilometers from Miletus. From there they went the next day to Rhodes, and then

3 Now when we had sighted Cyprus, we left it on the left hand and sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo.

4 And finding the disciples, we stayed there seven days. They said to Paul by the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 Now when we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went our way. And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, until *we were* out of the city. Then we knelt down on the shore and prayed.

6 Now when we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded ship, and they returned home.

7 ¶ And when we had finished *our* voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.

8 Then the next *day* we left and came to Caesarea. And we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven. And we stayed with him.

9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

10 And as we were staying *there* many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he had come to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own hands and feet. Then he said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'So will the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and will deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those of that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

14 And when he would not be dissuaded, we kept silent, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

15 ¶ And after those days we got ready and

to Patara. They boarded another ship in Patara in order to sail to Phoenicia. When they came in sight of Cyprus, they sailed southwest of it on to Syria. They made port at Tyre, the destination of the ship and cargo. **4 Finding the disciples:** In Tyre Paul and Luke searched for the disciples. When they found them they stayed with them for seven days. **Through the Spirit:** During those days inspired teachers in the church urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem for the Spirit had revealed to them that he would suffer persecution in Jerusalem (See 20:23; 21:12-14). **5** After enjoying the warm fellowship of the church in Tyre, Paul and Luke were accompanied by all the brethren to the seashore. They all bowed together on the beach of Tyre and prayed for God's work in the lives of these two great evangelists. **Accompanied us:** The Greek word here refers to the fact that they financially took part in helping the evangelists, Paul, Luke and the other companions (vs 8), on their way (See comments 3 Jn 1-8). **6** The brethren then returned home. Paul and Luke boarded a ship for Ptolemais.

7 After a half-day sail off the coast of Palestine they came to Ptolemais where they again found brethren, with whom they stayed and talked for one day. **8** The following day Paul, Luke and their traveling companions came to Caesarea. **Philip:** Paul was here received by Philip who was the friend of Stephen that was stoned to death years before by a mob with whom Paul had consented (6:5; 7:54-60; 8:1). Philip had long since forgiven Paul and they both now enjoyed one another's sweet forgiving fellowship in Jesus. **The evangelist:** Philip was an evangelist who had proclaimed the good news to many (ch 8; see Ep 4:11; 2 Tm 4:5). He was also one of the original seven who had been selected to minister to widows in Jerusalem many years before (6:5). He transitioned in his work for the Lord from

serving tables in Jerusalem to being an evangelist in Caesarea. **9 Who prophesied:** Philip had four unmarried daughters who were inspired teachers in the church. We must not assume that these sisters were preachers since the gift of prophecy included either inspired preaching, teaching, singing or prayer (See Jl 2:28; At 2:17; compare Ex 15:20; Jg 4:4; 2 Kg 22:14; 2 Ch 34:22; Ne 6:14; Is 8:3; Lk 2:36-38; see comments 1 Co 14:15). **10 Agabus:** After Paul and Luke had stayed in Caesarea for many days, Agabus, an inspired preacher, came from Judea (11:28). **11 Bind the man who owns this belt:** In the presence of the church, Agabus took Paul's belt in order to demonstrate a prophecy concerning Paul's future in Jerusalem. He bound his own hands and feet and said that the Jews in Jerusalem would so bind Paul and deliver him to the Romans (20:23; 21:33; 22:25). This was a prophecy by illustration. He illustrated that Paul would suffer the persecution of being bound because of his efforts to preach the gospel to the Jews.

12 Pleaded with him: Agabus' prophecy was only a warning to Paul, not a prohibition that he not go to Jerusalem (Compare 16:9,10). Therefore, the church pleaded with Paul in order to discourage him from going to Jerusalem. **13 I am ready:** Paul stopped them from their efforts to discourage him from doing that which he knew he must do as God's evangelist. He was a man with a God-given destiny, knowing that the accomplishment of his mission was more important than his own life (9:16; 20:22-24; Rm 1:14; 2 Co 12:15). His great bravery is here manifested in his willingness to face death in order to preach the gospel to the lost. **14 The will of the Lord be done:** When the church realized that he would not be dissuaded from his mission for Jesus, they ceased discouraging him. They

went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also *some* of the disciples of Caesarea. And they brought with them Mnason of Cyprus, a long standing disciple with whom we were to lodge.

17 ¶ And when we came to Jerusalem, the brethren gladly received us.

18 Now the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had greeted them, he declared in detail those things God had worked among the Gentiles through his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified

the Lord, and said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe. And they are all zealous for the law.

21 "And they are informed about you, that you teach all the Jews that are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, nor to walk according to the customs.

22 "Therefore, what is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come.

23 "Therefore, do this that we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow.

24 "Take them and purify yourself along with

entrusted him to the care of the Lord (Mt 6:10; 26:42; Lk 11:2; 22:42).

PAUL ARRIVES IN JERUSALEM

15,16 After their stay in Caesarea, Paul and Luke packed their bags and went from the coastal city of Caesarea up to Jerusalem that was at a much higher altitude. This explains the phrase, "up to Jerusalem". On the journey they were accompanied by brethren from Caesarea. On the way they stayed with Mnason, an early disciple who lived in a village along the way. Since there were no hotels, it was a common custom for brethren to search out one another on their journeys. Hospitality was enjoined on the disciples for the purpose of expediting evangelism.

17,18 The brethren in Jerusalem gave Paul and Luke a warm welcome. Paul and Luke met together with James, the Lord's brother (12:17; 15:13-20; Gl 1:19; 2:9; Js 1:1), and the elders of the church of Jerusalem. They delivered the contribution for the famine that had been given by the Gentile churches (See 20:4; 1 Co 16:1-4; 2 Co 8:1-24; 9:1-5). **All the elders:** This would be all the elders of the church that met in homes throughout the city of Jerusalem. **19 God had done among the Gentiles:** Paul reported all things that God had done in the mission areas where he had preached the gospel in fulfillment of his ministry to the Gentiles (14:27; 15:4,12; Rm 15:18,19). **20** When the Jewish Christians heard of the receptivity of the Gentiles, they glorified the Lord. **Zealous for the law:** The brethren in Jerusalem cautioned Paul that there were still many Jewish Christians in Judea who were zealous in keeping some of the Old Testament laws as a custom of life (See comments 15:1,2; Gl 2:1-5). These Jewish brethren were still entrenched in the legalistic system of Jewish religious tradition which divided them from Gentiles who were not subservient to their religious cultural practices. Even after the church debate in Jerusalem many years before concerning the binding of circumcision and ceremonies of the Old Testament law, the Jerusalem church still had a problem of binding either religious or cultural traditions on the church. The religious and cultural environment of the church in Jerusalem, therefore, was greatly affected by the Judaism of the area. Because of this Jewish influence in the Jerusalem church, there was an apparent division between the Jewish and Gentile churches of the first century. However, in Luke's narrative he places no significance

on this difference, and thus by the Holy Spirit, portrays the church as one. The lesson is that churches may believe and apply different things that do not affect fundamental doctrine, and yet, be considered by God to be the one united church. Though the Jerusalem church applied some cultural and religious teachings of the Old Testament, God still did not consider them out of fellowship with the Gentile churches who did not teach circumcision and the customs of the Jews. **21 Ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs:** Paul taught that circumcision and Jewish customs were not necessary for salvation (See introduction to Gl). In order to avoid an occasion for open division in the church and trouble in Jerusalem at this very volatile time in the history of the Jewish nation, the elders advised Paul to conform to these Jewish Christians' opinions in order to avoid confrontations. They had been correctly informed that Paul had taught the Gentiles that they did not have to conform to circumcision of the Old Testament law or Jewish religious traditions (28:17,18; see Gl 5:1-6). However, Paul's accusers were wrong in stating that he had taught Jews not to be circumcised or to honor Jewish customs. He only taught that circumcision and Jewish customs were not requirements for salvation and that Gentiles need not be subservient to such. When considering this incident one must keep in mind that the date here is around A.D. 58,59. This is about ten years before the Roman armies bring an end to national Israel because of Jewish insurrection. Jewish nationalism is on the rise at this time and would eventually lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). Keep in mind also that these disciples had possibly sensed the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of Mt 24. Thus in about ten years, they would all be driven from their homes when the Roman armies besieged Jerusalem. **22 Do what we tell you:** The elders wondered what they must do in this tense situation to promote unity and peace in these days of the existence of the church in Jerusalem when zealous Judaism was on the increase. The elders knew that the legalistic judaizers would eventually find out that Paul was in town, and then, cause open division in the church. **23** The elders thus made a decision that Paul join with four other brethren who had made a vow (18:18; see Nm 6:13-15). **24** They suggested that Paul ceremonially purify himself with these four brothers. He should pay their expenses for

them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads. Then all will know that there is nothing to the things that they have been told about you, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.

25 “As touching the Gentiles who believe, we have written that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.”

26 ¶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered into the temple to announce the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

27 Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews who were from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the

people and laid hands on him,

28 crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people and the law and this place. And furthermore, he brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”

29 For they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.

30 Then all the city was disturbed, and the people ran together. And they took Paul and dragged him out of the temple. Then immediately the doors were shut.

31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

32 He immediately took soldiers and centu-

their offerings and ceremonial charges for accomplishing their vows. They shaved their heads as an open manifestation that the vow they had made had been kept. Paul conformed to the advice of the elders in order to prove that the accusations against him were false (vs 21). He had walked in harmony with Jewish customs when among Jews (1 Co 9:19-23). We must keep in mind that he is not doing this because he had hypocritically forsaken all his teaching that the Old Testament law should not be bound on the church (See comments Rm 7:1-4). He is doing such because of the unique historical situation of the church in Jerusalem in days of great social and political tension. The city of Jerusalem at this time in history was very volatile. This tension had penetrated the church. Therefore, on this occasion Paul bends to the situation in order to make one last appeal to the Jews in Jerusalem that the end of national Israel is imminent. Destruction is looming over the nation and the prophecy of Jesus recorded in Mt 24 is about to come to pass. **25 *That they should observe no such thing:*** The elders here remind Paul that they had written to Gentile churches that they need not be subservient to either Jewish customs or the Old Testament law as a means of salvation (See 15:19,20; 29). They had instructed, though, that the Gentile churches keep themselves from those things that pertained to idolatrous worship. By saying such, the elders wanted it to be known that they were in a unique situation in Jerusalem. It is commendable of them that they maintained a correct understanding of the doctrinal implications of the matter by separating that which was fundamental and salvational from that which was Jewish traditional law. They had not succumbed to the cultural tension to bind where God had not bound in reference to Old Testament law and Jewish religious traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

PAUL IS UNJUSTLY ARRESTED

26 *Entered the temple:* After the purification of himself and the four men, Paul separately went to the temple with each of them to accomplish their vow. **27**

Seven days: When the seven days of purification were almost ended, the Jews from Asia who recognized Paul, stirred up the Jerusalem people against him (20:19; 24:18). These seven days could be the days of the keeping of the vows or they could be the seven days of Pentecost and the feast of Unleavened Bread. **The Jews from Asia:** These could possibly have been Hellenistic Jews who had heard Paul's preaching in Ephesus and other places in Asia (9:29). These Jews stirred up the Jews of Jerusalem. **28 *This is the man:*** They yelled out to the crowds and falsely accused Paul of turning people against the law and customs of the Jews. Because of his stand against the infiltration of Jewish legalism into the church, Paul had by this time become known throughout the areas to which he preached as one who stood against the Jewish influence of legal justification in the church. His reputation had reached even to Jerusalem. **Brought Greeks into the temple:** Here they falsely accuse Paul in order to generate a public outcry against him. **29** Since the Jewish troublemakers had earlier seen Paul with Trophimus (20:4), an Ephesian Gentile, they falsely assumed that Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple where Gentiles were restricted from entering.

30 *Seized Paul:* All the city of Jerusalem was stirred up against Paul because they thought he had violated the temple by taking a Gentile into it. A mob formed and thus dragged Paul out of the temple area, beating him as they wrestled him through the enraged multitudes. The priests shut the doors of the temple behind the multitude that it not be desecrated by the infuriated mob. **31 *The commander of the garrison:*** As the mob was seeking to beat Paul to death, news of the uproar came to Claudius Lysias (23:26). Claudius was the Roman commander who was stationed in Jerusalem over approximately 760 soldiers. **32** Lysias immediately rushed to the temple with at least two hundred soldiers. He went into the crowds to suppress what he believed to be a Jewish insurrection. This was a time in Jerusalem – Passover and Pentecost – when the most fanatical Jews were visiting the city.

rions and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

33 Then the commander came near and took him. And he commanded *him* to be bound with two chains, and asked who he was and what he had done.

34 But some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. And when he could not find out the reason for the uproar, he commanded him to be carried into the barracks.

35 And when he came to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

37 ¶ Now as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" And he said, "Can you speak Greek?"

38 "Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led out into the wilderness four thousand men who were assassins?"

39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in

Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. And I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."

40 And when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to *them* in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

Chapter 22

1 ¶ "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense I now *make* to you."

2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more silent. And he said,

3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of the law of the fathers, being zealous toward God as you all are this day.

4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering both men and women into prisons,

5 "as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the Council of the elders. From them also I received letters to the brethren, and

Therefore, Lysias did not want to take any chances with a possible Jewish uprising. When the soldiers arrived on the scene, the riotous mob stopped beating Paul. **33** Assuming that Paul was some dangerous criminal, Lysias commanded that He be bound with chains. He then asked Paul who he was and what he had done. **34,35** The crowd was evidently shouting so loud that Lysias could not clearly hear Paul's explanation. He then took Paul into the barracks. The mob was so violent that the soldiers had to physically carry Paul up the stairs. **36** The enraged mob followed. They wanted the Romans to take Paul away in order that he not interfere with their religious ceremonies (Compare Lk 23:18; Jn 19:15). **37,38** *May I speak*: In the Greek language Paul asked Lysias if he could address the people. Lysias was surprised that Paul could speak Greek for he had assumed that Paul was an Egyptian assassin who had recently led four thousand insurrectionist Jews in a rebellion against Rome. **39** *I am a Jew from Tarsus ... a citizen*: Paul identified himself as a Jew whose name was registered in Tarsus of Cilicia. He was a native of one of the three major educational centers of the Roman Empire, Athens and Alexandria being the other two. Therefore, he wanted to speak to the people. *No mean city*: Tarsus was an important cultural and political city which had been granted autonomy by the Roman government. Paul here declares that he is a Roman citizen, and as such, could not be condemned without a trial. **40** Lysias gave Paul permission to speak. After he had calmed the crowd with the backing of the Roman soldiers, Paul addressed the Jewish multitude in the Jews' dialect,

which was probably Aramaic. His speaking to them in their own language captured their attention.

Chapter 22

PAUL'S SUPERNATURAL ENCOUNTER

1 *Brethren and fathers*: Paul beckoned to the assembled mob as fellow Jewish brothers and showed respect to his Jewish heritage. He wanted to make a verbal defense of his beliefs (See 24:10; 25:8,16; 26:1,2,24). *My defense*: The Greek word here refers to a verbal justification of one's beliefs. Throughout the remainder of the document of Acts, Luke uses this word in reference to Paul's defending his beliefs (See 24:10; 25:8,16; 26:1,2,24). **2** When the multitude heard him speak in the Aramaic language they became very quiet. Many of the mob did not actually know why they were there. **3** Paul then affirmed that he was also a Jew (21:39; 2 Co 11:22). He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia. He was brought up in Jerusalem and studied at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most respected educators of the Jews (5:34). He had also been educated in the exactness of the Jewish law, the law of the fathers (23:6; 26:5; Gl 1:13,14; Ph 3:5,6). Paul said that he was also zealous in keeping the traditions of the fathers (21:20; Rm 10:2; Gl 1:14). *Zealous toward God*: See 26:5; Rm 10:2; Ph 3:5. **4** *Way*: See 8:3; 26:9-11; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13. Paul confessed that he had persecuted unto death both men and women Christians (8:3; 26:9-11; Gl 1:13,14; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13). **5** Paul said that he had even received official letters from a former high priest named Ananias (23:2), and the Sanhedrin (23:14; 24:1;

went to Damascus to bring those who were there bound to Jerusalem to be punished.

6 “Now it came to pass as I made my journey, and came near to Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light around me.

7 “And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’

8 “And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’

9 “And those who were with me saw indeed the light. But they did not understand the voice of Him who spoke to me.

10 “And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ Then the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there it will be told you all things that are appointed for you to do.’

11 “But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, being led by the hand by those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 “And a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good reputation with all the Jews who dwelt *there*,

13 “came to me. And he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And the same hour I looked up at him.

14 “And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Just One and to hear the voice of His mouth.

15 ‘For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

16 ‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and be immersed and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’

17 “Now it came to pass when I came again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, that I was in a trance.

18 “And I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’

19 “And I said, ‘Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue those

25:15), which gave him authority to arrest Christians in Palestine who would be brought to Jerusalem for trial and punishment (9:2).

6 Now it happened: The radical change in Paul's life could be explained only on the basis that something supernatural happened in his life. Therefore, Paul proceeds to offer the Damascus road encounter with Jesus as proof of the change of his life from a zealous persecutor of Christ to a zealous propagator of Christ (See comments 9:2ff; 26:10-12). Paul thus explained that on his way to Damascus of Syria, about midday a great light appeared to him. He fell stunned to the ground (9:3). The light was brighter than the sun of midday (26:12,13). **7,8 Who are you:** Paul beckoned to the One speaking to identify himself. Jesus replied by saying that since Paul was persecuting the body of Christ he was persecuting Jesus Himself. **9** The soldiers with Paul also saw the light and could testify to its existence. They were also afraid. However, they did not understand the message of the sound that Paul heard. **10** Paul then asked what to do. Jesus directed him to arise and go into Damascus. There it would be told him everything that had been appointed for him to do (See 9:15,16). **11** Since Paul was blinded by the brilliance of the light that had shown on him, the soldiers led him by the hand to the city of Damascus.

12 While Paul was fasting and praying, the Lord had appeared unto and directed Ananias (9:17), one who was obedient (10:22; 1 Tm 3:7), to go to Paul who had been fasting and praying for three days. **13,14** When he arrived where Paul was staying, Ananias healed Paul's blindness. He told Paul that the God of Israel (3:13; 5:30) had specifically chosen him (9:15; 26:16; Gl 1:15) to know God's will (3:14; 7:52), to see Jesus (9:17;

26:16; 1 Co 9:1; 15:8), and to hear the voice of Jesus (1 Co 11:23; Gl 1:12). **15 You will be His witness:** Because Jesus personally appeared to Paul, he was to be a special witness of Jesus as the original Christ-sent apostles (Lk 24:48). He was to proclaim the vision that he had seen and heard as a divine testimony to his apostolic mission (1:8; 4:20; 23:11; 26:16). **16 Arise and be immersed:** Ananias commanded Paul to arise and be baptized for God had promised to cleanse anyone of sin who would submit to immersion in the name of Jesus (2:38; 1 Co 6:11; Ep 5:26). Paul had experienced God's grace. Now it was time to respond to that grace. God's grace toward him would not profit if he did not obediently respond by obedience to the gospel in immersion for the remission of his sins (See comments Rm 6:3-6). The encounter with Jesus on the road shocked Paul concerning the reality of the risen Lord, but it did not save him. He had to be baptized for the remission of sins in order to be saved. **Calling on the name of the Lord:** In obedience to the gospel, one must depend on the authority of Jesus for his salvation (9:14; Rm 10:13).

17 After his immersion, Paul went into Arabia and then returned to Jerusalem where he went to the temple (See comments Gl 1:17-20). While he was in Jerusalem in the temple praying, God brought him into a trance (See 10:10; 11:5). **18 Get out of Jerusalem quickly:** The purpose of the vision was to save Paul's life. God revealed the imminent danger. He allowed Paul the responsibility of acting upon the knowledge that his life was in danger. The Lord told him that the people were unreceptive to the witness he had to give concerning his conversion. **19,20** It is certain that Paul did not understand why people would not listen to him.

who believed on You.

20 ‘And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by and consenting, and kept the clothes of those who were killing him.’

21 “And He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

22 ¶ They listened to him until this statement, and *then* they lifted up their voices and said, “Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live!”

23 And as they cried out and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”

26 When the centurion heard *this*, he went and told the commander, saying, “Take heed what you do, for this man is a Roman.”

27 Then the commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” He said, “Yes.”

28 And the commander answered, “With a great sum *of money* I obtained this freedom.” And Paul said, “But I was born *a citizen*.”

29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him let go of him. And the commander also was afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 ¶ On the next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him from *his* bonds and commanded the chief priests and all the Council to appear. And he brought Paul down and set him before them.

After all, he had imprisoned those who believed in Jesus (8:3; 22:4). He had severely beaten those who believed (See 26:11; Mt 10:17). He even consented to the murder of Stephen (7:54 - 8:1). Paul's conversion, therefore, would not be understandable if he had not had a miraculous encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road. **21 *Send you far from here:*** And so must an evangelist go. Jesus sent Paul far away from Jerusalem and Judea where he had greatly persecuted the church. He sent him to the Gentiles of Asia and beyond, even to Macedonia and Achaia (9:15; 13:2,46,47; 18:6; 26:17; Rm 1:5; 11:13; 15:16; Gl 1:15,16; 2:7,8; Ep 3:7,8; 1 Tm 2:7; 2 Tm 1:11).

THE JEWS INCITE RIOT

22 *He is not fit to live:* When Paul mentioned his commanded mission to the Gentiles, the close-minded and prejudiced Jews became enraged. They could not accept the fact that the commission to the Gentiles was direct from heaven. Their racism had blinded their eyes and distorted their understanding of God's work among all people. They viciously shouted out that Paul be killed. Such a radical environment was the situation in which the Jerusalem church lived. Since the Jerusalem church was primarily composed of converted Jews, one could easily assume that the church had a high level of Jewish cultural influence. **23,24 *Threw dust into the air:*** The infuriated Jews went into a frenzy, crying out loud, tearing off their clothes and throwing dust into the air. So Lysias, the Roman commander, ordered Paul to be brought into the barracks lest he be torn apart in the hands of this uncontrolled and fanatical mob. He commanded that Paul be questioned under beating in order to get the truth from him as to why the Jews were so furiously irritated with him. **25 *Bound him with thongs:*** The soldiers stretched Paul across a beam and ripped the clothes off his back. They were about to

proceed ripping his flesh with a Roman scourge that was commonly used on slaves. However, Paul asked in his defense if they should scourge an uncondemned Roman citizen (16:37). Severe punishment was inflicted upon those who would bind and punish an uncondemned Roman citizen. **26,27** When the centurion heard that Paul was a Roman citizen, he went immediately to Lysias and told him. Lysias came and personally asked if Paul were a citizen of Rome. Paul reaffirmed that he was a citizen. **28 *With a large sum:*** Lysias greatly respected Roman citizenship because he had paid a great deal of money to become a citizen. ***I was born a citizen:*** Paul stated that he was born a citizen of Rome, which meant that his citizenship was registered in Tarsus of Cilicia. Any who questioned his claim could investigate the proof. Any who falsely claimed citizenship would suffer the severe sentence of death. Therefore, the commander knew that no one would be so foolish as to falsely claim Roman citizenship without actually being a citizen. **29 *Afraid:*** Lysias was now afraid for himself since he had bound a Roman citizen who had not been tried and condemned. In this case, Paul could have taken his case before a Roman court which would have found Lysias and his men guilty of a crime that was deserving of great punishment. What is interesting in this case is that Paul is allowing himself to be arrested. It seems that he knows that his destiny is to go to Rome and witness to Jesus as the Son of God before a Roman court. At least he seems to flow with the occasion of his arrest.

30 Lysias released Paul from his bonds but held him in custody for his own protection. The following day he ordered the Jews and Sanhedrin who accused Paul to bring their accusations to a special meeting. He wanted to discover if their accusations against Paul were actually true. If they were not true, then he would have judged Paul innocent.

Chapter 23

1 ¶ And Paul, earnestly looking at the Council, said, "Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God to this day."

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

3 Then Paul said to him, "God will smite you, you whitewashed wall. For you sit to judge me after the law, and do you command me to be smitten contrary to the law?"

4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest, for it is written, '*You will not speak evil of a ruler of your people.*'"

6 But when Paul perceived that 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. I am being judged for the hope and resurrection of the

dead!"

7 Now when he had said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. And the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit. But the Pharisees confess both.

9 Then there arose a great outcry. And the scribes *who were* of the Pharisees' party arose and heatedly protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man. But what if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him."

10 Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul should be torn to pieces by them, ordered the soldiers to go down and take him away from them by force and bring *him* into the barracks.

11 ¶ And the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have solemnly witnessed for Me in Jerusalem, so must you also bear witness at Rome."

Chapter 23

PAUL ADDRESSES THE SANHEDRIN

1 Paul here addressed the Romans who were present and his Jewish brethren who composed the Sanhedrin counsel. **Lived in all good conscience before God:** Before God, he affirmed that he had lived sincerely and conscientiously in doing what he believed God wanted him to do (24:16; 1 Co 4:4; 2 Co 1:12; 4:2; Ph 3:6,20; 1 Tm 1:15; 2 Tm 1:3; Hb 13:18). This did not mean that what he did was right. It simply meant that he did that which he thought was right before God. **2 Ananias:** This Ananias was one who had probably been appointed high priest by either Chalcis or Herod Agrippa I around A.D. 47. **Strike him:** Before Paul could get started with his defense, Ananias, the high priest, who was evidently intimidated by Paul's confidence, commanded him to be struck. **3 God will strike you:** Paul used a customary Jewish pronouncement against Ananias by stating that God would strike him down because of his religious hypocrisy. Paul was right concerning Ananias' hypocritical behavior because he commanded something to be done that was contrary to Old Testament law (Lv 19:35; Dt 25:1,2; Jn 7:51). Paul's pronouncement came true because Ananias was eventually assassinated a few years later in A.D. 66. **4,5** The high priest was considered to be God's representative (Dt 17:8-13). **I did not know:** Paul did not know that this one who had commanded him to be struck was actually the high priest. He thus apologized because it was contrary to the law to show disrespect to God's representative (Ex 22:28; Ec 10:20; 2 Pt 2:10).

6 Paul realized that part of the assembly was composed of Sadducees who did not believe in the future resurrection of the body. The other part of the assembly, the Pharisees, did believe in the resurrection.

Therefore, in the midst of the assembly, Paul, a former Pharisee (26:5; Ph 3:5), proclaimed his belief in the resurrection (24:15,21; 26:6; 28:20). **7 A dissension arose:** Paul caused in the assembly that which he intended. When he stated his belief, an argument developed in the assembly between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. **8** Not only did the Sadducees not believe in the bodily resurrection (Mt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27), they did not believe in angels or the spirit of man. **9 We find no evil in this man:** As a result of the great division that developed in the assembly, the scribes, or lawyers of the law, who sided with the Pharisees in belief, protested that they found no fault in Paul who believed the same as they did on these teachings. They proclaimed the possibility that Paul may have had a spirit or an angel speak to him (See 22:6,7,17,18; Jn 12:29). The focus of Paul's accusers, therefore, turned from him to a dispute among themselves. **10** The Sanhedrin assembly was in an uproar and debate about their contradictory beliefs. Lysias again intervened to rescue Paul from the foolish arguments and mob mentality of the fanatical Jews. Paul was again placed in the barracks of the soldiers for his own protection.

11 Paul would have possibly been distraught by the preceding events. Everything was against him. For this reason, the Lord made a special revelation and stood by him in this time of trial in order to comfort him (See 18:9; 27:23,24). **You must also bear witness at Rome:** In this statement, Paul was promised that he would not die in Jerusalem. The Lord said that he would accomplish his goal to testify in Rome (19:11; 28:16,17,23; see Rm 1:11-13,15,23). It is here that we begin to understand the reason for God's call of Paul to apostleship. God was leading Paul to Rome in order to have Christianity put on trial before the highest court the world had to

12 ¶ Now when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

13 And there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy.

14 Then they came to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul.

15 "Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander that he bring him down to you, as though you were going to inquire something more accurately concerning him. And we, before he comes near, are ready to kill him."

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered into the barracks and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him* and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him."

18 So he took him and brought *him* to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to *him* and asked me to bring this young man to you, who has something to say to you."

19 Then the commander took him by the hand

and went aside and privately asked *him*, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they would inquire something more accurately about him.

21 "But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him who have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink until they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for a promise from you."

22 So the commander let the young man depart, and instructed *him*, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."

23 ¶ Then he called to him two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night.

24 "And provide mounts so that they may set Paul on and take *him* safely to Felix the governor."

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 "Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings.

27 "This man was taken by the Jews and would have been killed by them. Then I came with an army and rescued him, having learned

offer. At this time Paul is informed of God's greater plan for his life. Paul has established the evidences for what he has believed by the miraculous events that have occurred in his life. Now it is time to take his life before the Roman court in order to prove Christianity to be based upon the revelation of the one true and living God.

THE JEWS PLOT TO KILL PAUL

12,13 Satan continued to work against Paul. A group of more than forty radical Jews bound themselves together with an oath to murder Paul by an ambush (vss 21,30; 25:3; see 9:23,24; 26:21; 27:42; 1 Th 2:15; compare Jn 16:2). They vowed neither to eat nor drink until they had carried out their mission. **14,15** They had formed this conspiracy on their own. However, they revealed the plan to the chief priest and elders who consented to it. They asked the religious leaders and Sanhedrin to join them in their plot by requesting the commander to have Paul brought down to the counsel the next day. They would lie in ambush and kill Paul during his transfer to them for a supposed meeting of inquiry.

16-22 What happened here in this ordeal with Paul's arrest is a most interesting event wherein God may have been providentially watching over Paul through the ears of a boy. **Paul's sister's son heard:** Paul's nephew was concerned for his uncle's safety

(See also Rm 16:7,11). He was close by and listening to the plans of the conspirators who sought to murder his uncle. He subsequently told Paul of the plot. Paul then asked the centurions who were guarding him to tell Lysias of the assassination plot. One of the centurions quickly took the young lad to Lysias. Lysias wisely took the young man aside and inquired as to what he had to say. Paul's nephew told Lysias that more than forty devious Jews had schemed in a plot to murder Paul the next day. They had sworn with an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had accomplished their murderous plan. Lysias then allowed the young man to go, but told him to tell no one of the plot. Lysias then took action to foil the plot of the conspirators.

PAUL IS SENT TO FELIX

23,24 Lysias immediately realized the seriousness of the plot against Paul. He commanded two centurions to gather two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen. If an assassination were attempted, he wanted to make sure that Roman authority thoroughly crushed the attempt. To secure his strategy, Paul's guards would leave for Caesarea at 9:00^{pm} and travel all night. The plan was to bring Paul safely to Felix who was the governor of the region. **25-30** Lysias then wrote a letter to Felix Marcus Antonius who was governor from A.D. 52 to 59. Felix was

that he was a Roman.

28 “And when I wanted to know the reason why they accused him, I brought him before their Council.

29 “And I found him to be accused over questions concerning their law, but had nothing charged against him worthy of death or of chains.

30 “And when it was told me how there would be a plot against the man, I immediately sent him to you, and also gave orders to his accusers to say before you what *they had* against him. Farewell.”

31 ¶ Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

32 On the next day they left the horsemen to go with him, and they returned to the barracks.

33 When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked from what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* from Cilicia, **35** he said, “I will hear you when your accusers have also come.” And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.

Chapter 24

1 ¶ And after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus. And they brought charges to the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, “Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and since reforms are done to this nation by your providence,

3 “we always accept *this* in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 “Nevertheless, so that I not be further tedious to you, I beg you that you would hear, by your kindness, a few words from us.

eventually succeeded by Festus in A.D. 59. The events that happened here took place about two years before Festus was made procurator. These events, therefore, took place about A.D. 57. A paraphrase of the letter would be as follows:

*From Claudius Lysias
To the Most Excellent Governor Felix*

Greetings,

I am sending this man Paul to you whom I rescued from the Jews who had seized him and were about to kill him. I have since learned that he is a Roman citizen. In order to determine what they accused him of I brought him before the Sanhedrin counsel. However, I discovered that their accusations against him were matters concerning the Jewish law, not Roman law. Nothing was charged against him that would be worthy of death or even imprisonment. A plot was subsequently made against him by the Jews to kill him. I have thus sent him immediately to you. I have also commanded his accusers that if they have any accusations against him that they must state such before you. Farewell

31 The soldiers took Paul by night to the city of Antipatris that was about fifty-five kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. This place was rebuilt by Herod the Great and was named after his father, Antipater. **32** The next day the foot-soldiers returned to Jerusalem, but the calvary took Paul the remainder of the journey. **33** When they arrived in Caesarea, they delivered to Felix both Paul and the letter of Claudius Lysias. **34** When Felix read the letter he asked Paul for the province where his citizenship was registered. Paul replied that he was from Cilicia (6:9; 21:39). **35** Felix scheduled a legal hearing for Paul. However, they had to wait until Paul’s accusers came from Jerusalem. **Praetorium:** Paul was confined in a palace guardroom of the former

Herod the Great’s Caesarian headquarters. He was allowed freedom to teach all with whom he had contact.

Chapter 24

PAUL IS ACCUSED BY THE JEWS

From this time until Paul was released from Roman imprisonment, he will have been in Roman custody for four years. He will be two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome (24:27; 28:30). It is during these two years in Caesarea that Luke probably does much of his research concerning the life of Jesus. He thus writes the documents of Luke and Acts for Paul’s defense by the time Paul goes before Caesar’s court around A.D. 60 to 62. **1** Paul’s legacy for the next four years begins here in waiting for five days in Caesarea. He waits for the arrival of Ananias, who is the high priest, the Jewish elders and Tertullus, a lawyer for the accusers. The accusers must come from Jerusalem in order to present their case against him. The trial takes place around A.D. 56 to 58.

2 Tertullus began his case by first giving an eloquent and flattering speech to Felix about how the Jews had supposedly appreciated the great peace and prosperity of the Roman occupation of Palestine. **3** Tertullus actually lied when he stated that the Jews had appreciated the governorship of Felix and the Romans. His statements of appreciation were simply not true. Felix had been a cruel and mean ruler of the Jews. After he and his mother were freed as slaves, Felix was eventually made procurator of Judea because Caesar Claudius of Rome was a good friend of his brother. He subsequently became an intolerant ruler of the Jews in Palestine. **4 Not to be tedious to you:** Tertullus did not want to take too much time, and thus, create an atmosphere of boredom with Felix. He thus asked to

5 “For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow* and a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

6 “He has also tried to profane the temple; and then we seized him. [And we wanted to judge him according to our law.

7 “But the commander Lysias came, and with great violence, took *him* out of our hands,

8 “commanding his accusers to come to you.] By examining him yourself, you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him.”

9 And the Jews also joined in the attack, saying that these things were so.

10 ¶ Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered, “Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge to this nation, I do gladly make my defense,

11 “because you may take note that it is no

more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

12 “And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the people, either in the synagogues or in the city.

13 “Nor can they prove the things about which they now accuse me.

14 “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

15 “And I have hope in God, that they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection, both of *the* just and unjust.

16 “In view of this, I exercise myself to have always a conscience without offense toward God and men.

17 “Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation.

deliver a few words concerning Paul that all the Jews had surely agreed upon before their arrival at the assembly. **5** *Found this man a plague:* Tertullus continued by falsely accusing Paul of being the one who caused the stir among the Jews. In reality, Paul was a plague to the false religion of Judaism which was an apostasy from God's religion as it was revealed to Israel in the Old Testament. The Jews' religion was the invention of the Jews because of their many traditions (See Mk 7:1-9). However, the dissensions in Jerusalem were not caused by Paul but by the stiffnecked and intolerant Jews who antagonistically followed him from city to city with false accusations and inciting the multitudes against him (6:13; 16:20; 17:6; 21:38; 1 Pt 2:12,15). Nevertheless, Tertullus falsely accused Paul of being a ringleader of a supposed sect of Judaism. This sect was now being reproachfully referred to as Nazarenes, after the hometown of Jesus. **6** Paul was then accused of profaning the temple by bringing a Gentile into restricted areas of the temple (See 21:28). The Jews had thus seized him and attempted to judge him according to Jewish traditional law. **7** Tertullus then accused Lysias of causing the great violence when he rescued Paul from the hands of the mob. **8** Tertullus then affirmed that the Jews have now obediently appeared before Felix's court. However, the truth was that when Lysias did rescue Paul, he sent him to Felix in order that the riotous Jews not murder him. Fortunately, Lysias had forced the Jews to make their accusations in a Roman court of order and not in the streets of Jerusalem. **9** All the Jews who were standing behind Tertullus nodded with approval to the slanderous accusations that he had made against Paul.

PAUL MAKES HIS DEFENSE

10 After Felix had given Paul permission to speak, Paul made his first defense before the Roman courts. At this time, Felix had been in Palestine between eight to

nine years, and thus, knew the customs of the Jews. Paul was more than eager to give a public defense of his beliefs before one who knew Jewish law. **11** Because it had been only twelve days since he had gone to Jerusalem (21:15,18,26,27), Paul knew that Felix could determine an accurate account of what actually took place since the events were fresh on everyone's mind. **12** Paul then denied the false charges of the Jews. They had not found him in the temple disputing with anyone (25:8; 28:17; 21:27). He had not profaned or desecrated the temple in any way. Neither was he stirring up any crowd for insurrection in the synagogues or city. It was the antagonistic Jews who were stirring up the crowds. **13** In conjunction with this, his accusers could not prove any of their charges which they made against him. **14** Paul confessed, however, that he was a disciple of the Way (vs 22; 9:2). He worshiped the same God as the Jewish fathers. He believed the prophecies and promises of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, as well as, the Old Testament prophets. He had stayed faithful to what he had believed was the law of God, though his former religion was composed of many traditions (Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14). **15** His hope was the same as Israel's. He hoped for the Messiah and resurrection. Jesus was that Messiah and He made the future resurrection possible by His own resurrection from the dead (23:6; 26:6,7; 28:20). As the Pharisees, he also believed that both the righteous and unrighteous would be bodily resurrected in the end (Dn 12:2; Jn 5:28,29; 11:24). **16** As a result of this belief, he said he always conscientiously labored in order not to be in sin against God or offensive to his fellow man (23:1; See 1 Co 10:32; Ph 1:10).

17 In order to manifest harmony between Gentiles and Jews, Paul related that after many years he had returned to Jerusalem to bring a contribution from Gentile Christians to help Jewish Christians in Judea

18 “I was purified when they found me in the temple doing this. But there are some Jews from Asia

19 “who ought to be here before you to object if they had anything against me.

20 “Or else let these who are *here* say what wrongdoing they have found in me while I stood before the Council,

21 “unless it is for this one statement that I cried out standing among them, ‘Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.’”

22 ¶ But when Felix heard these things, having a more accurate knowledge of *the Way*, he adjourned them and said, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case.”

23 Then he commanded a centurion to keep Paul and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should not forbid any of his friends from ministering to him.

24 And after some days, when Felix came

with his wife Drusilla who was a Jewess, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control and judgment to come, Felix became frightened and answered, “Go away for now. When I have a convenient time, I will call for you.”

26 He hoped at the same time that money would be given him by Paul. Therefore, he often sent for him and conversed with him.

27 ¶ But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix. And Felix, willing to do the Jews a favor, left Paul imprisoned.

Chapter 25

1 ¶ Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews informed him against Paul. And they were urging him,

who were suffering from famine (11:29,30; 18:21,22; Rm 15:25-28; 1 Co 16:1-4; 2 Co 8:1-4; 9:1,2,12; Gl 2:10). **18** However, while he was ceremonially clean in the temple (21:26,27; 26:21), some of the antagonistic Jews who had followed him from city to city, found him and falsely accused him of bringing a Gentile into the temple. There had been no disturbance until these antagonistic Jews, who had come from Asia (21:27; 26:21), started the dissension. **19** These Jews should be present at this hearing, Paul affirmed, in order to state their case (See 23:30; 25:16). Thus the falsehood of their case was manifested by their fear to testify before a Roman official. **20** Paul then challenged those Jews who were present to publicly affirm before a Roman court their accusations against a Roman citizen. If he were guilty, even the Sanhedrin would have condemned him. But they did not. **21** Paul said that the only offense he may have done was the manner by which he stimulated a debate among the Sadducees and Pharisees in the Sanhedrin by proclaiming his belief in the resurrection (23:6; 24:15; 28:20). In this case the Jews' only accusation against Paul was a theological one. And for such matters, Felix had no interest.

FELIX FAILS TO MAKE JUDGMENT

22 Luke here wants us to know that Felix was not ignorant concerning Christianity. However, he excused himself from making a judgment on the matter by saying he would not make a decision until Lysias (23:26; 24:7) came to Caesarea in order to report his facts concerning the situation. **23** So Paul was unjustly kept in house arrest. However, he was given liberty to receive his friends as Philip who lived in Caesarea at the time (21:8). Luke was also there.

24 After Paul had been in house arrest for a period of time, Felix decided to satisfy the curiosity of his young

Jewish wife, Drusilla, who was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I who had murdered James (12:1). She was the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (25:13). Her uncle, Herod Antipas, had beheaded John the Baptist. **Felix ... sent for Paul:** Felix summoned Paul for a private interview with himself and his wife to discuss Paul's faith concerning Jesus as the Messiah (See Jn 3:15; 5:24; 11:25; 12:46; 20:31). **25** Paul then reasoned with Felix about righteous behavior before God, exercising self-control in life, and the final judgment where all men would give account of their deeds before God (17:30,31; 1 Co 15:58; Hb 9:27). Such teachings terrified Felix for he knew he was guilty of much sin against God. He thus told Paul to leave. If he had another convenient opportunity he would call on Paul again. Such was his excuse to rid himself of this preacher. **26** Felix thought that Paul might give him a bribe in order to release him. He kept bringing Paul before him, hoping to receive this bribe. Such manifested that Felix was unjustly and illegally retaining Paul in house arrest. Paul gave no bribes. He only gave sermons to Felix for his unrighteous living. **27** After two years, however, Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus as governor. In order to gain favor from the Jews, Festus retained Paul in house arrest.

Chapter 25

GOD TAKES CHRISTIANITY BEFORE CAESAR

1 Festus took office as governor in Palestine around A.D. 59,60. After being in office three days he did not delay to go to Jerusalem. We must keep in mind that the Jewish religious leadership still have in their minds a plot to murder Paul (23:12,15). **2** When Festus arrived in Jerusalem the Jewish religious leaders approached him and again falsely accused Paul who

3 and asking a concession against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem; *while* making a plot to kill him on the way.

4 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly.

5 "Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go down with *me* and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."

6 ¶ And when he had stayed among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought.

7 Now when he had come, the Jews who came down from Jerusalem stood around and laid many serious charges against Paul that they could not prove,

8 while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the

temple, nor against Caesar, have I offended in anything at all."

9 But Festus, desiring to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Will you go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"

10 Then Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.

11 "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die. But if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the Council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you will go."

13 ¶ And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

was still held in custody in Caesarea. **3 *Summon him to Jerusalem:*** The Jewish religious leaders pleaded with him to bring Paul to Jerusalem. But their intentions were evil. They wanted to murder Paul in ambush (23:12,15). **4** Festus flatly refused their requests, telling them that he would soon return to Caesarea for he wanted the trial of Paul to stay out of the city of Jerusalem. The political problem of the Jews in reference to Roman occupation of Palestine is at this time increasing in the country. Festus understands that Paul could be a political problem that would generate more strife in the city, for by this time he is known throughout the Jewish world. It would be only nine to ten years from this date that Rome would have to terminate the Jewish state by the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24). **5 *Go down with me:*** If anyone had accusation against Paul, Festus said, they could go down to Caesarea and accuse Paul there. It would be determined in Caesarea if there were any just accusation against Paul (See vs 18; 18:14).

6 After a little more than ten days in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea. ***Judgment seat:*** Festus sat upon the official Roman judgment seat (18:12,16,17; Mt 27:19; Jn 19:13; see Rm 14:10; 2 Co 5:10) and called Paul before him. The judgment seat was the official Roman seat upon which the Roman judge would sit and before whom all accused were brought. **7 *Laid many serious complaints:*** Paul's accusers had also come from Jerusalem. They stood around Paul in the judgment hall and made slanderous accusations against him. However, they could not prove any of their accusations (Compare Mk 15:3; Lk 23:2,10; At 24:5,13). Throughout these trial proceedings Luke is continually affirming that Paul had broken no Roman law. No accusation against him could be proved. **8** On this occasion, Paul responded again in his own defense. He affirmed that he had not violated the law of the Jews. He had not violated the temple. And he had broken no Roman laws. He stood innocent, and under Roman law,

should have been released (See 6:13; 24:12; 28:17). **9 *Do the Jews a favor:*** We must keep in mind that Festus has just recently been appointed by Rome to this position. He thus seeks to sacrifice Paul's rights for the sake of being politically correct in reference to the Jews. Therefore, Festus, as Felix, wanted to use Paul's destiny for his own political means. He therefore challenged Paul to stand before his accusers in Jerusalem. **10 *At Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged:*** Festus underestimated the man standing before him. Paul had correctly defended himself and stood for his rights as a Roman citizen before Caesar's court, which is where he should be judged. He said that he had done nothing to the Jews that would place him before a Jewish court. He had done nothing to place him in Caesar's court. Festus knew this. **11 *I appeal to Caesar:*** Paul affirmed that if he had committed any offense worthy of death, then he was not afraid to pay the ultimate penalty for such crimes. However, he had not committed any crimes worthy of death. Paul boldly looked Festus in the eye and said that even he could not deliver him over to the Jews. Therefore, knowing that he could not receive fair judgment in either Jerusalem or Caesarea, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed his case to be heard before Caesar (26:32; 28:19). Paul desired that he and Christianity be examined before the Emperor of Rome in order to proclaim Jesus before all men. It is here that we understand that Paul knows that God is working behind the scenes in order to get him to Rome (See 19:21; 23:11; Rm 15:22-28). **12** Festus then briefly confided with his advisors, and thus, commissioned Paul to be tried before Caesar in Rome.

ROMAN RULERS PLAY POLITICAL GAMES WITH PAUL

13 After some days had passed, Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I (12:1,21-23), and his wife Bernice, came to Caesarea. Herod Agrippa II was the

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause to the king, saying, "There is a certain man left in prison by Felix,

15 "about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring to have judgment against him.

16 "To whom I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver anyone to die before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.'

17 "Therefore, when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 "When the accusers stood up, they brought no charges against him of such things as I supposed.

19 "But they had some questions against him about their own religion, and about one

named Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 "And being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked *him* whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged about these matters.

21 "But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept until I could send him to Caesar."

22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would also like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you will hear him."

23 ¶ And on the next day when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered into the place of hearing with the commanders and principal men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews have appealed to me, both at Jerusalem

grandson of Herod the Great (Mt 2:1) and the brother of Bernice (25:13) and Drusilla who had married Felix (24:24). **14,15** After King Agrippa and Festus had feasted for many days, Festus mentioned the case of Paul to Agrippa. He said that the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem had asked for an immediate judgment of condemnation against this man Paul (24:13; 25:2,3). **16** It was Roman law that no man could be condemned until his accusers had first made charges against him to his face. However, in this case against Paul, this had been done but no judgment had been made by either Felix or Festus. Felix wanted a bribe from Paul. Festus simply procrastinated because he wanted to use Paul for his own political means. **17** In order to somewhat justify his procrastinated judgment which was against Roman law, Festus affirmed that he had immediately conducted a trial for Paul (vss 6,10). **18** In the trial he expected that the Jews would have a case against Paul concerning some violation of Roman law. However, such was not the case. **19** What the Jews did do was bring theological charges against Paul concerning their own religion (18:14,15; 23:29). The charges also concerned Jesus' death and resurrection, about which Festus evidently knew little. **20,21** Festus confessed that he was puzzled as to what he must do in this situation. He had challenged the prisoner Paul about a trial before the Jews in Jerusalem. But Festus said that Paul appealed to be tried before Caesar, that is, before "Augustus." This was a common title which the Roman Caesars adopted after the great Caesar Augustus of Rome. At this time, however, Nero was Caesar of Rome. He was Caesar from A.D. 54 to A.D. 68. Festus was at a loss as to what charges he must make against Paul in order to send him to Caesar, for he had found that he had broken no Roman law. Festus had kept Paul in custody until he could determine what

to do with him. Thus in this meeting he was asking Agrippa for advice. Agrippa subsequently asked if he could examine the prisoner. Festus eagerly granted his request, hoping that some fault might be found in Paul. **22** On the following day, Agrippa and Bernice pompously entered the place of hearing with all their pomp and royal glamour. The five Roman tribunes who were stationed at Caesarea were also there. The prominent men of the city were there. And then there was Paul, the humble servant of God. Paul stood boldly in the midst of an assembly of unbelievers who neither understood who he was nor cared for his convictions.

23,24 Festus introduced the prisoner Paul in a way that exalted the Romans but belittled the Jews. The Romans saw Paul as only a Jew. However, the whole Jewish leadership in Jerusalem and Caesarea was in an uproar about this one man who had had tremendous impact on the Jewish religious world by the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, the Jews wanted him dead (vss 2,3,7; 21:36; 22:22). **25** **Committed nothing deserving of death:** Paul had committed no crime against Rome that would cause him to be executed under anyone's law (23:9,29; 26:31). However, Paul had appealed to Caesar (vss 11,12). As a result of Paul's appeal, Festus had to send him to Caesar. **26** **Nothing certain to write:** Festus was here in a dilemma. Paul had appealed to be tried before "lord" Nero, however, Festus had no official charge to send as an accusation against him. For this reason, Festus brought Paul before Agrippa for the King's opinion. **27** If Festus sent a prisoner to Rome without charges, he would appear foolish before Caesar. He would also compound his legal dilemma. He had unjustly retained in custody a Roman citizen who had committed no crime against Rome. Luke wants Theophilus to understand that Paul committed no crime against Rome.

and here, crying out that he ought not to live any longer.

25 “But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself has appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 “I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore, I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, O King Agrippa, so that after examination has taken place, I might have something to write.

27 “For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner and not to signify the charges *laid* against him.”

Chapter 26

1 ¶ Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You are permitted to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself.

2 “I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, because I will answer for myself this day before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews,

3 “especially *because* you are an expert in all customs and questions that have to do with the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to patiently hear me.

4 “All the Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation at Jerusalem.

5 “They knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6 “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.

7 “To this *promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain. For this hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

8 “Why should it be thought an incredible thing with you that God raises the dead?

9 “Truly, I thought to myself that I had to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 “This I also did in Jerusalem. And many of the saints I shut up in prison, having re-

Chapter 26

PAUL TESTIFIES BEFORE AGRIPPA

1,2 *You are permitted to speak:* After being given permission to speak, Paul again, with an outstretched arm, politely gave his own defense concerning his belief. He stated that he considered it a great opportunity to address King Agrippa on behalf of himself (1 Pt 3:15) concerning the false charges the Jews had made against him (21:28; 24:5,6). It was a great opportunity to testify concerning his experience that Jesus had actually appeared to him on the road to Damascus (See 9:15). **3** Agrippa was familiar with the traditions of Judaism, though such were not a part of his heart’s conviction. Paul considered it an opportunity to speak before him because of Agrippa’s knowledge of the Jews’ religion.

4 *All the Jews know:* Paul began by stating that the Jewish leadership of Jerusalem knew of his behavior as a faithful Jew. They had known of his strict religious behavior from his youth. **5** Though they would not confess such before his hearing, they were familiar with Paul’s strict legal practice as a Pharisee of the Jews’ religion (Ph 3:5; 1 Tm 1:12). *The strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee:* The Pharisees were a very strict sect of legalistic religionists (See introduction to Gl; see comments Mt 23). Here Paul identifies the Jew’s religion which he kept in its strictest sense before his Damascus road experience (See comments Gl 1:13,14). By the time Jesus came, it was no longer the Old Testament religion that was delivered on Mount Sinai. It was a religion the Jews had created after their own traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9). **6** *Judged for*

the hope of the promise: Paul affirmed that he was not being judged because of the false accusations which they had launched against him, but because as a Jew he hoped of the Messiah (13:32,33) and the future resurrection from the dead (23:6). The Messiah would bring the promise of God that salvation would come to all men. **7** *To this promise ... hope to attain:* All Israel waited for the Messiah who would bring redemption to all men. They thus looked for the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy (See Gn 3:15; 12:3; 22:18; 49:10; Dt 18:15; 2 Sm 7:12; Is 7:14; 53). Paul affirmed that he was now being judged for his hope of the resurrection that was made possible by the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. *Twelve tribes:* Some have erroneously believed that the ten northern tribes of Israel were lost when taken into the Assyrian captivity of 721 B.C. But here Paul affirms their existence. Anna, for example, was of the tribe of Asher (Lk 2:36). Asher was one of the northern ten tribes. However, she, as well as the faithful remnant of all tribes that God brought back into the land of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity (536 B.C.) were in Jerusalem when God fulfilled the promise that the Messiah would come. **8** *God raises the dead:* Paul asked Agrippa why he would think it unbelievable that the God who created all things could not also raise someone from the dead. **9** *I thought:* Paul then explained his former life as a persecutor of the disciples of Jesus. He had done much harm to Christianity because he thought that Jesus of Nazareth was a fraud (1 Tm 1:12,13). But Paul said he was wrong. **10** *I cast my vote against them:* He had persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. The Jews knew this (8:1-3; 9:13; Gl 1:13). He had received authority from the chief priest to also

ceived authority from the chief priests. And when they were put to death, I gave my vote against *them*.

11 “And I often punished them in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme. And being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities.

12 “As I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 “at midday, O King, I saw in the road a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.

14 “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

15 “And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’

16 ‘But rise and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness, both of these things that you have seen, and of those things in which I will show to you;

17 ‘delivering you from the *Jewish* people and *from* the Gentiles, to whom I send you,

18 ‘to open their eyes in order to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’

19 ¶ “So then, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

20 “But I preached first to those of Damascus, and *also* at Jerusalem, and *then* throughout all the regions of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works appropriate to repentance.

21 “For these reasons the Jews seized me in

persecute Christians in other cities (9:14,21; 22:5). In conjunction with this he consented to the death of those who followed Jesus (8:3). The fact that the Jews were putting Christians to death for the simple fact that they were Christians explains the intensity of the hostility the Jewish religious leaders launched against the church in the first century (8:4). **11 *Compelled them to blaspheme***: The word “compel” is a strong word in Greek. Paul bound Christians who were meeting in synagogues and tried strongly to make them blaspheme by denying Jesus. However, he was not successful in this. Such only enraged his own fury to go even to other cities to hunt them down (22:19).

PAUL DEFENDS HIS MIRACULOUS ENCOUNTER

(9:3-9,19-22; 22:6-11)

12 Paul here gives testimony of that which explained the reason for the great change in his life. His argument was that such a change could not be normally explained without the miraculous event on the Damascus road (See comments 9:3-22; 22:6-11). ***I journeyed to Damascus***: Paul testified that he was once on his way to Damascus with letters from the chief priest in Jerusalem for the purpose of persecuting Christians in Syria (See 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). **13** At about noon, a great light that was brighter than the sun, shined down upon him from heaven. The light appeared all around him and to those who were with him. **14,15 *All had fallen to the ground***: A voice from heaven spoke to Paul in Aramaic and stated that it was hard for him to work against his own conscience. This indictment by Jesus convicted Paul. He knew that something about what he was doing against Christianity was wrong because he was now working against his conscience. When Paul responded to the voice as his Lord, Jesus answered that by persecuting the church he was actually persecuting the Son of God. Jesus told

Paul to stand up. He was going to be made a servant and a witness to others of this great vision and of things which He would yet reveal to him (22:15). **16** Jesus' appearing to Paul on the Damascus road was meant to qualify Paul as a Christ-sent apostle in order that he witness to the world that Jesus was raised from the dead. **17** Jesus promised Paul that no matter how much he would be persecuted, He would deliver Paul from the Jews and Gentiles to whom he was being sent (22:21). He would be sent to the Gentiles. **18 *To open their eyes***: He was being sent to open their eyes by the preaching of the gospel (Is 35:5; 42:7,16). By preaching the gospel they would be turned from the darkness of sin (1 Pt 2:9). The gospel would take them from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom reign of Jesus (Cl 1:13). In obedience to the gospel, believing men and women would receive the remission of sins (2:38; 22:16). They would become a part of the people of God who were sanctified by the blood of Jesus (Cl 1:12-14; At 20:28,32; 1 Co 6:11).

19 *I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision*:

The truth of Paul's experience concerning the vision was manifested in the hardships through which he had to go in order to be obedient to what Jesus commissioned him to do. The change in his life and the hardships through which he went in his life to carry out the commission of the vision proved that he had truly seen the vision. **20 *Repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance***: Immediately after the experience of the vision, Paul preached the gospel in Damascus, Jerusalem, all Judea, and then, throughout the Gentile world (9:19,20,22; 11:26; see comments Gl 1:15-24). He preached that men should turn to God in repentance and bring forth fruits which manifested their turning to a godly life (Mt 3:8). **21 *For these reasons***: It was because he was preaching repentance toward God that the Jews seized him in the temple and tried to

the temple and tried to kill *me*.

22 “Therefore, having obtained help from God, I continue to this day testifying both to small and great, saying no other things than those that the Prophets and Moses said would come;

23 “that the Christ would suffer, *and* that He would be the first who would rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

24 ¶ And as he thus defended himself, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself. Much learning is driving you mad.”

25 But he said, “I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.

26 “For the king knows about these things, before whom also I speak with confidence. For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him, for this was not done in

secret.

27 “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time you almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

29 And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

30 ¶ And when he had spoken these things, the king rose up and the governor, and Bernice, and those who sat with them.

31 And when they had gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, “This man does nothing worthy of death or of chains.”

32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

kill him. It was not because he was the ringleader of an apostate sect of Judaism that was seeking to lead an insurrection against Rome. **22** By God's assistance Paul gave testimony to the resurrected Jesus, that He was the Messiah. It was only by God's help that he was able to survive unto this time of testimony. **The prophets and Moses said would come:** To this hope in Jesus all the Old Testament prophets prophesied (24:14; 28:23; Lk 24:27,44; Jn 5:46; Rm 3:21; 1 Pt 1:10-12). **23** Moses and the Prophets said that the Christ, or Messiah, would suffer and be put to death (Ps 22; Is 53; Lk 24:26; Cl 1:18; Rv 1:5). However, He would rise from the dead (1 Co 15:20-23). This Messiah would proclaim the light of the gospel to both the Jews and Gentiles (Is 42:6; 49:6; Lk 2:32; 2 Co 4:4). Jesus was not the first one to be raised from the dead (1 Kg 17:23; 2 Kg 4:32-37; 13:21; Jn 11:38-44; Hb 11:35). However, He was the first and only one to be raised from the dead never to die again (1 Co 15:20-23; Cl 1:18).

AGRIPPA FINDS NO FAULT IN PAUL

24 **Paul you are beside yourself:** Some translations state that Festus pronounced Paul to be mad because of his much study (See 1 Co 1:23; 2:13,14; 4:10). The Greek word here is “lunacy” (See the same word in 12:15; Jn 10:20; 1 Co 14:23). **25** **I am not mad:** Paul immediately responded with calm and dignity to the rude outbreak of Festus. He affirmed that he was speaking as a sober-minded person. He had been convinced by the vision he had experienced that what he had heard Christians preach was true. The vision was the foundation proof of his ministry. **26** **The king ... knows these things:** Paul then turned to King Agrippa. He told the King that he knew about these things (vs 3). Agrippa had remained informed concerning the events of Jesus' life and work, for Jesus did not work in secret. He worked openly before all people. His miraculous confirmation was not in secret. He was proved to be the Son of God with miraculous

power that was demonstrated before both believers and unbelievers (2:22; Jn 3:2; 20:30,31). **27** **Do you believe the prophets:** Paul boldly challenged Agrippa by asking him if he believed the prophecy of the Old Testament prophets. The King hesitated to reply. But Paul knew that he believed them. **28** **Almost persuade me to become a Christian:** Paul's speech had touched Agrippa, for Agrippa knew the prophecies of the prophets, the hope of Israel, and the activities of the early Christians. He could possibly have been persuaded to be a Christian if Paul's address had not been rudely interrupted by Festus' outburst and the circumstances that prevailed on this occasion. On the other hand, some Bible students believe that Agrippa made this statement in order to scoff at Paul's defense of Christianity and his wish that Agrippa become a Christian. **Christian:** It is evident by Agrippa's use of the term “Christian” in reference to the disciples that the term was widely used in society to refer to those who were followers of Jesus (See 11:26; 1 Pt 4:16). **29** Paul responded to Agrippa that it was his desire that all who heard him would submit to God by obedience to the gospel and be a Christian as he was (See Rm 9:1-3; 10:1).

30,31 Immediately after Paul had made his statements, Agrippa, Festus, Bernice, and those who were with them, stood up. They left the meeting hall, but continued to talk among themselves concerning Paul's case. They were Rome's final and greatest judges in Palestine, and yet, they could find no reason why Paul should suffer death, or even be in prison (23:9,29; 25:25). **32** **Might have been set free:** Agrippa flatly told Festus that Paul, according to his judgment, would and should have been set free by him. However, since Paul, the accused, had already appealed to Caesar, he must now be sent to him (25:11). Behind the scenes, it is God who is working in order to get Paul to Rome. Paul did not appeal to Rome on his own accord. He knew that God wanted him to testify before Caesar.

Chapter 27

1 ¶ Now when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to *one* named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan cohort.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we embarked, intending to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.

3 And the next *day* we landed at Sidon. And Julius courteously treated Paul and gave *him* freedom to go to his friends to receive care.

4 And when we had embarked from there, we sailed under *the shelter* of Cyprus because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus,

since the wind did not permit us to proceed, we sailed under *the shelter* of Crete, off Salmone.

8 And passing it with difficulty, we came to a place that is called The Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

9 ¶ Now when much time had passed and when sailing was now dangerous, because the Fast was already past, Paul admonished *them*, **10** and said to them, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will end in disaster and much damage, not only of the cargo and ship, but also of our lives."

11 Nevertheless, the centurion believed the pilot and the owner of the ship more than the things that were spoken by Paul.

12 And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to depart from there also, if by any means they might reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and winter *there*.

13 ¶ Now when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* pur-

Chapter 27

PAUL JOURNEYS TOWARD ROME

1 In this defense presentation for Paul, Luke has now completed two years in Palestine with Paul. During this time Luke was possibly collecting material for his defense treatises for Paul which would be put in the letters that we now call "Luke" and "Acts." **Sail to Italy:** He and Aristarchus of Macedonia (19:29; 20:4; Cl 4:10; Pl 24) join the sailing party that will go to Rome with Paul. Paul and other prisoners were entrusted to a centurion named Julius, a commander of the Augustan Regiment of the Roman army. Julius had the responsibility of getting Paul and the other prisoners to Rome alive. **2** The decision was made that they would board a ship from Adramyttium. They would set sail along the south coast of Asia. **3** Before they departed, however, Julius was very favorable to Paul, treating him with much kindness. He had allowed Paul to visit his friends before they set out on the journey. Therefore, after Paul had made preparations, they sailed for Rome. After one day of sailing from Caesarea, they arrived in Sidon. **4-8** After Sidon they sailed north of Cyprus between the island and the mainland of Asia Minor. They did so because the southerly winds were blowing contrary to their course. After sailing westward for about fifteen days across the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, they came to Myra of Lycia. Julius then found a ship of Alexandria that was sailing for Italy. After again struggling against contrary winds for many days, with great difficulty they arrived off Cnidus. Because of the northwest headwinds, they sailed south under the shelter of the island of Crete. They were sailing off the coast from Salmone. They again sailed against headwinds along

the south coast of Crete until they eventually came to the protected bay of Fair Havens which was near the city of Lasea.

PAUL WARNS OF DANGER

9 The Mediterranean Sea was particularly unsafe during this time of the year which was between the middle of September and the middle of March. Too much time had now been lost in the journey because of the unfavorable headwinds of this season. It was now around September or October and getting close to the winter months when sailing was not done on the Mediterranean Sea. Sailing was dangerous at this time of year because of the storms. **Fast:** The fast of the Day of Atonement had just been completed (See Lv 16:29-31). Paul advised that it was too dangerous to sail on. **10-12** It was his personal observation that the voyage would end in disaster for the ship, the cargo and the lives of men. Unfortunately, Julius was persuaded to listen to the pilot of the ship and its captain who argued that they must continue on. They were sailing on a commercial ship, and thus, had to proceed with the wishes of the captain who had to get his cargo to its destination. They argued that Fair Havens was not a suitable place to spend the winter. Therefore, the majority decided to leave Fair Havens and sail the fifty kilometers to Phoenix that had a harbor which opened toward the southwest and northwest. It was reasoned that it would be easier to spend the winter there.

THE SHIP IS BLOWN BY A STORM

13-20 When the south wind began blowing favorably and safely, the ship's crew decided to take a chance and continue the journey. So they sailed close

pose, launching *from there*, they sailed close by Crete.

14 But not long after there arose a tempestuous head wind, called Euraquilo.

15 And when the ship was caught and could not face into the wind, we let ourselves be driven along.

16 And running under *the shelter of* a certain island called Clauda, we secured the *ship's* boat with difficulty.

17 When they had taken it on board, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship. And fearing that they might run aground on *the sands of* Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and so were driven.

18 And because we were exceedingly tossed by a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship.

19 On the third *day*, with our own hands we threw overboard the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm beat on *us*, all hope that we would be saved was then given up.

21 But after long abstinence from food, Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have

sailed from Crete and incurred this damage and loss.

22 "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there will be no loss of *anyone's* life among you, but only the ship.

23 "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve,

24 "saying, 'Do not fear, Paul. You must be brought before Caesar. And behold, God has given you all those who sail with you.'

25 "Therefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it will be even as it was told me.

26 "However, we must run aground on a certain island."

27 ¶ But when the fourteenth night came, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors assumed that they drew near to some land.

28 And they took soundings and found *it to be* twenty fathoms. And when they went a little further, they took soundings again, and found *it to be* fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing that we should run aground on rocks, they threw four anchors out off the stern and wished for the day.

30 And as the sailors were about to flee from

by the south coast of Crete. However, it was not long after they set sail that the tempestuous northeasterly wind called the Euroclydon, came upon them. The ship was seized by the fury of the wind, and thus, they were carried along out of control. Therefore, the crew let the ship be carried at will by the wind. They were blown under the shelter of the small island of Clauda. With great difficulty they brought on board the small safety boat which was in tow behind the ship. Once the small boat was on board, they ran large ropes underneath the hull of the ship and tightened them securely in order to strengthen the ship against the battering waves of the sea. They then became fearful that the vessel would be blown aground on the Syrtis Sands off the coast of north Africa. Therefore, they lowered the sails and were driven by the wind. The ship and all on board were violently tossed by the waves of the sea. Because they were taking on water, the crew threw cargo overboard in order to make the ship lighter. After three days of enduring the storm, they even threw the ship's tackling overboard. For many days they could not see the sun or stars, and thus, could not determine where they were. The storm was relentless. Because of their great fatigue and desperate situation they gave up all hope of surviving the storm. One cannot but think that God was at work wearing down everyone in order that they be receptive to the advice of Paul.

21,22 They had not eaten for many days. Paul then stood up and reminded them of what he had told them at

Fair Havens, that they should not have sailed. But now he encouraged them with good news. He assured them that no one would be lost. However, the ship would sink.

23-26 By this time everyone was ready to listen to Paul. To prove his claim, Paul affirmed that an angel of the God he served and to whom he belonged, stood by him in the night (See 18:9; 23:11; 2 Tm 4:17; Dn 6:16; Rm 1:9; 2 Tm 1:3). The angel had told him not to be afraid. The angel assured Paul that he would stand before Caesar. In fact, the angel said that God would allow all on board to be saved for the sake of saving Paul. Paul exhorted everyone to be cheerful and encouraged. They must trust in his belief that God would do exactly what he had promised (See Lk 1:45; Rm 4:20,21; 2 Tm 1:12). However, Paul said that the ship must run aground on some unknown island.

27-29 They had been driven by the storm for fourteen days in the Adriatic Sea since they left Fair Havens. Around midnight on the fourteenth day the crew began to surmise that they were drawing close to some land. They dropped a lead weight into the sea which was fastened to a string. By such they determined that they were in water that was about thirty-seven meters (120 feet) deep. Then it was about twenty-seven meters (about 90 feet) deep. Then they began to fear lest they be smashed against the rocks of the beach by the waves. They then unleashed all four anchors of the ship and prayed for daylight to come so they could see where they were. **30-32** The crew of the

the ship, when they had let down the *ship's* boat into the sea, under the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow,

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the *ship's* boat and let it fall away.

33 ¶ And while the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "This day is the fourteenth day that you have waited and continued without eating, having taken nothing.

34 "Therefore, I urge you to take *some* food, for this is for your health, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."

35 And when he had spoken these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all. And when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.

36 Then they were all of good cheer, and they also took *some* food.

37 And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six souls on the ship.

38 Now when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.

39 ¶ Then when it was day, they did not recognize the land. But they discovered a certain bay with a beach, onto which they resolved to run the ship if they could.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they left them in the sea while loosing the rudder ropes. Then they hoisted up the mainsail to the wind and made for the shore.

41 And striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the ship aground. And the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.

42 Then the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.

43 But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose. And he commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,

44 and the rest *should follow*, some on boards and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass that they all safely escaped to land.

Chapter 28

1 ¶ And when they had escaped, then they

ship decided to abandon ship and leave the passengers and prisoners. They thus lowered the small safety boat of the ship to the water on the pretense that they were lowering anchors from the bow. But Paul sensed their scheme. He told Julius, the centurion, and the soldiers that unless everyone stayed on board the ship they could not be saved. Julius was now listening to Paul. Therefore, the soldiers pushed the crew aside and cut away the small boat, letting it drop into the sea.

33-36 The sun was now about to rise. Everyone on board had not eaten for fourteen days. Paul had now become the central figure of encouragement and direction of the entire group. He therefore encouraged everyone to eat something. They would need strength for what was about to happen. He encouraged them by saying that all would be saved. Paul then took some bread, gave thanks to God before all of them, and then ate. Everyone followed his example and also ate. They were all encouraged by Paul's strength and leadership in these times of extreme discouragement. **37,38** There were about 276 people on board the ship which included crew, soldiers and prisoners. When everyone had eaten, they threw the remainder of the wheat out of the ship in order to make it lighter and able to drift closer to the shore.

ALL ARE SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA

39,40 When the sun came up, they rejoiced over the land that they saw. They saw a small bay and

decided to run the ship on the beach of the bay. Therefore, they let the anchors go. They loosed the ropes which had secured the rudder and hoisted up the sail in front of the ship. They headed for the shore. **41** The ship then ran aground at a place on the island of Malta where the waves of the sea met a current which ran between the main island and a small island offshore (See 2 Co 11:25). The front of the ship struck the beach and lodged. The back of the ship was pounded by the waves of the sea. As a result, it started to break up. **42,43** If the prisoners escaped, the soldiers knew that they would suffer severe punishment (12:19). Therefore, they planned to kill all the prisoners before swimming to the shore. But for Paul's sake, whom Julius wanted to spare, Julius would not allow them to do so. He commanded all those who could swim to jump overboard and swim to the shore. **44** Those who could not swim were told to grab a piece of the broken ship or a board. Everyone did as Julius commanded. As a result, everyone on board ended up on the shore. All were saved for the sake of Paul whom God had promised to protect in order to get him before Caesar (vss 24,31). This was only one of several times when Paul had been shipwrecked in his travels (2 Co 11:25).

Chapter 28

PAUL PREACHES ON MALTA

1 All of the passengers survived the shipwreck.

found out that the island was called Malta.

2 And the nationals showed us extraordinary kindness, for they kindled a fire and received us all because of the rain and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid *them* on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand.

4 And when the nationals saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said among themselves, "Without doubt this man is a murderer, and though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow him to live."

5 And he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

6 However, they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for some time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

7 ¶ In the same region was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and courteously en-

tertained us for three days.

8 Now it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others who had diseases on the island also came and were healed.

10 They also honored us in many ways. And when we departed, they supplied *us* with such things as were necessary.

11 ¶ And after three months we departed on an Alexandrian ship that had wintered at the island, which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed *there* three days.

13 And from there we circled around and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew and we came the next day to Puteoli.

14 There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome.

They were now stranded on the island of Malta. However, after two weeks in a storm at sea, they were certainly thankful to be on land again. **2** The nationals of the island, who could not speak Greek, showed them great hospitality. However, they were very superstitious. Nevertheless, they were very friendly toward their shipwrecked visitors. They immediately made a fire to warm and dry everyone's clothes because it was cold and rainy. **3-6** While Paul was doing his part in gathering wood for the fire, a snake came out of a bundle of wood which he threw onto the fire. It immediately bit him on his hand. The nationals of the island saw the snake hanging onto Paul's hand. They knew that it was a poisonous snake, and thus, assumed that the snake had bitten him because Paul was a murderer. It was a common belief that such tragedies that happen to individuals were the result of wrong they had committed. Paul had escaped the sea, they thought, but now received his just judgment by a poisonous snake. They believed this because they worshipped a goddess named Dike they believed directly inflicted punishment on earth for evil deeds. But Paul shook the snake off into the fire. The bite of the snake did not affect him in any way (See Mk 16:18; Lk 10:19). The nationals expectantly waited for Paul to swell up and die. They waited, but nothing happened. After they had waited for some time, they changed their minds about who Paul was. They then thought he was a god who had come down to earth (See 12:22; 14:11).

7 A leading citizen: In the area where the shipwreck occurred, a government official had a large estate of land. His name was Publius. He warmly welcomed everyone to stay with him, which they did for three days. **8-10** The father of Publius was very sick.

He was suffering from fever and dysentery. In recognizing the opportunity to create an audience for preaching by administering his gift of healing, Paul went to the father, prayed and healed him of his sickness (See 9:40; Js 5:14; Mt 9:18; Mk 5:23; 6:5; 1 Co 12:9). When the people of the island heard of this, they also came to Paul. Paul healed them also. As a result of these miraculous works of God (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4), the residents of the entire island gave great heed to what Paul, Luke and Aristarchus preached. They listened to their teaching for the three months they were on the island. The residents of the island thus provided everything that was necessary to make them feel at home during their stay. They even gave provisions to everyone for the remainder of their journey to Rome.

PAUL GOES ON TO ROME

11 After spending the winter months of November through January in Malta, everyone boarded an Alexandrian ship for the trip to Rome. The ship had the figurehead of two Greek gods (Castor and Pollux) who were worshiped by sailors for protection at sea. **12,13** They then sailed for Syracuse where they stayed three days. From there they tacked against the northwest wind until they reached Rhegium. After one day, the south wind began to blow, and thus, they went on to Puteoli. **14** In Puteoli there were brethren with whom Paul met. The church existed in Rome long before Paul arrived. It had been started as a result of Jews who were converted in Jerusalem and returned home to Rome to establish the church. Paul, Luke and Aristarchus were cared for by these brethren for the next seven days. From there they sailed for the district of Rome. **15** In the area of Rome, brethren immediately heard that foreign

15 ¶ And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. But Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

17 ¶ Now it came to pass that after three days Paul called together the leaders of the Jews. And when they had come together, he said to them, "Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against our people or customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans,

18 "who, when they had examined me, wanted to let *me* go because there was no cause for putting me to death.

19 "But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation.

20 "For this reason, therefore, I have called for you, to see *you* and to speak with *you*,

because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

21 Then they said to him, "We neither received letters out of Judea concerning you, nor any of the brethren that came showed or spoke anything bad about you.

22 "But we desire to hear from you what you think, for as concerning this sect we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

23 ¶ And when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning until evening.

24 And some believed the things that were spoken and some did not believe.

25 And when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had spoken one *final* word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

26 "saying, '*Go to this people and say, "Hearing you will hear, and will not understand. And seeing you will see, and not per-*

evangelists had arrived, especially Paul who had earlier written them an inspired letter (See introduction to Rm). They thus came from as far away as the city of Rome, about sixty kilometers away, to see the evangelists in Appii Forum and Three Inns. Paul thanked God for this warm welcome from local Christians (Compare 18:5; Rm 1:11,12; 15:32; 2 Co 7:6,7). **16** When Julius finally arrived in the city of Rome with his prisoners, he turned them over to the captain of the Roman Praetorian guard. Because of Julius' favor toward Paul, one soldier was assigned to him and he was also allowed to dwell in house arrest by himself in private quarters.

PAUL PREACHES IN ROME

17-20 Claudius Caesar had banished all Jews from Rome in A.D. 49. However, after his reign was eventually terminated, many Jews returned to the city (18:1,2). Paul called the leaders of these Jews together to explain to them his situation. He explained that he had done nothing in his ministry against fellow Jews or the customs of the Jewish fathers (21:21; 23:29; 24:12,13; 26:31). He had been unjustly taken, tried and detained in Palestine by the Romans (21:33). When he stood before the Roman rulers of Felix and Festus, no cause of death was found in him (22:24; 24:10; 25:8; 26:32; 28:18). They wanted to let him go. The Jewish religious leaders argued against Paul with false accusations. He thus appealed to be tried before Caesar. Paul said that he did such, not because he had done anything against the Jewish nation or Roman law, but to escape the unjust and prejudiced courts of Palestine. He said that he had called the Jewish leaders together to explain that he was bound because of his

Messianic hope that was common to all Jews and his belief in the resurrection to come (23:6; 26:6,7).

21,22 The Jewish leaders responded to Paul that they had heard nothing from Judea about his case. Even Jewish brethren who had come from Judea did not say anything of his situation. The only thing they had heard were things about the so-called sect of Christianity which was spoken against by the Jews everywhere (Lk 2:34; At 24:5,14; 1 Pt 2:12; 3:16; 4:14-16). By this they understood that the impact of Christianity had reached throughout the Roman Empire (Cl 1:23).

23 A special day was then set aside for a discussion concerning the things that would be taught by Paul. There were many present for this meeting. Therefore, beginning in the morning and extending to the evening, Paul explained to them from the Old Testament how Jesus had fulfilled all prophecies concerning the Messiah (Lk 24:44; At 9:22; 13:4,14; 14:1; 17:1-3; 18:27,28; 19:8; 26:6,22). He explained the present kingdom reign of Jesus over all things (Mt 28:18; At 2:24-35; 17:3; 19:8; Ep 1:20-22). **24** As always, some were convinced and some disbelieved (14:4; 19:9). Paul did not work any miracles to prove his message. The Jews had to see for themselves that the Old Testament clearly prophesied of Jesus. These prophecies were clearly fulfilled, thus proving that Jesus was the Messiah. **25-27** The Jewish leaders who were present could not agree among themselves concerning the things Paul was saying. So they departed from the meeting after Paul quoted Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied of the negative reaction of those who would not accept Jesus as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies.

ceive.

27 *For the heart of this people has become dull, and their ears are hard of hearing. And their eyes they have 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.*”

28 “Therefore, let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!”

29 [Now when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.]

30 ¶ And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all who came to him,

31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand:

Isaiah prophesied that even though the Jews would hear of the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies in Jesus, they would not understand because of the hardness of their hearts. They would actually see Jesus but would not accept Him as the Son of God. They had become hardened in heart and understanding because of their own traditions. As a result, Isaiah prophesied that they would not repent and turn to God (Is 6:9,10; Jr 5:21; Ez 12:2; Mt 13:14,15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10; Jn 12:40,41; Rm 11:8). **28,29** Paul said that the prophecy was fulfilled which stated that the light of the gospel had gone to the Gentiles (Is 42:1,6; 49:6; Mt 21:41; Lk 2:32; Rm 11:11; see 13:46; 18:6). Such happened in part because of the Jews' rejection of the gospel (13:46-48; 18:6; Rm 9-11).

30 For the next two years Paul remained in his own rented house in Rome. Many came to him for teaching. He was able also to fulfill one of his desires, that is, to impart to the brethren in Rome the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rm 1:11). **31** He preached the present kingdom reign of Jesus upon the throne of David (4:31; Rm 8:38; Hb 1:6; 1 Pt 3:22). He taught the life and teachings of Jesus. No one hindered his teaching, neither the Roman guards nor the Jews (See Ph 4:21,22). It was during this time that Paul was remembered and helped by the Philippian church. They sent aid to him by Epaphroditus while he was in Rome (See comments Ph 4:10-18). He also wrote his letter to the Philippians to thank them for their care for him. It was also during this first imprisonment that Paul wrote letters to the churches in Ephesus and Colossi (See introductions to Ep and Cl). Paul was also visited by Tychicus. When Tychicus returned to Asia he carried

the letters of Ephesians and Colossians to the churches (20:4ff; Ep 6:20; Cl 4:7,8; 2 Tm 4:12; Ti 3:12). He also wrote his first letter to Timothy. Paul was also visited by a runaway slave named Onesimus whom he converted in Rome. He sent Onesimus back to his owner, Philemon, with a letter directed specifically to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.

Luke's defense to or for Theophilus on behalf of Paul through the treatises of Luke and Acts was apparently successful. Paul had prayed and hoped for release from his first imprisonment in Rome (Ph 1:25; 2:23,24; Pl 22). After his release he evidently journeyed on to Crete where churches were established (Ti 1:5). He evidently went on to Ephesus (Ep 1:), Miletus (2 Tm 4:20), Troas (2 Tm 4:13), Dalmatia (2 Tm 4:10), Nicopolis (Ti 3:12), and Corinth (2 Tm 4:20). From Corinth he possibly went on to Spain (Rm 15:24,28).

It is believed that Paul was later arrested again by Nero in A.D. 67 and taken to Rome. It was then that he wrote to Titus and his final letter to Timothy, where he stated, *“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing”* (2 Tm 4:6-8).

Historians have affirmed that Paul was probably beheaded in Rome around A.D. 67,68. He thus finished the course that Jesus had given to him on a road outside Damascus. He accomplished his ministry to open the door for the gospel to the Gentiles of world. He had fulfilled his ministry.

Paul's Letter To The Romans

Author

The author the Holy Spirit used to inscribe this brilliant and classic letter of inspired literature was the apostle Paul. Paul was his Greek name, whereas Saul was his Jewish name. Paul was a Jew (At 21:39; 22:3) of the tribe of Benjamin (Ph 3:5). He was born in the city of Tarsus of the Roman province of Cilicia. Some of his kinsmen are mentioned in the letter (16:7,11,21; see At 23:16). Paul was educated at the feet of the well know Jewish Rabbi Gamaliel (At 22:3; 23:6; 26:5; Ph 3:5). He was educated as a Pharisee. Before his conversion, he was a Jewish authority with a mandate to bind and cast Christians into prison (At 22:4,5). He was well known by chief priests of the Jewish hierarchy (At 26:4) who had given him authority to bind and imprison Christians (At 26:10). However, because