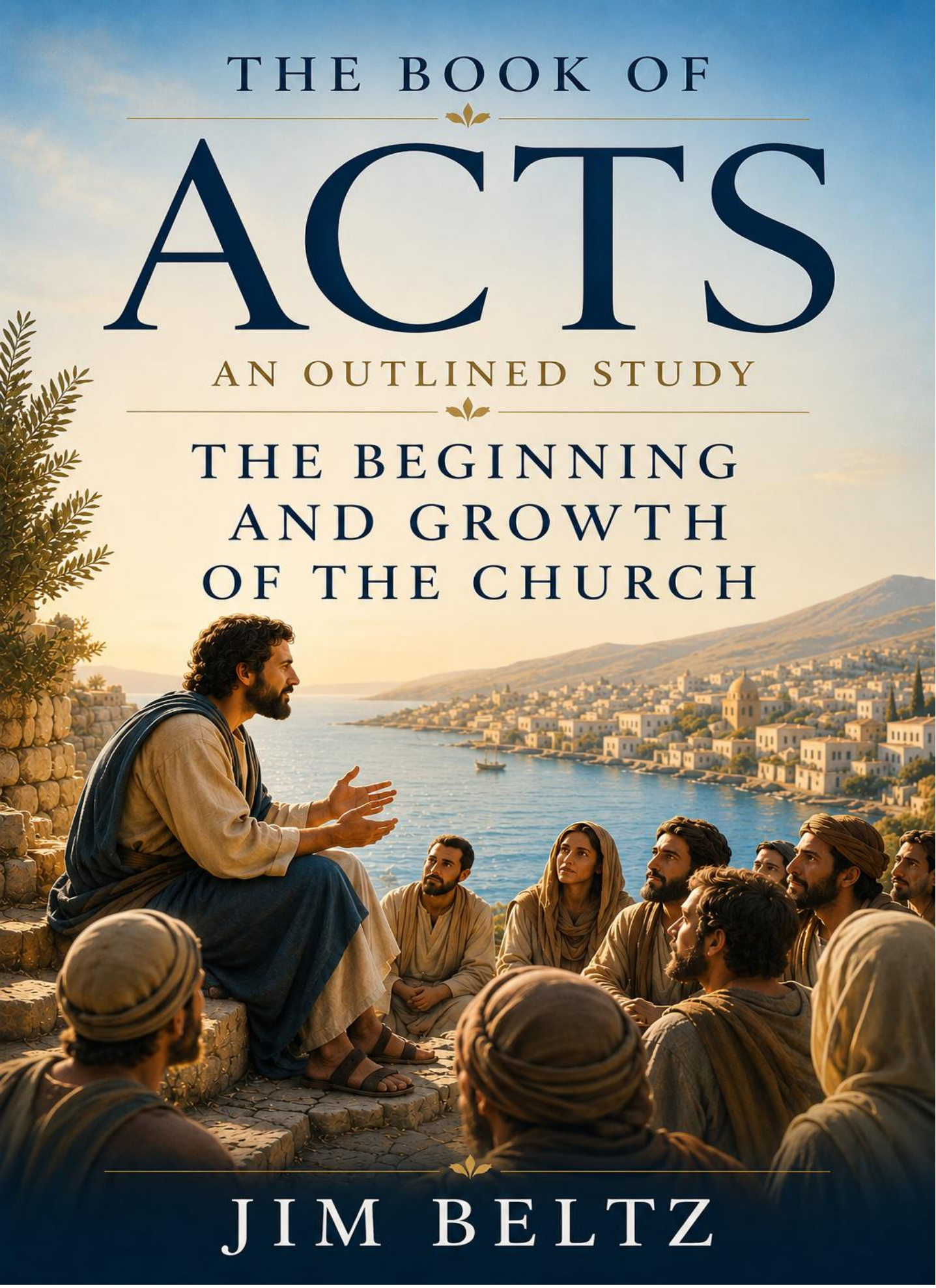




THE BOOK OF

ACTS

AN OUTLINED STUDY

THE BEGINNING
AND GROWTH
OF THE CHURCH

JIM BELTZ

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DISCOVERING THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts is the second part of the inspired information Luke recorded so Theophilus “mightiest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (Luke 1:4; Acts 1:2).

This book has been properly categorized as the “hub of the Bible.” Many events before Acts 2 point to the establishment of the church of Christ. All events after Chapter 2 point back to the blessed establishment of the place where God places all those who are saved, in the one church Jesus promised to build (Matt 16:18; Acts 2:47).

In numerous ways the book of Acts is the most pivotal section of the entire Bible. Many of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament were focused on the events recorded in this book. It reveals how the church grew and how it filled the world with the grace of God through obedience to Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is filled with examples of what both religious and non-religious people had to do to become Christians. It truly is the spiritual bridge that spans the chasm between the dispensations given by God.

A working knowledge of this book helps solidify all the information that comes before the Bible student. It makes the books which follow the book of Acts more easily understood.

A thorough understanding of the book of Acts will eliminate denominational errors and sectarian doctrines from the minds of the student. It sets forth the pure and unadulterated Christian religion that this world enjoyed before the whims and fancies of man changed it to suit their own desires.

To completely comprehend all this book holds for the reader, it must be studied with quality maps and charts of that time period in order to follow the progress of the gospel. The journey of God’s saving word starts in Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, and ends in Rome, the capital city of the Gentile world.

There is no official, divine title for this book. Some use Acts, some use The Book of Acts, others use Acts of the Apostles. Any of these are fine to use. In reality it is a book which reveals some of the acts of some of the apostles.

The book of Acts teaches anyone who reads it how to become a Christian.

The text is taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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Acts 1

Christ's ascension and Matthias is added to the apostles

- I. Linking the book of Acts with the book of Luke (1-3).
 - A. “The former treatise” is a specific reference to the book of Luke (Lk 1:3, 4).
 1. A continuation of the message contained in Luke.

Note: Luke wrote more of the New Testament than Paul did. Paul wrote 13 books; Luke wrote only two. Interestingly, if we compare the number of verses written Paul wrote 2,031 verses while Luke wrote 2,358 verses. Paul wrote 43,402 words while Luke wrote 50,194 words. Luke was more prolific than Paul.
 2. The book of Luke tells of the life of Jesus.
 - a. Luke 1 and 2 tell of Jesus birth and childhood.
 - b. Chapters 3 through 24 tell of what He did while on earth (cf Lk 3:23).
 3. The book of Acts tells of the beginning and growth of His church.
 - a. Interestingly, during Jesus’ life on earth He did not authorize humans to announce His Messiahship (cf Matt 8:4).
 - b. This was true even true after the events on the mount of transfiguration (Matt 17:9).
 - c. All that was to change when the Holy Ghost comes upon the apostles (Jn 14:26).
 - d. Why? So, no mistakes could be made (cf John 16:13; 1 Cor 2:10-13).
 - e. Verse 1 ends with, “of all the Jesus began to do and teach.”
 - f. Note: Jesus went about “doing” not just teaching (cf Luke 7:21-23; 24:19; Gal 6:9; 1 Peter 2:21-23).
 - g. If we are going to be effective in our teaching, we must practice what we preach (teach).
 - h. We must first live (show proper conduct) by the example of what we teach others to live by (cf Col 4:17; 1 Tim 4:16; Titus 2:7).
 - i. Your everyday example of proper Christian living is the best message (sermon) you will ever teach.
 4. “Until the day he was taken up” (v 2) links this with the ending of the book of Luke (24:51).
 - a. Paul taught the same message (cf 1 Tim 3:16).
 - b. The work of the Holy Ghost is introduced early in Luke’s letter.

Note: The risen Christ had to leave so the Holy Ghost could to earth (cf Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7).
 5. The “commandments” is what we typically call ‘the great commission’ Jesus given them before His ascension (Matt 28:19; Mk 16:15, 16; Lk 24:45-49).
 - a. He had chosen the apostles from among His disciples (Lk 6:13).
 - b. It is not clear how many disciples He had, but He was able to send seventy out at one time in what we typically call ‘the limited commission’ (cf Luke 10:1).
 - c. Yet, even those hand-picked men needed an infallible guide (cf John 14:16, 26).

- B. “To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion,” (Acts 13:31; 1 Cor 15:4-7).
1. “Passion” is a word which refers to the suffering Jesus endured (cf Acts 17:3; 26:23).
Note: The word “passion” is most often translated as a form of the word ‘to suffer’ in the KJV, e.g., Acts 3:18; 9:6; 17:3.
 2. He continued His earthly ministry for forty days after His death.
 3. His disciples needed more teaching (Lk 24:44, 45).
 - a. It is fifty days from the Passover to Pentecost, yet only forty days are accounted for here.
 - b. No record of Jesus’ activities in those ten remaining days. Maybe a chance for the disciples to reflect on His teachings.
 4. “[B]y many infallible proofs” (v 3). Infallible comes from a Greek word that means, *that which causes something to be made known, as verified or confirmed*.
Note: Not just infallible proofs, but many infallible proofs, e.g., John 21:11-18; Acts 13:30, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7, etc.
 - a. In today’s world we have many who deny the resurrection, but this was a problem for the 1st century church as well.
 - b. We may have here in verse 3 an anticipation of this error (cf Rom 1:4; 6:5; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:20 and many other verses emphasizing Jesus’s resurrection).

II. The promise of the Holy Ghost (4-8).

- A. The apostles were commanded to stay in Jerusalem (cf Lk 24:49).
1. The beginning point of the great commission was to be Jerusalem (Lk 24:47).
 - a. Exactly as prophesied in Isaiah 2:3.
 - b. Paul emphasized this point in Acts 13:46.
 - c. The Jews were to have the first chance to accept and obey the gospel (cf Rom 2:10).
 2. The baptism the apostles were to receive was something unique.
 - a. Their baptism was the baptism of the Holy Ghost.
 - b. It is important to note that this baptism was a promise of the Father (cf Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 8).
Note: These are every verse mentioning the Comforter coming and they all are directed to the apostles.
 - c. It was never a command to His disciples, but a promise to the apostles.
Note: We have to obey commands, but we cannot obey a promise.
 3. “Not many days hence” is the missing ten-day time frame.
 - a. It is called a “baptism” to indicate the overwhelming outpouring they were to receive (cf 1 Cor 10:1, 2).
 - b. John, (the baptizer) baptized with water and most likely the apostles had all been baptized by John at some point (cf Matt 3:5, 6).
- B. The apostles were still confused; even after all their instructions (v 6).
1. They did not know the nature of the kingdom (cf Jn 18:36).
 2. Error is always difficult to eradicate (cf Matt 20:20, 21).
 - a. The Jews wanted earthly change (cf Lk 24:18-21).
 - b. God offered spiritual change through His Son.

3. Notice that Jesus passed right over their ignorance, knowing that the Holy Ghost baptism would rectify the problem. (What amazing patience He exhibited).
 - a. In verse 6 they asked about time; in verse 7 Jesus told them not to worry about time. God was in charge of time (Eph 1:10).
Note: If the apostles were asking if it was time for the kingdom to be restored then we can know for certain that it had not yet been established (cf Matt 16:18, 19).
- C. Verse 8 serves as a divine outline for the entire book of Acts.
 1. Power was promised and then they would be witnesses for God because of the work of the Holy Ghost.
 - a. When this took place, they would no longer be restricted in proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah (cf Acts 2:32; Rom 15:19).
 - b. A “witness”, by definition, requires seeing an act in person (cf Jn 15:27).
 - c. The first five chapters of Acts verify the apostles as witnesses (1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32, plus other places).
 - d. Since we have no eye witnesses today, we have no one who can (honestly) claim to be a witness for Christ.

Notice the progression of the outline in this verse:

2. Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-8:4). The place the gospel begins.
3. Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8:5-11:18). The gospel spreads.
4. The uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 11:19 to the end of the book; cf Rom 10:18; Col 1:23).

Note: The order of preaching makes perfect sense. Those in and around Jerusalem were the ones who heard the preparatory preaching the most. Therefore, they would be the ones most likely prepared for the coming kingdom.

III. Jesus ascends into heaven (9-11).

- A. The apostles witnessed His resurrection, now they witness His ascension (cf Mk 16:19; Lk 24:50, 51).
 1. Clouds have often played a role in the divine description (cf Ex 19:9, 16; Dan 7:13).
 2. There was a cloud on the mount of transfiguration (cf Matt 17:5).
Note: He descended from heaven to walk among men for approximately thirty-three years. He then ascended back to heaven never to touch foot on this earth again (cf 1 Thess 4:17).
- B. While standing there, awe struck and gazing into heaven, two men started talking to them (cf Lk 24:4, 5).
 1. The word “heaven” simply means they were looking up (e.g., Matt 16:2, 3, sky).
 2. By the description of these two it is apparent that they are angels (cf Jn 20:12).
 3. “Ye men of Galilee” (cf Acts 2:7).
 4. Angels are always described as being male (cf Lk 1:11, 12, 28, 29; 24:4. John calls them angels in John 20:12).
- C. The promise was made of His return.
 1. His return will be connected with the same visual as His ascension (cf Lk 21:27; Rev 1:7).

2. He will reappear at the second coming as He promised (cf Matt 26:64).
 3. The point is that He will return in a visible fashion, it will not be a secret.
- IV. Wait in Jerusalem for God's help (12-14)
- A. "The mount called Olivet" is the Mount of Olives (cf Zech 14:4; Matt 26:30).
 1. A Sabbath Day's journey seems to vary with the source. Approximately 2,000 paces or 2,000 cubits (About 5/8 or maybe 3/4 of a mile).
 2. It comes from a rabbinical teaching rather from God's command.
 3. Mostly likely based on Joshua 3:2-4, the distance from the people to the ark.
 - B. When the apostles got back to the city, they entered the upper room where they were staying.
 1. This is one of four places the New Testament that list the apostles (Matt 10; Mark 3; Luke 6).
 2. Peter is mentioned first in every list (Judas is always last, when mentioned).
Note: Luke lists the apostles in a different order in the book of Luke.
 - C. The words "of one accord" come from a single Greek word which means they had the same mind (Same word is used in Romans 15:6).
Note: This indicates that brethren need to work together. We need to work as a unit to advance the cause of Christ.
 1. Luke records that the apostles spent time in the temple as well as the upper room (cf Lk 24:53).
 2. Both men and women are mentioned as being part of those banned together as Jesus' disciples (cf Lk 24:10; Jn 19:25).
- Note: This is the last time Mary is mentioned in the New Testament.
- V. Matthias selected to replace Judas (15-26).
- A. This is an interesting and fascinating account (15-19).
 1. The Holy Ghost had not yet come upon them. They were acting on their own to fill the vacancy, but it appears they conducted themselves well (cf Acts 1:26; 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5, 8).
 2. The specific Greek word used here indicates that Peter was speaking only to the men while making this decision (v 16).
 3. Peter mentions David (Ps 41:9; 109:2-5).
 4. Verse 17 shows Judas was a real apostle and no less than the others (cf Matt 10:1).
 5. Luke parenthetically inserts verses 18 and 19 as an explanation. This is a parenthetical statement in the NKJ, ASV, NASV and many others.
Note: These verses are given to help explain verse 17. It seems that Luke interrupts Peter's speech in his narrative to inform the Gentile readers what had happened to Judas.
 - a. Matthew's account is supplemental to Luke's account (cf Matt 27:3-8).
 - b. Judas' returned money bought the field.
 - c. Luke translates an Aramaic word (corrupted Hebrew) into Greek.
Note: There would have been no reason to have to explain the Aramaic word if it was the common language spoken. Luke is writing so others would be able to grasp the meaning of the word who did not know Aramaic.
 - B. Luke returns to the rest of Peter's speech (20-26).

1. David is given credit for both the Psalms mentioned (cf Ps 69:25; 109:8).
2. It was required that an apostle would have been a witness (See II. C.).
 - a. A person who had seen and heard the teaching from the beginning (cf Mk 1:1-5).
 - b. A person who would be a witness to the resurrection (cf Acts 4:33). This is a necessary qualification of an apostle.
3. The selection was narrowed down to two choices (v 23).
4. They prayed and asked God to be involved in the selection (cf Jer 17:10).
 - a. A wise direction in any decision.
 - b. The wording reveals that God already knew which would be the best choice; they just wanted help making a decision that would please God.
 - c. Even Jesus prayed all night before He selected His apostles (cf 6:12).
5. “[T]hat he might go to his own place” (v 25), the place he chose. Jesus selected him to a place of honor; he disqualified himself by disobedience and went to a place of dishonor (cf Jn 17:12).
6. They cast “their lots,” which appears to be equal to the thought of rolling the dice (cf Prov 16:33).
 - a. The term is used often used in both the Old and New Testaments (approximately. 70 times in the Old Testament, 4 other times in the New Testament: Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24), e.g., scapegoat (Lev 16:5-10); the dividing of the land (Josh 14:1, 2), etc.
 - b. Matthias became the 12th apostle (cf Acts 2:14). Bring the number of apostles back up to twelve.

Acts 2

The beginning of the church on earth

- I. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost (1-4).
 - A. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come” means the apostles were waiting for over a week from the ascension for the promise to come.
 - 1. Pentecost was one of three main feasts, or festivals, of the Jews (Feast of Tabernacles and Passover are the other two; cf Lev 23:15, 16).
 - a. Seven Sabbaths, plus one day. (Pentecost means fifty)
 - b. This feast had other designations: Feast of Harvest, Exodus 23:16; Feast of Weeks, Exodus 34:22; the day of the first fruits, Numbers 28:26.

Note: The word “Pentecost” is only found in the New Testament, and in only two other passages (i.e., Acts 20:16; 1 Cor 16:8).
 - 2. Paul used this feast to the Lord’s advantage long after his conversion (refer to previous verses).
 - 3. The Lord’s death occurred at one festival (Passover) and His church started at the next festival (Pentecost).

Note: “[F]ully come” probably refers to day light coming.

 - a. “[T]hey” refers to the apostles.
 - b. The closest antecedent is “with the eleven apostles” in 1:26.

Note: The Bible was not divided into chapters until 1228 by Stephen Langton, who was the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time. There was no division between chapters 1 and 2 until he divided them. God intended the thought to continue uninterrupted.
 - 4. “[I]n one place” is possibly a reference to the upper room (Acts 1:13).
 - a. “[O]ne accord” refers to having the same mind (cf 2:46; 4:24, 32; 5:12).
 - b. We are to have the same “accord” today (cf Rom 15:6; Phil 2:2).
 - c. Religious division, even within the church, is contrary to Bible teaching.
 - B. With suddenness there was the sound of a mighty wind.

Note: We cannot see wind, only the result of the wind.

 - 1. There is no indication of wind, just the sound of wind.
 - a. Interestingly, the sound of the wind comes from heaven, or in a downward direction. Normal wind moves sideways. A real phenomenon.
 - b. The word “mighty” means violent (cf 1 Kgs 19:11).
 - 2. ‘The sound of the wind filled all the house’ is the correct rendering of this verse.
 - C. “[C]loven tongues,” or divided light, sat on each of them.
 - 1. As with the sound of the wind this was not fire, but what looked like fire (or light).

- a. Most likely, light appeared, then divided and sat on each apostle. To divide or to part is Strong's definition of "cloven" # 1266.
 - b. "[T]ongues" as used here, probably has reference to the shape of the light.
Note: An audible sign followed by a visual sign.
- 2. In the next verse the same word "tongues" will be used in reference to languages. In this verse it is a reference to shape (Mk 7:33, 35; Lk 16:24).
Note: This was not unintelligible gibberish, but real words in real languages that people could understand (cf vv 6, 8, 11).
- D. "And they were filled with the Holy Ghost," often referred to as the baptism of the Holy Ghost (cf 1:5).
 - 1. The twelve apostles are still the subject here. Each verse has either a "they" or "them" in it since the twelve were mentioned in 1:26. The same subject.
 - a. This wording is often used of the miraculous (cf Acts 4:8; 13:9).
 - b. The wording can also be used in a non-miraculous way (cf Eph 5:18).
 - c. We are guided by the Holy Ghost today, through the word of God, in a non-miraculous fashion (cf Lk 11:13; Gal 5:22-25).
 - d. Today we are filled with the Holy Ghost when we are filled with the Bible (cf Rom 10:17; 2 Cor 6:7; Eph 1:3; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 2:13).
 - 2. "[S]peak with other tongues," is the same as speaking in other languages. Strong's definition of "tongues" (1100), *a language (specially, one naturally unacquired)* (cf Acts 2:11).
 - a. About sixteen countries or regions are listed in Acts 2:9-11, which we will cover in more detail under section II, A, 4.
 - b. We have no way of knowing exactly how many different languages or dialects were represented in that group.
 - 3. The Holy Ghost will give them the proper "utterances" (cf Matt 10:19; Lk 12:12).

II. Those gathered at Jerusalem (5-13).

- A. Jews had gathered in Jerusalem, from all over the world, for the festivals.
 - 1. Not all Jews lived permanently in Jerusalem, even as it is today. They were scattered abroad (cf James 1:1).
 - a. Some lived permanently in Jerusalem and some were living temporarily there. They were there to worship according to the Old Testament law.
 - b. To make the journey through the Roman Empire to worship shows their devotion to God and Moses' law (cf Jn 7:35).
 - 2. At the sound that was noised aboard the multitude came together.
 - a. It is not certain if they heard the sound as of a mighty wind (2:2), the sound of the languages, or the rumors spread through the city of the event.
 - b. Since scriptures are not clear, we should be tolerant of others' opinions.

Note: It appears to be safest to conclude that the sound was the sound of the wind because the text does say “there came a sound from heaven.”

- c. Whatever was “noised abroad” drew the multitude together.
- 3. They were “confounded” and “were all amazed and marveled.”
 - a. To be confounded or confused would be natural, nothing like this had ever happened before (cf Matt 2:1-3).
 - b. Hearing these unlearned men speak in languages they had never studied.
 - c. Everyone that came could hear one of the men speaking his own native language.

Note: This was a miracle of tongues, not a miracle of ears. The miracle was in the speaker, rather than the hearer.

- 4. Luke records sixteen nations or regions that were represented in the city of Jerusalem at the time of this miracle:
 - a. Parthians (Parthi, situated between the Persian Gulf and the Tigris River).
 - b. Medes (usually mentioned with the Persians, Est 1:3, 18; Dan 5:28; 6:8).
 - c. Elamites (Ezra 2:7; Neh 7:12; Isa 21:2).
 - d. Dwellers in Mesopotamia (name means between the rivers, Euphrates and Tigris; Gen 24:10; Acts 7:2. The birthplace of Abraham, Gen 11:27. 28).
 - e. Judea (local people were included by Luke).
 - f. Cappadocia (Peter mentions the Christians from this location, 1 Pet 1:1).
 - g. Pontus (North of Cappadocia, home town of Aquila, Acts 18:2).
 - h. Asia (Paul was forbidden to preach here, Acts 16:6).
 - i. Phrygia (a providence of Asia Minor, later a church of Christ here, Acts 18:23).
 - j. Pamphylia (near Phrygia, this is where John Mark left Paul, Acts 13:13).
 - k. Egypt (Northeast Africa. An amazing amount of Bible history associated with Egypt. It is where Joseph and Mary fled with baby Jesus, Matt 2:13).
 - l. Libya (a general name for the rest of Africa).
 - m. Cyrene (modern day Tripoli, west of Egypt. Simon, who carried Jesus’ cross, was from here. Acts 11:20; 13:1).
 - n. Rome (Josephus said there were eight synagogues in Rome, a large number of Jews lived there).
 - o. Cretes (an island south of Greece, very rocky terrain, Acts 27:13; Titus 1:5).
 - p. Arabians (area between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf).
 - q. Sadly, all most all of these nations or regions mentioned in the text would be Islamic nations today. They were given the first chance at the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, but to no lasting avail.

Note: Exactly how many languages or dialects were spoken is a mystery.

5. They heard the apostles speak “the wonderful words of God,” literally the great things God had done.
 - a. Verse 7 records they were amazed and marveled at what was taking place, in verse 12 the idea of amazed is reiterated.
 - b. Others accused the apostles of being drunk. An uncommon occurrence because of the early hour (cf Acts 2:15).

Note: The next twenty-three verses will highlight and emphasize the miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

III. Peter’s sermon on Pentecost (14-36). Subject: Salvation of mankind through Christ.

A. All twelve apostles had been preaching, but it appears they came together and then Luke records Peter’s message (there are actually several possibilities as to what happened at this time). (14-21)

1. He addressed the “men of Judaea and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem” (cf Acts 2:22; 5:35).

Note: It is possible that Peter was the one who addressed only those who spoke Hebrew, or Aramaic.

2. Peter had something very important to say to them, “hearken to my words,” NKJ, “heed my words,” the modern vernacular would be, “listen up” (cf Prov 8:32; Isa 52:1).
 - a. “[N]ot drunk,” too early in the day for that (cf 1 Sam 1:13-15; 1 Thess 5:7).
 - b. We always need to be careful of quick judgments.
 - c. Not drunken, but rather the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy (cf Joel 2:28-32).
3. The Jews believed this prophecy; they just did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.
 - a. “[L]ast days” refers to the Christian dispensation. It is the last law God will give to mankind (cf Isa 2:2; Heb 1:2).
 - b. “[P]our out of my Spirit” was literally being fulfilled before them (cf Jn 3:5).
 - c. “[W]onders in heaven...blood, fire and vapour of smoke” (cf Matt 27:45).

Note: Blood here refers to a color rather than literal blood (cf Rev 6:12).

B. Peter addresses the men of Israel (22-36).

Notice the power and profoundness in this one, divine sentence (22-24).

1. “Ye men of Israel” are the descendants of Jacob (cf Gen 32:24-28).
 - a. That Jesus had been approved by God through the miracles that God had done by Him (cf Matt 11:2-6).
 - b. That they knew this was true (cf Matt 9:8).
 - c. That Jesus yielded, not because He was impotent, but because it was in accordance to the purpose and foreknowledge of God (cf 1 Pet 1:20).

- d. That they had crucified Him (cf Acts 7:52).
- e. That they had done this with wicked hands (cf Lk 23:20-23).
- f. That God had raised Him from the dead (cf Jn 10:18; Rom 4:24).
- g. That it was not possible that death should hold Him (cf Heb 2:14; Rev 1:18).

Note: In one sentence Peter sums up all that is taught in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- 2. Peter uses the highly respected David as proof (25-31).
 - a. Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 in verses 25-28 (possibly the Septuagint version).
 - b. The word “hell” (or hades, NKJ), is the unseen realm of the disembodied spirits.
 - c. Notice that both flesh and soul are mentioned by David (26 and 27).
 - d. All souls return to Him who made them (cf Ecc 12:7).
 - e. Both the body and soul of Jesus were raised (cf 1 Cor 15:23).
- 3. Peter next uses logic to circumvent any arguments (29-31).
 - 1. David was dead and buried with no claim of a bodily resurrection.
 - 2. The Jews knew the Messiah would be a descendant of David (cf Matt 22:42; Lk 1:31-33; Jn 7:42).
 - 3. “He seeing this before” (v 31) refers to prophecy (cf 1 Pet 1:11, 12).
- 4. The resurrected and exalted Jesus is the Christ (32-36).
 - a. First-hand evidence that their words were true (cf Jn 15:27; Acts 1:8).
 - b. The words “right hand” (a single word in the Greek) are used as a term of power. By the power of God was Jesus resurrected (cf Job 40:14; Ps 17:7).

Note: This is different than being on the right hand, which denotes an exalted position (i.e., Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34). The same Greek word, but a different application.

- c. Peter’s closing sentence drives the point of the lesson home. Jesus, who you crucified, God has made both Lord and Christ, as foretold by David and the events of this day confirm that truth.

Note: The name ‘Jesus Christ;’ Jesus is who He was; Christ is who He is.

C. The power of the message converts many souls (37-41).

- 1. The response of the Jews who heard the message, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Note: This is the first time this question had been asked. Any answer other than what we given in Acts 2 is a false answer to the question.

- 1. The greatest question ever asked. They knew they had to do something to make it right.

Note: Miracles were sign to get their attention. But notice that nothing changed until the preaching started.

2. This sermon “pricked” or pierced their hearts. The thought is of acute grief for their actions (cf Acts 9:5, 6; 16:29-33; 22:10, 16).
2. Peter tells them; first of all, you must repent. (Strong’s definition of repent is “to think differently” # 3340).
 - a. Jesus gave us an example of repentance in Matthew 21:28-32.
 - b. Not just feeling guilty, but allowing the guilt to change our lives.
 - c. Peter is informing these Jews, you killed Him; now crown Him in your hearts as the Messiah.
3. Then Peter tells them they must be baptized (cf Matt 28:19; 1 Pet 3:21).
 - a. Repentance and baptism are equally important. Salvation cannot be obtained without both (cf Mk 16:15, 16).
 - b. God offers conditional salvation. He will save anyone and everyone who choose to obey His commands (cf Rom 6:16; 1 Pet 4:17).
4. If repentance and baptism have been observed then remission of past sins will follow.
 - a. Complying with these conditions is the one and only way to have our past sins removed from God’s mind (cf Acts 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11).
 - b. We pass from being a sinner to being saved in the act of baptism (cf Isa 1:18, 19; Rom 6:4).
5. “[T]he gift of the Holy Ghost” is, in this writers’ opinion, the salvation revealed through the Holy Ghost (cf Mk 13:11; 1 Cor 2:10-13).
 - a. The Holy Ghost Himself is not a gift to the average Christian any more than God, Himself, is the gift in John 4:10.
 - b. No more than Christ, Himself, is the gift in Ephesians 4:7.
 - c. All three of these verses have the same sentence structure. What is true in one will, of necessity be true in the other verses. None of these verses teach the literal, bodily indwelling of the Godhead.
6. The “promise” of this salvation, revealed through the Holy Ghost, was for them and from those afar off (cf Joel 2:28).
 - a. God has provided salvation for all (cf Eph 2:13-19).
 - b. No one will be overlooked in the opportunity to obtain salvation (e.g., all nations, Matthew 28:19; all the world, Mark 16:15).
7. “And with many other words” (v 40) reveals that Peter preached as long as he needed to in order to convince and convict those Jews (cf Acts 15:32; 20:9).
 - a. When they asked, “what shall we do?” Peter gave them the answer and they accepted that answer. “[G]ladly” means cheerfully. No arguments, no debate, no disappointment, just acceptance.
 - b. Once they were convinced, they needed to be baptized, there was no delay. There is always danger in delay.
 - c. 3,000 added that same day to the church of Christ.

Note: Some have tried to argue that 3,000 could not be baptized in one day. They poorly reason that there was just was not enough time to baptize that many. With twelve apostles baptizing over a six-hour period, it would only be one person every minute and a half. A task easily done.

- IV. The New Testament church was alive and well in Jerusalem (42-47).
- A. The benchmark of all religious authority was and is the teachings of the apostles (cf Eph 2:20; Col 1:23).
1. They did not forsake the inspired teachings of the apostles (as so many do today).
 - a. The words “continued stedfastly” come from a single Greek word which means “to adhere closely to” [Strong’s # 4342].
 - b. Every church today should have the same standards (cf 2 Tim 3:14; 2 Pet 3:1, 2).
 2. Part of their steadfastness was the fellowship of like-minded people (cf Phil 2:2; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 Jn 1:3).

Note: “[F]ellowship is not a meal. Fellowship is social intercourse, often, but necessarily, accompanied with the eating of a meal.
 3. “[B]reaking of bread” most likely refers to the Lord’s supper (cf Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16, 17).
 - a. The same word “breaking of bread” is used in both the Lord’s supper (Lk 22:19) and in the common meal (Lk 24:30; Acts 2:46).
 - b. Context and common sense must be used to determine which is being referred to in scripture.
 4. “[P]rayers” (cf Eph 6:18; Col 4:2).
 - a. Jews (Muslims and others) have set times to pray.
 - b. As Christians, we have the blessed opportunity of constant and continual prayer (cf 1 Thess 5:17; 2 Tim 1:3).
- B. “[F]ear” (v 43) means Godly reverence growing from all they had seen and heard that day (cf Lk 7:16; Acts 5:11).
1. It should be obvious that only the apostles were baptized in the Holy Ghost, because only the apostles preformed “the many wonders and signs” (cf Acts 5:12).
 2. “And all that believed” (v 44) shows a religious separation in the believing Jews.
 - a. “[T]ogether” means they were united in the same cause and shared what they had so that no person was without necessities (cf Acts 4:32).
 - b. This was not a commune, but were people taking care of needy people on a purely voluntary basis (cf Acts 5:4; 1 Jn 3:16, 17).
 - c. This type of distribution of goods to help the needy was unknown in that day and certainly not all that common in uncivilized cultures today.

- C. The church, numbering 3,000+, still mingled around the temple. The best place to share the gospel is where the likely prospects are located (cf Jn 4:35).
1. A new covenant had been established between God and mankind.
 2. Since the Holy Ghost was guiding them at this time they would have ceased sacrifices and giving attention to the old law.
 3. “[B]reaking bread” refers to the common meals they shared.
 - a. The Lord’s supper is reserved for the first day of the week (cf Acts 20:7).
 - b. “[M]eat,” or food, was eaten from house to house with gladness.
 - c. “[S]ingleness of heart” indicates a desire upon a single subject (e.g., their fellowship with other likeminded people).
 - d. “Praising God, and having favor with all the people.” Even the hard-hearted Jews could see the good in the Christians’ actions.
 4. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
 - a. God adds people upon their obedience (cf Acts 5:14; Titus 3:4, 5).
 - b. The scriptures do not teach that we join the church.
 - c. God has a plan and we must follow that plan to obtain salvation (Rom 8:30; 1 Pet 3:21).
 5. What year was the church of Christ started? We most often parrot the year as 33 AD. This is likely incorrect. If Jesus was born around 6-4 BC, then approximately thirty-three years later would make the founding of the church closer to 29 or 30 AD. In any case, the church of Christ was established the first Pentecost after His resurrection.

Acts 3

The lame man is healed and the event was used to teach the Jews.

(This event will extend through most of the next two chapters.)

This is not the first miracles the apostles performed, as some teach (cf Acts 2:43).

- I. The lame man healed (1-11).
 - A. The infirmed would be placed outside the temple hoping for charity (1-3).
 - 1. The apostles were still gathering in and around the temple. Probably for two reasons: 1. It was familiar for them. 2. It was a place ripe with possible conversions (cf Acts 5:25).
Note: Peter and John are often mentioned together (cf Matt 4:18-21; 17:1; Acts 8:14).
 - 2. The ninth hour, an hour of prayer, would be about 3:00 PM.
 - a. This hour would give the beggars the best opportunity to receive alms.
 - b. Begging was common (cf Mk 10:46; Lk 18:35; Jn 9:8).
Note: According to Coffman there were nine doors to the temple. All of them were 45' high, except the gate of Nicanor, which was 75' high. It faced eastward and was richly adorned, hence, the gate "beautiful."
Note: Other commentators give different measurements of the doors. They were destroyed about forty years after this miracle,
 - 3. This crippled man saw Peter and John going into the temple and asked a benevolent gift of them (alms, cf Matt 6:1).
 - B. They had no material gift to offer, but they had something much better (4-9).
 - 1. Peter and John gave the lame man an unwavering look and he expected alms from them (cf Lk 4:20).
 - 2. This was done not only to get the man's attention, but also served as an effective way of getting others' attention as well (cf 1 Tim 4:16).
 - 3. Peter said that they were willing to help the man, but not with silver and gold.
 - a. Silver and gold would help temporarily; their gift was a better gift.
 - b. Christians, with little of this world's goods, still have great gifts to offer others (cf 2 Cor 6:10; James 2:5).
 - c. "In the name of" means *by the authority of* (cf Mk 16:17; Acts 4:7; Col 3:17; 2 Thess 3:6).
 - d. "[O]f Nazareth" was used as an identifier. Not just any Jesus, but rather the Jesus who was crucified before their eyes (cf Matt 2:18-23). Jesus was common name at the time, hence, the qualifier, of Nazareth (cf Acts 13:6).
 - 4. Peter takes the right hand of the lame man and pulls him to his feet.
 - a. It appears the man was not going to try to stand on his own.

- b. Obviously, the *faith* in this case of healing was in Peter, not in the lame man (cf Matt 9:6; 17:20; Jn 5:8; 11:38-44).
- c. Once on his feet he knows he is well and begins leaping and walking about (cf Acts 14:10).

Note: This was recorded by an actual physician (cf Col 4:14).

- 5. The healing and praising of God were witnessed by all who were passing by.
- C. The result of this miracle caused wonder and amazement among the people (10-11).
 - 1. They could not deny that the miracle happened, because they recognized the man who was once lame (cf Acts 4:14-16).
 - a. There is obvious deception in the so-called miracles today. That was not so in the cases in the 1st century (cf Acts 3:2).
 - b. A miracle was designed to confirm the message and/or the messenger (cf Lk 4:36).
 - 2. “[S]olomon’s porch” was the east entrance to the temple (cf Jn 10:23; Acts 5:12).
 - a. There was a buzz around the temple about this healing.
 - b. Peter sees an opportunity to advance the cause of Christ in this crowd.

Note: Solomon’s temple was built about 1,030 years before the events of this chapter and was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar about 643 years prior. The temple in this chapter was the temple Zerubbabel and Ezra rebuilt after being released from Babylonian captivity. Herod had been rebuilding and beautifying this temple for about forty six years (cf Lk 21:5; Jn 2:20)

II. Peter implores the Jews to repent (12-26).

A. Peter stresses their guilt (12-15).

- 1. Peter “answered.” It is impossible to know if a question was posed or if he responded to the opportunity to teach this gathering (cf Acts 5:8).
 - a. It appears the crowd wanted to glorify Peter and John for this miracle (cf Acts 10:25, 26; 14:11-13).
 - b. Peter denies power or holiness for himself and John. The power and the glory are God’s (cf 2 Cor 3:5).
- 2. Peter teaches us an important lesson in verse 13. He found common ground so he could share the truth with them.
 - a. The “God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob” would catch the Jews attention and show respect for the hearers (cf Ex 3:6; Ps 105:7-10).
 - b. The God they already revered was the One who sent Jesus of Nazareth.
 - c. They had “delivered up” Jesus and then pressed Pilate to kill Him (cf Matt 27:2, 17-23; Jn 19:15).

Note: Pilate was convinced of His innocence and sought a way to release Him. Pilate hoped the scrounging would slake their blood-lust.

3. Peter contrasts the “Just” (innocent) One with Barabbas, a murderer (cf Mk 15:7).
 - a. This juxtaposition revealed their sin in graphic simplicity (cf Lk 23:18).
 - b. The “Prince” of eternal life (cf Jn 1:4; 1 Jn 5:11).
 - c. Peter reminds these non-believing Jews that they were witnesses of His resurrection from the grave (cf Eph 1:20).

Note: The apostles, in general, were all witnesses, but this reference is specific to Peter and John in the context.

B. Peter turns the attention back to the healed man (16-18).

1. There is no evidence that the crippled man believed in Christ before his healing (cf Matt 17:19, 20).
 - a. The faith mentioned in verse 16 is the faith Peter and John had in Christ. (Much to the chagrin of those who call themselves faith healers today).
 - b. They knew the man’s previous condition and could now see the completely cured man before them (v 8).
 - c. They were all witnesses of the “perfect soundness” of this man. No one could deny the healing. Would they believe the evidence?
2. Peter is not saying they were innocent through ignorance, he is saying they did not know He was/is the Messiah (cf 1 Tim 1:12-15).
 - a. If we tell the police officer, “I did not know...” are we still guilty of breaking the law? Of course we are.
 - b. Ignorance may have caused them to kill Christ, but the time of that ignorance has past (cf Acts 17:30).
 - c. The Jews knew their prophets. Christ’s suffering was the fulfillment of scriptures that were well known (cf Ps 41:9; Isa 53:7; Zech 12:10).
 - d. They may have been ignorant, but they were without excuse (cf Rom 1:20).

C. Pay attention to the prophets and repent of your actions (19-24).

1. After a demonstration of divine power, the Jews are implored to change their spiritual direction (repentance is a change of mind) and accept Jesus as Christ (cf Heb 12:16, 17).
2. Peter is basically repeating his statements he made on Pentecost (2:38).
 - a. The words “repent...and be converted” are exactly the same thought as “repent and be baptized” (cf 2 Cor 7:10).
 - b. The only way for us to have our past sins removed is through the washing of regeneration (cf Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21).
 - c. Our sins are “blotted out” (wiped away) at conversion (cf Matt 26:28; Rom 6:3-8; 1 Pet 3:21).

- d. The “times of refreshing” would be the relief experienced when the guilt of killing the Messiah was removed through their repentance and conversion (literally, a breath of fresh air).
- 3. Jesus was preached and now waits the “times of restitution of all things.”
 - a. This would correct the Jews misunderstanding about the Messiah setting up an earthly throne. He waits, celestially, on David’s throne (cf Heb 10:12; 1 Pet 3:22).
 - b. Hundreds of prophecies concerning the Christ were spoken by the prophets (cf Lk 1:70; 2 Pet 3:2).
 Note: Several writers have mentioned that there are over 300 prophecies given about the Messiah in the Old Testament.
- 4. Peter uses Moses because he was revered by the Jews. If Moses said it, it was totally acceptable in their minds (cf Acts 7:37).
 - a. Verse 23 reveals that if they refused to be converted, they would be destroyed (lost eternally; cf Jn 3:18, 19; 8:24; 2 Thess 1:7-9).
 - b. Peter uses a reference to Samuel to show that many prophets referred to the coming Messiah (2 Sam 7:16).
- D. Peter says, these prophets were your forefathers. Harken and obey them (25-26).
 - 1. These Jews were the natural heirs to the promises of spiritual blessings (cf Acts 13:26; Rom 11:18-21).
 - a. The promises given to Abraham and passed on through Isaac and Jacob (cf Gen 12:3; 26:4, 5; 28:13, 14).
 - b. They became a mighty nation, temporally (cf Deut 4:6-8).
 - c. The true blessing was the spiritual blessing through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - 2. God “raised up His Son” (Servant, NKJ) for the Jews to have the first opportunity to obey (cf Lk 24:47; Acts 13:46, 47; 18:4-6).
 - a. Peter was trying to persuade them to believe that the Messiah has come.
 - b. Obey and enjoy the blessings of the Messiah.

Note: Up to this point in the text Peter and John were outside the temple (v 2). The Jewish religious leaders will now swope in and arrest these men.

Acts 4

The first recorded opposition to the church of Christ.

- I. Peter and John imprisoned (1-4).
 - A. Three different types of religious leaders are mentioned in verse 1: priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees.
 - 1. “[P]riests” were probably those assigned to service in the temple at the time of prayer (cf Lk 1:5, 9).
 - 2. “[C]aptain of the temple” was the one in charge of the Levite guards in the temple (cf Lk 22:4, 52).
Note: The Jewish temple guards, not Roman soldiers, as some have suggested.
 - 3. “[T]he Sadducees” were a sect of the priests which came into existence after the Babylonian captivity. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, among other things (cf Acts 23:8).
Note: The Sadducees were not mentioned as having part in the arrest, trial or death of Jesus. At that time the problem was with the Pharisees, because of Jesus’ teaching. In this chapter, the issue is the resurrection of Jesus and it now becomes the Sadducees’ problem; they take the lead in persecuting the apostles. The Sadducees were small in number, but large in influence.
 - 4. They felt a need to put a stop to this kind of teaching.
 - a. “Being grieved” or greatly annoyed, it is a strong word showing anger (cf Acts 16:18).
 - b. Campbell’s translation of this word is *indignant* (sore troubled, ASV).
 - c. The apostles had proof of the resurrection. The Sadducees wanted to quiet this doctrine, so they abused their power to hopefully squelch it.
 - 5. “And they laid hands on them” (v 3) refers to arresting them and taking them into the temple for the night (cf Acts 5:17, 18).
 - a. This seems to be in accordance with Old Testament requirements (cf Jer 21:12).
Note: A law that was ignored during the trial of Jesus.
 - b. The “captain of the temple” would have the power of the Levite guards at his disposal, to take the apostles away without opposition.
 - 6. The number of disciples had now grown to 5,000 men (v 4).
 - a. The total number was probably much higher than the 5,000 mentioned here. Only men are numbered in this passage.
Note: The word used for “men” is *aner* [Greek], designating the male of the species.
Note: The word for mankind, in general, is *anthropos* [Greek] (cf Matt 4:4, 19).

- b. In Acts 2:47 we are told “the Lord added to the church daily.” Those daily additions now number 5,000 men at the beginning of chapter 4.
 - c. Even though the Sadducees wanted to stop the teaching, the people could see the truth and were responding to that truth daily, e.g., the crippled man just healed.
 - d. The church of Christ was growing at an amazingly rapid rate.
 - II. Peter and John before the high priest the next morning (5-12).
 - A. This was probably the gathering of the Sanhedrin, or what we would think of as the Jewish Supreme Court (cf Matt 2:3, 4).
 - 1. Many of these men were at the trials of Jesus (cf Jn 18:13), others we have no information about, e.g. John and Alexander (v 6).
 Note: The Bible says that both Annas and Caiaphas were high priests (cf Lk 3:2). Only one man can rule as high priest at a time (cf Num 35:25), so this implies that we must have an account of Roman manipulation here. Annas was the true high priest, but Caiaphas was installed as high priest because he would co-operate with the Roman government. Caiaphas was serving as a puppet ruler for the Romans (cf Jn 18:24).
 - 2. These rulers wanted to know by what power, or by what name (authority) the apostles worked these mighty signs and wonders (v 7) (cf Matt 21:23).
 - a. The apostles had not done anything illegal, but these Jewish leaders wanted to stop them from preaching and converting the Jews, even if they had to invent charges (cf Acts 5:28, 40).
 - b. They probably expected the intimidation to be enough to stop the apostles’ teachings. We cannot be intimidated into silence for the gospel’s sake.
 - 3. The guidance that was promised to the apostles comes upon Peter and he speaks up before this august body (cf Matt 10:19, 20; Lk 12:11, 12).
 - a. Peter’s retort was by inspiration. We, on the other hand, have to study and grow in knowledge to be able to answer questions (1 Pet 3:15; 2 Pet 3:18).
 - b. This was a perfect question for Peter to teach these rulers about the Christ.
 - B. The rulers of the Jews had rejected the chief building block of the spiritual structure (cf Ps 118:22-23; Isa 28:16).
 - 1. Jesus made application of this metaphor to Himself. (cf Mk 12:10-12).
 - 2. Peter will use this same figure of speech several decades later (cf 1 Pet 2:6-8).
 - 3. These Jewish leaders were very religious, but lost. Salvation is only in Christ and they had rejected Christ. In that condition they were without salvation (cf 1 Cor 3:11).
 Note: Most of the religious people today are lost in their condition. Being religious means nothing to God, being faithful is the only hope of salvation.
- III. Peter and John were threatened and released (13-22).

- A. The boldness of Peter and John bewildered the rulers. Their answer was not ambiguous, timid or evasive.
 1. It appears the rulers expected the apostles to cower in their presence.
 2. The word “boldness” is translated *confidence* in several passages, e.g. 1 John 2:28; 3:21; 5:14.
 3. “[U]nlearned” means *unlettered* [Strong’s # 62] and refers to not having any technical training in the rabbinical schools of the Jews.
 4. “[I]gnorant men” comes from the Greek word *idiotes* and refers to not having any formal knowledge, or one who is ill-informed.
 - a. Yet, these Jewish rulers could not find anything to say against Peter and John (cf Acts 19:36).
 - b. The fact remained and was very much unsettled; the man who was crippled is now healed (cf Lk 21:15).
- B. In their disconcerted state they wanted to talk, among themselves, in private (cf Acts 5:34, 35).
 1. “What shall we do with these men?” (v 16) reveals that they knew they had to be careful. There was no denying the miracle (cf Jn 11:47, 48).
 2. Instead of asking what will we do with the apostles, they should have asked what do we have to do to be saved (cf Acts 22:10)?
 3. They agreed to threaten the apostles in order to stem the teaching to the people.
 - a. A suitable compromise for the situation, or at last they thought so.
 - b. The apostles’ popularity probably saved them from harsher punishment.
- C. The threats of these self-righteous leaders would not stop the apostles spreading the gospel message (cf 1 Sam 15:24; Acts 5:29).
 1. The apostles turned the table on these Jews. With the words “judge ye” (v 19) they offered logic that these men could not resist (cf Ps 58:1).
 Note: If laws are passed in this nation, we will have to make decisions on following man’s laws or God’s laws. The apostles had made their decision.
 - a. Peter and John defied the Jewish court of rulers. God’s requirements (laws) hold precedence over man’s requirements (laws).
 - b. Every person is responsible for their own conduct (cf Gal 1:10).
 - c. With every decision we make we must answer the question, “What is right in God’s sight?”
 2. They threatened the apostles, and then “further threatened them” (v 21) and then let them go because they could not figure out a way to punish them without turning the people against themselves (cf Acts 5:26).
 - a. The man who was healed was over forty years old. The age is given to prove this was no fluke or some temporary illness (cf Matt 9:20; Lk 13:11; Jn 5:5).

- b. Christ had the power to cure even a man afflicted for over forty years.
- IV. The apostles and disciples unite and rejoice before God (23-31).
 - A. Upon being released they went to their own and reported the Jewish leaders' threats (23, 24).
 - 1. "[T]heir own company" was probably the fledgling church in Jerusalem (cf 1 Tim 5:8; Titus 3:14).
 - 2. When it was known what Peter and John had endured, at the hands of these religious leaders, there was praise to God for their deliverance.
 - a. "[L]ifting up their voice" was the public prayers of the church.
 - b. Peter and John were bold and not intimidated by these potent men.
 - c. A powerful lesson for Christians today (cf Matt 10:28; 1 Pet 3:14).
 - 3. The church refers to God as "Lord, thou art God" (v 24).
 - a. "Lord," here is not the common word for God, but rather a word that refers to His position of being *an absolute ruler* [Strong's # 1210] Same word used in Jude 4.
 - b. Every time Paul uses this Greek word it is translated as *master*, e.g. 1 Timothy 6:1, 2; 2 Timothy 2:21.
 - c. Peter and John had been before rulers, but they had an absolute ruler who took precedence over those earthly rulers.
 - d. Verse 24 uses the "one accord" statement again. This is the fourth time in the book of Acts already (Cf 1:14; 2:1, 46).
 - B. A Messianic Psalm is used as reference to their present situation, i.e. Psalm 2:1, 2; (25-30).
 - 1. The passage shows many people rising up against the Christ, i.e. Roman soldiers, Herod, Pilate and the Jews (cf Lk 23:1-8).
 - 2. The heathen people, kings of the earth and rulers were all those opposed to Jesus during the mock trials, punishments and execution He endured.
 - 3. Verse 28 reveals that all this was God's will (cf Lk 22:22; 24:46).
 - a. The enemies of God were doing only that which He knew they were going to do (cf Isa 53:10).
 - b. Peter preached this same message on Pentecost (cf Acts 2:23).
 - c. The word "determined" (v 28) is translated *predestinate* in several other passages, e.g. Romans 8:29, 30; Ephesians 1:5, 11.
 - 4. The disciples prayed for courage to continue in their assigned task (cf Eph 6:18-20; 1 Thess 2:2).
 - a. They prayed for miracles to be performed through them so the truth of their message might be confirmed (cf Acts 6:8; 9:40-42).
 - b. The power was in the name of Jesus, by the authority of Christ and to magnify Christ.

Note: The danger did not stop them or slow them down. They remained undaunted by the opposition. Oh, for that spirit in Christians today.

C. God let them know their prayer was heard (31).

1. They received a tangible manifestation of God's acknowledgement (cf Acts 16:25, 26).
2. The filling of the Holy Ghost, in this verse, is not another filling, it is not another baptism (Acts 2:4), but a renewing of the original filling with additional confidence and courage.

Note: This is the divine record of the first opposition the fledgling church experienced. This opposition and persecution will be what God uses to fan the fires of evangelism in those Christians (cf Acts 8:1).

V. The disciples had all things in common (32-37).

A. The believers had one heart and one soul (cf Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 1:10).

1. When we learn to put away our petty differences, we will have what they enjoyed (cf Phil 2:1, 2; 1 Pet 3:8).
2. The numbers of the church were large and growing every day. There would be many needs amongst so large a number of members.

B. We are introduced to the generous Barnabas in verse 36.

1. Joses (ASV = Joseph), who was given the name (surname) Barnabas.
 - a. It is unclear why so many, in that time, had additional names given to them, but it was common, e.g. Mark 3:17; Acts 1:23; 10:18; 12:12.
 - b. The name means, "The son of consolation" (encouragement= NKJ; exhortation = ASV) and was a name given by the apostles.
 - c. He was more than just generous; he had a gift for speaking as well.
 - d. He was from Cyprus (cf Acts 11: 19, 20; 15:39).
2. It is probable that Barnabas' land he sold was on the island of Cyprus (the reason the tribe of Levi is mentioned in this verse),
Note: The Levites were forbidden to own land in Israel under the law given to Moses (cf Num 18:20, 21; Deut 10:8, 9).
3. Barnabas saw a need and solved that need with his benevolence (cf Matt 19:29).
4. Luke will next reveal the other side of this generous, magnanimous nature. In the next chapter we have the account of Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 5

Trouble in the church.

- I. Ananias and Sapphira are guilty of hypocrisy and lying (1-11).
- A. The word “[B]ut” (v 1) contrasts the motives of Barnabas (in chapter 4) with the couple introduced at the beginning of this chapter.
- Note: This is the first internal problem recorded in the church of Christ. We have a husband-and-wife team deciding to go against God.
1. They sold some property and then made a pact to keep “back” part of the money, while saying that they gave the whole amount to the church (cf Mal 3:8, 9; 1 Tim 6:10).
 - a. It seems that Judas had the same problem with money (cf Jn 12:6).
 - b. Ananias and Sapphira desired more credit than they were willing to earn or deserved. Egotism has no place in the church.
 - c. We all are (or at least should be) servants of one another (cf 1 Cor 9:19; 2 Pet 1:1).

Note: The four accounts of Jesus’ life on earth only cover about 50 different days. We learn so much about His purpose and divine nature, but nothing is more evident in those accounts than His attitude and teaching on service to others (cf Matt 20:28; Mk 10:42-44).
 2. The covetousness of Ananias and Sapphira culminated in laying an amount of money at the apostles’ feet; which appears to be the common practice of the time (cf Acts 4:34, 35, 37).
 - a. The sin was in what they said (lying about the amount given), not in what they did (cf Matt 6:2, 3; Phil 2:3).
 - b. These two wanted all the praise without making all the sacrifice.
 3. Peter declares that Satan had filled their hearts (cf Jn 13:2, 27).
 - a. It appears that this refers to the point in time when the thoughts of an individual turn to doing evil, (e.g., Judas; cf Jn 13:26, 27).
 - b. How we control the urge to sin is what defines us (cf Jn 6:70).
 - c. Ananias and Sapphira stopped fighting Satan and gave in to the urge to gratify human desires (cf Lk 22:3).
 4. Peter says that they lied to the Holy Ghost (v 3) and in verse 4 equates the Holy Ghost with God (cf Rom 1:20; Col 2:9).
 - a. The lie of this couple was not a lie to the apostles (unto men); it was a lie to the whole, divinely appointed church.
 - b. This is always the progression of sin in our lives; we see it, we think it and then we do it (cf James 1:15).

Note: The progression is visible in David’s sin with Bathsheba. Lust, fornication, murder (2 Sam 11:2ff).

- c. It is exactly what we see in the case of Achan (cf Josh 7:21).
 - d. Satan will win the war in our minds if we do not fight him (cf James 4:7).
Note: Satan wants us to sell ourselves cheaply.
5. God gives a graphic object lesson on the sins of lying, coveting and hypocrisy; Ananias falls dead on the spot (cf Mal 3:8, 9).
- a. Why is this set in scripture? For an example to the young church. “[G]reat fear” would stem the tide of this happening to the others who witnessed it and to those of us who understand the example given (cf Ps 64:9; 119:120).
 - b. Note: If left unchecked this sin would have turned something good and praiseworthy into corruption. It would have promoted hypocrisy and discredited the church of Christ. Swift vindication of the situation made the point. It would not be forgotten. It was a divine deterrent for lying.
 - c. Intelligent people learn from the mistakes of others (cf Lev 10:1-7, Nadab and Abihu).
- B. Three hours later the whole process was repeated with Sapphira when she admitted to her part in the conspiracy (v 7ff) (cf Prov 11:21).
- 1. She had no knowledge of what had happened to her husband. She now had the opportunity to confess her lie and repent. She could have allowed her conscience to bring her back to God, but she refused to fight the devil (cf Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Pet 1:8, 9).
 - a. It seems it took three hours for Ananias’ body to be prepared for burial, the grave to be dug and then the men to return to the assembly.
 - b. These two were guilty of the same sin, but were condemned separately. We are responsible for ourselves. We will give an account for our own actions (cf Rom 14:12).
 - 2. The “great fear” that came upon the church, and the others who knew what had taken place here, set the moral standard of the church (cf Acts 19:17; Heb 4:1).
Note: Godly discipline affects the church in a positive way, but it also affects those outside the church as they see that the church will not tolerate sinful behavior.
 - a. Without strict moral guidelines the spiritual direction of the church would soon be as corrupt as the anarchy the Jews suffered in the temple.
 - b. Paul refers to examples to help us hone our direction (cf 1 Cor 10:1-13).
 - c. To be a follower of Christ had/has tremendous rewards, both now and in eternity. but it comes with moral commitment.

- d. There are always two points to consider at baptism: (1) Do you know why you need to be baptized, i.e., for the remission of past sins (Acts 2:38); (2) Do you understand the commitment associated with becoming a Christian. Christ is now your Lord (Master) (cf Rom 14:8, 9; 2 Cor 5:15).

II. The apostles continue to demonstrate the power of God's message through signs and wonders (12-16).

- A. The Godly discipline that came upon Ananias and Sapphira did not weaken the church or cause it any problems; but rather caused growth and strength (12-14).
 1. It appears that at this point in time in the church, it was the apostles only who were performing signs and wonders (cf Mk 16:17-20; Acts 2:43; 6:6-8; 8:14-17).
 - a. If we would practice discipline in the church today, we would get the same results. The church would be strengthened and the members more fearful and faithful (cf Acts 5:5, 11).
 - b. Church discipline is the most neglected commandment in the 21st century church (cf Gal 6:1, 2; 1 Jn 5:16).
 - c. We have "Solomon's porch" (v 12) mentioned again (see comments on Acts 3:11, I, C, 2).
 2. The "rest" (v 13) probably refers to the rulers of the Jews, although this is difficult to be determined definitively (cf Acts 9:26).
 - a. The fate of Ananias and Sapphira had a lasting effect on the entire community (cf Ps 64:9; 119:120; Acts 2:43).
 - b. Instant death for dishonesty is a serious deterrent.
 - c. Yet the multitude respected and magnified the church (cf Lk 19:37, 38, 48).
 - d. No person, or group of people, will ever have true respect from outsiders without stringent self-castigation (cf 2 Cor 13:5).
Note: Trying to please everyone simply will not work. Our goal is to please God.
 - e. The result of this disciplinary action was that even more were added to the church of Christ, "multitudes of both men and women" (v 14).
- B. There was renewed hope among the infirmed of Jerusalem and beyond (15, 16).
 1. Lining the streets with the sick and crippled showed both hope and desperation (cf Matt 9:21; Acts 19:11, 12).
Note: It is never indicated in scriptures that the mere shadow of Peter passing over the sick healed any people.
 - a. They brought them forth on beds and couches because the healing of the crippled man gave them hope (cf Mk 6:55).

- b. It also indicates just how popular the apostles were at this time, in spite of the Jewish rulers' threats.
 - 2. The news of what the apostles were doing began to spread into the neighboring regions. The infirmed were brought to Jerusalem with hope of being healed (cf Matt 4:24; Acts 2:43).
 - a. The apostles had a 100% success rate in healing the sick, "healed every one" (v 16) (cf Lk 9:11).
 - b. The people who were vexed by "unclean spirits" were healed at the same time and with the same success rate (cf Acts 19:12).
 - c. During the miraculous age of the church demonic possession was possible. Note: This would fit the constant balance we see in the Bible, i.e., demonic possessions only occurring when miraculous powers could offset them. Since we do not have miraculous powers today, we do not have demonic possession today either. 1 Corinthians 13 deals with the cessation of all miraculous powers on earth.
- III. The apostles were imprisoned again (17-32).
 - A. They were incarcerated in the common prison, but an angel released them to continue their teaching (17-20).
 - 1. The "high priest" (either Annas or Caiaphas), along with the rulers of the Jews, were angry that the apostles had not stopped teaching (cf Jn 11:47-49).
 - a. The "common prison" was the Jewish public holding jail. Treated like common law-breakers (cf Acts 12:5-7).
 - b. These Jews were "filled with indignation" (v 17), a word which means *envy* or *jealousy* [Strong's, # 2205] (cf Acts 13:45).
 - 2. An unidentified angel referred to as "the angel of the Lord"(v19) "brought them forth" from the prison (cf Acts 12:8-10).
 - a. Comfort and encouragement for the apostles and the church; as well as a warning to the religious rulers (cf Acts 12:7-11).
 - b. Their power was no match for the power of God (cf Acts 23:9).
 - B. The Jewish leaders go to the temple and bring the apostles back (21-25).
 - 1. The first sentence in verse 21 is the fulfillment of the angel's command to the apostles which was given in verse 20.
 - a. They did as they were instructed and began teaching early in the morning (cf Jn 8:2).
 - b. They were not where the Jewish leaders wanted them, but they were where God wanted them (Jer 7:2).
 - 2. At the same time the apostles were teaching in the temple, the Jewish leaders called a meeting and then sent word to the prison to bring the apostles out (cf Acts 12:18, 19).

- a. It appears the Jews were looking for advice on how to handle the apostles. The word “senate” refers to those older, more experienced men (cf Jn 3:1). Note: The word “senate” is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. Probably another word for the Sanhedrin (See Strong’s # 1088).
- b. The prison was still shut up tight, but the apostles were gone.
- c. The guards were still at their posts, the doors were still closed and locked, but the prisoners were nowhere to be found (cf Acts 12:6).
- d. The officers reported the facts to the rulers and the rulers were perplexed (doubted) about how far this teaching would go (cf Acts 2:12).
3. The mystery was explained in verse 25; the apostles were in the temple teaching the people (v 20).
- C. The Jewish leaders now sent men to the temple to bring the apostles before the council (26-32).
 1. They did this “without violence.” They were quickly losing control of the situation and did not want the crowd to turn on them (cf Matt 14:5; Lk 20:19).
 - a. Interestingly, these Jews feared being stoned by Christians. They obviously did not understand the nature of this new religion.
 - b. Stoning was part of the old law (cf Deut 17:5; Acts 7:59; 2 Cor 11:25).
 2. The council presented two charges before the apostles:
 - a. Disobeying the Jewish leaders (Sanhedrin) (cf Acts 4:1, 5, 6)
 - b. Accusing these leaders of being guilty of the blood of Jesus (cf Acts 2:22-24).
 - c. The very thing they requested a few months before (cf Matt 27:25), but now refused to accept accountability.
 3. The apostles knew God was with them, so it was a simple choice, follow God not man (cf Mk 7:7-9).
 - a. The word “tree” (v 30) does not mean a literal tree, but rather lumber, as it is sometimes translated (e.g., Mark 14:43; 1 Corinthians 3:12; Revelation 18:12).
 - b. Peter was not going to back down before these religious hypocrites.
 4. This same Jesus, as “Prince and a Saviour” (v 31), offered to Israel the gift of repentance and forgiveness (cf Acts 3:15; Titus 2:13).
 - a. The arrogance of these men would not allow them to consider that they should repent (cf Lk 24:47; 2 Tim 2:25, 26).
 - b. They felt no sting of sin, therefore no need of repentance (cf Col 1:14).
 - c. Many religious people today fit the same pattern. Being religious, even strongly religious, is enough in their minds (cf Matt 7:21; 1 Jn 2:4).
- D. An unusual supporter aids the apostles (33-42).
 1. Peter’s refusal to acquiesce caused the Jewish leaders to desire the apostles’ death (cf Jn 16:2).

2. A Pharisee, by the name of Gamaliel, addresses the Jewish council.
 - a. This man was very influential. He was described as a “doctor of the law” (v 34) (cf Lk 2:46; 5:17).
 - b. It is less likely Gamaliel was a friend to the church and more probable he was only trying to avoid an uprising in the city.
 Note: Since Gamaliel was a Pharisee, he might have used this opportunity to strike a theological blow against the Sadducees.
 Note: The Pharisees were not as strongly in opposition of the church at the beginning. They opposed Jesus’ teaching, but now the Sadducees were in opposition because of the doctrine of the resurrection, which they denied.
3. The council is warned to take heed of their intentions (v 35).
 - a. Care and caution must be exercised in making religious decisions (cf some non-Christian examples; Acts 19:36; 22:26).
 - b. The council (the religious leaders) wanted to kill the apostles (v 33) and is now ready to act upon that desire.
4. Gamaliel mentions Theudas and Judas of Galilee as examples of rebellions that had come and then gone, because God did not support them.
 Note: A good teacher will use examples to aid in understanding.
 - a. We have no additional scriptural mention of either of these men.
 - b. It is possible the “days of the taxing” refer to something similar to what we find in Luke 2:1.
5. If, on the other hand, this is God’s will you cannot stop it (cf Isa 46:10).
 - a. Maybe Gamaliel believed the evidence of the miracles and understood that God was behind the apostles (e.g., the crippled man), in the context.
 - b. In any case, we must never be guilty of fighting against God (cf Acts 23:9; 1 Cor 10:22).
6. The council finally agreed with Gamaliel. They were persuaded not to kill the apostles.
 - a. The apostles were then beaten and threatened again before they were released, i.e. scourged (cf Deut 25:2, 3).
 Note: This is the first case of the apostles being beaten for spreading the gospel, but certainly not the last (cf Acts 16:37; 2 Cor 11:25).
 - b. This is exactly what the apostles had signed up for (cf Matt 10:17; Mk 13:9).
 - c. It is for this very reason they could rejoice at the suffering (cf 2 Cor 12:10; 1 Pet 4:13, 14).
7. The beating and threats did not stop them from teaching and preaching.
 Note: Two places are mentioned as they continued their ministry, “the temple, and in every house.”

- a. The difference between teaching and preaching appears to be subtle, but nevertheless true.
- b. Teaching is the sharing of knowledge (therefore, if no one is learning then there is no teaching taking place) (See Strong's # 1321, as used in Matthew 28:20).
- c. Preaching is the public proclamation of the good news (cf Acts 17:3; Eph 4:20, 21) (see Strong's # 2784 as used in Matthew 3:1).

Acts 6

Additional internal church problems resolved.

- I. Seven men were appointed over the business of the church (1-8).
 - A. Some widows were being neglected in the church of Christ at Jerusalem (1-4).
 - 1. Murmurings came from the Grecians (Hellenists, NJK) concerning the neglect of their widows' daily care.
 - a. The number of disciples continued to grow, and with growth came the problem of making sure everyone was cared for properly (cf Acts 2:45; 4:35).
 - b. The Grecian widows were probably native Greeks who may have primarily spoken Greek instead of Hebrew (cf Acts 21:40-22:2).
Note: This may be the first case of prejudice recorded in the church. The native Jewish widows were being cared for to the neglect of the Grecian widows (cf 9:29). Adam Clarke wrote that the suffix on the word *Grecian* implied inferiority (Clarke's Commentary on The New Testament).
 - 2. The murmurings were directed toward the apostles, since they had control of the money donated to the church. Leaders are never exempt from criticism. Criticism should never stop a person from being a leader. Leaders lead, critics criticize!
 - a. The Old Testament had provisions to care for the widows (cf Deut 26:12; Mal 3:5), which probably were no longer available to these converts.
 - b. This is a sensitive situation which calls for a solution based on wisdom.
 - 3. Even in the face of this dire problem the apostles kept their priorities straight (i.e., the preaching of the gospel comes first) (cf 2 Tim 2:4; 4:2).
 - a. Allowing menial (comparatively) tasks to take time away from the preaching of the gospel was not *reason* (v 2; desirable, NKJ), a word which means *pleasing* (e.g., Acts 12:3; 1 John 3:22).
 - b. The distribution of food could be done by disciples who did not have the special gifts the apostles had obtained (cf Lk 24:49).
Note: We can hinder the gospel by not doing our part so that others can be free to teach and spread the message.
 - c. To "leave the word of God" means *to leave behind* (cf Lk 9:62).
 - 4. The disciples were to select seven honest men (cf Acts 16:1, 2; 3 Jn 12). The apostles acted quickly when a problem arose. Delay can only cause greater problems for the church.
Note: These were not the first deacons in the church. A deacon serves under an eldership, and elders were not appointed at this time. (It will be several years before elders in the church are mentioned in the church; cf Acts 11:30). We should not read into the scriptures what we want them to say. These men were appointed for a specific purpose. When the purpose was fulfilled they no longer held the position, therefore they were not deacons.
 - a. The apostles delegated authority. Wise elderships will follow their divine example.
 - b. The church selected the men and then the apostles appointed them.

- c. Whether these men had miraculous gifts or not is difficult to determine from the text (cf 1 Cor 12:8; Eph 5:18).
 - 5. The “prayer” and “ministry of the word” was in counter-distinction to the work of the seven chosen men (cf Rom 1:9; 1 Tim 4:15).
 - B. The appointment of these seven men caused the church to expand (5-7).
 - 1. The apostles pleased the whole congregation with this counsel (cf Acts 15:22).
 - a. Some have concluded that three of these names are Hebrew, three are Greek and one a proselyte from Antioch.
 - b. Keep in mind that these men were selected by the church; shrewdly solving the problem rather than fueling the fire.
 - c. Stephen and Philip are mentioned again in Acts (cf Acts 8:2; 21:8). We have no additional scriptural information on the other five.
 - 2. The laying on of the apostles hands was probably a sign of separating these men for the task, rather than the imparting of spiritual gifts (cf Num 27:18; Acts 13:3).
 - 3. The increase in numbers, plus the addition of many priests, may have stemmed from the apostles being able to devote more time to preaching combined with the peaceful coexistence within the body of Christ (cf Acts 19:20; Heb 5:9).

Note: A “great number of priests” were converted. (v 7) This is an outstanding blessing for the early church, but may have also been the reason the persecution and problems quickly escalated in and around Jerusalem. It was a great triumph, but with mixed affects for the church.

 - a. Obedience “to the faith” refers to the plan of salvation (cf Acts 2:38; Rom 1:5; Jude 3).
 - b. Every person saved on the day of judgment will be saved in the same way stipulated by Jesus and obeyed by those on Pentecost (Matt 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38, 47).
 - C. Stephen received special note among this peer group (8).
 - 1. He was exceptional in two areas:
 - a. “[F]ull of faith and power” (cf Acts 6:3; 7:55).
 - b. “[D]id great wonders and miracles” (cf Acts 4:30; 8:6).
 - 2. Stephen’s power and wonders were significant. He was a noted disciple during the time of Peter and John’s extraordinary miracles (e.g. speaking in tongues; healing the crippled man).
- II. Stephen receives opposition from several sects of the Jews (9-15).
- A. The “synagogue” probably stemmed from devout Jews needing a place to worship during the Babylonian exile. The synagogue had no authority in the Law of Moses. First mentioned in Psalm 74:8 (many believe this Psalm was written well after the destruction of Jerusalem) but not mentioned again until Matthew 4:23.

Note: Even though the temple was in Jerusalem, many foreign Jews felt the need to gather with their own nationality. It only took ten members to have a sufficient number to make a synagogue [ISBE]. Tradition speaks of 480 synagogues in Jerusalem [ISBE].

1. The synagogue of the Libertines (Freemen) was comprised of freed Jewish slaves whose forefathers were carried away into slavery by Pompey in about 63 B.C.
 2. The synagogue of the Cyrenians was made up of men from North Africa.
 3. Alexandrians were probably men who make up a synagogue of people from Alexandria, in Egypt.
 4. Cilicia, the home of Saul of Tarsus, who might have been a member of this synagogue before his conversion (cf Acts 22:3).
 5. Asia, a province in southeast Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the capitol (cf Acts 19:26).
 6. They all disputed (questioned) Stephen.
- B. They were unable to resist the wisdom and spirit of Stephen (v 10; cf Jn 7:46).
 Note: There is not enough emphasis placed on the man and the character of Stephen. He is described as being wise, the same attribute said of Solomon (cf Matt 12:42) and Jesus (cf Matt 13:54).
 Note: It should also be pointed out that Stephen was the one that the leaders of the Jews were out to get, not the apostles. Imagine being considered a greater threat to the false Jewish religion than Peter, James, John and the rest of the apostles.
1. “[S]pirit” in verse 10 is probably the enthusiasm Stephen spoke with rather than a reference to the Holy Ghost. His zeal will help spread the good news (cf 2 Cor 9:2; Col 4:13).
 2. Stephen defended (apologetics) the gospel against the antagonists of these synagogues.
- C. They “suborned men” which means they paid men to bring false accusations against Stephen (cf Matt 26:59; 28:12, 13).
1. As Coffman points out, “Men do not need to be bribed to tell the truth.” (Commentary on Acts, page 130).
 2. Those men claimed to have heard Stephen blaspheme Moses and God.
 - a. To blaspheme God was punishable by death (cf Lev 24:15, 16).
 - b. The blasphemy of Moses was just an attempt to stir up the minds of the people who exalted him (cf Jn 1:17).
 3. In this agitated state of mind the people, elders and scribes take Stephen to the council (cf Matt 27:20; Mk 15:11).
 - a. “[C]ame upon him” means they rushed at him.
 - b. “[C]aught him” means they laid hands on him (cf Matt 26:57; Acts 17:5, 6).
 - c. This is the first account of the common people turning against the church.
 Note: Up to this point the “fear of the people” (cf Acts 4:21; 5:26) had kept the persecutors in check.
 - d. Interestingly, Luke does not mention the Sadducees in this disturbance.
 Note: It is possible that the Pharisees were craftier than the Sadducees. If the law by itself, or threats, would not stem the popularity of this new religion then they would bring false witnesses to stop this teaching.
 - e. This council was, no doubt, the same council (Sanhedrin) the apostles were standing before in Chapter 5.

4. Additional charges were added to the accusations: Stephen spoke “blasphemous words against this holy place” and blasphemous words against “the law.”

Note: They claimed to report the words of Stephen, but the Bible calls them “false witnesses.” They either fabricated words or took words out of context.

- a. The “holy place” was the temple (cf Matt 24:1, 2).
 - b. “[T]he law” was the Law of Moses (cf Gal 3:24).
5. It is probable that Stephen had spoken on both these subjects, warning (or reminding) them of what Jesus had taught on both topics when He was on earth (cf Lk 21:5, 6).
 - a. He never teaches that He will destroy the temple, but rather the Gentiles will be used for God’s purpose (cf Lk 21:24).
Note: This could be a misunderstanding of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 12:40 (cf Matt 27:40, 63).
 - b. Moses’ law had served its intent (cf Gal 4:3-5; Heb 8:6-8).
Note: When advocates of error are exposed, they will typically turn to slander. Which is an inadvertent admission of being wrong and defenseless.

D. The whole council looks upon the angelic face of Stephen (v 15).

1. The steadfast looking of the council may have been because of the unique appearance of Stephen.
 - a. Stephen fearlessly stood before these powerful men with a calm countenance.
 - b. They expected fear and cowering, but got something very different (cf Matt 10:21; Acts 5:33; 9:23).
2. Some think that Stephen’s face shone like Moses’ when he descended the mountain (cf Ex 34:29, 30, 35).
 - a. There is no evidence of that being true (cf Gen 18:2; 19:1). Nothing special about the appearance of these angels.
 - b. Many think that Saul of Tarsus (Paul) sat on this council (cf Acts 8:1).

Acts 7

Stephen reviews Jewish history before the council and then is martyred by these men.

- I. Abraham was called to worship God (1-8).
 - A. “Are these things so” (Are you guilty or not guilty?) refers to the accusations made against Stephen in Acts 6:11-14. (See II, C. for that discussion).
 1. Stephen was given an opportunity to defend himself. He enters in to a long and extremely powerful defense of God’s plan starting with Abraham.
 2. The accusations held an element of truth, but were taken out of context and misapplied.
 3. Stephen chooses not to defend himself, but rather to give historical facts to explain God’s providence from Abraham’s call to Christ’s appearance.
 - B. Stephen addresses the council in a respectful manner, i.e. “Men, brethren and fathers.”

Note: He is addressing the council here and calls them brethren and fathers. He is attempting to convert them, not anger them (cf Acts 3:17; 22:1).
 - C. Stephen says that God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia (cf Gen 12:1; Neh 9:7).
 1. Charran (KJV) is the Greek form of Haran (cf Gen 12:5).
 2. Mesopotamia is the region where Ur was located (Gen 11:31).
 3. God told Abraham to “Get thee out of this country” (v 3), leave the family behind and go to a land that would be shown to him (cf Heb 11:8).
 - a. Why? 2 Cor 6:17
 - b. We must separate ourselves from anything or anyone who will hinder our journey to heaven, e.g. idolatry, homosexuality, denominationalism, Islam or any other device of the devil. (cf Rev 18:4).
 4. Abraham left Ur and dwelt in Haran for several years until his father, Terah, died (cf Gen 11:31; 12:4)..
 - a. After the death of his father, Abraham took Lot, his brother’s son, and his wife and traveled to Canaan, the land which will be promised to the Jews (cf Gen 17:8; Deut 11:30; Josh 5:10-12).
 - b. God called Abraham when he lived in an idolatrous land.
 - D. The inheritance of the land was for Abraham’s seed (Hebrew nation) and not for Abraham (cf Gen 12:7).

1. The phrase “not so much as to set his foot on” simply means he had no part in the inheritance (cf Deut 2:5).
 - a. He actually owned land in Canaan. A burial place for his wife, Sarah (cf Gen 23:1, 2).
 - b. He purchased the land (cf Gen 23:14-16). Not an inheritance (v 20).
 2. The promise of giving the land to his offspring was done before Abraham had any offspring (cf Gen 17:16-19).

Note :Isaac was not born until chapter 21.

 - a. He only had the promise of God about the land and about the child.
 - b. His faith caused him to hope against hope (cf Rom 4:18).
 3. From Abraham’s seed would come a nation that would sojourn in a strange land, be held in bondage and be evilly treated for a portion of the 400 years (cf Gen 15:13).

Note: There is no liberty taken by Stephen concerning dates, i.e., he did not round the numbers off as some suppose. 400 years and 430 years at dated from two different starting points. There are no mistakes in God’s word.

 - a. In verse 6 the 400 years is correctly stated as 430 years in Gen 12:40, Ex 12:40 and Gal 3:17.
 - b. There were about thirty years between the promise of a seed given to Abraham and the birth of Isaac, which accounts for the time difference.

Note: The 430 years is the time from the promise God gave to Abraham until the exodus from Egyptian bondage. They were not in slavery all that time, but only for four generations (cf Gen 15:13-16).
 4. The nation which held them in bondage was to be punished (judged, v 7; Ex 7:4, 5).
 - a. The Hebrew people were to “serve” God.
 - b. Zacharias (John, the baptizer’s father) used these words in his prophecy before John’s birth (cf Lk 1:73-75).
 - c. “[I]n this place” refers to the Promised Land.

Note: A case can be made for “this place” being specifically Mount Sinai (Mt. Horeb; cf Ex 3:12).
- E. A covenant (agreement) of circumcision was made between God and Abraham (cf Gen 17:9-12).
1. This was a specific sign for Abraham, and his seed (the nation of Israel) to separate them from the heathen world (cf Rom 4:11).
 - a. After the covenant, Abraham begot Isaac (cf Gen 21:2-4).

- b. Circumcision was specifically to be done on the eighth day (Gen 17:12). Why the eighth day?

Note: Vitamin K, the vitamin responsible for blood clotting, is at its highest level on the eighth day after birth. The most perfect day in a human's life for surgery. God is never wrong!

- 2. Isaac begot Jacob (cf Gen 25:26).
- 3. Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs (cf Ex 1:2-5).
 - a. The promise God gave to Abraham was passed to each in turn.
 - b. The word "patriarchs" means *father* or *family rulers* (cf Heb 7:4).

II. The patriarchs envy caused them to sell Joseph into slavery (9-16).

A. Stephen gives the circumstances of the God's people being in Egypt.

- 1. He refers to the "patriarchs" or ten of Joseph's brothers. Benjamin had nothing to do with this jealous act (v 9).
 - a. Envy of Jacob's love for Joseph (Gen 37:3, 4).
 - b. Envy of the dreams Joseph had concerning them (cf Gen 37:6-11).
 - c. Joseph was not sold directly into Egyptian slavery. He was sold to the Ishmeelites, who later sold him into Egypt (cf Gen 37:23-27).
 - d. Probably the descendants of Ishmael (cf Gen 16:11, 12).
- 2. "But God was with him" and made Joseph prosper in slavery (cf Gen 39:2, 5, 21-23).
 - a. The favor Joseph enjoyed was due to his wisdom and his ability to interpret dreams (cf Gen 41:9-16).

Note: Pharaoh is not a name, but rather a title, e.g., President or King.

- b. Pharaoh exalted Joseph to governor, a word often translated "chief" (cf Lk 22:26; Acts 14:12; 15:22).
 - c. A position with great authority (cf Gen 41:40).
- B. God's providence was soundly in place when the famine struck the land (cf Gen 41:54).
- 1. There was no food for animals or humans.
 - a. This was in accordance with Joseph's prophecy of seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine (cf Gen 41:55-57).
 - b. God was protecting those who had received the promise which began with Abraham and was passed on through his offspring.
 - 2. Egypt had stockpiles of food because of Joseph's knowledge (cf Gen 42:2).
 - a. Stephen continues to speak of "our fathers" (v 12) in order to maintain the connection with these Jewish leaders.
 - b. Jacob "sent" ten of his sons to Egypt to find food. He and Benjamin stayed behind in Canaan (cf Gen 42:5).

- c. “[F]irst” (v 12) means the first time the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt in search of food (cf Gen 43:2-5).
- d. During the second visit to Egypt Joseph revealed himself to his brothers (cf Gen 45:1-3).
- e. The Pharaoh knew Joseph was Hebrew (Gen 41:12), but had not been introduced to his family.
- f. Joseph then sends for Jacob, his father, and they dwell in the land of Goshen (The fertile delta of the Nile) (cf Gen 45:10; 47:27).
- g. Seventy-five family members relocated in Goshen (cf Gen 46:3-7, 26, 27).

Note: Deut 10:22 records the number of people as seventy not seventy-five. A possible explanation is because women were not normally counted.

- C. Jacob died in Egypt along with all the Jewish patriarchs (v 15).
 - 1. Stephen is the only inspired writer that mentions the patriarchs’ bones being carried out of Egypt and being buried in the Promised Land.
 - 2. Joseph’s remains are mentioned in several passages (cf Gen 50:13; Ex 13:19; Jos 24:32).
 - 3. Sychem (Shechem) was in the land of Samaria, near Jacob’s well.

III. Stephen reminds these Jews that Abraham’s promise was continued through Moses (17-29).

- A. In a dark time in Hebrew history God protects Moses (17-22).
 - 1. “[T]he people grew and multiplied in Egypt” (v 17) during the 200+ years of comfort and freedom they enjoyed (cf Ex 1:7).
 - a. The word “increased abundantly” means that they increased like fish.
 - 1) The same word is used in Gen 1:20 concerning fish.
 - 2) No creature is as prolific as fish, e.g., a single carp can lay 20,000 eggs, a sturgeon can lay up to 3 million eggs at a time.
 - 3) Seventy-five (seventy) people journeyed to the land of Goshen (v 14), now they are a mighty people through God’s providence and protection (cf Num 1:44-47).
 - b. “Another king” means another Pharaoh who did not appreciate (or care about) all that Joseph did for Egypt (cf Ex 1:8).
 - 1) We do not know, for certain, which Pharaoh this was.
 - 2) It was about sixteen centuries before the birth of Christ.
 - 2. This new Pharaoh “dealt subtilly” (treacherously) to weaken the Hebrews through killing the male children (cf Ex 1:22).

Note: Killing the male children shows the Egyptians were afraid of the Hebrews building an army in the future. You never reduce the population by killing the males of any specie.

- a. During this decree was the time when Moses was born (cf Ex 2:1, 2).
- b. Moses was hid three months because he was “exceedingly fair” (NKJ well pleasing to God). From this we learn two things:
 - 1) He was an exceptionally beautiful child.
 - 2) It was common for the Hebrew people to acquiesce their children to be killed according to the degree of Pharaoh.
- c. As the babe grew they could no longer hide him. Arrangements were made in hope of Moses being found and saved (cf Ex 2:1-10).
- d. Moses became well educated in a highly cultured land.
 - 1) It seems the Egyptians were thought of as the standard of knowledge and wisdom in the Old Testament times (cf 1 Kings 4:30).
 - 2) “[M]ighty in words and deeds” is similar to the phrase used of Jesus in Luke 24:19.

Note: This verse says he was mighty in words, in Ex 4:10 he regarded himself very differently.

B. Moses becomes a man while living in Egypt (23-29).

- 1. Moses was considered grown at forty years of age (cf Ex 2:11).
 - a. Moses’ life was divided into three forty-year periods:
 - 1) The first forty years he was growing in Egypt (v 23).
 - 2) The second forty years he was maturing in Midian (v 30).
 - 3) The third forty years he was the leader of the Hebrews (cf Ex 16:35; Deut 34:7).
 - b. While “visiting his brethren” he observed the oppression they suffered at the hands of the taskmasters (cf Ex 2:11).
 - 1) It is commonly believed that the Egyptians used the Hebrews as slave labor to build cities and possibly other structures (cf Ex 1:11).
 - 2) When Moses saw the Egyptian harm the Hebrews he killed the Egyptian and buried him (cf Ex 2:12).
- 2. Stephen mentions that Moses thought the Hebrew people would recognize him as their deliverer (v 25).
 - a. Stephen is preparing the minds of these Jewish leaders so he can bring them to an understanding of Christ (cf Gal 3:24).
 - b. Moses came upon two men fighting (cf Ex 2:13).
 - c. When he tried to reason with them they “thrust him away.” The same word is used in Rom 11:1; 1 Tim 1:19.
 - d. “Who made thee a ruler and judge over us?” means Moses’ attempt at peace was met with contempt.

- 1) In truth God had made him ruler, just not yet.
 - 2) This attitude ties together Stephen's statement in Acts 7:51.
 - 3) Their fathers rejected the help of Moses in Egypt and now they had rejected the help of the Messiah (cf Matt 21:42).
3. The news travels fast about Moses avenging his fellow countryman (v 28; cf Ex 2:14).
 - a. It was now not safe in Egypt for Moses, so he fled from Pharaoh and journeyed to the land of Midian (cf Ex 2:15).
 - b. Moses found favor in the land of Midian and prospered (cf Ex 2:16-22).
- IV. After forty years in Midian, around Mount Sinai, Moses was called by God to lead His people (30-43).
- A. God speaks to Moses from a burning bush (30-33).
1. Moses is about 80 years old at this point. (See B.1.a)
 2. He was in the wilderness near Mt. Sinai [Horeb] (cf Ex 3:1).
 - a. Moses turns aside to observe a burning bush that was not being consumed by the fire (cf Ex 3:2, 3).
 - b. An angel of the Lord was visible in the bush, but Moses heard the voice of God speaking (cf Ex 3:4).

Note: Either God was with the angel in the bush or the "Angel of the Lord" was God (cf Ex 23:20, 21; Judges 2:1-3; 13:16-22).
 3. Moses trembled at the sound of the voice from the bush (cf Ex 3:6).
 4. Moses was instructed to remove his shoes.
 - a. The removal of shoes was an act of reverence in that culture (cf Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15).
 - Note: This is still a sign of respect in many cultures.
 - b. The ground was rendered holy because of Divine presence.
- B. Moses hears God's commission (34-37).
- Note: Stephen cleverly parallels Moses' rejection from their forefathers with their rejection of Jesus.
1. God says He has "seen" and "heard" the afflictions of His people and that He has "come down to deliver them" (v 34, cf Jn 6:38).
 2. Moses was the God-appointed spokesman, therefore, he was as God speaking (cf Ex 3:10; Mic 6:4).
 3. The Israelites questioned Moses in three areas: (v 35)
 - a. Ruler; a military leader
 - b. Judge; in civil matters.
 - c. Deliverer; redeemer of prisoners or captives (cf Ex 6:6).
 4. "[B]y the hand of the angel" (cf Num 20:16).

5. “[S]igns in the land of Egypt” were the plagues. Parting the Red Sea and sustaining the nation for forty years in the wilderness (cf Ex 16:35).
 6. “Like unto me” (v 37) shows Moses was a type of the Messiah (cf Acts 3:22).
- C. God’s people are the “assembly” in the wilderness (38-41).
1. The KJV uses the word “church,” while the NKJ uses “congregation.” The word is most often translated “church,” but means *an assembly*, or *the called out*, in general. Same word used in Acts 19:32, 39, 41.
Note: The account as recorded in the book of Exodus does not mention an angel. God gave the message to Moses. Stephen may refer to God as an angel or the ministry of angels mentioned in Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2.
 2. Yet, the Israelites disobeyed Moses and asked for Egypt and idols (vv 39, 40; Ex 32: 1, 23).
 - a. It is astonishing how quickly they forgot about God and Moses.
 - b. “Make us gods to go before us” might be an allusion to the cloud and pillar of fire which led them out of Egypt (cf Ex 13:21).
 - c. The word “gods” is a vestige of living in Egypt where they worship many different gods.
 - d. Aaron made the golden calf and implicated the whole nation as being a part of the idolatry (cf Ex 32:2-6; 21-24).
Note: One of the main gods of the Egyptians was Apis, a bull.
 - e. “Rejoiced” means they made merry; feasting and dancing.
 - f. They made the figurine with their own hands and then worshipped it as if it were divine. Ludicrous and illogical. (cf Ps 115:4).
- D. There is a price to be paid for idolatry (42, 43).
1. If mankind chooses to turn away from God, He will turn away from us (cf Ps 81:11, 12; Hos 4:17).
Note: The same word is used three times by Paul when referring to God giving the heathen up to their lusts: Rom 1:24, 26, 28.
 - a. “[T]he book of the prophets” was a single volume the Hebrews used which contained the 12 Minor Prophets.
Note: The Jews divided their Bible differently than we do.
 - b. The quote, in this case, comes from Amos 5:25-27.
Note: Amos was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BC.
 - c. “[T]o worship the host of heaven” (v 42) means a worship of the sun, moon, stars etc. (cf Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16).
 2. “The tabernacle of Moloch” was a god of the Ammonites.
 - a. This god was associated with the fiery sacrifice of children.

- b. Moses outlawed Moloch worship (cf Lev 18:21; 20:2).
 - c. Solomon worshipped this god (cf 1 Kgs 11:7).
 - d. Manasseh had his son pass through fire to honor this god (cf 2 Kgs 21:1-6).
 - e. “Remphan” is possibly the planet Saturn, i.e., star worship.
3. Stephen says, “I will carry you away beyond Babylon” while Amos says Damascus (Amos 5:27).
- a. Stephen knew the nation had been taken all the way to Assyria (cf 2 Kgs 17:6).
 - b. He was establishing a pattern of the rejecting God by the Jews (cf 1 Sam 8:7; Jer 6:19; Hos 4:6).
 - c. He wanted them to break this cycle and cause them to repent and turn back to God.

V. The true tabernacle of God (44-53).

A. The tabernacle was appointed by God and was called “the tabernacle of witness” because it was visible proof of God presence (44-50).

1. Moses received all the instructions for building the tabernacle while he was on Mt. Sinai, Ex 19-31.
- a. He was on the mountain for forty days (cf Ex 24:18; 34:28).
 - b. Part of the reason he was gone so long was because he was acquiring all the details for constructing the tabernacle (Not just the Ten Commandments).

Note: Very detailed instructions that were there to be followed to the letter (cf Ex 26:30).

2. The Hebrews writer says Moses followed the “pattern” perfectly (cf Heb 8:5).
- a. Stephen was emphasizing the importance of following God’s pattern in order to please Him (cf Ex 25:9, 40).
 - b. Inspiration accentuates following the “pattern” in every part of our lives (cf Rom 6:17; 1 Tim 4:12, same Greek word).

Note: Stephen now makes the transition from Moses to the following generations.

3. Joshua (Jesus, KJV) was the next person to lead the Hebrew nation (cf Deut 31:7; Josh 1:1, 2).
- a. The Hebrew people enter the Promised Land, which was occupied by Gentile nations at the time (Ex 34:11; Ps 78:55).
 - b. All during these generations they worshipped God in the tabernacle carried through the wilderness (cf 2 Chron 1:3).
 - c. David was interested in making a permanent dwelling place for the ark (cf 1 Chron 22:7).

Note: The word for tabernacle in verse 46 is different than the one used in verse 44.

- d. Solomon built a permanent dwelling place (temple) for the ark, because David was not allowed to do so (cf 1 Chron 22:8, 9).

Note: Stephen was charged with speaking blasphemously against “this holy place” (6:13, i.e., the temple), yet He (Christ) was greater than the temple (cf Matt 12:6).

- 4. God does not dwell in man-made structures (cf 1 Kgs 8:27; Acts 17:24).

- a. God does not confine Himself to a house or a place.
- b. He is greater than any structure (cf 2 Chron 2:6).

Note: Stephen was challenging the Jewish leaders with improper understanding of true worship (cf Jn 4:21).

- c. Then Stephen quotes from Isaiah 66:1, 2.

B. Stephen now makes application of the history lesson (51-53).

- 1. “[S]tiffnecked” refers to the unwillingness to bow in submission to God (cf Ex 32:9; 33:3).
 - a. Stubbornness characterized the Hebrew people (cf Neh 9:16; Ezek 2:4).
 - b. Stephen was saying that in “resisting the Holy Ghost” they were conducting themselves like their misguided forefathers (cf Matt 23:31-33).
- 2. “[U]ncircumcised in heart and ears” emphasizes this stubborn attitude.
 - a. Circumcision was a sign indicating they had agreed to submit to God’s will (cf Gen 17:11; Ex 12:48).
 - b. Uncircumcised in both heart and ears would mean they did not live for God, nor did they want to hear what He instructed (cf Jer 4:4; 6:10).
- 3. An indication of the Jews not wanting to hear God’s instructions is evident in the persecution of His prophets (cf 2 Chron 36:16).
 - a. Jesus brought this very point to their attention (cf Matt 5:12; 23:34).
 - b. Paul also taught this same doctrine (cf 1 Thess 2:15).
 - c. These very prophets foretold of the coming Messiah, which the Jewish leaders had killed (cf Acts 3:14, 15).

Note: There are over 300 messianic prophecies.
- 4. Angels were used by God to deliver the law (cf Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2).
 - a. These Jewish leaders gave a pretense of scrupulous observance of God’s commands, but, in reality, they both ignored and manipulated the law to suit themselves (cf Rom 2:23).

Note: Many attempt to do the same thing today with situation ethics and feminine movement forced on the church and other ideological movements foreign on the Bible..

- b. Stephen had, in effect, reversed the proceedings and put the Sanhedrin on trial.

VI. The Jewish leaders take Stephen's life for speaking the truth (54-60).

A. "[T]hese things" is probably a reference to the content of verses 51-53.

1. These Jews had a hard time accepting any fault (cf Acts 5:29-33, the same word is used with reference to the Sadducees).
2. "[G]nashed on him with *their* teeth" literally means *to bite with loud noise, to grind or gnash the teeth*, Robertson).
 - a. This verbiage is often associated with the anguish of eternal punishment (cf Matt 8:12; 22:13; Lk 13:28).
 - b. The rage displayed by these Jews was an ugly demonstration of religious leaders who were setting the wrong example.
Note: Leaders are always charged with a degree of honor. One cannot be a proper leader if they will not set the very best example.
3. Stephen's conduct was in counter distinction to these leaders.
 - a. It appears he calmly lifted his eyes and was given a vision (cf Rev 4:1).
 - b. Being full of the Holy Ghost was one of the qualifications to serve tables in the Jerusalem church (cf Acts 6:3, 5).
 - c. Jesus is often described as being on God's right hand (cf Matt 26:64; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3).
4. Then Stephen reported what he saw in the vision, which infuriated the Jews even more (cf Dan 7:13, 14).
 - a. Stephen's reference to Christ being the "Son of man" is Jesus' own words (Lk 22:48).
 - b. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have references to heaven being opened, figuratively (cf Ezek 1:1; Matt 3:16).

B. The Jews now turn on Stephen in violence, in order to stop his mouth.

1. The evidence was piling up against them and they did not want to hear it, so they "stopped their ears" (cf Ps 58:4; Zech 7:11).
 - a. They considered Stephen's words to be blasphemy (cf Matt 26:65).
 - b. In truth, what they heard, i.e., Jesus is standing at God's right hand, was proof they had murdered the innocent Son of God.
 - c. Their anger caused them to rush upon Stephen in order to stop his condemnation (cf 2 Tim 4:4).

Note: These Jews did not have the authority, under Roman jurisdiction, to kill Stephen; but anger forfeited obeying the law. Most likely the

Romans would ignore this violation of their law as long as no consequences would fall back on them. This case is different than in the case of Jesus, because the Jews claimed He declared to be king.

2. Stephen was taken outside the city so the stoning would not defile the temple with blood (cf Lev 24:14).
 - a. The ever hypocritical Jews were scrupulous in obeying their customs, even while committing murder (cf Num 15:35)!
 - b. These “witnesses” were the false testifiers from Acts 6:11, 13.
 - c. They removed their outer garments and laid them down near Saul.
 - d. Saul was not one of the witnesses, but was already a leader among the Pharisees (cf Acts 22:20).
3. As Stephen was being stoned to death he called upon Jesus to receive his spirit (cf Lk 23:46).
 - a. We cannot know if the kneeling down was due to the stoning or a voluntary position of prayer (cf Lk 22:41; Acts 20:36).
 - b. Stephen asked that the sin not be held against these Jewish leaders (cf Matt 5:44; Lk 23:34).
 - c. “[F]ell asleep” is in dramatic contrast to the attitude of the Jews. Stephen was calm and peaceful, knowing his reward (cf 1 Cor 15:20; 1 Thess 4:13, 14).
 - d. Stephen died like he lived; 100% committed to Christ.

Acts 8

The church begins to fulfill the great commission as a direct result of the Jewish persecution.

- I. The disciples were scattered everywhere preaching the gospel (1-4).
 - A. Saul (Paul) consented to Stephen's death (cf Acts 7:58; 22:20).
 - 1. "[C]onsenting" means that Saul took pleasure in Stephen's death.
Note: The Jews did not have the authority to put anyone to death under Roman law (cf Jn 18:31). The Jews seemed to ignore this law or realized the Romans would not care about their actions (cf Acts 26:10).
 - 2. After Saul's conversion he would write, with great condemnation, about this very sin (cf Rom 1:18; 2:1-3).
 - B. A "great persecution" arose against the church starting with the council in Jerusalem (cf Jn 15:20; 16:2).
 - 1. This persecution began immediately after a great number of priests were converted (cf Acts 6:7).
 - a. Possibly a stop-gap measure to stem the tide of priests becoming Christians and to strike fear in the fledgling church.
 - b. These Jewish leaders were no longer following the advice of Gamaliel (cf Acts 5:33-35).
Note: The church had probably existed for an undetermined amount of time at this point, possibly two to five years. When things seem darkest and scariest God still has a purpose.
 - 2. The reason the disciples scattered is because the word persecution means *to chase, hunt, pursue, persecute* (Robertson).
 - a. They did not just leave town; they were being hunted like criminals.
 - b. The Jewish leaders, unwittingly, did a great service to the cause of Christ when they forced the disciples to scatter (cf Matt 10:23; Phil 1:12).
 - c. The gospel was carried to the regions of Judaea and Samaria (cf Acts 1:8).
 - 3. We are not told why the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. It is interesting that it was the people, the members of the church, and not the apostles that carried the message to the world (cf 2 Tim 2:2).
 - a. Possibly because of the great work (cf Neh 6:3).
 - b. Possibly because God knew those men could take the abuse from the Jewish leaders without wavering.
Note: The toughest battles go to the strongest soldiers.
 - c. Possibly because their leaving might be thought of as weakness to those watching these events.
 - d. In any case, the apostles staying in Jerusalem added strength and credence to the Christians.
 - C. Stephen was buried with great lamentation (v 2).

1. These devout men braved the persecution of the Jewish leaders in order to properly bury this great man (cf Acts 2:5; 10:2).
 2. Lamentation is the outward expression of grief (cf Matt 9:23, 24).
 - D. Saul seems to take the lead in persecuting the early church (cf Acts 26:9-11).
 1. “[M]ake havock” means *to destroy, ravage, lay waste* (Vine’s).
 - a. Saul was going house to house looking for Christians (cf Gal 1:13).
 - b. “[H]aling” means he was forcing or dragging them out of their homes.
 2. When he found Christians, he delivered them to prison (cf Acts 22:4).
 - a. The tense of the word means Saul kept on handing them over to prison.
 - b. The only offence these men and women had committed was embracing the saving gospel through obedience (cf Heb 5:9).
 - E. They scattered to escape the persecution in Jerusalem.
 1. The church members, the people in the pews, were the motivating force behind the gospel being preached to the Jews everywhere (cf Acts 11:19).
 2. No one likes trouble in the church, but church members are always stronger when dealing with opposition and conflict.
 - a. We have to study harder to fight error.
 - b. We have to sharpen our swords to battle the enemy (Prov 27:17).
- II. Salvation is taken to Samaria (5-13).
- A. The gospel is preached in Samaria by Philip (5-8) (See Acts 6:5)
 1. The “city of Samaria” was possibly Sychar (cf Jn 4:5).
 2. Jesus had previously laid the ground work for Philip when He taught the woman at the well and then taught the entire city (4:39-42).
 - a. Interestingly, we are often taught these Samaritans were a half-breed, mongrel people, yet inspiration teaches us differently (cf Lk 10:30-37; 17:11-19).
 - b. “[G]ave heed” (v 6) means more than just heard the word preached. It carries the idea of being spell-bound by the magnitude of the gospel message (cf Acts 13:44).
 - c. The Samaritans both heard the gospel and saw the miracles.
Note: The miracles confirmed that the message Philip shared was from God. The purpose of miracles was always to confirm the message and/or the messenger.
 - d. Luke then records several different types of miracles by Philip in Samaria:
 1. The casting out of unclean spirits (cf Matt 4:24; Lk 4:41).
 2. Healing of those with palsies (cf Mk 2:3; paralyzed or enfeebled, Strong’s # 3885).
 3. The lame were healed (cf Acts 14:8-10).
 3. The result of Philip’s visit is a joyous city (cf Ps 98:2-4; Acts 13:48).
 - B. Simon, the sorcerer, is converted (9-13).

1. Sorcerer, as used here, is a very different word than our modern usage.
 - a. It has the same root word as the “wise men” in Matthew 2:16. (Strong’s words # 3096 and # 3097, from astrology and science, cf Acts 13:6).
 - b. The word “bewitched” is also translated *amaze* (Mark 2:12) and *astonished* (Luke 2:47).
 - c. Gullible people will often believe an impostor like Simon and be duped out of fortune and favor (cf Jn 7:18; 2 Pet 2:18).
 - d. Whatever abilities Simon possessed, he was able to use them to fool the people into believing he had great power (cf 2 Pet 2:2).
2. Philip preached the gospel with real (greater) power and many were converted (cf Mk 16:15, 16; Rom 10:10).
 - a. Baptism is the point of conversion (cf 1 Pet 3:21).
 - b. Verse 12 states that both men and women were baptized; which, by exclusion, eliminates babies and children from being baptized (cf Acts 5:14).
 - c. Philip preached “the kingdom” (interchangeable with the church) to these people. They were taught that salvation was to be found only in that kingdom, the church of Christ (cf Matt 16:18, 19).
 - d. Simon, seeing real power in Philip, was converted in the same fashion as the other Samaritans (cf Matt 28:19, 20).

Note: Simon knew real power when he saw it.

III. Peter and John travel to Samaria and Simon commits sin (14-25).

- A. News travels back to Jerusalem that Samaria had received the gospel (14-17).
 1. Peter and John were sent to Samaria, indicating that no one apostle was above the other apostles.
 - a. The young Christians in Samaria needed religious stability, which the gifts of the Holy Ghost would give them (cf Acts 19:2; Rom 1:11).
 - b. It is interesting that Peter and John were the apostles “sent” to Samaria:
 1. Peter was sent, which shows his equality with the other apostles.
 2. John was the very disciple who wanted to call fire down from heaven upon the Samaritans (cf Lk 9:52-54).
 3. The context of the famous words in John 4:35 had direct reference to the Samaritans.
 2. Philip did not have the power to transfer the gifts of the Spirit to the Samaritans.
 - a. Their conversion gave them the gift of the Spirit (salvation) according to Acts 2:38 (see Acts 1, III, C. for an explanation of that gift).
 1. Only the apostles performed miracles in the early church up to the time of the selection of the seven to serve tables (cf Acts 5:12; 6:6-8).

2. The receiving of “the Holy Ghost” in Samaria (v 15) was something discernible to the observer (cf Acts 19:6).
 - b. The KJV has verse 16 as a parenthetical insertion, given to further explain what took place in verse 15.
 1. “[F]allen upon” is a common way to express the receiving of the Holy Ghost (cf Acts 11:15; 19:2).
 2. They were correctly baptized, but did not have the written word (Bible) to guide them. Therefore, the extraordinary gifts were given. Note: These gifts were necessary because the written word was decades away from being written. Many of these Christians would live and die without ever seeing the written message of God. How truly blessed we are in modern times.
 - c. The apostles laid their hands on some selected Samaritans. It is obvious they did not lay hands on everyone due to the fact that Simon was excluded from this manifestation.

Note: The obvious conclusion is that if only the apostles had the ability to transfer these gifts, then when the last apostle died that ability to transfer those gifts ended.
- B. Simon’s error (18-25).
1. In this case the laying on of the apostles’ hands was only for the transferring of the gifts of the Spirit.
 - a. Simon used to be someone great in their eyes. He wanted that status again and thought he could purchase the power he had witnessed (cf 1 Tim 6:5; Jude 11).
 - b. Simon saw a marketable set of assets in the power to give gifts (cf Phil 2:3-5; 3 Jn 9).
 2. Peter responds with, “Thy money perish with thee,” meaning that Simon’s money held no value to Peter (cf 1 Tim 6:9; James 5:3).
 - a. Simon committed a sin by trying to buy the spiritual gifts after his conversion.
 1. He became a Christian when he obeyed the gospel Philip preached (vv 12, 13).
 2. Some unknown period of time passes when Peter and John arrive in the city and, at that point, he commits this sin (vv 14, 15).
 - b. Simon had neither “part nor lot” in the power to convey the gifts of the Holy Ghost.
 1. “[T]his matter” (v 21) applies directly to the gifts, not to Simon’s salvation, as many falsely suppose (e.g. A. Barnes, A. Clarke, ad infinitum).
 2. Simon was an erring Christian that needed to repent (cf Acts 17:30).

3. God sees and judges us by what is in our hearts (cf Heb 4:13; Rev 2:23).
 - c. As a sinful Christian, Simon was instructed to repent and pray (cf 2 Cor 7:9, 10; 2 Pet 3:9; 1 Jn 1:9).
 - d. The “wickedness” of Simon is expressed by the same Greek word which is translated differently in James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1, 16.
 - e. Only through repentance and prayer would Simon have a chance of God’s forgiveness (cf 2 Tim 2:25; Heb 4:12).
 1. “[G]all of bitterness” means something very bitter (cf Deut 32:32, 33; Heb 12:15).
 2. “[B]ond of iniquity” means bound by sin. Sin binds and keeps us in servitude to Satan (cf Prov 5:22; Rom 7:23, 24).
 - f. Simon wanted help getting out of his sinful condition (cf James 5:16).
 1. Simon was moved by Peter’s message. He wanted to escape the penalty for his sin and beseeched Peter to intervene (cf Job 42:8).
 2. With this plea for Peter’s help, inspiration ends all information concerning Simon. Hopefully he was restored and prospered.
 - g. As the apostles journeyed back to Jerusalem they taught along the way.
- IV. An Ethiopian is converted (26-40).
- A. Philip receives instructions from an angel to travel south towards Gaza (26-34).
 Note: Philip was traveling from Samaria to a city of the Philistines; God’s providence leading him on a mission he knew nothing about.
1. In New Testament times Gaza was a city located on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea southwest of Jerusalem.
 - a. The road to Gaza was largely uninhabited, hence the word “desert” (cf Mk 6:35-39).
 - b. During the time of Joshua’s conquest, it appears Gaza was a region rather than a city (cf Josh 15:47).
 2. On the road, Philip came across an Ethiopian eunuch of great authority returning to his homeland after worshipping in Jerusalem.
 - a. The journey back to Ethiopia would bend around the south-east corner of the Mediterranean Sea enroute back to eastern Africa.
 - b. He was a proselyte (non-Jew) converted to Judaism, which was common (cf Matt 23:15; Acts 2:10).
 - c. “Candace” was a title of the queens of Ethiopia (e.g. Pharaoh).
 - d. Eunuchs were often used in high government positions in ancient times, especially around important females.
- Note: This would remove temptations and ensure a certain amount of safety.
- e. As a proselyte and as a eunuch he would not have total privileges in the Jewish religion (cf Deut 23:1).

Note: Isaiah 56:4, 5 is probably prophetic in nature.

- f. This shows the superiority of the New Testament law over the old law. He would enjoy complete citizenship as a Christian (cf Gal 3:28, 29).

Note: For a further discussion on eunuchs see An Outlined Study on the Book of Matthew, same author.

- 3. The eunuch was reading (aloud) the scroll of Isaiah (cf Ps 1:2, 3). The wording in the original indicates reading aloud.
 - a. Philip was instructed to join the eunuch as he read. Probably the Septuagint version (Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, often designated by LXX), which was written in the universal language of the day.

Note: We see the Philip ran to the task. A soul was a stake. He showed his enthusiasm to share the gospel.
 - b. This eunuch was obviously a very devout man; he traveled to Jerusalem in order to worship and was reading God's word on his return trip (cf Rom 16:26; Heb 1:1).

Note: The journey was probably over 1,500 miles.
- 4. "Understandest thou what thou readest" indicates the necessity of knowing, or striving to understand, what we read (cf Matt 12:15; 16:8, same Greek word).
 - a. Sometimes help is needed to gain that understanding (cf Ps 25:9; Matt 13:51; Rom 10:14).
 - b. A true guide will point us to scripture rather than their own ideas.
 - c. The eunuch had a specific question about Isaiah 53:7, 8.

B. Philip began at Isaiah 53 and preached Jesus to this eunuch (35-40).

- 1. Philip used this text to teach about salvation through Christ (cf Acts 18:28).

Note: This is what preaching Jesus means; teaching all the necessary steps to obtain salvation through Christ:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| ➤ Hearing | Romans 10:17 |
| ➤ Believing | John 20:31 |
| ➤ Repenting | Luke 13:3 |
| ➤ Confessing | Matthew 10:32, 33 |
| ➤ Being baptized | 1 Peter 3:21 |
| ➤ Living faithfully | Matthew 10:22; 24:13 |
| ➤ Teaching about the one, true church | Matthew 16:18, 19 |

- a. The Jews were constantly looking for the Messiah (cf 1 Pet 1:11, 12).
- b. Philip used the Old Testament to help understand the New Testament (cf Lk 24:27; 2 Pet 1:19).

Note: As Peter stated, "But this is that which was spoken" (cf Acts 2:16).

- 2. When they came across sufficient water, the eunuch wanted to be baptized (cf 1 Pet 3:21).

Note: This is significant because it was the student who wanted to be baptized. How very strong the teaching on baptism must have been in the chariot.

- a. When Philip preached Jesus, it obviously included how to obtain the remission of sins (cf Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3, 4).
 - b. The eunuch took the first opportunity to be baptized. The Greek holds the idea of “Behold, Water!” Showing joy in the ability to obey.
3. Belief is necessary before baptism. This would rule out infants, children and the mentally infirmed.

- a. They both went down into the water and came up out of the water. The inspired wording is conclusive concerning immersion (cf Jn 3:22, 23).

Note: Certainly, both men would have had drinking water with them in their travels through this deserted land. When sufficient water was found it allowed them to go down into the water. It was then that the baptism could be performed.

- b. After the baptism, Philip is caught away by the Spirit. His work was done with this eunuch. He was now saved through his obedience (cf Acts 22:16).
- c. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing because he had put on Christ in baptism (cf Acts 16:31-34; Rom 5:1, 2; 12:12).

Note: This the last we see of this eunuch.

4. Azotus was probably the city of Ashdod, north of Gaza.
- a. Philip preached in all the cities as he made his way along the coast until he reached Caesarea.
 - b. We will see later in this book that Philip made his home in Caesarea (cf Acts 21:8).

Acts 9

Saul is converted and Peter performs more miracles.

I. The conversion of Saul (1-19).

A. Saul was determined to persistently persecute the church of Christ (1, 2).

1. Saul was, no doubt, highly praised by the Jewish council for his destructive actions toward the Christians (cf Acts 8:3).
 - a. “[B]reathing out threatenings and slaughter” means that threats and slaughter of the Christians had become Saul’s very breath (cf Ps 27:12).
 - b. Like a vicious animal smelling blood or thirsty cattle smelling water.
 - c. His persecuting turned to an obsession (cf Acts 26:11).
2. He went to the High Priest, who would be president of the council, and secured written permission to pursue the Christians in Damascus.
 - a. The High Priest, which could have been Annas, Caiaphas or Theophilus (A.D. 37), depending on how much time had elapsed (cf Acts 4:6).
 - b. Damascus was a city approximately 135 miles north of Jerusalem.
 1. By implication, it is possible that Saul had run out of “targets” to persecute in the Jerusalem area.
 2. Damascus probably had a large Jewish population. The scattering Christians would look for comfort and protection from family and friends.
3. The “way” refers to the church of Christ and is used five times in the book of Acts (cf Acts 19:9; 19:23; 22:4 24:14).

B. Saul encounters Christ on the road to Damascus (3-9).

Note: This is Luke’s the account of Saul’s conversion to Christianity. Paul will give two more accounts, in his own words, later in this book

1. The fact that Saul had traveled far enough to come “near Damascus” indicated several days on the road (approximately 135 miles from Jerusalem).
 - a. This is significant for two reasons:
 1. Many days of travel may have assuaged his anger, somewhat, toward the Christians.
 2. A more moderate frame of mind would allow Saul to be more receptive to the Lord.
 - b. A sudden light (flash of light) enveloped Saul on the road.

Note: If we combine the three accounts of this event recorded by Luke we get a full picture of what happened on the road to Damascus; Acts 22:6-16; 26:12-18.

- c. The bright light shown at noon (cf Acts 22:6; 26:13).
- d. Saul (later Paul) revealed that this event changed his life (cf 1 Cor 15:8; Gal 1:16).

- e. The text reads, "...he fell to the earth..." We do not know how Saul was traveling. It could have been by horse, donkey, camel, chariot or on foot.
 - f. We do know that after these events he had to be led by the hand, which indicates a probability that he was on foot (cf Acts 9:8).
2. "Saul, Saul" is an emphatic way to draw attention (cf Lk 10:41; 22:31).
- a. He saw a bright light and heard a voice.
 - b. Saul was accused of persecuting Christ. We know Saul was persecuting the disciples. To harm the church is to harm Christ (cf Matt 25:45).
- Note: As J.B. Coffman wrote, "Refusal to belong to the church is a refusal to belong to Christ" (Commentary on Acts, page 181).
3. "Who are thou, Lord" (v 5, capital "L") does not indicate Saul acknowledged Christ as the Christ.
- a. The same word is translated as both *sir* and *lord* (lower case "l") in other passages: (cf John 4:11, 15, 19; 15:15, 20).
 - b. "I am Jesus" (His earthly name) to make sure Saul understood that this man from Nazareth, which he held in such contempt, was indeed alive.
 - c. To kick against the pricks (or goads) was an exercise in futility.
 - d. Kicking against a sharp, pointed object will cause harm and accomplish nothing (cf Job 9:4; Isa 45:9).
 - e. Christ was telling Saul that his efforts would not accomplish his goal.
- Note: Our human stubbornness can lead to us harming ourselves.
4. A blinding light and an ethereal voice caused Saul to tremble and be astonished (cf Hab 3:16; Phil 2:12).
- a. "What wilt thou have me to do?" A question every person needs to ask themselves (cf Lk 3:10; Acts 2:37).
 - b. "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."
 - c. Two important factors are relevant here:
 - 1. Saul is no longer the haughty, power-hungry Pharisee. He now believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.
 - 2. Christ did not save him on the road, but sent him to the city so a human preacher could teach him salvation via the gospel (cf 1 Cor 1:21; Titus 1:3).
 - 3. Christ would not give mankind the commission and then violate His own order for salvation (cf 2 Tim 2:2). It is our responsibility to convert mankind.
 - d. Verse 7 indicates a group of men were traveling together. Safety in numbers, plus Saul would need assistance in arresting the Christians.
 - 1. In this account they stood speechless; in Acts 26:14 Luke recorded they fell to the ground. Not a contradiction, but rather, a logical sequence of events (cf Acts 22:9).

2. They heard an incomprehensible voice or noise (cf Ps 29:3, 4; Jn 12:28, 29).
3. Saul was supernaturally blinded by the glory of this event (cf Acts 22:11).
4. He was led by the hand on to the city of Damascus.
5. The mighty Saul of Tarsus is now reduced to child-like dependence so that he could focus on his past, present and future. We all need inner reflection and self-examination.
6. This blindness lasted three days during which time he neither ate nor drank.
Note: Saul was now a believer in Jesus Christ, but he was still lost.
7. Being blind, Saul could now clearly see his error in opposing Christ and he would soon be told what to do to be able to make his life right.

C. Ananias receives divine instructions concerning Saul (10-16)

1. We have no additional information about this Ananias other than he was well respected by both the Jews and Christians in Damascus (cf Acts 22:12).
 - a. A vision came to him with instructions to go to Saul. The street and house were revealed to Ananias.
Note: J.W. McGarvey writes that there is still a street called “Straight” in that city.
 - b. Interestingly, Ananias was not described in any special terms. “A certain disciple” is inspirations designation of him (cf Acts 22:12).
 - c. He was selected to preach to Saul, without special instructions. If we have obeyed the gospel, we know enough to teach others to obey.
 1. “[B]ehold he prayeth” (v 11) was probably to calm the apprehension of Ananias concerning facing this man (see vv 12-13).
 2. An indication that this man had changed.
 3. Saul received a vision in which he was told a man named Ananias would come to him.
Note: It is possible that the vision of Acts 9:12 is the same vision Paul records in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (cf Gal 1:1, 11, 12).
2. Saul’s reputation was well known, even in Damascus. Ananias had heard, by many, how much evil this man had done (cf Acts 8:3; 1 Tim 1:13).
 - a. The “many” of verse 13 were probably the ones “scattered abroad” (8:1).
 - b. The Lord assures Ananias that Saul is a chosen vessel for the good of the church (cf Jn 15:16; Rom 1:1).
 - c. Specifically, Ananias is told Saul would bear His name before:
 1. Gentiles (cf Rom 11:13; Gal 2:7, 8; 1 Tim 2:7).
 2. Kings (cf Acts 25:22-24; 26:1, 2).
 3. The children of Israel (Acts 21:39-22:3; 28:17).

- d. Saul was to suffer many things for Christ's sake (cf Acts 20:22, 23; 2 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Tim 3:11).

Note: It is possible we see the first of this suffering in verse 23 of this chapter.

D. Saul is baptized (17-19).

1. "Brother Saul" was probably a reference to their common Jewish ancestry. Saul would not be his brother in Christ until he got into Christ (cf Gal 3:27; 1 Pet 1:22, 23).
 - a. Ananias put his hands on Saul (v 12 is fulfilled in v 17). We know from previous passages this was not to transfer gifts (Acts 8:14-17), but rather a custom of the time to give a blessing (cf Matt 19:13).
 - b. Ananias was dispatched to Saul so he could receive his sight again and also be filled with the Holy Ghost (cf Acts 2:4).
2. The "scales" fell from his eyes and he was baptized the same as the people on Pentecost, for the remission of sins (cf Acts 2:38; 22:16).
 - a. There is no sound reason to make Saul's scales a cornea condition. This was divine intervention into Saul's life. He was the only one on the road to Damascus who is described as suffering this blindness.
 - b. Saul was baptized immediately. There is never a case recorded in the New Testament where baptism was delayed once the person understood the necessity of baptism.
3. After three days of fasting, Saul's body was now refreshed along with his mind and spirit.
 - a. The troubles of this life often burden us to our own detriment. If we can learn to give God our troubles and live close to Him through His word this life would be so much easier (cf Lk 10:41, 42; Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7).
 - b. Saul found strength and comfort in being around people of like precious faith (cf 2 Pet 1:1).
 - c. A changed person will change company, if necessary (cf Rom 1:12; 1 Cor 15:33).

II. Saul begins to preach the very Christ he once denounced (20-22).

- A. The immediateness of his preaching was an indication of his conversion. He went from persecuting to proclaiming Christ with the same zeal (cf Gal 1:23, 24).
 1. Saul preached that Jesus is the Christ (cf Rom 1:3, 4).
 - a. To say Jesus is the Son of God is to say He is the Messiah.
 - b. John, the baptizer, understood this (cf Jn 1:34).
 - c. Nathanael did also (cf Jn 1:49).
 2. Saul was familiar with the synagogue and probably felt comfortable starting his preaching there (cf Acts 13:5; 15:21).
- B. Saul's reputation made it difficult for the Christians in Damascus to accept him.

1. “[I]s not this he that destroyed them...” was to call Saul the destroyer of the Christians (cf Acts 9:1; Gal 1:13).
2. A reputation he had earned, but a life of which he had repented. He was bringing forth “fruits meet for repentance,” e.g. preaching Christ (cf Matt 3:8).
3. Saul’s strength increased. The more he preached the stronger he got (cf Rom 4:20). This is the case with any of us. The more we do the more we can do.
 - a. “[C]onfounded” and “proving” (v 22) reveals that the more Saul preached the more confusing it was to these Jews.
 - b. Saul’s preaching proved Jesus as the Christ (cf Acts 17:3).

Note: It is probable that Paul’s trip to Arabia mentioned in Galatians 1:11-18 could be inserted at this juncture of Luke’s narrative. If so, then there is a three years gap between verses 22 and 23.

III. Saul escapes Damascus and flees to Jerusalem (23-30).

A. The hunter becomes the hunted (cf Acts 14:19; 22:22).

1. If the previous note is correct then approximately three years elapse before Saul’s next visit to Damascus (cf Gal 1:18).

Note: That may be the proper understanding of Luke’s statement “after many days were fulfilled” (v 23).

2. The Jews would consider Saul a traitor so they “took counsel to kill him” (cf Acts 23:12; 25:3).

B. Saul knew their plot and was assisted in his escape by being let down the outside of the wall of the city in a basket (cf Josh 2:15; 1 Sam 19:12).

1. The gates of the city were the logical place to exit a walled city.
2. Paul gives his own account of these events in 2 Corinthians 11:32, 33.
3. Under the cover of darkness Saul escaped in a large basket.

Note: The same Greek word is used of the seven baskets which the disciples used to collect the food fragments after the feeding of the 4,000 (cf Matt 15:37).

C. He fled to Jerusalem where the Christians were afraid of him.

1. After three years, Saul was firmly engrained as a Christian in his own mind; but the disciples in Jerusalem remember the “threatenings and slaughter.”
2. The lack of knowledge concerning Saul’s conversion may have been due to poor communication, but more likely due to Saul’s years in Arabia.
3. It is also possible that word traveled back to Jerusalem about his conversion, but they simply did not believe the news to be accurate, possibly a spy.

D. Saul finds a champion in a man named Barnabas (cf Acts 4:36).

1. Barnabas took Saul and brought him to the apostles, Peter and James (cf Gal 1:18, 19).
2. Maybe they were the only apostles in town at the time, maybe they were the leaders (cf Gal 2:9).

3. In standing up for Saul, all the barriers from the Christians seemed to dissipate in and around Jerusalem; possibly for a fifteen day visit (cf Gal 1:18).
4. This does not mean Saul was free from trouble. His boldness in preaching caused the Grecian (Hellenists, NKJ) Jews to desire to kill him.
Note: For further discussion on Grecian (Hellenistic Jews) see Chapter 6, this book.
5. It is possible that Saul would be classified as this type of Jew. If true then he would know precisely how to dispute with them to make his points.
 - a. This style of disputing was common for the apostle Paul as he did his best to convert the Jews (cf Acts 17:17; 18:9; 19:8).
 - b. These Jews could not defeat Saul with religious apologetics so they sought to silence him in another way, by death.
Note: This is the second time in this chapter the Jews had sought to take Saul's life.
6. The Christians found out about the Jews desire to kill Saul so they got him to Caesarea and then to his home town of Tarsus.
Note: This is Luke's last mention of Saul for several years. He turns his attention away from Saul and focuses again on Peter for about two chapters in the book of Acts.

IV. Peace settles on the church around Jerusalem (31-35).

- A. It appears that immediately after Saul left Jerusalem the churches of Christ in that area enjoyed a period of internal rest (a word that means *quietness* or *peace*, Strong's # 1515).
 1. Saul's persecution of the church had ended years before, but the distrust of this man caused anguish and bitterness to linger.
 2. At his departure, there seems to be peace of mind in the members and quietness in the local churches.
 3. Being "edified" was a direct result of the rest they enjoyed.
 - a. Edified is a word which literally means *to be a house builder* (Strong's # 3619).
 - b. The same Greek word is used in the following passages: Matthew 7:24; 21:42; 1 Peter 2:5.
 - c. This is the thought behind our edifying one another in the faith (cf Rom 14:19; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Tim 1:14; Jude 20).
Note: The edification these saints enjoyed resulted in three positive attributes for the church:
 1. "[W]alking in fear of the Lord" is a reference for honoring His commandments (cf Prov 1:7; 9:10).
 2. "[I]n the comfort of the Holy Ghost" refers to the tranquility they now enjoyed (cf Phil 2:1, 2; 2 Thess 2:16, 17).

3. “[W]ere multiplied” is another reference to the amazing growth the early church experienced, which is always the result of walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.
- B. Luke now switched his attention to Peter’s continued efforts to spread the gospel.
1. Since the text says Peter came to the saints, we can conclude he visited the churches in the area of Judea, Galilee and Samaria (v 31).
 - a. We have no additional information about the city of Lydda except what is recorded in verse 38 saying it was close to Joppa.
 - b. God’s plan was for Peter to focus on preaching to the Jewish nation, while Paul was selected to primarily preach to the Gentile nations (cf Gal 2:7, 8).
 2. Peter heals a man named Aeneas in Lydda.
 - a. Luke (as a physician) would understand the difficulty of a human doctor healing a man bed-ridden for eight years (cf Mark 5:25).
 - b. Nothing is too difficult for true divine healing (cf Acts 14:8).
 - c. Not only was this man healed immediately, but he had strength to make his own bed, indicating complete restoration of his strength (cf Matt 9:6).
 3. Peter gives the credit to Christ (cf Acts 4:10).
 - a. “[S]aron” is probably a reference to the Plain of Sharon, a region west of Samaria on the Mediterranean coast. Solomon writes of the “Rose of Sharon” (Song of Solomon 2:1).
 - b. This was a way of stating that a great number of people knew about this crippled man’s lingering condition.
 - c. His healing caused many to turn to the Lord. Miracles were only used to confirm the message and/or the messenger.
- V. Peter raises Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead (36-43).
- A. Joppa was a town about forty miles from Jerusalem, near the sea coast.
1. Peter spends several days in Joppa. He is still in that city when the events of Chapter 10 take place (cf Acts 9:43; 10:5).
 2. Tabitha was known for her “good works and almsdeeds” (cf Eph 2:10; Titus 2:14).
Note: We have many charitable clubs who call themselves “Dorcas Societies” today. All of them are based on the woman mentioned here.
 3. Tabitha became sick and died. Peter was nearby in Joppa and they sent two men to implore Peter’s presence in the matter.
 - a. Washing the body and laying it out was customary prior to burial.
 - b. Many people would want an opportunity to pay their last respects to such a well-loved Christian woman.
 4. It is impossible to know what the disciples expected from Peter when they sent for him.

- a. They may have been looking for comfort. Maybe they wanted Peter to conduct the funeral. Maybe they were hoping for something miraculous. We simply cannot tell from the context.
 - b. When Peter entered the upper chamber, he saw women crying and displaying both inner and outer garments which Dorcas had made.
 - 1. These were examples of the “good works and almsdeeds” mentioned in verse 36.
 - 2. Possibly the widows were affected most by the passing of Dorcas because they would no longer benefit from her efforts.
- 5. Peter emptied the room and knelt down in prayer (cf Lk 8:54).
 - a. Peter implores God to restore Tabitha to life. She opens her eyes and then sits up (cf Acts 5:12).
 - b. Her physical life was returned to her for a period of time, to the glorification of the gospel.
 - c. Because of this miracle “many believed in the Lord” (cf Jn 12:9-11).
 - d. This miracle was done for the advancement of the church, not for Tabitha’s sake. She was called back from paradise to live a little longer on this earth (cf Lk 23:43).
- B. Peter dwells in Joppa with Simon a tanner “many days.”
 - 1. We have no way to determine how long Peter dwelt with Simon. It could be three days or three years (see notes on Acts 9:23).
 - 2. Luke leaves Peter in Joppa at this point in his narrative and turns his attention to events happening in the city of Caesarea as the next chapter begins.

Acts 10

The conversion of a Gentile soldier named Cornelius.

Note: The conversion of Cornelius, his kinsmen and near friends was so significant to the first century church that this conversion occupies most of the next two chapters. The Jewish Christians, and particularly the apostles, needed to see “the mystery” of salvation for the Gentiles revealed.

- I. Cornelius’ prayers and alms were acknowledged by God (1-4).
 - A. Luke’s narrative switched from Joppa to Caesarea, which is about thirty miles north.
 1. Cornelius was a Gentile (cf Acts 10:28; 11:1).
 2. He was a centurion in the Roman army, which would roughly correspond with a captain in our modern army, e.g., a company commander.
 - a. Centurion means *a leader of a hundred* (Robertson’s NT Word Pictures) which was one tenth of a Roman legion (cf Matt 27:27).
 - b. “Italian *band*” was the name given to the legion (cf Acts 27:1).
Note: Every time a Roman centurion is mentioned in the New Testament (there are a half dozen or more mentioned), is always in a favorable light.
 - B. Cornelius had such amazing attributes that some might wonder why he would have to be converted (2 Thess 1:8, obedience).
 1. “A devout man” (v 2) refers to reverence and worship (cf Acts 2:5).
 - a. The verb form of the same Greek word is used in Acts 17:23 to refer to pagan worship.
 - b. The word is translated “godly” in 2 Peter 2:9.
 2. Cornelius was not a pagan, but a man that “feared God with all his house.”
 - a. “[F]eared” is from the same root word used in Acts 9:31. This showed his great reverence for God.
 - b. This was the common way for Luke to refer to religious non-Jews (cf Acts 13:16, 26).
 3. His love of God moved Cornelius to demonstrate that love by giving benevolently to the poor and praying often (cf Acts 10:31).
 - C. About the ninth hour of the day (3 o’clock) Cornelius received a vision.
 1. The Bible tells us that this was an hour of prayer for the Jews (cf Acts 3:1).
 2. An angel, or a divine messenger, was sent to Cornelius with words of encouragement (cf Acts 27:23).
 - a. Cornelius’ prayers and his alms were known and remembered by God (cf Lk 1:13; Heb 6:10).
 - b. We live in a world which desires physical memorials, e.g., grave yards and our nation’s capital, which are full of monuments.
 - c. Cornelius’ memorial (alms and prayers) was before God.

- d. The only other time this word is used is by Jesus in reference to Mary's anointing just before His death (cf Matt 26:13; Mk 14:9).
- II. Cornelius is instructed to send for Peter (5-8).
- A. Joppa was the city where Peter had tarried (Acts 9:43).
 1. Cornelius sent for Peter instead of making the thirty-mile trip to Joppa, possibly because he had responsibilities as an officer (cf Matt 8:8, 9).
 2. The words "call for" mean *to summon* or *invite* (Strong's # 3343; cf Acts 24:24, 26).
 3. The angel gave Cornelius all the information necessary to locate Peter in Joppa, i.e., whose house and where the house was located.
 - B. The angel says, "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."
 1. Why did this heavenly messenger not tell Cornelius how to be saved?
 2. The great commission was given to men (cf Rom 10:14).
 - a. God chose to save people through the preaching of the gospel (cf 1 Cor 1:21; Titus 1:3).
 - b. He could have accomplished it in any way He might have chosen, but He made sharing the knowledge of salvation our responsibility.
 - c. God brought together Philip and the Ethiopian (Chapter 8), Ananias and Saul (Chapter 9), and now Peter and Cornelius (Chapter 10).
 - C. Cornelius obeyed the angel immediately.
 1. He sent two of his household servants, possibly similar to what Onesimus had been (cf Philemon 16).
 2. Also, a devout soldier was sent along. The word "devout" (as used in the New Testament), has reference to being godly or pious (cf 2 Pet 2:9).
 3. It is possible that Cornelius' influence affected the lives of those soldiers serving under him.
 Note: People are always watching us. We either glorify God by our actions or we drive people farther away from righteousness by our words and deeds.
- III. Peter receives a vision (9-16).
- A. The next day Peter goes up on the housetop to pray.
 1. This would be the day after Cornelius received instructions to send for Peter.
 2. The sixth hour would correspond to noon (cf Ps 55:17; Matt 27:45).
 - a. The housetop would be a quiet, private place to pray (cf Matt 6:6).
 - b. Those housetops were flat and often used as a house annex, accessible by outside stairs (cf 1 Sam 9:25; Prov 21:9; Matt 24:17).
 3. Peter fell into a trance while the noon meal was being prepared.
 - a. Paul used the same word (trance) when describing his conversion (cf Acts 22:17).
 - b. Peter would have important information supernaturally revealed to him in this trance.

- B. A vessel came down from heaven as a sheet being lowered.
1. If we keep the thoughts here in context, it will help us see what Peter saw in his trance.
 - a. Peter was hungry and it was time to eat.
 - b. The sheet was probably similar to a table cloth which was tied at the four corners. Possibly resembling a huge knapsack.
 2. Inside the sheet were three different classifications of animals:
 - a. “[F]ourfooted beasts of the earth”
 - b. “[C]reeping things”
 - c. “[F]owls of the air”

Note: “[W]ild beasts” is supplied by the translators. These words are not found in the original language, but probably implied by the words “all manner” of beasts.

 - d. Under Jewish law some animals were classified as clean while other animals were classified as unclean (cf Lev 11; Deut 14:1-19).
 3. Peter heard a voice saying “Rise, Peter, kill, and eat” (v 13).
 - a. The voice authorized Peter to kill any of the animals he might choose and to eat freely.
 - b. Peter refused (by saying “not so”) because Moses’ law forbade eating of certain animals and Peter claimed to follow that law (cf Lev 20:25; Ezek 4:14).
 - c. Peter refused to partake three times (v 16) then the vessel was taken up again into heaven.
 4. This was a lesson that would teach Peter that God had called the Gentiles to be saved with the gospel also (cf Acts 15:9).
 - a. Interestingly, the Jews were not the first to have clean and unclean animal designations (cf Gen 7:2). Some eight or nine centuries before the law was given on Mount Sinai there were clean and unclean animals.
 - b. The events here in Chapter 10 could have been as many as ten to twelve years after the church was started. Yet, they still had not gone into “all the world” or to “every nation.” They needed a push!

Note: More than that they were still holding on to some of the Old Testament laws or restrictions. Obviously their progress was slow.

IV. Peter is requested to go to Caesarea (17-23).

- A. While Peter was puzzled by the vision and what it might mean, men (dispatched by Cornelius) were in the city looking for him.
1. Peter “doubted” (wondered, NKJ) at his vision. It made no sense to him (cf Acts 2:12; 5:24).
 2. Cornelius’ men had asked where to find the tanner’s house and were waiting at the gate or outside the house.

- a. These Gentile men were about to enter a Jewish home (cf Acts 10:28).
 - b. Waiting outside may have been a gesture of politeness from the Gentiles.
 - B. While Peter pondered the vision, the Spirit spoke to him concerning the three men who were at the gate seeking him.
 - 1. He is instructed to go down (from the roof) and accompany them back to Caesarea.
 - a. Inexplicably, Peter seems prepared to go with them without an argument.
 - b. He had just disputed with the heavenly voice (three times) about eating unclean animals (v 14, cf Acts 9:13-17).
 - c. We can see the providence of God at work here.

Note: Interestingly, the word “providence” is used only one time in the Bible (Acts 24:2), and that passage does not refer to God, but the work of man.

 - d. God was guiding Cornelius’ men and Peter so the gospel could be shared with the lost world of the Gentiles.
 - 2. Peter tells the men that he is the one they seek.
 - a. The men give excellent testimony about the character of Cornelius.
 - b. Peter still does not know their reason for coming to him. “[W]hat is the cause (reason, NKJ) wherefore ye are come?” (v 21b)
 - c. The men tell Peter of Cornelius being “warned” (divinely instructed, NKJ) to summons him (same word used in Hebrews 8:5).
 - d. God has often warned (instructed) in this same fashion (cf Matt 2:12, 22; Heb 11:7).
 - 3. Peter invited these men into his house where they spent the night.
 - a. This was a sign of Christian kindness (cf Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9).
 - b. The next morning, they departed from Joppa to Caesarea (cf Acts 10:29).
 - c. Peter took six brethren as witnesses (cf Acts 11:12).
 - d. This was a very important event in the history of the fledgling church.

Peter used wisdom to have the account verified by six brothers.
- V. Peter travels to meet Cornelius (24-33).
 - A. Cornelius had gathered relatives and close friends together in Caesarea while awaiting Peter’s arrival (cf Lk 5:29).
 - 1. It is obvious that Cornelius enthusiastically shared his vision with those close to him.
 - a. He fully expected great things from Peter.
 - b. He wanted those near to him to experience whatever God had in store through Peter’s message.
 - 2. Just like the journey to Joppa, it took more than a single day to travel back to Caesarea, “And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea” (see v 9).

Note: Ten men made the pilgrimage: the three Cornelius dispatched, Peter and the six witnesses he brought with him.

B. Cornelius had such great reverence for God that he fell down at the feet of God's messenger.

1. Peter would not allow this to happen (cf Acts 14:11-15).
 - a. If Peter was the first pope this would have been a good time to start the trend of pope worship.
 - b. Instead of encouraging this action (like all the modern popes do), Peter stopped it immediately. Peter literally says "I am just a man" (v 26).
2. No person, or thing, is to receive our worship except Jehovah God (cf Rev 19:10; 22:8, 9).

Note: Some try to explain away Cornelius' actions by saying he prostrated himself before Peter after the eastern custom of reverence. That is simply not the case (cf Jn 4:24; Rev 22:9, same Greek word).

C. Cornelius, in his excitement, went out of the house in order to meet Peter.

1. When they finally entered the house, Peter saw the throng gathered.
2. He immediately announced that it was an unlawful act for a Jew to "keep company" with a non-Jew.
 - a. There is no such law from God to Moses. Probably an undocumented tradition of the Pharisees (cf Gal 2:11, 12).
 - b. They were prohibited from marriages and legal contracts (cf Ezra 9:11, 12).

Note: It is wrong for us to read more into a passage than God intended. We know Jesus did no sin, yet He openly taught and healed non-Jews (cf Lk 9:52; 17:11-16; Jn 4:9).

3. Peter understood the vision from God was divine instruction for him not to call any man common or unclean (cf Acts 15:9).
4. Without negative speech or opposing questions, Peter says he came as soon as he was sent for.
 - a. He then asks Cornelius, before the large gathering, what reason he had to send for him.
 - b. Since Peter had already been informed of the reason for the summons (vv 21, 22) this question may have been asked for the benefit of the people gathered in Cornelius' house.

D. Cornelius related the events that transpired four days earlier.

Note: This gives us the time-frame between Cornelius' vision and Peter's arrival. See notes on verses 1-8 for pertinent information on verses 30-32.

1. Cornelius praises Peter for responding to his call (v 33).
2. Probably part of that praise was the courage to be willing to break away from the traditions that fueled the fires of prejudice in the Jewish minds.
 - a. This gathering of family and close friends had a singleness of purpose. They wanted to hear what the preacher had to say.

- b. No preacher has ever had more fertile soil than was afforded Peter on that great day (cf Acts 28:28; 2 Thess 2:13).
 - 3. The stage is now set for the Gentiles to have the saving gospel of Christ preached to them.
- VI. Peter preaches in the Gentile's household (34-43).
 - A. Peter "opened his mouth" to speak. Jesus, Philip and Paul had similar wording used concerning their preaching (cf Matt 5:2; Acts 8:35; Eph 6:19, 20).
 - 1. "Of a truth" is an indication of Peter understanding the vision as it applied to the Gentiles.
 - 2. If one is a "respector of persons" it would show favoritism for family, money, position, politics or nationality.
 - a. Inspiration deals with these very thoughts in James 2:1-4.
 - b. Peter now understands a man cannot be accepted simply because he is a Jew or rejected simply because he is a Gentile.
 - c. It is astonishing how many times the New Testament addresses this subject; i.e., Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25.
 - d. The extreme prejudice of the Jews was a constant battle in the early church.
 - B. In verse 35 "he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness" is an elaboration on the thought of God not respecting any person, along with the parenthetical insert at the end of verse 36 (he is Lord of all).
 - 1. Notice that *feareth* and *worketh* are present tense, continuous action verbs.
 - 2. Interestingly, Peter was present when Jesus gave His marching orders to the apostles to take the gospel to every nation (Matthew 28:19), he was present when the order was renewed just before Christ's ascension (Acts 1:8), and even made the connection of prophecy (Acts 2:39), yet it appears Peter is having an epiphany at Cornelius' house about sharing the gospel with the Gentiles.
 - 3. Peter tells them that they already knew of the preaching of peace by Jesus, which began in Galilee and went throughout Judaea (cf Lk 23:5; Acts 26:26).
 Note: John's baptism was no longer valid after the day of Pentecost (cf Acts 19:1-5).
 - a. Verse 36 begins with, "[T]he word" not *a word*. The doctrine of Christ.
 - b. The word in verse 37 is a different word in the original. It could have been translated *that thing* and been correct.
 - c. The order of distribution is exactly as prophesied by Jesus before His ascension (Acts 1:8).
 - 4. Jesus traveled from city to city doing good and healing all that were oppressed (possessed) by the devil (cf Matt 4:23; 1 Jn 3:8).
 - a. The witnesses were the apostles (cf Lk 24:48; Acts 2:32).

- b. “[H]anged on a tree” simply means hanged on something made of wood (see notes on Chapter 5, III, C, 3).
 - c. Luke records consistent references from Peter about witnessing these events. Christianity is a religion based on evidences. What we believe, of necessity, needs to be proven (cf 2 Cor 13:3; Phil 2:22; 2 Tim 4:5).
 - d. People cannot choose or volunteer to be a witness for Christ. That responsibility fell upon those who had personal contact with Him during His earthly sojourn (cf Jn 15:27).
5. God raised Jesus after three days in the grave (cf 1 Cor 15:3, 4).
- a. The apostles witnessed His resurrection (cf Acts 1:2, 3).
 - b. Verse 41 reveals the apostles ate and drink with the risen Jesus. It begs the question as to what type of body Jesus had after the resurrection that needed food and drink (cf 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16, 17; 1 Jn 3:2).
 - c. Peter says he was “commanded” to preach to the people. This is the assignment Jesus gave in Matthew 28:19, 20 and Mark 16:15, 16 to go into all the world.
 - d. The reason “Judge” is capitalized in the text is because the words “to be the” are supplied by the translators (cf Heb 12:23).
 - e. “[Q]uick” (living) and dead might have reference to the Jews (living) and the Gentiles (dead). Notice the rendering of “dead” in the following passages: Matthew 8:22; Luke 15:24, 32; John 5:25; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13.
6. The prophets all gave witness (v 43) to Jesus being the Messiah (cf Jn 1:45).
- a. Witness is used in a slightly different sense in this passage. Not an eye-witness, but rather one who testifies (cf Acts 13:22; 14:3; 26:5, same Greek word).
 - b. What was it the prophets witnessed or prophesied? That remission of sins would come through the name of Jesus to all that believed.
 - 1. “[T]hrough his name” means by His power.
 - 2. “[B]elieveth” is a synecdoche; a part standing for the whole. In this case, believeth stands for gospel obedience (cf 2 Thess 1:8; Heb 5:9).

VII. The Holy Ghost comes upon the Gentiles (44-48).

- A. While Peter was speaking to those gathered at Cornelius’ house he was interrupted by the Holy Ghost as it fell upon those that listened.
- 1. This was evidenced by the speaking in tongues (cf Acts 11:15; 15:8, 9).
 - 2. The astonishment of the Jews was the evidence of God coming to the Gentiles.
 - a. We must keep in mind as we study this amazing event unfolding before the eyes of these witnesses that Peter took along, that had not seen the vision Peter received.

- b. They may have had serious doubts concerning Peter's understanding of the vision.
 - c. The witnesses had visual and audio proof that God was showing equal favor to the Gentiles. Something their national teaching would not allow and something the Jewish Christians struggled with for many years (cf Acts 11:1-3; 15:1, 2; Gal 2:14, 15).
- B. In the logical order of salvation, given by inspiration, the Holy Ghost would come upon the baptized (cf Acts 2:38; 19:6).
 - 1. The Holy Ghost coming upon Cornelius and his household was not for the remission of sins (vv 47, 48).
 - 2. Therefore, it had to be for some other reason. It was proof to the seven Jewish Christians that were present that God wanted the Gentiles to be classified as full brethren in the church of Christ.
 - 3. "[A]s well as we" (v 47) shows equality of Jews and Gentiles in the church of Christ (cf Rom 10:12).

Acts 11

Peter defends the events at Cornelius' house and the church sends Barnabas to Antioch.

- I. Peter returns to Jerusalem where the Jewish Christians accuse him of having associated with Gentiles (1-3).
 - A. The occurrence in Caesarea was such a phenomenon that word of it spread rapidly back to Jerusalem (cf Acts 8:14).
 1. It is necessary to remind ourselves of the prejudice the Jews had. Peter had received the vision of the sheet being let down from heaven (Acts 10:9-16), these other Jews had no such advantage.
 2. It seems obvious to us, in the 21st century, that they missed the point of many of their own prophets, e.g., Hosea 2:23; Zechariah 2:11; Malachi 1:11.
 - a. Remember the moral position of Cornelius (Acts 10:1, 2).
 - b. His entire household is mentioned as having the same moral direction.
 - c. Yet, even people with this exemplary resolve caused offense to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
 - B. The circumcision (Jewish Christians) “contended” with Peter. The English word “contend” means *to strive in combat; to strive in competition* (Webster’s New World Dictionary).
 1. The word used in this passage means *to separate thoroughly, to withdraw from* (Strong’s # 1252).
 2. It appears these Jewish Christians shunned Peter for associating with Gentiles (cf Gal 2:12, 13).

Note: If they contended with Peter over this matter it shows, conclusively, that he held no exalted position in the early church (i.e., pope).

 3. These Jewish Christians questioned Peter about going “in to men uncircumcised” (v 3) and also accused “didst eat with them.”
 - a. These Jewish Christians were not ready for any non-Jews to be part of the fellowship within the church of Christ.
 - b. Basically, the same accusation was leveled at Jesus in Matthew 9:10, 11 and Luke 15:2.
 - c. They were not yet ready to tear down the middle wall of partition (cf Eph 2:14; Col 2:11-14).
 - d. Not eating with Gentiles was based on tradition and not on law.
- II. Peter explains the events leading up to the Gentiles conversion (4-18).
 - A. Peter began to give a detailed account “from the beginning, and expounded it by order” to the other apostles and brethren (cf Lk 1:3).

1. Peter's account in the city of Jerusalem was basically a reiteration of the events related in chapter 10:3-8.
 2. The record says Cornelius' prayers were heard before his conversion.
 - a. Jesus said that God does not hear sinners (cf Jn 9:31; 1 Pet 3:12).
 - b. The most likely explanation for this sinner's prayers being heard is because he was honestly seeking to find the truth.
- B. The vision that Peter related helped him to properly understand the universality of the gospel message (cf Lk 2:10, 11; 31, 32).
1. Peter's prejudice had been removed (at least temporarily). He now hoped the same message would eliminate the prejudice in these brethren (cf Rev 14:6).
 2. Peter takes these Jewish Christians (even the other apostles) step by step from the vision to the conversion. Peter related his own experience first (4-10):
 - a. He went into a trance and saw a vision (v 5).
 - b. A vessel resembling a sheet came down.
 - c. All manner of animals were before him. (v 6).
 - d. Even creeping things and birds.
 - e. Peter was told to rise, kill and eat. (v 7).
 - f. He disputed with the voice and would not do as instructed. (v 8).
 - g. This was repeated three times. (v 10).
 - h. The voice clearly declared that what God has cleansed should not be called unclean.
 3. He then relates the events at Cornelius' house (11-15):
 - a. Three men came to him from Caesarea. (v 11).
 - b. The Spirit instructed him to go with them (v 12).
 - c. He took six witnesses along.
 - d. We went into this Gentile's house.
 - e. He tells them that Cornelius was instructed by an angel to send to Joppa to bring Peter to them. (v 13).
 - f. That when he arrived, he would have words that would save Cornelius and his household. (v 14).
 - g. While Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on them, "as on us at the beginning." (v 15).

Note: It is interesting that Peter does not tell them what he preached that day. His emphasis was on what God did, not on what he did.
- C. In verse 16 Peter says he "remembered" the words of Jesus (cf Acts 1:5).
1. He probably thought he understood what Christ was talking about just before His ascension, but now the meaning is crystal clear (cf Jn 12:16).
 - a. John, the baptizer, foretold these events (cf Matt 3:11; Jn 1:26, 33).
 - b. Peter made mention of this prophesy on Pentecost, quoting Joel (cf Joel 2:28).

2. “[T]he like gift” means an equal gift. The same in quality, rank or measure (Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament; cf Acts 15:8, 9).
 - a. “[W]hat was I” (“who was I”, NKJ) to withstand God (cf Rom 9:20, 21)?
 - b. Why would Peter, or any other person, resist the clear acceptance of the Gentiles by God (cf Acts 23:9).
 3. The other apostles and Jewish brethren in Jerusalem accepted Peter’s explanation and glorified God at the addition of the Gentiles.
 - a. Peter was able to convince them to their satisfaction. They kept quiet after the rendering of the facts, which is in counter-distinction to verse 2.
 - b. Because the Jews held themselves so high and thought the other nations so low, this was, beyond question, difficult for them to accept.
 - c. To their credit, there appears to be no other opposition to extending fellowship to the Gentiles (cf Eph 3:6-8)
 4. We now have both Jews and Gentiles in full fellowship in the church of Christ. The door is now open to evangelize the Gentile nations.
- III. Barnabas and Saul were with the church of Christ in Antioch, which becomes the center for Gentile evangelism (19-26).
- A. These church members were the same disciples that were scattered from Jerusalem after the death of Stephen (cf Acts 8:1).
1. As they fled the city of Jerusalem and the tyranny of Saul they traveled north along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and to the island of Cyprus.
 - a. Phoenicia was a country located between the sea coast and the Lebanon Mountains (cf Acts 21:2, 3).
 - b. Cyprus is the island in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea (cf Acts 4:36, 37).
 - c. Antioch of Syria. This designation is necessary because of another city named Antioch located in Pisidia (cf Acts 13:14).
 2. The scattered Christians did not take the message “to every creature” (Mk 16:15) as instructed, but limited the teaching to the Jews.
 - a. Verse 20 seems to be the converse of verse 19. Those men of Cyprus and Cyrene preached to the Greeks in Antioch (NKJ translates as Hellenists, which is a word that is difficult to fit within the context).
 Note: The definition of a Hellenist is “someone who adopts, speaks, or heavily studies ancient Greek culture, language or ideas” (Collins Dictionary) Wikipedia says that the “Hellenist refers to the person (the student; the adopter of culture, or the religious practitioner) rather than the period.”
 - b. There was nothing significant about preaching to the Grecian Jews. The gospel had been shared with them from the beginning (cf Acts 6:1).

3. “And the hand of the Lord” means with God’s approval (cf Lk 1:66; Acts 13:11).
 - a. “[T]urned” to the Lord is a common expression for Gentiles’ conversion (cf Acts 15:19; 26:20; 1 Thess 1:9).
 - b. We are not told, specifically, what the believers did in this passage when they turned to the Lord, but the text does say the believers took some type of action after they believed. Believing, alone, is not enough.
- B. Upon hearing these things, the church in Jerusalem dispatched Barnabas to Antioch (v 22).
 1. The character of Barnabas can be seen in the passages previously used concerning him, e.g., Acts 4:35, 36; 9:26, 27.
 2. Why Barnabas was selected to go to Antioch instead of one of the twelve is not stated in scripture.
 - a. Upon Barnabas’ arrival he saw “the grace of God” in these converts (cf Col 1:6).
 - b. That grace (unmerited favor, see Acts 7:10, 46 etc.) caused gladness, or cheerfulness, in Barnabas.
 - c. True to the type of personality Barnabas possessed he exhorted, or encouraged, these new brethren (cf Acts 4:36).
 - d. Their purpose, or the direction of their lives, was now to remain loyal to God through Christ (cf Ps 17:3; Rom 8:28).
 - e. Persistence in faithfulness was a virtue then as it is now (cf Col 1:23; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 3:14).
 3. The reasons why Barnabas was successful in Antioch are listed in verse 24.
 - a. “For he was a good man,” possibly stated in the passage because he rose above the prejudices of his day to do what was right.
 - b. “[F]ull of the Holy Ghost,” this might mean he was compelled to act according to the influences of Galatians 5:22, 23.
 - c. “[A]nd of faith,” is a word which mean *persuasion*. It comes from the root word that means *to convince by argument* (Strong’s # 3982). His conviction helps others to be convicted. A wonderful example for any Christian.
- C. Barnabas leaves Antioch and travels to Tarsus searching for Saul.
 1. That was Saul’s home town (cf Acts 21:39).
 2. Barnabas brings Saul back to Antioch where they spent an entire year together with the church of Christ.
 - a. We can speculate that either Barnabas understood Saul’s great value in evangelizing the Gentiles or the Holy Ghost directed him to get Saul’s help.

- b. In either case the result of these two men working with the church in Antioch is that many people were taught (v 26).
- 3. It was in this city and at this time that the disciples were first called Christians.
 - a. The name “Christian” was given because they followed Christ.
 - b. The controversy that exists over who gave them the name is of little significance. The significant fact is that Christ is who they followed and who they emulated, hence the name “Christians.”

Note: Names are often associated with who people follow, e.g., Lutherans follow the teachings of Luther, Buddhists follow the teachings of Buddha, etc.

- c. This is the first of three times the name Christian is used in scriptures: Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16 (cf Eph 3:14, 15).

Note: The name Christian is an important designator to the followers of Christ, but it is no more important than the other names the disciples used in scripture, e.g., saints, brethren, disciples, etc. The fact is that both Luke and Peter validate the name Christian through inspiration.

- d. The name may be the “new name” Isaiah wrote of in Isaiah 62:2.
- e. We must be careful not to be too dogmatic about that name. John wrote of a “new name” about sixty years after they were first called Christians at Antioch (cf Rev 2:17; 3:12).

IV. Agabus tells of a great famine which was to come “throughout all the world” (27-30).

A. Prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch during the one-year period that Barnabas and Saul worked with the church there (vv 25, 26).

- 1. Prophets were a classification of inspired teachers in the first century (cf Eph 2:20; 4:11).
- 2. Some were foretellers (as we normally think of prophets, Acts 21:4) and others were forth-tellers (possibly Judas and Silas, Acts 15:32).

Note: It was an office which was ranked just after the apostles in the first century (cf 1 Cor 12:28).

- 3. Agabus told of a famine that would affect “all the world,” which is probably used as a hyperbole.
 - a. If the famine was literally world-wide, then it would have been impossible for the concerned Christians to send relief.
 - b. The timeline was made specific by Agabus during the reign of Claudius Caesar (AD 41-54). That would place this at about twelve and possibly as many as twenty-five years after the church was established.
 - c. Several famines are recorded during Claudius’ reign, but Josephus mentions one particular famine that occurred about AD 45 in Judea and lasted several years (Josephus, Antiquities).
 - d. The prophecy was made and the famine came to pass just as predicted.

B. Relief was sent to the suffering saints in Judea.

1. The context would determine that this was a case of Gentile Christians sending aid to Jewish Christians in need (cf Rom 15:25-27).
2. This relief was given “according to his ability.” Every person gave as they had been prospered. Some could give a lot, others gave less, but all gave something as they had the ability (cf 1 Cor 16:1, 2).
Note: This same spirit is alive and well within Christians today as evidenced by the magnanimous response to every disaster we know about, e.g., floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, famines, etc.
3. They sent the money (or relief) to the elders for proper distribution.
 - a. This is the first mention of elders in the church of Christ (cf Titus 1:5).
Note: This may have been about fifteen to twenty years after the church was established. (See comments under IV. A. b. If the church was established around 29 AD then this famine would be fifteen or sixteen years after the church of Christ started.
 - b. It should be noted that the relief was not said to be sent to the elders at Jerusalem, but rather to Judea.
 - c. Barnabas and Saul had delivered the relief to Judea.
 - d. We have no further information about the distribution of this relief

Acts 12

Herod vexes the church.

Luke now changes the scene from Antioch back to Jerusalem

- I. Herod kills James, the apostle (1-4).
 - A. “Now about that time” refers to the time Barnabas and Saul were in Antioch (11:26).
 1. The Herod mentioned here (whom Luke calls “the king”) is the grandson of Herod the Great, who slew the children in Bethlehem (cf Matt 2:16).
 - a. Herod, the king, died in AD 44, so we have a time line for the death of James.
 - b. Herod wanted to “vex” the church, a word which means to do harm (same word used in Acts 18:10 and 1 Pet 3:13).
 2. Herod’s vexing included killing James, John’s brother (cf Matt 4:21; Mk 10:35).

Note: James is often mentioned first when the brothers are both mentioned.

 - a. Jesus foretold this event many years prior (cf Matt 20:21-23).
 - b. This is not the James who wrote the book of James. Herod killed this James in about AD 44, the book of James was written about AD 60.
 - c. Interestingly, James’ death means there were eleven apostles now living. We have no record of anyone being selected to fill the empty slot.

Note: The apostle Paul is about to re-enter the narrative and will bring the number of apostles back to twelve.
 - d. We are not told if James was beheaded or pierced with the sword.

Note: James was the first apostle to die, and according to tradition, his brother, John, was the last.
 - B. Because he realized that vexing the church pleased the Jews, Herod imprisoned Peter while he rode the wave of popularity (cf Acts 24:27; 25:9).
 1. It appears Herod was motivated by popularity, which is always dangerous in any generation (cf 1 Thess 2:4).
 - a. This popularity emboldened Herod to arrest Peter, another leader of the church of Christ (cf Gal 2:9).
 - b. Perhaps he reasoned that if he could eliminate the pillars of the church it would crumble.
 - c. The parenthetical statement (v 3) concerning the time of unleavened bread reveals the time of year these events took place, i.e., Passover (cf Ex 12:14, 15; Matt 26:17).

Note: Unleavened bread was eaten for seven days after the Passover (Ex 12:18).

2. “[F]our quaternions of soldiers” (four squads, NKJ) means four groups of four soldiers each; a total of sixteen soldiers, assigned to guard Peter after his arrest.

Note: This is the third time Peter has been arrested by the Jews for teaching the truth (Acts 4:3; 5:18).

- a. Herod may have heard of Peter and John’s escape after being arrested outside the temple (see notes on Acts 4, I).
- b. “Easter” (NKJ Passover) is an obvious reference to the time of unleavened bread. It is an unfortunate choice of words by the translators.

Note: Every other time this word appears in scripture it is translated as Passover (28 other times in New Testament), e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:28.

- c. Herod intended to wait until the Passover festival was completed before he brought Peter to the people. He did not want to offend the Jews.

II. Peter is miraculously released from prison (5-11).

A. Unceasing supplications were made by the church for Peter (cf 1 Thess 5:17; Heb 13:3).

1. “[W]ithout ceasing” (constant, NKJ) means *intently* and is translated *fervently* in 1 Peter 1:22.
 - a. There needs to be an earnestness in our prayers (cf James 5:16).
 - b. We are not told what the church was praying for, specifically, concerning Peter. It may have been for his release or it may have been for Peter to have strength to face the trials before him.
2. If we conclude they were praying for his release from prison we will have to explain the shock and bewilderment of his freedom in later verses of this very chapter (vv 13-16).

B. Peter was fast asleep chained to two soldiers while two additional soldiers were stationed outside the door.

Note: This would be one-fourth of the quaternion of soldiers assigned to Peter.

1. The night before Herod was going to bring Peter before the people an angel came to him while he was sleeping.
 - a. The inner peace of being right with God soothes the mind like nothing on this earth can (cf Phil 4:6, 7; Heb 13:6).
 - b. He was probably chained to both of the soldiers. An uncomfortable sleeping position at best (cf Acts 21:33).
 - c. The Roman soldiers had done everything possible to guarantee the security of their prisoner, but they were no match for the power of God!
2. An angel appeared in the jail cell and had to strike Peter to awaken him (cf Acts 5:19).
 - a. Peter’s trust in God’s power allowed him to have this inner tranquility.

- b. People, circumstances and/or situations can never undo what God has done for us as Christians (cf Phil 4:7).
- 3. An allegory is often made comparing Peter's condition in this prison cell with a sinner's condition in sin:
 - a. Peter was captive... all sinners are captive of Satan
 - b. Peter was guarded... Satan stands guard over all his victims to prevent their escape.
 - c. Peter was bound by two chains... everyone in sin is bound by whatever chains hold them in their sinful condition.
 - d. Peter was asleep... sleep is a state of insensitivity, inactivity and illusion. In the spiritual sense, every sinner is asleep (cf Rom 13:11; 1 Thess 5:6).
 - e. Peter was in darkness... sin is a state of darkness (cf Col 1:13).
 - f. Peter was naked... all sin and spiritual deficiency are nakedness cf (Rev 3:17, 18).
 - g. Peter was condemned to death... which is the state of every sinner on earth (cf Jn 3:18). (Origin unknown)
- 4. Peter was commanded to get dressed and to follow the angel out of the prison.
 - a. To "gird" himself means to get his clothes on for movement.
 - b. The word is used in several different ways in scriptures:
 - 1. Belting on a sword (cf 1 Sam 25:13).
 - 2. Wrapping cloth around oneself (cf 2 Sam 3:31).
 - 3. Used to demonstrate what was going to happen to Paul (cf Acts 21:11).
 - 4. Even used figuratively in 1 Peter 1:13.
 - c. Peter was not sure if these events were real.
 - d. He probably was both puzzled and amazed, possibly even thinking he was caught up in another vision as in Acts 10.
- 5. The "first and second ward" (watch, NKJ, guard posts) which can mean the person doing the guarding or the place the guard is posted (cf Lk 2:8; 12:38).
 - a. The iron gate would be the entrance into the prison, which would naturally be a highly secure, formidable obstacle to prevent escape.
 - b. This gate opened "of its own accord" or by miraculous means (cf Acts 5:19; 16:26).
 - c. When Peter was safely outside and a street away from the prison the angel departed from him.
 Note: It says Peter "come to himself." The same word is used of the prodigal in Luke 18:17.
 - d. This is when Peter comes to the understanding that God had delivered him from Herod (cf 2 Sam 22:1; 2 Pet 2:9).
 - e. The word "expectation" at the end of verse 11 means *looking after* and is used only one other time in the New Testament (cf Lk 21:26).

- III. Peter joins himself to the disciples (12-19).
- A. Peter goes to John Mark's mother's house where many had gathered in prayer.
1. This Mary may have been Barnabas' sister (cf Col 4:10, cousin NKJ).
 - a. We are not told if Mary's house was the normal place the disciples gathered or if her house was in close proximity to the prison. Peter may have been supernaturally guided to her house.
 - b. Since Peter had been kept in the prison under guard it is not likely he knew about the prayer vigil on his behalf (cf Acts 4:31).
 2. Peter knocks on the door of the gate in order to gain entrance to the house.
 - a. This door may have been to a porch or courtyard.
 - b. Many commentators feel that since the house had a gate/porch area Mary was a wealthy woman.
 - c. Every time this Greek word is used in the New Testament it is translated in the KJV as *gate* except for Matthew 26:71 (porch).
 - d. A girl named Rhoda came to the door to ask who was there. Probably a servant assigned to the gate in these troubled times. James had just been killed and Peter was arrested.
 3. The girl left Peter standing at the door and joyfully ran to tell the others the exciting news.
 - a. If Rhoda recognized Peter by his voice he must have been very well known to this servant.
 - b. When she announced Peter's presence, they thought she was mad (cf Acts 26:24).
 - c. Rhoda insisted that Peter was really outside the door, so they changed their mind to say it was his angel.
 - d. The Jews commonly believed in spirit manifestations (guardian angels) who could take on the shape and voice of the person (cf Matt 14:26; Lk 24:37).
 - e. Interestingly, they believed it was Peter's spirit rather than the released Peter, which takes us back to the thoughts contained in II, A, 2.
 4. Peter continues to knock and it appears several went to the door.
 - a. They were amazed at Peter being outside the gate. He got them to quiet down so he could tell them of the events which led to his escape (cf Acts 13:16; 21:40).
 - b. James and the brethren were obviously somewhere else. There being several thousands of Christians would necessitate them to be spread around the city.
 - c. James is singled out as if he was the prominent person (cf Acts 15:13; 21:18).

Note: This was not the apostle James, but rather the Lord's half-brother.
Who will become a powerful and important person in the early church.

- d. It is unknown where Peter went. "[A]nother place" might mean he left the city to escape Herod's jurisdiction (cf Gal 2:11).

- B. When day light came, there was a great "stir" at the absence of Peter from the prison cell.

- 1 The soldiers did not know of Peter's absence until the next morning, which would probably mean that Peter was released by the angel sometime after the last guard shift change.
- 2 Herod searched for Peter without finding him.
- 3 He then examined the sixteen soldiers assigned to keep Peter captive. It was a very serious crime to allow a prisoner to escape (cf Acts 16:26, 27).
- 4 They could not answer Herod's questions so he condemned them to death (cf Matt 28:4).

IV. Herod takes the glory for himself (20-25).

- A. Herod becomes angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon for some unstated reason.

1. Tyre and Sidon were port cities located on the Mediterranean coast. Chapter 11 ended with a great famine, maybe Herod was negotiating food and supplies through these cities (cf Isa 23:1-4).
2. Blastus, the king's "chamberlain," (personal aide, NKJ) became the people's friend.
 - a. Many think this chamberlain was in charge of Herod's bedchamber (cf Est 1:12, 13; 2:3).
 - b. Normally thought of as eunuchs in the Old Testament (cf Isa 39:7; 56:3).
 - c. In the New Testament a chamberlain may have been much more (cf Rom 16:23).
 - d. This word is most often translated "steward" in the New Testament, e.g., Luke 16:1, 3, 8; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2).

- B. On a certain day Herod dressed in his finest clothes and sat on the throne, probably a high seat in the theater (cf Prov 18:12; Acts 25:23).

1. In verse 19 it says Herod went to Caesarea. Josephus writes that the "set day" was the second day of a festival honoring Claudius Caesar in Caesarea (Antiquities 17 and 19, which give a full account of Herod's death).
 - a. From this seat Herod made a speech and the people shouted that it was the voice of a god (cf Acts 14:1-13).
 - b. Interestingly, neither Luke nor Josephus record the message or the subject of the message. Herod allowed the flattery of the crowd, which exalted him to god status, to go unchecked (cf Jude 16).

2. Immediate punishment was meted out because he accepted the praise rather than giving the praise to God.
 - a. “[E]aten of worms” is hard to pinpoint. It might have been intestinal worms that killed Herod. Josephus wrote that Herod had rotting flesh. He lingered for five days and his flesh produced worms (cf Job 7:5).
 - b. He “gave up the ghost,” or died, in this condition (cf Matt 23:12).
3. Despite the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter the gospel continued to spread and gain strength (cf Acts 19:20).
 - a. Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch after taking aid to the needed saints in Jerusalem (cf Acts 11:30).
 - b. They brought John Mark back with them (notice v 12).
 - c. All of the pieces are now in place for the first evangelistic journey to being from Antioch.

Acts 13

The Holy Ghost separates Barnabas and Saul for the work of evangelism.

- I. The church of Christ in Antioch sent forth Barnabas and Saul (1-3).
 - A. Antioch had prophets and teachers within the church.
 1. “[P]rophets” was an office in the early church. (For more information on prophets see Chapter 11 outline, IV, A)
 2. “[T]eachers” was probably an office which had been given the gift of teaching by the Holy Ghost (cf Rom 12:6, 7; 1 Cor 12: 28, 29; Eph 4:7, 8, 11).
 3. These are the same descriptions used of Barnabas and Saul at the end of chapter 11 (vv 25-27).
 - B. Several individuals are mentioned by name:
 1. Barnabas, who seems to be the primary person at this point.
 2. Simeon, called Niger. Nothing more is known of this man.
 3. Lucius of Cyrene. Mentioned again by Paul in Romans 16:21.
 4. Manaen, “which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch.” This nine-word phrase comes from a single Greek word which means *a fellow-nursling*. Possibly a foster brother.

Note: This is the Herod that had John the baptizer beheaded (cf Mk 6:16, 17).
 5. Saul (Paul) is mentioned last.
 - C. It is from this group of men who were working and fasting the Holy Ghost asked Barnabas and Saul to be separated.
 1. “As they ministered to the Lord” means they were about the business of serving the people (cf Lk 1:23, cf Rom 15:27; Col 4:17; 2 Tim 4:5, 11).
 2. God called them to carry the message (cf Acts 9:15, 16; 26:16-18).
 3. Fasting is not a requirement for Christians, but we have examples of many Christians fasting, especially in trying times (cf 1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 6:5).
 4. After fasting and praying they laid their hands on them.
 - a. We know there were times when the laying on of hands was the way to transfer the gifts of the Holy Ghost (cf 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).
 - b. That was not the case here at Antioch. The fact is, we do not know for sure the significance of this act.
- II. The first evangelistic journey begins at Antioch (4-13).
 - A. Barnabas and Saul were “sent forth” (also used in Acts 17:10) by the church through the authority of the Holy Ghost (see v 2).
 1. The first place on the list of cities to visit is Seleucia. A city about sixteen miles west of Antioch located near the sea coast at the mouth of a river.
 - a. Seleucia would be advantageous in seeking a ship to sail westward.
 - b. From this port they boarded a ship and sailed to Cyprus, Barnabas’ home land (cf Acts 4:36).

- c. The gospel had already been preached on this island (cf Acts 11:19).
- 2. When they landed on Cyprus they started at the city of Salamis, an eastern port city.
 - a. They moved across the island preaching in the synagogues of the Jews (cf Rom 1:16).
 - b. This was the standard mode of operation as the church took the gospel to the world (cf Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1).
 - c. John (Mark) was assisting them in this work. Since Cyprus was Barnabas' home island and he and John were related, they may have gotten John to join their efforts when he learned this island was to be their first stop (cf Col 4:10).
 - d. Preaching their way across the island, they came to the city of Paphos, where they came into contact with a sorcerer named Barjesus (son of Jesus or Joshua; note Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8).
Note: For more information on sorcery see notes on Chapter 8, II.
 - e. Inspiration calls this man a "false prophet," which means *a religious imposter* (Strong's # 5578; cf Matt 7:15; 1 Jn 4:1).
 - f. "[D]eputy" (proconsul, NKJ) was a Roman official appointed by the senate. This would be the same political position of Pilate (Matthew 27:2) and Felix (Acts 23:24).
 - g. He was a sagacious man (intelligent, NKJ), which means he had good mental judgment (cf Prov 14:15, 18).
 - h. He called for Barnabas and Saul to hear the gospel taught.
 - i. Verse 8 uses the name Elymas, which is actually a word translated from Arabic which means *sorcerer* (cf Jn 1:41). So, it becomes a description of the man and not his proper name.
 - j. Elymas tried to influence the deputy away from Christianity (cf 2 Tim 3:8; 4:14, 15).
Note: Verse 9 is the first time the name "Paul" is used in scriptures.
 - k. The Holy Ghost, working through Paul, did not allow Elymas to hinder the gospel.
 - l. Paul had harsh words for this imposter; "full of all subtilty" (deceit, NKJ), "all mischief" (fraud, NKJ), "child of the devil" and "enemy of all righteousness" (cf Jn 8:44).
 - m. By the power of God Elymas became blind.
Note: The word "mist" is used in no other scripture. It is the medical term for dimming (remember, the book is penned by a physician, Colossians 4:14).
 - n. This miracle astonished the deputy. It is the same word translated *amazed* in Luke 2:48; 9:43.

- o. The power of the gospel was confirmed before his eyes.
 - B. They had now traveled across the island of Cyprus and departed the island from the city of Paphos and sail to the city of Perga, in Pamphylia.

Note: This places them in southern Turkey, by our modern maps.

 - 1. This is the first time Paul is mentioned before Barnabas. From this point forward in Luke's narrative Paul will usually be listed first (notice v 1).
 - 2. It seems Paul is now the lead person on this trip ("Now Paul and his company" v 13).
 - 3. The only notable fact we have recorded about the visit to Perga was that John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem at some point between Paphos and Perga. (cf Acts 15:37, 38).
 - a. We are not told the specifics of this separation. Speculation abounds, but we have no facts.
 - b. Paul was deeply affected by John's abandonment. Feelings that would last into the beginning of the next evangelistic journey.

Note: Saul will now be called Paul in most every case, except when he refers to himself (cf Acts 22:7 13; 26:14).
- III. Paul preaches in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia (14-41).
- A. Paul responds to an invitation to speak before the Jews in Antioch (14-16).
 - 1. They entered the synagogue on Saturday (Sabbath day) because that was where the Jews were.
 - 2. Paul was a special ambassador to the Gentiles, but usually gave the Jews the first chance to hear the good news about the Messiah (cf Acts 17:2).
 - 3. The reading of the law and the prophets appear to be a regular part of the worship in the synagogue (cf Lk 4:16; Acts 15:21).
 - 4. The rulers asked if they had any "exhortation for the people" to speak it forth.
 - a. After the reading of scriptures, a sermon followed (the exhortation), much like our assemblies today.
 - b. This was all the opening Paul needed to begin speaking to the assembled Jews.
 - 5. He stood and beckoned with his hand to get their attention and began his teaching by calling them "men and brethren." This was a common way of addressing the Jews by both Peter and Paul, e.g., Acts 1:16; 2:29; 23:1, 6.
 - 6. "Men of Israel" is exactly the way Peter began his famous sermon on Pentecost in Acts 2:22.
 - 7. Beginning with verse 17 we enter into Paul's first recorded sermon.
 - B. Paul reminds them of the early days of the Hebrews, from Egypt to settling in the Promised Land and on through King David (17-22).
 - 1. Paul emulates Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 by recounting the history of the Hebrew people.

- a. Because the Jews were a proud people this approach was a sure way to gain their attention at the very beginning of the sermon (cf Gen 17:7, 8).
 - b. The children of Israel came to Egypt as invited and honored guests, but through time they became undesirable (cf Ps 105:23, 24; Acts 7:17).
 - c. With a “high arm” (uplifted arm, NKJ) probably has reference to God when Moses was before Pharaoh (cf Ex 6:1, 6).
 2. God led them out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, through the wilderness on the east side of the Gulf of Suez and then on to Mount Sinai.
 - a. The people murmured and were rebellious toward God and Moses during this journey, but God “suffered” them (put up with, NKJ; cf Deut 1:31; 32:10).
 - b. The forty years of wandering were directly related to their sinful conduct (cf Ex 16:2; Num 14:33, 34; Heb 3:16-19).
 3. Paul states that God destroyed the seven nations because the Hebrew people could not have done it without Him (cf Deut 7:1).
 4. The 450-year period mentioned in verse 20 is probably not an exact number, but rather an approximation (cf 1 Kgs 6:1). Notice the word “about.”
 - a. Samuel was the last of the judges and the one who anointed Saul to be the first king (cf 1 Sam 9:27-10:1).
 - b. Saul reigned over Israel for forty years.
Note: All three kings that ruled over Israel ruled for forty years each.
 5. David replaced Saul as king (cf 1 Sam 16:1).
 - a. David is described as being a man after God’s own heart (cf 1 Sam 13:14).
 - b. David was a man with copious amounts of sin in his life. This statement might refer to his desire to obey God rather than his lack of sin (cf 1 Kgs 15:3).
- C. God’s promise of a Savior came through the lineage of David (23-27).
1. Paul references the sacred scriptures so the Jews would more readily accept the Messiah (cf Is 11:10; Matt 1:1).
 2. John, the baptizer, first preached in Judea (cf Matt 3:1, 2).
 - a. John was a few months older than Jesus (cf Lk 1:24-31, 41-44). Probably about six months older.
 - b. It appears he started preaching a few months before Jesus also (“before His coming” which means before Jesus started His public ministry, v 24; cf Matt 3:11-13).
 - c. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance, but remission of sins was also part of that baptism (cf Lk 3:3).
 3. John’s course (purpose) was not as the Messiah, but rather to prepare the way for the Messiah (cf Jn 1:19-23).

- a. Paul used this same word concerning himself in Acts 20:24 and 2 Timothy 4:7.
Note: At baptism we have taken on a new purpose, a new course, a new direction in life (cf Rom 12:2, a transformation).
- b. This was Jesus' attitude during His ministry (cf Jn 4:34).
- 4. Paul wanted them to accept Jesus as the Messiah so he used the most respectful language possible to entice them.
 - a. The ASV has "to us" (v 26) rather than "to you" in this verse. This is the preferred translation. The Greek word is almost always translated "us" in the KJV, e.g., 1 John 1:8-10; 4:12, 13.
 - b. Paul presents Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecies for both Jews and Gentiles (cf Lk 24:47; Acts 10:35).
- 5. In verse 27 Paul offers ignorance as the reason the Jews in Jerusalem killed the Messiah.
 - a. Peter used the same excuse in Acts 3:17.
 - b. Later, Paul will use the same defense for his own actions in 1 Timothy 1:13.
 - c. They were not ignorant men, but rather ignored the teachings of the prophets which were read each Sabbath day (cf Lk 24:25-27).
 - d. God knew they would ignore His words and in doing so they fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Christ (cf Matt 26:54-56; Acts 26:22, 23).
 - e. It takes more than knowledge of the scriptures to be acceptable. It also takes wisdom, comprehension and context to get all we should get for our knowledge (cf Col 2:1-3; James 1:5, 22; 3:17). Then it has to be applied in obedience.
- D. The Jews killed the Messiah, but God raised Him from the dead (28-31).
 - 1. Even though there was no reason for Him to be condemned they demanded that Pilate put Him to death anyway (cf Matt 27:1, 2; Lk 23:4).
 - a. Paul emphasizes the details of the death of the Messiah were in accordance with what the prophets had foretold (cf Lk 18:31-33; 24:27; Jn 19:36, 37).
 - b. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were the two involved in removing Him from the cross (tree) and placing Him in the tomb (cf Jn 19:38-42).
Note: For more information on "tree" see notes on Chapter 5, III, C, 3.
 - 2. The resurrection of Christ was the foundational point of Paul's sermon (cf Acts 2:24; 17:31).
 - a. As proof of the resurrection Paul offers eye-witnesses of the miraculous event (cf 1 Cor 15:5-7).
 - b. The apostles were uniquely qualified as witnesses to the people for the risen Christ (cf Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32).

- E. Paul used David and the Psalms to solidify Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah (32-37).
1. In verse 32 Paul includes Barnabas in the preaching of the gospel (good news or “glad tidings”).
 Note: ‘Good news’ is never used in the KJV. Good or glad tidings is used six times, e.g., Luke 2:10; 8:1; Romans 10:15.
 - a. The “glad tidings” was for them as it is for us today; the salvation of our souls from eternal damnation (cf Mk 3:29; Rom 3:8; 13:2).
 - b. Promises were made and God keeps His promises (cf Acts 26:6).
 2. Paul then quotes Psalm 2:7.
 - a. God acknowledged Jesus as His son at His baptism in Matthew 3:16, 17.
 - b. Paul refers to Christ at His resurrection as being “the son of God with power” in the opening chapter of Romans (cf Rom 1:4).
 - c. The end of verse 33 “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” is possibly a reference to Jesus’ resurrection rather than His birth (cf Rev 1:5; also see Colossians 1:15, 18). Plus, the resurrection fits the context of Paul’s sermon (see v 34)
 Note: “Only begotten” as used in John 1:14, 15 refers to His incarnation, but comes from a completely different word in the original.
 - d. The word “corruption” (v 34) refers to death or the grave (cf Rom 6:9) i.e., the body decaying.
 - e. The body of Lazarus was raised from the dead (cf Jn 11:39-44), only to die again. Not the Savior’s body.
 3. Paul then refers to another Psalm (Psalm 16:10).
 - a. Peter used the same Psalm and the same argument on the day of Pentecost (cf Acts 2:23-31).
 Note: For further study on His resurrection see notes in Chapter 2, II, B.
 - b. Since God raised Jesus from the dead, He saw no corruption. This annihilates the false doctrine of Jesus not being raised from the dead.
- F. Paul urges the Jews to take advantage of remission of sins through the risen Christ (38-41).
1. This is the same message that Peter preached on Pentecost (cf Acts 2:38).
 2. That is the fact of the gospel, but they had to believe on Him for that fact to benefit them. Moses was not able to offer forgiveness of sins (cf Rom 3:24-28; 8:1).
 - a. These Jews are then warned (v 40) not to reject this opportunity (cf Mal 4:1; Matt 3:9; Heb 12:25).
 - b. Paul then quotes Habakkuk 1:5, which was a warning for Israel not to reject the long-awaited Messiah (cf Prov 1:24-28, 29).

- c. We know that most of them did reject Him and refused to obey, just as most of humanity rejects Him today. Mankind can expect nothing better from God than Israel received. They shall call and He shall not hear (cf Heb 5:9; 10:28, 29).

Note: This is the end of Paul's first recorded sermon.

IV. Mixed results from the preaching in Antioch of Pisidia (42-52).

A. The Gentiles at Antioch requested more teaching (42-49).

1. The Jews rejected the message, but the Gentiles were interested in the forgiveness of sins and scheduled to hear more about God's grace (cf Rom 3:24; Titus 2:11).
 - a. These Gentiles are called "proselytes," which were non-Jews who followed the Jewish religion (cf Acts 2:8-10).

Note: We can think of proselytes as converts to the Jewish religion (cf Matt 23:15).
 - b. The request was for more to be taught on the next Sabbath, but the text reveals (vv 42, 43) that Paul and Barnabas continued to teach immediately after the assembly dismissed. We teach when and where we can (cf Jn 4:35).
2. When the next Sabbath came most of the city gathered together to hear the gospel presented.
 - a. We can assume that Paul and Barnabas did a great deal during the week to cause excitement and anticipation about the message to be presented at the next Sabbath (cf Mk 1:33).
 - b. It would be impossible for the whole city to fit inside a synagogue. Maybe Paul preached to those inside and Barnabas to those gathered outside. Note that verse 46, which says they both spoke.
 - c. The Jews saw the gathering and the popularity of the message and were filled with envy. Envy is as old as mankind, e.g., Cain and Abel (cf Ecc 4:4; James 3:14-16; 4:5).
 - d. The Jews blasphemed the preaching of Paul, which means they spoke against him (cf Jude 10).
3. The preachers would not let the words of the Jews keep them from fulfilling their mission (cf Eph 6:19, 20).
 - a. It was necessary for the Jews to get first chance at God's salvation under the new law (cf Lk 24:47; Rom 2:10).

Note: Remember the divine outline at the beginning of this book (Acts 1:8).
 - b. Because of a hard-heart, the Jews rejected the opportunity for salvation. It was a common way of these people (cf Jn 1:11; Acts 7:51).

- c. In verse 47 Paul refers to a command. Paul was not there to receive the marching orders with the other apostles (Mk 16:15). This command comes from Isaiah 49:6.
- 4. The word “ordained” in verse 48 (appointed- NKJ) was a result of gladly hearing the word and glorifying that word. They accepted what the Jews rejected. The same word is used by Paul in Acts 22:10.
- B. The Jews tried to stir up trouble in Antioch, but God’s word prevailed (50-52).
 - 1. It was common for the Jews to incite others when things did not go as they wished (cf Acts 6:12; 17:13).
 - 2. “[D]evout and honorable women” (prominent- NKJ) were women of influence in Antioch.

Note: the term ‘devout and honorable’ or even the word ‘prominent’ does not mean they were spiritually correct. Because women always have had great influence on men, they need to be the more cautious.

 - a. Possibly using these women to influence their men so they would not leave Judaism.
 - b. The “chief men” might be these women’s husbands or possibly high-ranking officials of that city.
 - c. They stirred up trouble for the preachers and, as a result, got them ran out of town (cf 2 Tim 3:11).
 - d. As depressing as that would be, it seemed not to slow down these great men. Shook the dust off their feet and moved to the next town. A dramatic but common gesture, it appears in passages such as Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:11).
 - e. Iconium was about forty-five miles east of Antioch.
 - f. Joy was the result of the message preached and received (cf Rom 14:17).
 - g. When a person understands the burden alleviated through obedience to the gospel it causes ecstasy of the mind (cf Rom 15:13).

Acts 14

The first evangelistic journey continues in Iconium, Lystra, then Derbe.

At Derbe they begin to backtrack through all the cities until they reach the city of Antioch, where they began.

- I. The gospel goes to Iconium, where they had to flee for their lives. From Iconium they traveled to cities of Lycaonia (1-7).

- A. Preaching in Iconium caused many Jews and Greeks to believe (cf Acts 13:43; 17:4).

Note: “Believe” is used as a synecdoche for obeying the plan of salvation (Acts 6:7; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 1:22. It takes more than belief, alone, to be saved, Mark 1:24; James 2:19). The definition of a synecdoche is “*a figure of speech in which a specific part of something is used to refer to the whole thing.*”

1. As in most of the major cities, they went first to the synagogue when they entered the city (cf Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14; 18:4).
 - a. There they had tremendous success preaching to the Jews and Greeks.
 - b. Multitudes turned away from Judaism and embraced Christianity (cf Rom 1:16. 10:12). The Greeks would be giving up paganism.
 2. Opposition came to these evangelists from the same source as in Antioch, the unbelieving Jews (cf 1 Thess 2:15, 16).
 - a. “[U]nbelieving” (v 2) is often translated as disobedience (cf Rom 10:21; 1 Pet 2:8).
 - b. To have salvation presented and then ignored is more than simple rejection in God’s mind. He sees it as being disobedient.
 - c. It was not enough for these disobedient Jews to reject salvation, they felt the need to stir up the Gentiles against the preachers (cf Acts 17:5, 13).
 3. The persecution did not deter them from the work of evangelizing. The good they were doing out-weighed the problems they were facing (an important lesson in any age). There was a great number of converts that needed teaching and encouragement (cf 1 Cor 16:8, 9).
 - a. They continued boldly as the Lord gave testimony “unto the word of his grace” (cf Acts 20:24; 1Thess 2:2).
 - b. Miracles were performed in Iconium by Paul and Barnabas, which was the way the Lord gave “testimony” through these evangelists (cf Heb 2:4).
 - c. Luke records that they stayed in Iconium for a “long time,” (v 3) which is vague, but reveals their stay there was probably longer than other places they visited.

Note: The longer he stayed and preached the more success for the cause of Christ and conversely, the more the Jews opposed him.

- B. The city was divided and Paul and Barnabas were unsafe in Iconium (4-7).

1. This type of division is what can be expected when the true gospel is preached. Some will believe and others will oppose the truth (cf Lk 12:51-53; Jn 7:43).
 - a. This happens with many of our families and friends even today (cf Matt 10:34-36).
 - b. We can see the influence the Jewish leaders had on the proselytes, which is not unusual. We must care more for truth than human alliances (cf Jn 8:32, 36; 17:17).
 - c. This is the first time that Paul and Barnabas are classified as apostles (v 14). The term here probably means messengers, dispatched by the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:2, 3). It is the same word as used in Philippians 2:25 as ‘messenger.’
 - d. Paul does make the application of apostleship to both of them in 1 Corinthians 9:5, 6.
 - e. Caution must be exercised in applying the title of apostle. Several were given the designation who did not meet the requirements of Christ’s apostles (cf Jn 15:27).
 - f. The word *apostle* is used in a secondary sense in several places in the New Testament, i.e., 2 Corinthians 11:13 (false teachers); Galatians 1:19 (Jesus’ brother); compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1 with 2:6 (Silvanus and Timothy). Note: Inspiration teaches Paul’s apostleship was equal to the twelve apostles (cf Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1).
 2. An assault (violent attempt, NKJ) was made by both Jews and Gentiles who intended to stone them (cf 2 Tim 3:11),
 - a. We are not told if they were warned of the attack by inspiration or by a friend (cf Acts 17:13, 14).
 - b. Lystra was about twenty miles east and Derbe was a city near to Lystra. Note: This is the city where Paul comes in contact with Timothy (cf Acts 16:1, 2).
 - c. Spreading the gospel is the motive behind their journey and they quickly get back to preaching.
- II. An impotent man was healed in Lystra and then those people attempted to worship Paul and Barnabas (8-20).
- A. A man crippled from birth is healed similar to Peter and John’s healing in Acts 3:1, 2, 7-9 at the temple.
1. Luke (a physician) further adds that this man had never walked. There would be complete muscle atrophy.
 - a. Interestingly, the word translated “impotent” is most often translated as *impossible* in the KJV (cf Matt 19:26; Heb 6:4, 18; 11:6).

- b. Without miraculous intervention it would have been impossible for this man to rise and walk (same word used in Romans 8:3).
- 2. Paul, observing this man, understood in some fashion that he had believed the message and should be healed (cf Matt 9:28, 29; Mk 10:52).
 - a. Speaking with a loud voice would ensure that everyone would ascertain what was about to happen (cf Jn 11:43).
 - b. He “leaped and walked” immediately. The words in the original mean he leaped up in a single bound and began to walk.
- 3. After witnessing this amazing feat, the people spoke in a language unfamiliar to Paul and Barnabas declaring them gods incarnate (cf Acts 28:6).
 - a. The idea of gods being in the “likeness of men,” or having human attributes, is very common. Humans do this so we can better relate. It is called anthropomorphizing (cf Ex 33:22, 23).
 Note: It must be kept in mind that these people were heathen idol worshippers. To give the result of this miracle to a god they were familiar with would be natural. They were steeped in the poems of men like Homer and Ovid.
 - b. They call Barnabas Jupiter, (Zeus- Greek, NKJ) whom the Romans appropriated from Greek mythology. The king of all mythological gods.
 - c. Paul they call Mercurius (Hermes = Greek, NKJ) the messenger god of the Romans. He was usually depicted as wearing winged sandals.
- 4. The priests of Jupiter were about to make sacrifices unperceived by Paul and Barnabas because of the language barrier.
 - a. “[B]efore the city” (v 13) means the city had either a statue or a temple near the city gate.
 - b. Many ancient writers mentioned the elaborate fashion in which the sacrificial oxen were adorned (Ovid).
 - c. The tearing of clothing was prevalent in both previous dispensations (cf Gen 37:29-34; 2 Kgs 19:1; Job 1:20; Jer 36:24).
- 5. “[M]en of like passions” means the preachers were subject to the same nature (needs) as all those present (cf James 5:17).
 - a. They taught them to turn from “vanities” (useless things, NKJ) and worship the God of heaven and earth.
 - b. All nations (except the Jews, when they were under Moses’ law) were without written laws to guide them (cf Acts 17:30).
 - c. He did give them natural things, which supplied their needs and should have pointed them to the Divine sustainer (cf Ps 19:1, 2; Rom 1:20).
 - d. With these persuasive arguments they were scarcely able to stop the sacrifice.

- B. The diabolical zeal of these enemies of the gospel caused them to travel great distances to spread their vial opposition to these preachers (cf Acts 13:45, 50, 51).
 1. We often speak of the devotion and zeal of the early evangelists. The persecutors seem to be just as zealous in their evil work.
 - a. The same thing can be observed today in the dynamic way false doctrine is spread in our communities.
 - b. We observe the pendulum swing from the people exalting Paul as a god to stoning him, apparently to death (cf Acts 17:13).
 - c. It appears that they stoned Paul and then drug him out of the city. This is a different sequence than when Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58).
 - d. Those who stoned Paul thought he was dead. Luke seems to imply that he was not dead, but appeared to be dead (cf 2 Cor 11:23, 25; 2 Tim 3:11).
 - e. This stoning may have been part of the reason Paul penned Galatians 6:17.
 2. As the disciples gathered around the bloody body of Paul, possibly thinking they needed to make burial arrangements, he arose.
 - a. Many think Paul was indeed dead and God brought him back to life. Whether that is true or not is simply unknowable to us. Paul was able to make a twenty mile walk to Derbe the day after the stoning. Whether dead or almost dead we see God's miraculous power was at work.
 - b. It is not revealed how Barnabas escaped the same fate.
- III. Paul and Barnabas traveled back to the cities they had visited and strengthened the new converts (21-28).
 - A. This first evangelist trip has now reached its greatest extent. Luke passes over many of the details as the trip begins the return leg.
 1. "[T]aught many" (v 21) is written immediately after the physical and mental trials of Lycaonia.
 Note: This writer wonders if God healed Paul's physical wounds or if the people of Derbe saw the evidence of the stoning he suffered. He would have been an unsightly mess if he was not divinely healed.
 2. Nothing would stop Paul from his assigned task of preaching the gospel (cf Acts 9:15, 16).
 - a. The cities of Iconium and Antioch are the cities from which the instigators of the stoning had come.
 - b. It took great courage to revisit these cities, but the new converts needed strengthening and encouragement (cf Acts 18:23).
 - c. Exhortation is one of the great blessings of being a mature Christian. It can add so much clarity and peace to those younger in the faith (cf 2 Cor 1:4; 7:13; Eph 6:22).
 - d. Luke also mentions "much tribulation," (v 22) which means that Christians should expect earthly trials (cf Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 3:12).

- e. The road to the eternal kingdom is strait (narrow, NKJ) and not always easy. The reward, however, will be worth the effort (cf Matt 7:13, 14; 1 Thess 3:4; 2 Tim 1:8).
- 3. They ordained elders in every church. These were congregations which were established a relatively short time previously (two or three years, at the most).
 - a. A number of factors need to be mentioned in connection with the appointment of these elders “in every church:”
 - 1) There was a plurality of elders in every church. God never intended for one man to control His congregations (never a single “pastor” rule, or evangelistic oversight). The minister is a member of the congregation and is under the oversight of the eldership.
 - 2) There was either a large number of remarkable men in these congregations or there was divine help in allowing these men to meet the qualifications of the office of an elder, because qualified men were selected (appointed, NKJ) in every congregation (cf 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
 - 3) Maybe 1 Corinthians 12:8 gives us an insight into gifts of the Spirit being used in the first century to assist men in qualifying for this office.
 - b. They were “commended” (v 23) which is a word that is often translated *to set before*, i.e., Mark 6:41; 8:6, 7.
 - 1) According to Robertson’s NT Word Pictures this word means *to entrust, to deposit, as in a bank*.
 - 2) The same word is used in 2 Timothy 2:2.
- B. Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch via the cities in which they had already taught the gospel (cf Acts 13:13, 14).
 - 1. There is no specific reference of them preaching in Pisidia the first time through, but we can assume they made the effort. It was the singular purpose of their travels (cf Acts 13:2).
 - 2. It appears these men retraced their steps until they got to Perga, the very place John Mark left them (cf Acts 13:13).
 - a. Attalia was a sea-port city (not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible).
 - b. They were probably looking for passage back to Antioch.
 - c. It is hard to determine if these men were in a hurry to return to Antioch or if Luke was not given (by inspiration) a lot of the details of the return trip.
 - 3. When they arrived back in Antioch, they gathered the church and told them of all that had transpired in these Gentile cities (cf Acts 21:20-22).
 - a. The idea of an open “door” was common usage for Paul (cf 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3).
 - b. The same symbolism is used for the church in Philadelphia (cf Rev 3:7, 8).

- c. Even after all the problems they encountered, Paul saw the great work of God among the Gentile world. He will plan and execute additional evangelistic trips.
- C. An analysis of the first journey is as follows:
 - 1. Approximately 1,300 miles traveled; about 500 miles of which would be by water.
 - 2. Between two and three years invested in the trip, mostly on foot.
 - 3. Many churches were established, scripturally organized and fully functional.
 - 4. Paul and Barnabas were successful, God was glorified, and His Son's church flourished in these Gentile cities.

Acts 15

The council at Jerusalem concerning circumcision. The second evangelist trip is planned.

I. In Jerusalem the question of circumcision arises for the Gentile converts made during the first evangelistic trip (1-3).

A. “And certain men” must have been converts from Judaism who were ready to insist that any follower of God must be circumcised according to the Law of Moses (cf Gal 2:4).

Note: It is probable that the information recorded in Galatians 2:1-10 is the same event recorded in Acts 15 in Jerusalem. If that is true, we have an accurate time frame for these events (cf Gal 2:1, 2). In the book of Galatians, Paul emphasizes justification by faith in Christ, not by the Law of Moses.

1. Circumcision was part of the Law of Moses (cf Lev 12:3), but the fact is, circumcision was given to Abraham hundreds of years earlier (cf Gen 17:9-13; Jn 7:22).

2. These “certain men” insisted that if a convert was not circumcised, they could not be saved (cf Gal 5:6).

a. This false doctrine was the primary reason the apostle Paul was compelled to write so much information about false teachers in his epistles (cf Rom 16:17; Gal 1:6, 7; 1 Tim 1:7; Titus 1:10).

b. Paul and Barnabas did not go to Jerusalem to allow the “council” to decide what was right on this doctrine. Paul and Barnabas had the truth, and the other apostles and leaders needed to be taught that God had already settled the matter.

Note: Galatians 2:2 states Paul went to Jerusalem “by revelation.” He was sent there by the people in Antioch. He was directed to go to Jerusalem by the Holy Ghost, so everyone would understand the truth.

c. The prejudice of the Jews was a hard thing to expel. If the apostles and other leaders remained partial and pernicious, then the church of Christ was doomed to the same prejudices that the Jews suffered from.

d. Peter had already experienced this same problem after the conversion of Cornelius (cf Acts 11:1, 2).

e. The contention was not about Cornelius’ conversion, but rather Peter entering his house and did eat with him (cf Acts 11:3).

B. When the question of circumcision could not be resolved, Paul and Barnabas, along with several witnesses of the conversions, made a trip to

Jerusalem (among whom was Titus, who was not circumcised Galatians 2:1, 3).

Note: This was approximately a 300-mile journey south

1. “[N]o small dissension” means there was a big disturbance about circumcision of the new converts. It is the same word translated *uproar* in Acts 19:40.
 - a. Also, the same word is translated *insurrection* (rebellion, NKJ) concerning Barabbas in Mark 15:7.
 - b. This was no minor disagreement. Paul was a man who was willing to become “all things to all men” (1 Corinthians 9:22), yet would not allow false doctrine to gain a foot-hold in the church of Christ.
 - c. Altruistic perspectives in tolerance, kindness and sympathy should be our mantle; but to give place to sinful practices cannot be allowed in the teaching of the church (cf Gal 2:4, 5).
2. It appears the church sent them on their way with all the necessary supplies for the journey (cf Rom 15:24).
 - a. They journeyed south from Antioch through the regions of Phenice (Phoenicia, NKJ) and Samaria, making known the conversions of the Gentiles as they traveled.
 - b. This caused great joy among the saints (cf Acts 11:18; 13:48).

II. When they arrive at Jerusalem the Judizing teachers waste no time in presenting their position (4-12).

- A. The church, apostles and elders “received” Paul, Barnabas and the others from Antioch (cf Acts 21:17; Col 4:10).
1. This was Paul’s third visit to Jerusalem since his conversion (cf Acts 9:26; 12:25).
 2. It appears the welcome in Jerusalem was warm and cordial, until a sect of the “Pharisees which believed” spoke up about wanting the Gentiles to conform to the Law of Moses.
 - a. These messengers from Antioch told the church in Jerusalem “all things that God had done” while preaching in the Gentile cities (cf Acts 21:19).
 - b. Paul and Barnabas had done the work, but they knew God was the one who deserved the credit (cf 1 Cor 15:10).
 - c. Some of the Pharisees had become Christians, which may refer back to Acts 6:7.

Note: It seems these Pharisees who believed were woefully short of being truly converted. Christianity is for those who obey Christ, not for those who obey His teachings, plus or minus something else (cf Heb 5:9; 1 Pet 1:22).

- d. The issue went beyond circumcision alone. They wanted the Gentiles to follow all the Law of Moses (cf Gal 2:16, 21).
 - e. Even after they believed, they still did not understand that the law was given to lead them to Christ (cf Gal 3:24).
- B. This matter needed to be discussed not because they had to decide right from wrong. Paul was inspired and commissioned by the Holy Ghost. It needed to be discussed so that everyone would believe and teach the same doctrine about salvation.
 - 1. From verses 4 and 22 we see the whole church was involved in this, not just the leaders. Church leaders do not get to decide right and wrong; God has already done that in His written word. Leaders simply enforce the God-given rules and encourage people to follow those rules.
 - a. The word “consider” has a common definition of *to look at carefully, examine* (Webster’s); however, the word used here is often translated by *know, knew* or *knowing* (Acts 19:32; 20:22, 25).
 - b. These men in Jerusalem came together to *know* about this matter, not to decide what was right.
 - 2. As the case so often is, when men gather together to resolve an issue there is “much disputing.”
 - a. In H. Leo Boles’ commentary, he writes that the word “disputing” means *to debate*. Honest debate is both good and healthy.
 - b. The question was important. Were they going to follow the new law, the old law, or some form of hybrid law?
 - 3. Peter, who apparently had remained quiet during this debate, finally spoke up and interjected his own account of the household of Cornelius (cf Acts 10:32-35).
 - a. Peter said that the events at Cornelius’ house transpired “a good while ago.” Maybe as many as ten or twelve years previous.
 - b. Saul was converted in Chapter 9 in Damascus.
 - c. Peter went to Cornelius’ house in Chapter 10.
 - d. Paul said his conversion happened fourteen years before this trip to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1). This gives us a possible time-frame for “a good while ago.”
 - 4. Peter reminds these men that God had made “no difference” between Jews and Gentiles (cf Rom 3:9, 22).
 - a. Obedience to the gospel purified their hearts (cf 1 Pet 1:22).
 - b. Since God made no distinction between men, we should not make a distinction either (cf Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).

5. Peter wants to know why they would “tempt” (test, NKJ) God in this matter. Why would anyone want to provoke God (cf Matt 4:7)?
 - a. “[Y]oke” has reference to a burden. The context, plus Galatians 5:1, is obviously a reference to the Law of Moses. This may shed new light on Jesus’ statements in Matthew 11:30; 23:4.
 - b. If no Jew could fully and completely follow the Law of Moses to perfection (except Jesus), why would they want to place that yoke, that burden on the Gentiles (cf Eph 2:7-9; Titus 3:4-7)?
 - c. The word “we” in verse 11 must refer to those Jews who had been converted and expected God’s grace through Christ to allow them to obtain salvation.
6. After Peter spoke, the multitude quieted down. It seems the debate was over and they (“the multitude,” which indicates the whole church) were now ready to listen to Barnabas and Paul (cf Lk 5:6; 6:17).
 - a. Barnabas is mentioned before Paul during this trip to Jerusalem (v 25). He was either the better known or the more trusted of the two.
 - b. The purpose of Barnabas and Paul declaring the signs and miracles performed among the Gentiles was to convince the Jewish Christians that God was behind these events (cf Acts 19:11).

Note: This is the last passage in the book of Acts that mentions Peter.

III. James, the Lord’s half-brother, makes some summary statements concerning prophesy and suggests a plan to eliminate any future disagreement (13-21).

- A. James was a pillar in the Jerusalem church (cf Gal 2:9). Paul declared him to be both an apostle (in the secondary sense) and the Lord’s brother (Gal 1:19, cf Matt 13:55, 56; Jn 7:5).

Note: For a further discussion on Jesus and his half-brothers see An Outlined Study on the Book of John, same author, Chapter 7, Section I, A and B.

1. They gave James their attention when he asked for it. He had been an important person in the church since the death of James, the apostle (cf Acts 12:2).
2. James substantiates Peter’s statement about the Gentiles being visited by God (cf Lk 1:68).
3. James’ purpose was the same as Barnabas and Paul’s (6, b above); to convince the Jews that God was involved in the conversion of the Gentiles.
 - a. James then quotes words from a prophet to validate his statement (cf Amos 9:11, 12).

- b. The statement from Amos was proof that God intended to include the Gentiles in the lineage of David (cf Lk 1:69, 70).
 - c. “[T]he residue of men” (rest of mankind, NKJ) refers to those outside the Law of Moses (cf Mic 4:1, 2; Zech 2:11).
 - d. Verse 18 is stating that God always has a purpose and has intended to include the Gentiles from the beginning (cf Acts 17:26).
- B. James then offers his suggestion (judgment) to eliminate the issue. James held an important position within the church at Jerusalem. Possibly a leadership position since he spoke last.
 - 1. His opinion was “that we trouble not them” (cf Gal 1:7).
 - a. Not adding an extra burden, that might cause them to fall away (cf Gal 2:4; 5:13).
 - b. Any message but the gospel message will burden the hearer (cf Gal 1:6-10).
 - c. “[T]urned to God” (v 19) indicates the Gentiles’ conversion (cf Acts 26:20; 1 Thess 1:9).
 - 2. James declares an expedient way to promote spiritual purity, and yet not burden these new converts with vestiges of the old law is to write a letter expressing proper conduct.

Note: This decision was not in favor with the “sect of the Pharisees which believed” (v 5), but sided with Barnabas and Paul, the Holy Ghost concurring (v 28).
 - 3. James suggested that the new converts be encouraged to abstain in four different areas:
 - a. Pollutions of idol.
 - 1). Which means any kind of defilement with false gods.
 - 2). Possibly referring to meat sold in market places after being sacrificed to idols (cf 1 Cor 8:4; 10:25-29).
 - b. Fornication.
 - 1). The word used here (Greek,) refers to any illicit sexual activity. Adultery, incest, bestiality and all others forms of sexual immorality.
 - 2). It is the very the same word Jesus used in Matthew 19:9.
 - 3). It seems that this sin was prevalent in the Gentile world and it could not be brought into the church (cf Rom 1:29; Eph 5:3).
 - c. From things strangled.
 - 1). Draining the blood from an animal pre-dated the Law of Moses (all the way back to Noah and the first animals to be

eaten as food, Genesis 9:3, 4; incorporated in the old Patriarchal law. Leviticus 17:10-14, and carried into the law given by Moses).

2). The blood poured out of the animals has always pointed to the blood of our Savior that was poured out for the sins of the world (cf Matt 26:28).

d. From blood.

1). It seems that most commentators think this phrase refers to the eating of blood. One would think the idea of eating blood would be covered in “things strangled.”

2). It is possible that “blood” has reference to the shedding of innocent blood (cf Rom 3:12-15).

3). This sin goes all the way back to Cain (cf Gen 4:8-10).

4. Verse 21 is the reason these four things are noted by James. If the Gentiles insisted on involvement in these activities, it would increase the prejudice of the Jews toward the Gentiles.

Note: God has always been opposed to all four of these since the creation.

a. As Christians, we always have a responsibility to others. Paul had this sentiment when he penned 1 Corinthians 10:23.

b. Caution should be exercised when our actions could lead others to sin or to accept sin (cf Rom 15:1, 2; 1 Tim 1:4).

IV. The truth was victorious at Jerusalem and the whole church sent the message of acceptance to the church in Antioch (22-29).

A. Men were chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch in order to confirm the acceptance of the Gentiles based on obedience to the gospel of Christ (cf 2 Thess 1:8; Heb 5:9).

1. In these verses, we have another church problem averted by the entire church knowing and participating in the solution (cf Acts 6:4, 5).

2. Two “chosen men,” who were described as “chief men,” were selected to travel back to Antioch with Barnabas and Paul.

a. Judas, surnamed Barsabas, is not mentioned in any other passage. Since “bar” is the prefix meaning *son of*, it is possible that this man was brother to Joseph (cf Acts 1:23).

b. Silas is probably the companion of Paul in later travels (cf Acts 15:40; 17:10). Also known as Silvanus; 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

c. They were men of influence in Jerusalem and thought to be of benefit in collaboration of the facts at Antioch (cf 1 Pet 5:12).

B. The content of the letter was recorded by Luke (vv 23-29).

1. Fascinatingly, the text reads the “whole church” was of the same mind. The Pharisees “that believed” must have had a change of heart concerning adding any burdens (old law) to the converts (see v 25). Note: The only other possibility is that these Pharisees that believed withdrew themselves from fellowship with the church. When Luke recorded the “whole church” it means the decision was unanimous.
2. In verse 23 the churches of southern Galatia are included in receiving this letter (Cilicia).
 - a. The word “letters” is not in the original. It does not mean they wrote more than one letter, it simply means they wrote unto them (same word is used in 1 Peter 1:16; 5:12; 2 Peter 3:1).
 - b. The word “greeting” in verse 23 is a happy salutation. The Gentiles are called “brethren” (cf James 1:1, 2; 3 Jn 14).
 - c. It is probable that many of these new Gentile converts had no idea someone was challenging their conversion. Champions of the faith defended them and the Holy Ghost was harmonious.
3. Verse 24 refers back to verse 1 of this chapter. “And certain men” came to Antioch from Judea with words that troubled the new converts (cf Titus 1:10, 11; 1 Jn 2:19).
 - a. These men may have said they had come to Antioch with a message from the church in Jerusalem. James denies this with the words “to whom we gave no such commandment.”
 - b. Paul and Barnabas knew that this was not the case (see 15:2).
 - c. “[C]hosen men” were sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to verify this written message with words from their mouths (see v 27). Luke even records that the congregation in Jerusalem was of “one accord.”
4. Paul and Barnabas were highly praised for having “hazarded their lives” in the name of Jesus Christ (cf 1 Cor 15:30; Phil 2:29, 30).
5. The decision made in Jerusalem was not made by man’s opinion, but with the help of the Holy Ghost.
 - a. The “necessary things” mentioned in verse 28 were necessary to encourage healthier relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians, but not all of them were necessary for salvation.
 - b. Paul made it clear (through inspiration) that eating meat (offered to idols) was acceptable unless it affected a brother’s faith (cf Rom 14:14-17; 1 Cor 8:8-13; 9:19-22).
6. The message then lists the four “things” mentioned previously, in section III, B, 3.

- a. If the Gentile converts would refrain from these things they would “do well” according to the Holy Ghost. Harmony and peace are the desire of the Godhead for the church (cf Jude 20, 21).
- b. The message ends with “Fare ye well.” This comes from a single word in the original which means *to strengthen, have health, good bye* (Strong’s # 4517; cf 2 Cor 13:11).

Note: We would not think that the eating of meats offered to idols would be a problem for the modern-day Christians. Consider this, as Islam gains ground in every western culture. The meats that are marked with the designation of HALAL are meats that have been offered in sacrifice to Allah. The Muslim butcher must carry out the slaughter while saying Allah’s name. Literally, a pagan sacrifice and then the meat is offered to people like us (Christians) in our common stores for purchase (cf 1 Cor 8:1; 10:18-20, 28).

- V. These four men take the message back to Antioch (30-35).
 - A. They delivered the message and it was read to the church at Antioch (30-32).
 - 1. The message from Jerusalem caused rejoicing among the Gentile converts (cf Phil 3:3).
 - 2. The yoke of bondage (the old law) was not to burden these new Christians (cf Gal 5:1).
 - a. Tension may have been high as the Christians in Antioch waited for Paul and Barnabas to return from Jerusalem (cf Acts 15:1).
 - b. When the message was read, they “rejoiced for the consolation” (NKJ, rejoiced over its encouragement).
 - c. There was great reason to rejoice. Not only were they free from Judaism, but truth had prevailed over error in the early church.
 - 3. The word “prophets” in verse 32 is used as forth-tellers rather than foretellers (see v 27). They were teaching, exhorting and encouraging the brethren (cf 1 Thess 2:11; 1 Pet 5:12).
 - a. Judas and Silas “confirmed” (strengthened, NKJ) the brethren with positive words (cf Acts 14:22; 1 Cor 1:8).
 - b. Everyone needs encouragement and reassurance occasionally (cf Deut 3:28; 1 Thess 2:11).
 - B. Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas chose to remain in Antioch and build up the brethren (33-35).
 - 1. The four men stayed at Antioch for “a space” (a time, NKJ) and when the brethren there were sufficiently edified, they said it would be acceptable for the men to return to Jerusalem (cf Ex 4:18).

- a. They had done their job. The brethren felt comfortable and were ready to release the men back to Jerusalem.
 - b. It appears to be a formal dismissal, much like what is seen in Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50.
 2. Silas decided to remain in Antioch.
Note: Some think that verse 34 was added later to help explain verse 40. The verse is in the text of the *textus receptus*, from which the KJV is translated.
 3. Paul and Barnabas also make the decision to stay in Antioch (cf Acts 14:28).
 - a. There was work to be done in Antioch and these three men set about to preach and teach the word of the Lord (cf Col 1:28).
 - b. It does not say how long these men remained in Antioch, but it is likely that it is during this time is when we have the incident with Peter recorded in Galatians 2:11, 12.
- VI. The second evangelistic trip is planned (36-41).
- A. Paul is the one who suggests traveling back to the cities and congregations that he and Barnabas established in Chapters 13 and 14.
 1. He was both interested in them and concerned for them. The words “see how they do” indicates interest in their spiritual condition (cf Phil 1:27; 2 Tim 1:4).
 2. The original intent of Paul, on this second journey, was to revisit places they had been. We will see that the Holy Ghost had other ideas.
 - B. Barnabas wanted John (Mark) to go with them on this second trip (Acts 13:5).
 1. Barnabas and John were related, probably cousins (cf Col 4:10).
 2. Paul remembered that John had deserted them and the work in Pamphylia (cf Acts 13:13).
 3. This disagreement grew to the point that inspiration records “the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.” This was no minor disagreement (cf Acts 15:2).
 4. Several things should be noted in connection with this sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas:
 - a. It was a matter of opinion.
 - b. Paul knew John Mark by his actions in Pamphylia and did not want the same type of action from him in the future.
 - c. Barnabas was related to him and probably gave him latitude on his actions.
 - d. This was not a matter of faith, but of personal choice.
 - e. Even though the contention was sharp, the text does not

mention anger or misconduct from either man.

- f. We can disagree sharply with our brethren, but we are still obligated to conduct ourselves as Christians even in a “sharp” contention.
 - g. The end result of this contention, because these men maintained proper decorum, is that twice as many men were now evangelizing.
 - h. The island of Cyprus will be edified and encouraged by Barnabas and John Mark, while Paul goes to other areas previously visited.
Note: All of this was made possible because Christian men acted like Christian men, even when they disagreed.
Note: To coin a phrase used during the restoration movement in this country, “In matter of faith, unity. In matters of opinion, liberty. In all things love.”
5. The issue between them could not be resolved, so Barnabas took John Mark and sailed back to Cyprus, his home land (and possibly of John Mark also; cf Acts 4:36).
6. Paul then invited Silas to accompany him in his original purpose.
- a. Thus begins the second evangelistic tour. This tour will take us through Acts 18:22.
 - b. Many think that because verse 40 says that Paul and Silas were “recommended” by the church at Antioch that Paul was the one who was right in this contention.
 - c. The Holy Ghost is not swayed by opinion. Paul is the one Luke will write about as inspiration directs him, and will even join Paul on this particular trip.
Note: Luke will not mention Barnabas or John Mark again.
7. These two men leave the city of Antioch (the same city they departed from on the first trip) and journeyed through Syria and Cilicia (cf Gal 1:21).
- a. These are the regions to which the message composed in Jerusalem was directed. (cf Acts 15:23).
 - b. The message was read in Antioch, but the intent of the letter was for the converts in these areas.
 - c. The direction of their visit is reversed because they traveled first by land instead of by sea.
 - d. Paul was not a total stranger to the land route he selected (cf Acts 9:30).
 - e. Paul strengthened the churches as he visited them (cf Acts 18:23).

Acts 16

Paul and his traveling companions answer the Macedonian call.

- I. Paul and Silas go back to some of the cities visited by Barnabas and Paul on the first evangelistic trip (1-5).
 - A. They came to the cities of Derbe and Lystra.
 1. This was Paul's third visit to some of these cities (Acts 14:6, 21).
 2. Approaching the area on foot they came from the east and Derbe would be the first city they came to rather than the last (please see a good map of the area for reference).
 3. It was in the city of Lystra that the disciple Timotheus (Timothy) is introduced by Luke in this narrative (cf 2 Tim 1:2).
 - a. His mother was Jewish; his father was a Greek; a marriage of mixed nationalities and possibly mixed religions (cf 2 Tim 1:5).
 - b. Timothy is mentioned by name in ten of the thirteen books that Paul wrote.
 - c. Paul called him his "own son in the faith" (cf 1 Tim 1:2).
 - d. Also, Timothy had known "fully" what Paul suffered in Lystra, i.e., old enough to understand what had happened during Paul's first visit to this city (cf 2 Tim 3:10, 11).
 - e. Much has been said and written about Timothy being a young man (cf 1 Tim 4:12). The truth is that we have no idea how old this "young" man was in the context of Acts 16.

Note: Saul of Tarsus was called "a young man" in Acts 7:58. The word used for Saul comes from the same word used for Timothy (youth and young are based in the same word, Strong's # 3501). It would be very doubtful Saul was a teenager while being a leader among the Pharisees.
 4. Whatever Timothy's chronological age, he was of sufficient maturity to be highly regarded by those of Lystra and Iconium (his abilities might be a connection to 1 Timothy 1:18).
 5. The reason Paul circumcised Timothy is stated at the end of verse 3; "...for they knew all that his father was a Greek."
 - a. He was both Jew and Gentile and the Jews would have never listened to his preaching; therefore, for the sake of expediency, he was circumcised (cf 1 Cor 9:20).
 - b. The circumcision had nothing to do with salvation (cf Gal 5:2).
 - c. This is another case where an attempt is made to circumvent the prejudices of the Jews in order to save their souls, e.g., Acts 15:28, 29.

- d. Interestingly, Timothy grew up under the influence of both a strong mother and grandmother of the Jewish faith, yet was never compelled to be circumcised (cf 2 Tim 1:5).
 - B. These three men traveled through the cities sharing the message from Jerusalem, which refers to the four items mentioned in Acts 15:28, 29.
 - 1. The word “decrees” elevates those four “necessary things” to the status of obligation and not suggestion.
 - a. The same Greek word as used in Luke 2:1, Acts 17:7 and Colossians 2:14.
 - b. The council did not make the decision, the Holy Ghost did, therefore it was binding on the Gentiles (Acts 15:28).
 - 2. The efforts of Paul and Silas “established” (strengthened, NKJ) the Gentile congregations (cf 1 Thess 3:13; 1 Pet 5:10).
 - a. Luke had used this word (established) twice before (in Acts) to indicate strength, like an exercised muscle becoming strong (cf Acts 3:7, 16).
 - b. The truth about circumcision, and the united direction of the church, caused a favorable environment for more growth (cf Acts 12:24; 13:48, 49).
 - c. The cause of Christ is hampered in many places today because of the lack of a united front for Christianity. Our inability to work together is causing souls to be lost (cf 1 Cor 1:10, 11; 12:25).
- II. Paul receives what we commonly refer to as the Macedonian call (6-10).
 Note: The first two places mentioned in this passage are cities, the next two are regions.
 - A. The gospel was next taken to Phrygia and Galatia (cf Acts 18:23).
 - 1. The words “when they had gone throughout” come from a single Greek word which means *to traverse* (same word is used in Acts 14:24; 20:2).
 - 2. With new traveling companions (Silas and Timothy), Paul pushes on to new territory in spreading the gospel.
 - a. We know the gospel had great success in that region (cf 1 Cor 16:1).
 - b. Peter will write to these Christians also (cf 1 Pet 1:1).
 - B. The Holy Ghost forbade the gospel to be preached in Asia.
 - 1. We are not told, at this point, why the talented trio of teachers could not sow the seeds of the kingdom in that area and at that time.
 - a. Inference points to the necessity of hurrying the journey along to the sea coast.
 - b. We might think it unfair for the Holy Ghost to cause skipping over this large region in order to get the gospel preached in another place.
 - c. The area was not neglected. Asia is the region that all seven of the churches of Asia were in when John penned the beginning chapters of Revelation (cf Rev 1:4).

- d. Some have speculated that Paul became sick early in this evangelistic trip and could not preach (cf Gal 4:13).
- e. This speculation does not take into account the fact that Paul said he preached to them and that the other two men could amply share the gospel.
- 2. They came to the region of Mysia and wanted to turn north into Bithynia but the Spirit would not allow it (cf Rom 1:13).
 - a. The word “assayed” means *attempted* (tried, NKJ).
 - b. It appears they journeyed approximately 300 miles (most likely on foot) without any recorded preaching or conversions.
 - c. Sometimes we do not know why we are in a specific situation, but we always have to be ready to do the Lord’s work wherever we find ourselves (cf 1 Tim 6:18; Titus 3:1).
 - d. “And they passing by” (v 8) means they did not stop in Mysia to preach, but went on to Troas, a city located on the shore of the Aegean Sea (cf 2 Cor 2:12).
- 3. While in Troas, Paul received a vision in the night about a man from Macedonia who requested “help.”

Note: This seems to be a common way of God communicating in the first century. So far in the book of Acts it has happened to Ananias (Acts 9), Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10) and now Paul.

 - a. At this point Paul learns the reason the Spirit did not allow them to tarry in preaching along the way (cf 2 Cor 7:5).
 - b. The “help” desired was the preaching of the gospel. When it is shared correctly, the gospel helps in several basic ways; e.g., better husbands, better wives, better children, better friends, etc. (cf Rom 10:14; 16:25, 26).
- 4. Verse 10 is a very important passage in our understanding of the book of Acts. Luke, for the first time, uses the pronoun “we” here; indicating his presence with Paul, Silas and Timothy in this evangelistic effort (cf 2 Tim 4:11).
 - a. We will observe several places where Luke will give first-hand accounts of the events that he writes about (cf Acts 20:6; 21:1; Col 4:14).
 - b. The use of the word “us” in verse 10 indicates that the men shared the preaching responsibilities as they traveled (cf Acts 21:8).

III. Lydia and her household (11-15).

- A. They sailed from Troas across the Aegean Sea to land at Neapolis. The preachers were on European soil for the first time.

Note: They had traveled from modern day Turkey to Greece with the gospel.

- 1. Samothracia is an island in the northeast corner of the Aegean Sea.
- 2. Spending the night at Samothracia, the next day they sailed on to Neapolis, a port city about ten miles from Philippi.

- B. After spending several days in Philippi, they went down by the river on the Sabbath (Saturday) to preach to those who gathered there to worship.
1. This was the common approach of Paul in the Gentile cities (cf Acts 13:14, 42).
 2. Believers in God would be the obvious prospects for acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah (cf Luke 3:3, 4).
 - a. It appears that only women were assembled to worship. Often women are the strongest, most faithful people in a community or congregation (cf Rom 16:1, 13).
 - b. There are generally more women than men present in any of our worship services and Bible studies.
 - c. In verse 13 we see the words “where prayer was wont to be made” (where prayer was customarily made, NKJ) indicating predictable behavior on the part of these women. Regular and expected worship.
 Note: It took ten men to constitute a synagogue; maybe the meeting of these women by the river indicated insufficient numbers to assemble for an official worship under the Jewish Mishnah (oral traditions, Meghillah 4:4).
 3. Lydia, a seller of purple (purple fabrics or possibly the purple dye, which was highly prized and costly), gave attention to the message these men preached (cf Lk 19:48; Col 1:6).
 - a. This woman was from Thyatira (one of the seven churches of Asia, Revelation 2:18). Interestingly, she was from a city in the region the Holy Ghost forbade preaching by these men (v 6).
 - b. The opening of Lydia’s heart has long been a source of controversy. The Bible heart is the mind (intellect) of mankind (cf Matt 13:15; 15:19; Lk 2:19; Acts 28:27). Therefore, the meaning is God opened her mind to receive the message taught (cf Lk 24:45; Acts 11:21).
 - c. When the gospel is properly presented, it is always the power of the Holy Ghost that does the converting, not the man (cf Rom 10:17; 1 Thess 2:13).
 - d. After understanding the truth, she and her household were baptized (cf 1 Pet 3:21).
 Note: These are the first conversions in Europe by an apostle.
 Note: The order of conversation was typical; the word was spoken, the message was heard, the hearers paid attention to the words, they were baptized (the same as Acts 8:28ff).
 - e. Lydia showed Christian hospitality by opening her house to these preachers (cf 3 Jn 8).

IV. Preachers imprisoned at Philippi (16-24).

- A. In the city of Philippi was a certain “damsel” (slave girl, NKJ) who was being used by her masters to gain riches (cf 1 Tim 6:10).
 1. It appears the quartet of quality preachers (notice the use of “we” and “us”) journeyed to a specific place to pray, possibly on a regular basis (see v 13).
 - a. If there was no synagogue in the city they may have gone back to the river side, the site of the original converts in Philippi.
 - b. Verse 18 indicates this occurred many days in a row.
 2. “[T]he spirit of divination” in the original language is derived from “Python” a huge snake in Greek mythology, which Apollo killed.
 3. She followed the preachers and “cried” or shouted with a loud voice (same word used in Revelation 18:2; 19:17).
 4. She acknowledged them as being “servants of the most high God” (cf Mk 5:7; Lk 8:28).
 - a. It might appear, on the surface, that this would be the kind of advertisement the preachers would want to aid the gospel in a Gentile city.
 - 1). To permit demons to testify for the truth would be the same as admitting there was an alliance between them and these preachers (cf Eph 5:11; 1 Tim 4:1).
 - 2). It would have caused seducing spirits to be able to use the name of Christ to add credence to their false ways (cf 1 Tim 4:1, 2).
 - 3). Why then, we might ask, did not Paul put a stop to this the first time it happened? The text does not say why. Possibly, in casting out the demon this woman would be reduced to no value in the eyes of her masters. This is a case of a person becoming misused property.
 - 4). It is also possible the preachers were trying to avoid conflict, which would take away their freedom to move about the city, while they taught the people of Philippi (see vv 23, 24).
 - b. They offered “the way of salvation.” Since the beginning of the church in Acts 2 there has been one and only one way of salvation (cf Acts 2:38).
- B. When the demon was finally cast out, the masters of the damsel took Paul and Silas into custody.
 1. These men had had their income taken away (see v 16) and they wanted the rulers of the city to punish these preachers for their loss (cf 2 Pet 2:3).
Note: Their focus was on material gain, not on the great miracle preformed.
 - a. The “command” for this demon to come out of the girl was through, or by the authority of Jesus Christ (cf Rom 1:8; 5:11; Phil 4:13).
 - b. This authority (power) was what Jesus promised while here on earth (cf Mk 16:17; Lk 10:17-19).
 2. These men took Paul and Silas to the marketplace, or what we might consider a town square (same word used in Matthew 20:3 and Acts 17:17).

Note: It appears Luke and Timothy are spared this public humiliation, beating and prison time.

- a. It is possible that the actions of these men are what caused Paul to be “grieved” (v 18) and be slow to cast the demon out of this girl (see IV, A, 4, a).
 - b. It is interesting that these sinful men accused the preachers of being troublemakers in their city. Those men were extorting a slave girl for personal gain. Often, the ones who stand up for the right are accused of being troublemakers. Do not let accusations keep you from standing strong for the truth (cf 1 Kgs 18:17, 18).
 - c. Verses 20 and 21 indicate an attempt at patriotism (prejudice). They “being Jews,” we “being Romans.”
 - d. The Roman law allowed anyone to worship according to their own religion, but did not allow any new religion to be taught publicly.
Note: For a further explanation concerning these Roman laws based on ancient authorities see: Aen. viii. v. 185; Cicero, De Legibus, lib. Ii. C. 8.
3. The multitude escalated the attack on Paul and Silas to the point of tearing the clothing off of them and preparing them to be beaten.
- a. Ripping their clothing (causing them to be naked, or nearly naked) and then beating them in public would produce double shame.
 - b. This might be one of the cases Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 11:25.
 - c. The word $\rho\alpha\beta\delta\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ (to beat) implies being beaten with rods (caning).
 - d. “[M]any stripes” refers to the Roman method of punishment as opposed to the Jewish style, which limited the number of stripes given (cf Deut 25:3; 2 Cor 11:24). Romans had no such limits.
 - e. After the severe beating, these two men were cast into the “inner prison,” which we might think of as a dungeon, dark, dank and dismal.
 - f. Their feet were confined by “stocks,” indicating the use of wood with holes in it for their feet to be immobilized, rather than chains around the ankles (same word used for *tree* and *wood* in other passages; e.g. Revelation 2:7; 18:12).
Note: Many feel that the use of stocks was an additional torture inflicted on these men because of the pain and discomfort therewith associated.
 - g. Picture the dungeon scene in your mind. Because of the stocks, sitting up would be uncomfortable, if even possible. Lying down would be worse than sitting up because of the severe beating they had received. Near total darkness, damp, disoriented and wrongfully detained; yet a totally uncharacteristic attitude rings forth from the confines of the vault (see next section).

V. Conversion of the Philippian jailer (25-34)

- A. God works a miracle at midnight in the prison.
 1. Luke records the two men as praying and singing. It is likely that sleep would have been impossible because of their physical condition. If the bloody backs from the caning would not have kept them awake, the sitting position in the stocks would have.
 - a. We do not find these men angry or plotting their revenge. We find them with inner peace; singing and praying at midnight (cf Ps 119:62).
 - b. We find no reason why they may have thought that things would get better for them. Surely, this was a most unusual sound coming from the dungeon. Tortured, bleeding and bound, yet their hearts were able to rejoice. A truly remarkable situation (cf 2 Cor 4:16, 17; Col 3:15, 16; James 5:13).
 - c. Their reaction to this situation is so very different than what we see in our modern world (cf 1 Cor 4:12; Phil 1:29).
 - d. Astonishment and bewilderment must have filled the other prisoners as they heard these preachers singing and praying.
 1. Christians have a source of happiness that cannot be destroyed by external circumstances (cf 2 Pet 2:20).
 2. The peace that comes by being right before God through Jesus Christ can overcome all the discomforts and obstacles of this world (cf 1 Pet 4:13).
 3. The encapsulation of true religion is captured in this prison scene (cf Rom 14:17).
 2. In the midst of the unusual scene in the dungeon, an earthquake shakes its very foundations; cell doors were opened and fetters fell free (cf Isa 42:7).
 - a. God had used this power several times previously, but never outside the city of Jerusalem (cf Acts 5:19; 12:7, 10).
 - b. The sleeping jail-keeper was awakened by the events and expected his prisoners had fled.
 - c. To avoid a much more painful death (and possibly torture) at the hands of the Roman officials he decided to take his own life with his sword.
 1. Suicide by “falling on your sword” was not unusual in ancient times for defeated military commanders and had become a common idiom in our language (McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms). Brutus might be the most famous example who committed suicide after assassinating Julius Caesar..
 2. Those in charge of prisoners were bound by death for the lives of those prisoners (cf 12:19; also see 16:23, 24).
- B. Paul intervenes to prevent the suicide.
 1. Seeing the jailer was about to fall on his sword Paul “cried with a loud voice,” or shouted for him to stop.

- a. Possibly because of the poor lighting and the dust in the air from the earthquake, the jailer could not see clearly into the dark cells.
 - b. After Paul shouted for him to stop, the jailer called for a light (no doubt a torch) to shed some light in the “inner prison.” (v 24).
 - c. Interestingly, Paul could speak for all the prisoners when he said “we are all here.” Probably divine intervention kept the prisoners in place or possibly he was only in charge of the two prisoners.
 - d. The jailer trembled (same word as *quake* as used in Hebrews 12:21) from all the events in this account and fell down before Paul and Silas (cf Mk 5:33; Lk 8:47).
 - e. The jailer then asked the most important question mankind can ask, “What must I do to be saved?”
 - f. Paul and Silas understood this man was referring to something far more important than being saved from the Roman authorities. We know this from the answer the jailer received.
- C. The answer to the greatest question ever asked.
1. Paul and Silas said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”
 2. This is the third time in the book of Acts this same basic question had been asked:
 - a. The Jews in Jerusalem asked “What shall we do?” (2:37). The question was answered in verse 38 with “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”
 - b. We have observed Saul asking “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (9:6). Ananias came to Saul and said “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (22:16).
 - c. In chapter 16 the answer is different, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...” How could the same basic question be answered differently and still be correct?
 - d. Logic dictates the answer:
 1. If three families wanted to make a trip to Orlando for vacation and asked “How do I get to beautiful Orlando?” The answer would be predicated on where they were starting their trip. A person traveling from Texas would have different directions than one traveling from Maine. A family traveling from Tennessee would have yet a different set of directions.
 2. The difference in the answers in the book of Acts is based on the same principle. The Jews at Pentecost had been taught about Jesus. Saul also knew about Him. Hence, we find “repent and be baptized.” Jesus had

never been preached on European soil before by an apostle so they needed to be taught basic belief in Him before they could move to being saved (cf Rom 10:17; 1 Thess 2:13).

3. They had to be taught before they were baptized (cf Acts 8:5, 6; 35).
- e. “[A]nd thy house” may have reference to the same opportunity will be offered to his household (cf 1 Cor 1:16).
- f. They preached to all that were in his house (v 32). It was a busy, instructive night at the jailer’s house. The end result being that the jailer and his entire household obeyed the gospel (were baptized) immediately.
 1. The jailer took them to a convenient place to wash the blood from their backs. Probably a combination of repentance and tenderness as a new babe in Christ (cf Matt 25:35-40).
 2. The world should be able to see the difference in our lives once we submit to Christ and expect salvation from our sins (cf Gal 5:6).
 3. This new attitude continued when the jailer brought Paul and Silas back to his house. After he did what he could to clean their wounds, and fed them with rejoicing (cf Philemon 7).
 4. There is no case of anyone ever delaying baptism after they were taught the truth. Those teachers must have been emphatic and insistent on the hearers removing the burden of sin from their lives (cf Acts 8:35, 36; Rom 6:3, 4; 1 Pet 3:21).

- VI. Later that same morning, the magistrates decided to release the prisoners (35-40).
 - A. It is not revealed why the officials changed their minds about the prisoners.
 1. There is no indication that any of the events of the night were known to the officials, so we might conclude that the beating and imprisonment were only an appeasement of the rioting citizens.
 2. For the newly converted jailer it was some additional great news.
 3. He could officially release these men and sincerely say “Go in peace” (cf Acts 15:11).
 4. Paul received this news very differently than the jailer.
 - B. History is replete with references to the privileges of Roman citizenship (see Valerian and Porcian laws; e.g. Lex Valeria BC 509; Lex Poscia BC 248).
 1. Paul was not going to allow a public shaming and then accept a private dismissal (cf Acts 22:25, 26).
 2. It might be good to ask why Paul would conduct himself in such a fashion. If he was released, why not just move on and continue to sow the seed?
 - a. Slipping out of town might have given some the idea that what these great men were doing was a cause of dishonor.
 - b. A formal, public dismissal would vindicate both the men and the message in the eyes of the citizens of Philippi.

3. Interestingly, Luke indicates that Silas was a Roman citizen too by the use of “us” and “Romans” (v 37).
 - a. The officials had broken Roman law and Paul was using it to exonerate any dispersion of the preachers.
 - b. These officials became frightened for their own lives and asked (begged) them to leave the city (same word used in 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 5:12).
 - c. Paul and Silas went back to Lydia’s house for comfort, possibly where Luke and Timothy were still abiding before they departed the city.
- C. We know from other scriptures there was great success in Philippi.
 1. They supported Paul on at least two occasions (cf 2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:15, 16).
 2. Possibly helping his condition while he was held in Rome also (cf Phil 4:14, 18).
 3. It is time for them to continue the evangelistic journey.

Note: Acts 16 is the only place in scripture that it is said that Paul was ever in prison. He as been held in protective custody in both Jerusalem and Caesaria and he has lives in his own hired house in Rome for two years, but nothing is said about him being in prison after these events in this chapter. Let us not be guilty of saying more than the scriptures say.

Acts 17

The gospel is preached in Thessalonica, Berea and Athens.

- I. The preachers traveled around the northern reaches of the Aegean Sea, which would be modern-day Greece (1-4).
 - A. Chapter 17 begins with the pronoun “they” indicating that Luke was no longer traveling with them. He will not rejoin them until Acts 20:6.
 1. Amphipolis and Apollonia were cities of southeastern Macedonia (cf Acts 16:9, 10; 1 Thess 1:7, 8).
 2. They journeyed on to Thessalonica, which would eventually have a church of Christ that would receive two inspired letters (cf 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1).
 3. All of these cities were situated on the famous Egnatian Way.

Note: This ancient highway still exists. Sometimes it is a simple cobble stone pathway, other times it has been incorporated into the modern road system. In the city of Thessaloniki (modern Thessalonica) it is a downtown, modern six-lane highway in Greece’s second largest city.

 - a. As was Paul’s custom, he entered the synagogue in Thessalonica three weeks in a row to preach to the Jews (cf Acts 14:1; 15:21; 18:4).
 - b. This may imply that no synagogue existed in Amphipolis and Apollonia (cf Acts 16:13).
 - c. See notes on Chapter 16, III, B, 2, c for additional information concerning synagogues.
 - d. Verse 2 states he “reasoned with them out of the scriptures” (cf Isa 1:18; Acts 24:25). Same word used in Acts 17:17 and 19:8.
 - B. Paul preached Christ’s suffering and resurrection to the Jews.
 1. “Opening and alleging” (explaining and demonstrating, NKJ) means opening the scriptures and using the written record to prove Jesus is the Messiah (cf Acts 13:26-32).
 - a. Christ suffered, as the scriptures abundantly predicted (cf Isa 53: 3-6; 1 Pet 1:11).
 - b. That He was to die and then be raised from the dead was also preached from the scriptures (cf Gen 3:15; Zech 13:7; Acts 26:8).
 2. Because of the preaching, some in Thessalonica believed, or associated with, (consorted) with Paul and Silas.
 - a. Verse 4 has three separate groups of believers:
 1. “Some” of the Jews from the synagogue.
 2. “A great multitude” of the Greeks.
 3. More than “a few” chief women.
 - b. We know from 1 Thessalonians 1:9 that many in the church of Christ in Thessalonica were pagan converts.

- II. The unbelieving Jews in the city start uproar (5-9).
 - A. Envy was the motivating factor in the Jews inciting this unrest (cf Matt 27:18).
 1. This is a sin that many have to fight against (cf 1 Cor 3:3; Gal 5:21).
 2. “[M]oved with envy” comes from a single word which means *to covet, desire, be jealous over* (Strong’s # 2206; cf Acts 7:9).
 3. It is likely that these Jews were jealous because of the success the gospel had in converting the Jews and Gentiles to Christianity (cf Acts 13:45; 17:13).
 - a. The text reveals how the Jews went about stirring up the trouble in Thessalonica; they used “lewd fellows of the baser sort” to incite a riot.
 - b. This could be translated with such words as *lazy, vulgar men who were ready to do evil*. The NKJ uses the word “marketplace,” probably indicating they were idly sitting around the town square.
 - B. In the frenzy of the riot, they assaulted the household of Jason thinking Paul and Silas would be there.
 1. We know from previous studies that this uproar would have most likely ended with Paul being stoned again (cf Acts 14:19) or beaten (cf Acts 16:19, 20).
 2. The men they sought were not in Jason’s house, but now their ire was stirred up. They took Jason and some other brethren to the rulers of the city (cf Acts 6:12, 13).
 3. They brought those of Jason’s household before the rulers and made two allegations against Paul and Silas (and Jason and his company, by association it appears).
 - a. “These that have turned the world upside down” (v 6).
 - b. That these “do contrary to the decrees of Caesar” (v 7).
 - c. Both allegations, at least to some degree, were true.
 - d. When the gospel is presented with all the power God intended it will stir people to change (cf Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 4:19, 20).
 1. If people are not moved by the power (dynamite, dynamo, dynamic) of God’s word one of two things must be true: it was not presented with power or it was not properly applied (cf Matt 11:20-23, same word is used three times).
 2. As Luke follows the apostle Paul in his travels in the book of Acts there is usually a shock wave either for or against God’s saving message (and messenger).
 3. When the message gets the power it deserves, no one should be able to remain neutral to the gospel.
 - e. The phrase “have turned the world upside down” is universally used as motivation for evangelism. In the context it is not used in a positive sense.
 1. Only two other passages contain this same Greek word. In those verses it is translated “uproar” and “trouble you” (cf Acts 21:38; Gal 5:12).

2. The phrase was meant as an accusation against the aggressive style of the gospel preachers.
Note: “Have turned the ...upside down” comes from a single word in the original language.
3. From this it is safe to say that when the gospel is presented, with the power God intended for His message, a reaction is expected. Maybe positive, maybe negative, but everyone should be moved to action by the gospel.
4. The work of these men in Thessalonica was successful in spite of all the negatives surrounding them (cf 1 Thess 1:7; 2:13, 20).
- f. The Jews had been recently banished from the city of Rome as indicated in Acts 18:2. This might be why so many were willing to advocate a loyalty to Caesar.

III. Paul and Silas take the gospel to Berea (10-15).

A. There may have been three contributing facts in Paul and Silas being “sent away” from Thessalonica:

1. The city was in such an uproar that further advancement of the gospel would be unlikely.
2. For their own safety in such a volatile environment.
3. The safety of Jason and “certain brethren” (v 6).
 - a. Very likely these brethren in Thessalonica suffered at the hands of the persecuting Jews because of the gospel (cf 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:6).
 - b. Even though the preachers were sent away, we should not think the gospel failed in any way in Thessalonica. The church of Christ was established in that city and was thriving (cf 1 Thess 1:1-3, 8; 2:13, 20; 2 Thess 1:3, 4).

B. Paul and Silas made the journey of about sixty miles to Berea and started preaching the gospel once again.

Note: It is difficult to determine if Timothy left with them or came to Berea at some later time (cf 17:14).

1. They went to the synagogue, as was their custom, to immediately start teaching salvation through Jesus Christ.
 - a. The people of Berea were “more noble” (fair minded, NKJ) than those in Thessalonica.
Note: Interestingly, the word means they were of a more noble birth (more illustrious ancestors) than those in Thessalonica.
 - b. Luke reveals why they were considered “more noble,” because “they received the word with readiness of mind” (cf Prov 1:5; 9:9; James 1:21).
 - c. The citizens of Berea were placed in contrast to the Jews of Thessalonica who refused to hear the message (cf Prov 9:9; 2 Thess 2:10).

- d. The preaching of Paul and Silas made the people of Berea Bible students. They “searched the scriptures daily” to find out if the things being taught “were so” (cf Jn 5:39).
 2. The teaching and the close examination by the hearers resulted in “many of them believed” (v 12).
 - a. This belief was a direct result of the Bible study in which they had been involved (cf Eph 1:13; James 1:21).
 - b. They searched the Old Testament scriptures to verify that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the promises as prophesied (Isa 2 [where]; Dan 2 [when]; Joel 2 [what], etc.).
 3. In Berea many believed. Honorable Greek women and men, probably those of higher social status, believed because of searching the scriptures.
 4. As so often happened to these evangelists, the Jews, in this case from Thessalonica, followed them to a location and tried to undo the blessings of Christianity (cf 1 Thess 2:14-16).
 - a. Facing trouble is part of every Christian’s life. Stirring up trouble is not who or what we are to be (cf Prov 15:18; Acts 21:27).
 - b. Because of the agitation of the people by the Jews they sent Paul away; but Silas and Timothy stayed behind in Berea (cf Acts 9:25, 30).
 Note: The Jews were determined to stop Paul, not the gospel. If they were concerned about the preaching of the truth, they could have eliminated Silas and Timothy in Berea. Their mission was to stop Paul.
 - c. The same thing happened in Thessalonica (17:10), which might have caused most of us to rethink our direction. Not this mighty apostle.
 5. The brethren at Berea sent Paul away for his safety. They escorted him with some men from Berea. They traveled to the city of Athens (possibly 250 miles away).
 - a. From Athens, Paul releases these men to return to Berea with a message to send Silas and Timothy to come to Athens to be with him (cf Acts 18:5).
 - b. Verse 15 states they were to “come with all speed.” If the messengers from Berea and the preachers both traveled on foot this could have taken approximately twenty days (or more) for Silas and Timothy to arrive in Athens.
 - c. Paul is in Athens alone. Athens was the center of literature, science and fine arts of the Greeks. It was also the center of the culture’s idolatry.
- IV. Paul teaches the philosophers in Athens (16-21).
- A. While Paul waited (for Silas and Timothy) his mind (spirit) was agitated at the display of idol worship in Athens (cf Jer 20:9; Mk 3:5).

1. We might imagine Paul walking around Athens as any tourist would do in a new city. He saw all the highlights, but everywhere he turned he saw idols (cf Isa 2:8; Jer 50:2). The worshipping of idols stirred his spirit.
 2. “The city wholly given to idolatry” literally means *the city full of idols*.
 - a. Pliny states that at the time of Nero, Athens had over 30,000 public statues, besides countless private ones in the homes (cf Rom 1:22, 23).
 - b. Today a tourist might admire the beauty and art of these statues and buildings. Paul saw these people as ignorant and lost (v 23; Isa 2:8; Jer 50:38).
- B. He disputed (reasoned, NKJ) with those in Athens, beginning with the Jews in the synagogue. This was his standard *modus operandi* (MO) in every city (cf Acts 14:1-4; 17:2-4).
1. It is difficult to know exactly who the “devout persons” are mentioned in verse 17. It is used with reference to Jews (Acts 2:5), Christians (Acts 8:2) and those yet unconverted (Acts 10:2).
 2. The “market” (marketplace, NKJ) was the town square or the center of commerce in ancient cities (cf Matt 20:3; Mk 12:38).
 3. In this open setting, certain of the philosophers accused Paul of being a “babblers” and teaching about “strange gods” because he taught the resurrection of Jesus.
 - a. The word “babblers” (used only here in the New Testament) means seed-picker. The reference is probably connected to a bird picking up small seeds. According to these philosophers, Paul had picked up a little knowledge as a tiny bird will pick up small seeds. It was meant as an insult.
 - b. Epicurean philosophers taught that all of living is pleasure and enjoyment.
 - c. Stoick (Stoic) philosophers taught pantheism; that nature, or the universe, is god. This opens the door for polytheism (s 16).
 4. These philosophers brought Paul to the Areopagus that they might “know what this new doctrine...is” (cf Acts 25:22; 26:1).
 - a. The “Areopagus” is mentioned in verse 19 and “Mars Hill” is mentioned in verse 22. These refer to the same place (see NKJ). The words are used interchangeably (Strong’s # 697).
 - b. This was the very spot five centuries earlier that Socrates faced his accusers.
 - c. It was a place revered by the Athenians.
 - d. “And they took him” does not mean they forced him to go, but rather were interested in what Paul had to say concerning this “new doctrine” and invited him to speak (cf Mk 1:27).

- e. From the words “may we know” it is possible Paul was set in the midst of those philosophers on Mars Hill to teach them exactly what he journeyed to Athens to share (cf Acts 9:13-15).
- 5. The strange doctrine (teaching) of this apostle was different than anything they had heard before (cf Hosea 8:12; 1 Cor 1:18, 23).
 - a. Verse 21 is recorded to explain why Paul was given the opportunity to speak at the Areopagus. In the KJV this verse is parenthetically inserted.
 - b. God uses their curiosity as the motivation to allow Paul to preach the resurrected Christ.
 - c. This opportunity will segue into Paul presenting his famous sermon on Mars Hill.
- V. Paul addresses the assembly on Hill (22-31).
 - A. Paul addresses these men as being “too superstitious” (very religious, NKJ; same root word is used in Acts 25:19).
 - 1. J.W. McGarvey wrote that this word should be translated *demon-fearing* and it relates to the Athenians worshipping many demons (Original Commentary on Acts, page 220).
 - 2. Those Athenians probably took this as a compliment. Paul would want to start by winning them over, to the best of his ability.
 - 3. Paul states that among their objects of worship he noticed an altar “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (cf Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 8:5).
 - a. This unknown God was worshipped in ignorance (cf Jn 4:22; Gal 4:8).
 - b. After they built an altar to all the known gods they could think of, they built an additional altar, just in case there was a god they missed.
 - c. Paul had thus “set the hook” into his audience so they would listen to his sermon (cf Acts 25:19)
 - d. It appears they were admitting their own polytheistic ignorance in the erection of this altar “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (cf 1 Peter 4:2, 3).
 - e. This unknown God Paul was prepared to declare unto the Athenians (cf 1 Cor 1:21).
 - 4. One great, all powerful God who has made everything. Not the 30,000 gods (Robertson) these Athenians observed (cf Rev 14:7).
 - a. A God that had made the world and all that is in the world would be in contrast to the false deities they worshipped, which were created by their own hands (cf Isa 40:12; 45:18; Acts 4:24).
 - b. When Paul states that the God he worships “dwelleth not in temples made with hands” he may have gestured toward the Parthenon, a short distance away from Mars Hill and up the hill, which would be very visible to all (cf 2 Chron 6:18; Isa 66:1).

Note: This is something Paul learned from the last dying words of Stephen's lesson (Acts 7:48).

- c. Paul then goes on to say "neither is worshipped with man's hands." Worshipped means *to serve* (Strong's # 2323).
- d. The Athenians would bring meat offerings and lay before their idols and then pretend the idols ate the offering. The God Paul revealed did not need to be fed to sustain life; He is the life-giver to all things (cf Job 12:10; Rom 11:36).
- 5. Then Paul shocks the Athenians by saying that all of mankind stems from the same origin (cf Gen 3:20; 9:19).
 - a. The Greeks, like the Jews, thought of themselves as a superior race.
 - b. We still suffer from prejudice in our world, but that ancient world seems to be far worse.
 - c. The words "one blood" are probably used to indicate the unity of the human race, but the scientific fact is that we all do have the same blood. A truth which was not accepted until the middle of the last century.
- 6. Paul then makes reference to God's control of all things, i.e., human history, nations coming into power or fading from power and all other aspects of man's activities (cf Job 24:1; Acts 1:7).
 - a. Mankind should seek Him, not turn away from Him (cf Rom 1:20-23).
 - b. "[T]hey might feel after him" (grope for Him, NKJ) is the idea of blindly groping along in darkness (cf Deut 28:29; Job 12:25; Isa 59:10).
 - c. We do not need to go very far to find God, if we are truly seeking Him. But it is necessary to look outside the many false religions to locate Him (cf Jer 23:23, 24).
 - d. "For in him we live, and move and have our being" (v 28) reveals mankind's intimate connection to this "unknown" God through three action verbs (cf Col 1:17).
- 7. Paul then acknowledges a detailed understanding of Greek history, poetry and religions.
 - a. The quote Paul used on Mars Hill could fit the pen of several different Greek poets; Aratus, Cleanthes and others. They wrote as much as three centuries before Paul's visit to Athens.
 - b. Interestingly, the words penned by the Greek poets had reference to being the offspring of Zeus, not Jehovah God (cf 1 Cor 8:6).
 - c. Paul's argument is that since we are all the offspring of God how could they worship statues, images and trinkets made from material like gold, silver or stone (cf Isa 44:9, 10; Hab 2:19, 20).
 - d. God is a spirit and we must worship Him in spirit and truth (cf Jn 4:24).
- B. God will no longer "wink" at this type of ignorance (cf Acts 14:16).

1. “[W]inked at” (overlooked, NKJ) means *not to see* or *not to punish*.
 Note: Does this passage call into question the commonly taught doctrine of universal observance of the patriarchal law for all non-Jews?
 - a. This period of overlooking seems to be a reference to the time before the gospel came into effect (cf Acts 20:21).
 - b. Under the new dispensation, all people are commanded to repentance (cf Lk 24:47; Acts 3:19).
 - c. The time to judge those of this world is set, but not revealed to us (cf 2 Pet 3:7; Jude 14, 15).
 2. Judgment day is coming (cf Jn 12:48; 2 Cor 5:10).
 3. Paul is trying to prepare the Athenians for that notable event.
- C. Paul leaves them on Mars Hill (32-34).
1. They listened to him until Paul preached the resurrection of the dead, then some there on Mars Hill began to mock him (cf Acts 25:19; 26:8; 1 Cor 1:23).
 - a. Paul was mocked by some (cf Acts 2:12, 13; Heb 11:36), but others requested to learn more about the resurrection (cf Acts 4:2; Heb 6:2).
 Note: Even though he was mocked by those on Mars Hill he did not change his position, cower down or soften the message to please them. The truth of God’s word cannot be altered and be expected to achieve the results God intends.
 - b. Those who wanted to hear more may have had their curiosity piqued about the doctrine of life after death (cf Lk 16:22, 23).
 2. We are not told why Paul left this city abruptly. Maybe the poor reception influenced his decision (cf Matt 5:3).
 - a. Maybe he understood that the people had been greatly polluted by the philosophers of that city (cf Prov 16:18; 18:12).
 - b. Maybe the soil had been so degraded that the effort of planting the seed of the gospel would have better results in another field.
 3. Do we conclude that Paul failed in the city of Athens? He did not fail as long as one obeyed the saving gospel (cf Mk 8:36).
 Note: Dewalt writes that the church at Athens was one of the strongest congregations in the empire during the 2nd and 3rd centuries.
 - a. A man and a woman are specifically mentioned by name (v 34), along with others.
 - b. The word “clave” (joined, NKJ) is a strong word that means *to glue to* (Robertson). Same word used in Acts 8:29; 9:26; 10:28.
 - c. The term “Areopagite” means *a member of the court held on Mars Hill* (Strong’s).
 - d. This conversion must have been a great accomplishment for Christianity in that pagan city.

4. Sadly, we do not have mention of any church, or activities of that church, elsewhere in inspired writings.
5. Some think that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 is an allusion to his inability to spread the gospel in Athens with any degree of success.
 - a. It appears that Paul is stating that he will never again try to spread the gospel by matching intellect with intellect.
 - b. It is not about the excellency of speech, but rather about the power of God's word (cf 1 Cor 2:1).

Acts 18

Paul takes the gospel to Corinth.

The 2nd evangelistic tour ends at verse 22 and the 3rd tour begins at verse 23.

I. Paul, being alone, travels from Athens to Corinth (1-4).

Note: Paul had sent for Silas and Timothy to come to him “with all speed” (Acts 17:15), it is possible to insert 1 Thessalonians 3:1, 2 at this point. Timothy (at least) may have come to Paul at Athens and then was dispatched to go to Thessalonica.

A. Upon arriving at Corinth Paul became acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla, a husband and wife team who had recently arrived from Italy.

1. This husband-and-wife duo is mentioned in four New Testament books: Acts 18 (3 times), Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19 and 2 Timothy 4:19.
2. Corinth was located on an isthmus between the Adriatic Sea and the Aegean Sea. It had a port on each side, which made it a popular and wealthy city.
 - a. In addition to the ports, ships could be hauled over-land from one sea to the other. The center for trade coming from Rome to the east, or from anywhere in the east toward Rome.
 - b. It was the site of the temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, sexuality, pleasure and procreation. (Roman equivalent of Venus.)
 1. That temple had 1,000 religious prostitutes serving to gain money for the temple.
 2. A city wholly given to immorality, much like the conception many have of modern day Las Vegas.
 3. The word ‘Corinthianize’ meant *immorality* or *whoredom*.
 4. A city catering to sailors who wanted to profligate, i.e., engage in immorality and shamelessness.
 5. This was the scene of Paul entering the city of Corinth, alone, to preach the gospel.
3. The reason Aquila and Priscilla were in Corinth is because Claudius (reigned from 41-54 AD) had expelled the Jews from Rome for some unknown reason.
 - a. It is possible that Aquila and Priscilla were Christians when Paul “found” them in Corinth. We simply are not told if Paul converted them or not.
 - b. Most likely Paul “found” them because they were Jews (a reference to nationality) or because they had the same trade.
 - c. After he found them the text says he “came unto them.”
 - d. Verse 3 says he abode with them “and wrought” (worked, NKJ; 2 Cor 11:9; 1 Thess 2:9).
 1. Possibly paying room and board from the wages he earned (cf 2 Thess 3:8, 9).

2. In our modern society, a man who preaches and supports himself at labor is often thought of as a second class preacher. Not Paul!
 3. Most, if not all, of the pioneer preachers of the restoration movement were gainfully employed outside the pulpit.
 - e. “[T]entmakers” means they worked with canvas. It could have been for tents, booths, sails or anything where canvas might be employed.
- B. Paul turned to the synagogues of the Jews in this sin-filled city to begin the preaching of the gospel each Sabbath day (cf Acts 13:14).
1. His secular employment and his desire to worship on the first day of the week would keep him busy, but not too busy to spread the gospel (cf Acts 20:21; 2 Cor 5:11).
 2. Paul’s ability to reason (v 4) would be best used on those who believed in God, the scriptures and the prophecies of the Messiah (cf Jn 5:39; 1 Pet 1:19).
 3. In light of verse 4, it is possible the “Greeks” mentioned here are the proselytes associated with the synagogue.
- II. Paul’s companions arrive in Corinth and his evangelistic efforts increase (5-10).
- A. Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia with news of the congregations there.
1. Paul sent for them while he was laboring in Athens (Acts 17:15), but he was alone when he arrived at Corinth.
 2. Two important events happened when these two men finally arrived in Corinth:
 - a. Paul was greatly encouraged and grew bolder in the proclamation of the gospel (v 5; cf Acts 9:22).
 1. This encouragement could have been based partially on the great news concerning the spiritual growth of the church in Thessalonica.
 2. Certainly Paul was encouraged to have his trusted friends and fellow laborers in the Lord back at his side, especially in such a sinful place.
 - b. They brought financial relief, which allowed Paul to dedicate himself wholly to preaching (cf 2 Cor 11:9; 1 Thess 3:6).
 - c. We all can help in either one or both of these ways to advance evangelistic efforts in our time.
- Note: Verse 5 is the last time Luke mentions Silas in this inspired account.
- B. Paul’s greater efforts to preach the gospel caused the Jews to oppose him (cf 2 Tim 2:25).
1. They did not simply oppose the doctrine of Christ, they “blasphemed” or spoke evilly against (Acts 13:45; James 2:7).
- Note: Blaspheming the name of Jesus the Christ is another indication of the fury the average Jew held toward the man from Nazareth and the cursing they did at the very use of His name.

2. The shaking of his raiment (garments, NKJ) was an outward sign of disgust (cf Lk 10:10, 11). Often associated with the dust on one's feet, i.e., Matthew 10:14.
 - a. "Your blood be on your own heads" is disclaimer of responsibility for their souls (cf Ezek 18:13; 33:4).
 - b. They brought eternal destruction on themselves by rejecting God's salvation (cf 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Pet 5:10).
 - c. Paul's responsibility (and ours) is to share the good news. We cannot force the gospel on someone. Rejection on their part is beyond our control.
 3. Paul states that he will "go unto the Gentiles" with the good news (cf Acts 28:28; Rom 11:11).
 4. This turning point in Paul's efforts had to apply to the city of Corinth, because we see Paul continuing to preach to the Jews at future times, e.g., Acts 19:8-10; 28:17-23.
- C. Paul now changes residence; no longer living with Aquila and Priscilla, he now moves into Justus' home.
1. There are several men named Justus in the New Testament, i.e., Acts 1:23; Colossians 4:11, but we have no way to know if any of these men are the Justus of this passage in Acts 18.
 2. It is possible that this Justus was a recent convert and Paul desired to live with him due to the proximity of his house to the synagogue.
 - a. Justus' house "joined hard to the synagogue" (was next door to the synagogue, NKJ).
 - b. Paul stated he would "go unto the Gentiles," but it appears he continued to work with the Jews in the synagogue who would listen to the gospel (cf Acts 19:8-10).
 3. The chief ruler of the synagogue was convinced by the gospel and was baptized for the remission of sins, along with many of the Corinthians (cf Acts 8:12).
 - a. The man Crispus is one of the very few people Paul baptized himself (cf 1 Cor 1:14).
 - b. Crispus must have been a great and noble man. He did not allow his position of power and prestige to stop the truth from saving him (cf 1 Cor 1:26).
 - c. The decision of the ruler of the synagogue might influence some of the other Jews to reconsider their blasphemous stand against the Christ (cf Josh 24:15).
 - d. Many of the Corinthians believed. Even in the sin-capital of the ancient world the pure gospel can penetrate the cloak of darkness and save the soul willing to obey the message (cf 1 Cor 9:16; 1 Pet 4:17).

4. “Be not afraid” (v 9) indicates the apostle was fearful of the situation in Corinth (cf Eph 6:19, 20).
 - a. Paul had experienced the harm the Jews could inflict, in the name of God, on someone who taught differently than they believed (cf 2 Cor 11:24-27). Note: Think of the world wide horrors that the religion of Islam has inflicted in the name of their god.
 - b. The vision gave Paul courage and encouragement to speak boldly. The words in the original imply the idea of *do not become silent* (cf 1 Pet 3:14).
 - c. When we fear or doubt we will often hold back. That is not what God wants in His servants (cf 2 Cor 3:12; Phil 1:20). Humble, yes. Timid, no.
5. Christ promised Paul protection from harm (v 10).
 - a. He had promised the other apostles this in Matthew 28:20.
 - b. Paul will have the promise renewed at other times in his life, i.e., Acts 22:17, 18; 23:11; 27:23, 24.
 - c. “For I have much people in this city” may be a reference to the many who would soon be converted in Corinth (cf 1 Cor 6:9-11).

III. After he was encouraged by the vision, Paul continues his efforts in Corinth for a year and a half (11-17).

- A. It was unusual for Paul to stay at a location for extended lengths like this (cf Acts 19:10; 20:31).
 1. We are not told how long the apostle was in Corinth before he received the statement of protection (vv 9, 10).
 - a. Many think that while Paul was at Corinth at this time he penned the books of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.
 - b. It is difficult to know if the year and a half was after he was encouraged to speak boldly or the total time at Corinth. Also see verse 18.
 2. Notice that verse 11 states Paul was there “teaching.” Luke uses a Greek word specifically designating teaching rather than preaching.
 - a. This original word is used approximately ninety-eight times in the New Testament and is never translated preach, e.g., Acts 4:18, Acts 28:31 and Galatians 1:12.
 - b. Some think that Paul was fulfilling Christ’s words in Matthew 28:20.
- B. During the time that Gallio was deputy (proconsul, NKJ) of Achaia the Jews, once again, caused Paul trouble.

Note: For additional information on deputy/proconsul see Chapter 13 of this book, section II, A, 2, f.

1. Achaia was the region located at the lower portion of the Grecian peninsula.
2. The Jews, no doubt angry over the success Paul was having in Corinth, made “insurrection” or made a stand against him (cf Acts 16:22; 17:5).

3. "[T]he judgment seat" indicated the Jews were powerless to administer punishment under Roman jurisdiction. This was the city's place of judgment (cf Acts 25:10; James 2:6).
 - a. They accused Paul of preaching that which was unlawful according to the law. The text is unclear whether the accusation is a violation of Roman or Jewish law (cf Acts 25:8).
 - b. It makes no sense to take a violation of Jewish law before Roman authorities (cf Acts 21:28; 24:5, 6).
4. It appears Gallio was confused about the accusations also. Verse 14 ends with, "O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you," which carries the idea of *to patiently endure* (cf 2 Cor 11:1).
 - a. Paul was about to defend himself when Gallio spoke up and dismissed the Jew's case.
 - b. "But if it is a question of words and names" might be referring to Paul stating that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah (cf 1 Jn 5:1).
 - c. Gallio was a Roman official and would not get involved. If it was Jewish law they thought was being violated he says they were to handle it, he would not be used as their instrument (cf Rom 13:3, 4).
 - d. This established the precedence that allowed Paul to travel throughout the Roman Empire with little official interference.
5. Gallio drove them from the judgment seat. He was finished with the Jew's accusation and dismissed them. There is no indication of any force or violence used by Gallio in this dismissal, but some violence was to soon follow.
 - a. The Greeks took Sosthenes, possibly the spokesman, or leader of those who went to Gallio, and beat him.
 - b. There is a man named Sosthenes mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:1. It is possible he was converted after this beat-down.
 - c. The man in charge, Gallio, must have had about all he could handle from the Jews in Corinth. The text says he did not care that Sosthenes was beaten.
 - d. Paul will stay at Corinth for what Luke described as "a good while," (v 18) after the incident with Sosthenes.

IV. Paul leaves Corinth and returns to Antioch (18-22)

- A. Paul will now travel with Priscilla and Aquila toward Syria. He was headed back to Antioch, with a few stops along the way.

Note: When the scriptures mention sailing into Syria (v 18) it refers to the whole area known as Phoenicia; the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea.

1. The last portion of verse 18 is disconcerting, at best.
 - a. Cenchrea is a port city near Corinth. Most likely the port they departed from when sailing to Ephesus.

- b. The disconcerting part is the shaven head and the vow. This vow would be part of the Law of Moses (cf Deut 23:21-23; Ecc 5:4).
 - c. It appears Paul was trying to live, at least partially, in the old law while preaching the new law.
 - d. There is great difficulty in finding a specific vow in the Old Testament which required the head to be shaved.
 - e. It was not a Nazirite vow, because that vow was completed by the shaving of the head and the burning of the hair (cf Num 6:1-5, 18).
 - f. It appears Paul was mistaken in taking this vow, even though he might have done it as a way to be accepted by the Jews (cf 1 Cor 9:22).
Note: Some try to make this vow an expedient, similar to Timothy's circumcision (cf Acts 16:3). They are not similar.
 - g. We will cover this subject in greater depth when we get to Acts 21, where it is believed Paul makes the same mistake once again (Acts 21:20-25).
2. Cenchrea (v 18) was apparently the home of Phebe and it had a congregation of the church of Christ located there (cf Rom 16:1).
- B. The only stop Luke records on their journey to Syria is at Ephesus (cf Eph 1:1).
- 1. This is the first recorded visit to Ephesus; therefore it is unlikely that the church of Christ had been established in that city yet.
 - a. In Ephesus Paul followed his usual plan of preaching in the synagogues first (cf Acts 17:1, 2; 18:4).
 - b. Later we will read that Paul will spend more time in this city than any other city recorded in the New Testament; three years (cf Acts 20:17, 31).
 - c. Ephesus would receive what we commonly refer to as the Book of Ephesians, which was one of the four letters written while in Rome awaiting trial." A letter written many years after his first visit to Ephesus.
 - 2. They wanted Paul to spend additional time with them, but he did not agree to do so (cf Acts 20:16).
 - a. The circumstances at Ephesus were unusual. Paul preached to the Jews with no opposition recorded by Luke. No revolts, no riots, no threats.
 - b. Paul says that his desire is to leave, but he promises to return if God wills (cf Heb 6:3; James 4:15).
 - 3. Paul then sails to Caesarea, where the text says "and gone up, and saluted the church..."
 - a. It is likely that Paul landed at Caesarea and then made the journey to the church of Christ located in Jerusalem (cf Acts 25:1).
 - b. This language was used by Jesus when referring to trips to Jerusalem (cf Jn 7:8, 10).
 - c. From Jerusalem it would be geographically correct to say that "he went down to Antioch" since the elevation is much higher at Jerusalem.

- d. Antioch is the city where this second evangelistic trip started and Paul draws it to a conclusion by returning there (cf Acts 15:35, 40).
 - e. This second journey took approximately three years to complete. It started with Paul and Silas leaving Antioch; they added Timothy and Luke along the way. It appears he ended this highly successful trip alone. The gospel had been preached in Galatia, Lystra, Derbe, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus. Estimated to have been a 2,700-mile trip.
- V. After spending “some time” in Antioch Paul is determined to strengthen the disciples in the cities he had visited. Hence, the third evangelistic journey begins (23-28).
 - A. Both Galatia and Phrygia were provinces, or regions, located in Asia Minor, or what we would today call Turkey.
 - 1. The words “in order” has reference to the order the cities were visited in the second evangelistic effort.
Note: Interestingly, the order (Galatia then Phrygia) would be the order Paul would arrive when traveling from Antioch on foot (cf Acts 16:1). This order is reversed in Acts 16:6.
 - 2. It appears Paul starts this third effort alone. He would not work alone for long (cf Acts 19:22, 29).
 - B. Luke leaves Paul working in Asia Minor and turns his inspired attention to events taking place in Ephesus, centering on the teaching of Apollos.
 - 1. Apollos was a Jewish disciple of John, the baptizer (cf Matt 9:14; 11:2; Jn 3:25).
 - 2. We are given detailed information about Apollos:
 - a. “[B]orn at Alexandria;” a seaport located near the Nile River delta in Egypt.
 - b. “[A]n eloquent man.” Well educated and probably a gifted speaker (Ex 4:10).
 - c. “[M]ighty in the scriptures.” He knew the Old Testament well.
Note: The last of these should be true of every person who is a preacher. When a person is being paid for a vocation that means they are a professional. Every professional should be “mighty” in their field.
 - d. Apollos was “fervent in the spirit” and “taught diligently.”
 - e. But, sadly, “knowing only the baptism of John” (cf Isa 40:3; Mk 1:3).
 - f. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance, but John was dead before the church was established (cf Matt 14:6-10; 16:17, 18).
 - 3. It appears Luke is giving background information in order to prepare the readers for Paul’s arrival in Ephesus (cf Acts 19:1).
 - C. From verse 26 it is obvious that Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus as he journeyed on to Antioch (cf Acts 18:18, 19).

1. When this couple heard Apollos preaching an inaccurate (incomplete) message they took him aside to further instruct the man (cf Acts 8:31).
 2. There can be no doubt Apollos knew the Old Testament prophecies. He needed instruction to help him see they applied to Jesus of Nazareth (cf Acts 28:23).
 3. There are areas in which we all need help to understand the scriptures better or more clearly (cf Prov 1:5; 9:9; 2 Pet 3:18).
- D. After Aquila and Priscilla taught Apollos the will of God for man's salvation "more perfectly" he left Ephesus and traveled to Achaia.
1. This is the first recorded case of brethren writing a letter of commendation (v 27) on behalf of a traveling saint (cf 1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 3:1, 2).
 2. It is a scriptural practice, but not often employed today.
 3. It is probable that Apollos traveled to Corinth (in Achaia) based on 1 Corinthians 3:6.
 4. Apollos learned his lesson well. He mightily (powerfully) convinced the Jews in Achaia that Jesus was (is) the Christ (cf Jn 5:39; Acts 18:5).

Acts 19

Paul in Ephesus

- I. Paul encounters about twelve men (v 7) in Ephesus (1-7).
 - A. Luke gives no details of Paul's travel from Antioch to Ephesus other than recording he "passed through the upper coast" (modern day Turkey).
 1. Paul comes once again to the city of Ephesus, which fulfills his promise given in Acts 18:21.
 2. The men are called "disciples," which has two possible explanations:
 - a. They could have been classified as "disciples" of John (cf Matt 9:14).
 - b. It is possible the term may refer to their future state of becoming disciples of Christ since Luke wrote this many years after the event took place.
 - c. After the church was established (Acts 2), the term "disciple" is synonymous with Christian (cf Acts 6:1; 11:26; 20:7).
 - B. When Paul questions these men about the Holy Ghost they replied "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (cf Jn 7:39).
 1. It is unlikely that they had never heard of the Holy Ghost (cf Gen 1:1, 2). John taught about the Holy Ghost (cf Lk 3:16).
 2. They had not heard about the giving of the Holy Ghost, or the promise of the Holy Ghost, to Christians (cf Acts 1:5, 8; 2:33; 11:15).
 - C. The reason they knew nothing about the Holy Ghost being given was because they were baptized "unto John's baptism" (cf Matt 3:1, 2; Lk 3:3, 4).
 1. It is remarkable that after that many years (possibly 18-24 years) they had not heard the church was established (cf Acts 2:47).
 2. Paul then teaches them about the nature of John's baptism (v 4), a doctrine of preparation for the coming Messiah (cf Jn 3:28-31).
 3. Their knowledge and their doctrine were incomplete.
 - D. To their credit, when they heard the truth (the fact that they had an incomplete faith) they immediately obeyed the gospel to the saving of their souls (cf Acts 8:12).

Note: They were not "rebaptized." They had never been baptized correctly under New Testament law (cf Matt 28:19). A person is baptized scripturally only once. Unscriptural baptisms are not baptisms at all in God's sight. This passage proves that a person has to be baptized according to God's law in order to be accepted by God. These religious men had to be retaught and then properly baptized.

 1. After their baptism, Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Ghost came upon them, as evidenced in speaking in tongues and prophesying (cf Acts 8:16; 2 Tim 1:6).
 2. The word "about twelve" is puzzling. Luke uses this term several times when dealing with numbers, e.g., Luke 1:56, 3:23, Acts 2:41, 4:4, 5:7, 5:36, etc.

3. These men, now properly taught and in an acceptable relationship with God, were probably the foundation for the church of Christ in Ephesus.
- II. Paul taught in the synagogue at Ephesus for three months (8-12).
- A. He spoke “boldly” in the same synagogue he had briefly visited near the end his second journey (cf Acts 18:19, 20).
 1. Paul’s “disputing (reasoning, NKJ) and persuading” with the Jews was about “the kingdom of God” (cf Acts 1:3; 28:23).
 2. That kingdom is the church Christ died to establish. The terms are used interchangeably in Matthew 16:18, 19.
 3. For a three-month period, Paul worked boldly in the synagogue at Ephesus to bring Jews out of the dead religion of Judaism and into the New Testament church (cf Acts 19:8).
 - B. It appears that near the end of this three-month endeavor in the synagogue that some of the Jews grew hardened and hostile toward Paul and his doctrine.
 1. The text says they “believed not,” which would reference both the Christ and the kingdom (cf Neh 9:16, 17; Acts 7:51).
 2. Also, they “spoke evil of that way,” which is a common expression for the church of Christ (cf Acts 9:2; 22:4; 24:14).
 3. Because of the trouble in the synagogue, Paul separated himself and the converts from the disruptive Jews.
 - a. Paul was courageous and bold, he did not stop teaching in the synagogue because he was being opposed (cf Eph 6:19, 20).
 - b. He must have seen that the opposition and evil talking would hurt the further growth of the church (cf Jude 10).
 - c. The school of Tyrannus would be a more comfortable atmosphere for spiritual growth among the fledgling Christians.
 - d. Nothing is known about this school other than what is revealed in this passage. The word translated “school” is the Greek work for *leisure*.
 4. This peaceful place to teach and learn continued for two years with wonderful results:
 - a. “[A]ll they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (cf 1 Pet 1:1; Rev 1:4).
 - b. A congregation based on faith and love was established in this city (cf Eph 1:15, 16).
 - C. Paul had the ability to perform “special miracles” at this time (v 12).
 1. Since all miracles would have been classified as “special” this must mean Paul was able to work miracles even they, in the age of miracles, would denote as unusual or rare (cf Jn 14:12; Rom 15:18, 19).
 2. The “special miracles” refer to the handkerchiefs and aprons of the apostle. Items he would use in his travel and work. Clothing he personally sweat on.

- a. The word “special” is from three Greek words which mean *not of the ordinary kind* (jb).
 - b. The only other time the phrase is used in the New Testament is in Acts 28:2, where the kindness shown was *not the ordinary kind* of kindness.
- Note: This is very different from what the modern-day charlatans who swindle people from their hard-earned money with false promises.

III. Certain Jews caused problems in Ephesus (13-20).

- A. There were Jews classified as “vagabond” who presumed to have the same powers as Paul.
 - 1. The vagabond Jews were traveling Jews, much like Gypsies, who would wander from place to place.
 - a. Interestingly, this is the description (vagabond) God gave of Cain after his curse (cf Gen 4:12, 14).
 - b. They are called “exorcists” by inspiration. Many think they were followers of a practice attributed to Solomon (see Josephus, Ant., book VIII, 2.5).
 - c. This may have been what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 12:27.
 - d. “[T]o call over” (to call the name of the Lord Jesus over, NKJ) was used by them as a spell, or incantation, to try to drive out evil spirits.
 - e. This seems similar to the case of Simon who saw the real power of the apostles and wanted to have it (cf Acts 8:18, 19).
 - 2. Luke next deals with the seven sons of Sceva (v 14).
 - a. Sceva was described as “chief of the priests” (chief priest, NKJ).
 - b. We have no additional information about this man or how he served.
 - c. He could have been a High Priest in Jerusalem, or one of the heads over the twenty-four orders of priests (cf Acts 5:24).
 - d. In any case, he had seven sons involved in the fraud being perpetrated on the Jewish community in Ephesus as indicated by verses 15 and 16.
 - e. These demons recognized the authority of Jesus, and as Paul spoke by Jesus’ authority, they recognized him, but not these seven brothers.
 - f. The man possessed with these demons leapt on the vagabond Jews and overpowered them physically (cf Lk 8:29).
- B. The result of the false teachers being driven away and the truth prevailing was that both Jews and Gentiles feared the Lord and the “name of the Lord Jesus was magnified” (cf Ps 64:9; Acts 2:43).
 - 1. These so-called exorcists had lost their control over the people of Ephesus. Many believed, confessed and showed their deeds (cf Ps 32:5; Rom 10:10).
 - 2. The power the gospel had gained in this city was evidenced by the burning of the large number of books associated with “curious arts” (magic, NKJ).
 - a. Verse 18 uses the word “came” which means they *kept on coming*.

- b. The number of people who were converted was large, as indicated by the very high value of the books burnt; 50,000 pieces of silver.
 - c. We often have to give up what we once regarded as valuable in order to gain that which is most valuable, eternal life (cf Matt 6:1; Mk 8:36).
 - d. Scriptures abound with this type of teaching: Matthew 13:44-46; Philippians 3:7, 8.
 - 3. Verse 20 is an indication of how great the commitment was to the gospel in the city of Ephesus.
- IV. A riot breaks out in Ephesus (21-41).
 - A. Paul “purposed in the spirit” to go to Jerusalem and then on to Rome (cf Acts 23:11).
 - 1. This is something Paul purposed, or resolved, to do. Spirit (v 21) should not be capitalized as in the NKJ, (cf Rom 1:13; 2 Cor 1:15, 16).
 - a. Revisiting the regions of Macedonia and Achaia would put the apostle in contact with congregations in such cities as Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth.
 - b. All this was planned with his eyes focused on getting to Rome (cf Rom 1:15; 15:23, 24).
 - c. Interestingly, the book of Acts ends with Paul staying in Rome in his own hired house for two years (cf Acts 28:17).
 - 2. Timothy and Erastus are sent to Macedonia.
 - a. This is the first of three places Erastus is mentioned (Rom 16:23, 2 Tim 4:20).
 - b. In Romans 16:23 Paul says Erastus was “chamberlain of the city” (NKJ, treasurer), which was perfect divine providence since money (Erastus’ strong suit) was being raised for the saints in Jerusalem (cf 1 Cor 16:1-4).
 - B. Paul’s preaching in Ephesus stirs up trouble with the heathens worshipping the goddess, Diana.
 - 1. “[N]o small stir” means *a great deal of disturbance* (cf 2 Cor 1:8).
 - 2. This disturbance centered on the preaching of that “way.” A common scriptural euphemism for the church of Christ (cf Acts 19:9, 23; also see II, B, 2, above).
 - 3. The silversmith named Demetrius was the spokesman behind the disturbance.
 - 4. The text says he made “silver shines” for Diana, which were probably replicas of the famous temple located in Ephesus (possibly images of Diana).
 - a. The temple was one of the seven ancient wonders of the world, but it is questioned whether the shines were replicas of the temple or the goddess. Note: The temple was 425 feet by 220 feet and had 127 beautiful columns.
 - b. The making of the trinkets brought tremendous wealth to the silversmiths.

5. Paul had taught “almost throughout Asia” (v 26) that it was impossible to make gods with human hands (cf Acts 17:29; 1 Cor 8:4; 12:2).
6. Because of this teaching Demetrius was concerned his livelihood would disappear as people departed from idolatry (v 27).
 - a. This was similar to the concern the Jews had about Christianity (cf Acts 4:16, 17).
 - b. As always seems the case, if a person is affected financially, they will rise up in opposition.
7. The threat to their income (rather than a threat to the goddess they worshipped) caused an uproar in the city (cf Acts 16:19).
 - a. In anger, a cry went out... “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” This was a Roman goddess, equivalent to Artemis in the Greek religion
 - b. In this agitated state, the populace of Ephesus took hold of Gaius and Aristarchus and rushed into the “theatre” (cf James 3:16).
 - c. The New Testament has a great deal to say about both of these men who are described as “Paul’s companions in travel.”
 1. Gaius is mentioned in four books (Acts 20:4, Romans 16:23, 1 Corinthians 1:14 and 3 John 1).
 2. Aristarchus is mentioned in three books (Acts 27:2, Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24).
8. The fearless apostle Paul, wanted to go to the defense of these men, but the other disciples would not allow it.
 - a. “And certain of the chief of Asia” (v 31) refers to officials who were in charge of festivals and sporting games.
 - b. These officials were friends of Paul and urged him not to get involved in this public demonstration, which would have likely resulted in bodily harm or death (cf Acts 21:11, 12).
 - c. It is possible that Paul was thinking of placing himself in harm’s way to rescue his friends.
 - d. The words “adventure himself” are the same words, in the original Greek, that Paul used for Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins (cf Gal 1:4; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14).
- C. Verse 32 indicated that mob mentality had taken over in Ephesus (cf Acts 21:34).
 1. Maybe Demetrius had been overpowered by the crowd, or he may have gotten lost in the mob, but his leadership was no longer apparent.
 - a. The word “confused” here does not mean what we normally think of as *confused* in modern English. The same word is used in Acts 21:27, 31.
 - b. That allows us to have a better understanding of the word as used in verse 29. The whole city was stirred up and ready to riot.

2. It appears the Jews wanted Alexander to speak for them before this angry mob.
 - a. Possibly to make sure the Ephesians knew that the Jews and Christians were not associated (cf Acts 16:20).
 - b. “And Alexander beckoned with the hand” is a common expression Luke uses in the New Testament (cf Lk 1:22; Acts 12:17; 13:16, etc.).
3. When the crowd discovered Alexander was a Jew they would not allow him to talk, but shouted out the name of Diana for two hours (cf 1 Kgs 18:26).
4. As the mob fatigued the “townclerk” quieted the crowd by appealing to the vanity of the goddess they worshipped (cf Dan 3:3; 1 Pet 1:18).
 - a. “[T]he image which fell down from Jupiter” (Zeus, NKJ; v 35) was the mythological answer to how the original image came into existence (cf 2 Tim 3:13).
 - b. The reputation of the city of Ephesus being the center of Diana worship, and Jupiter giving them the image, or statue, of the goddess “cannot be spoken against.” There is no reason to despair was his message.
 - c. Because these legends were accepted as truths, he encouraged the Ephesians to quiet down and think before they acted (cf Prov 25:8).
 - d. The silversmiths, with Demetrius as their leader, were named as being responsible for the riot.
 - e. The town clerk pointed out the legal system was in place for their grievances. As Roman citizens they should use the system to keep themselves above question (cf Rom 13:1, 7).
5. The clerk then reminded the Ephesians that these types of commotions would displease the Roman authorities, which could lead to giving an account of the riot.
 - a. One of the Roman laws made all such commotions a capital offense, “He who raises a mob shall forfeit his life” (Clarke).
 - b. These words persuaded the rioters to depart (cf Prov 15:1, 2; Ecc 9:17).

Acts 20

Paul continues his 3rd journey as he reunites with Luke.

- I. Paul travels back to Macedonia and probably Achaia (1-6).
 - A. The last chapter stated Paul had the desire to return to Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21-23) before the riot started in Ephesus.
 - 1. When the uproar was over, he called the disciples together to embrace them and to let them know it was time for him to depart.
 - 2. It is possible that Paul left Ephesus sooner than he intended, based on 1 Corinthians 16:8.
 - 3. He traveled throughout Macedonia exhorting (encouraging, NKJ) the brethren, which was an important part of his efforts (cf 1 Thess 2:3, 11; 4:1).
 - 4. The text says he came to Greece. This is the only time the word “Greece” is used in the New Testament.
 - a. Most likely it refers to the region of Achaia.
 - b. Luke leaves out many of the details about the trip to Macedonia. It is possible that 2 Corinthians 2:12 and 13 partially fills in the gap.
Note: It appears, at the beginning of Acts 20, that Luke omitted Paul traveling from Ephesus to Troas in hope of rejoining Titus there. Titus was not there and this caused Paul great hardship and heartache. Paul’s anguish is turned to rejoicing when, months later, he was finally reconnected with Titus (cf 2 Cor 7:5-7).
John recorded that “the world itself could not contain” all the books necessary to chronicle all that Jesus did while on earth (Jn 21:25). The same idea may apply to Paul also. There was simply too much done in his evangelistic travels for it all to be properly included in Holy writ.
 - 5. After three months in “Greece,” he desired to sail to Syria, but learned the Jews were waiting there to trap him (cf Acts 9:24; 23:30).
 - a. Instead, he journeyed north through Macedonia.
 - b. Many think that it was while Paul was in Corinth that he penned the books of Galatians and Romans.
 - B. Luke lists a number of brothers (seven) who accompanied Paul into Asia.
 - 1. These men were from the Roman provinces that participated in the collection for Jerusalem (Macedonia, Galatia and Asia).
 - a. Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus were from Macedonia.
 - b. Gaius and Timothy were from Galatia.
 - c. Tychicus and Trophimus were from Asia.
Note: All of the men mentioned here are also mentioned in other books of the New Testament. They were important and trusted servants.

- d. It is fascinating that no brothers from Achaia are mentioned, especially in light of 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2, 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 and 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.
2. These men went ahead of Paul and then waited for him on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea, in Troas (cf 2 Tim 4:13).
- C. Verse 6 indicates Luke was reunited with Paul in the city of Philippi, which is where Luke stayed at the end of Acts 16 (see Acts 17:1).
 1. Paul may have still been observing the feast of unleavened bread (cf Ex 13:6-10; Lev 23:6-8, a Jewish holiday and, if so, therefore, sinful) or possibly this is a reference to give the readers a time-frame (cf Gal 4:10; Col 2:16).
 2. It took five days to sail from Philippi to Troas, which is only about 150 miles, depending on the route taken. It took two days to sail this distance going the other direction (see Acts 16:11).
 - a. Paul had been in Troas before, but a “door was opened” to him and he did not stay there long (cf 2 Cor 2:12).
 - b. This time Paul will take a week and preach Christ in that city.
- II. Paul preached in Troas (7-12).
 - A. “And upon the first day of the week” emphatically states that Christians assembled together on Sunday.
 1. Many important events took place on the “first day of the week,” e.g.:
 - a. Jesus was resurrected (cf Jn 20:1).
 - b. Jesus showed Himself to the disciples after His resurrection (cf Jn 20:19).
 - c. Most likely, He showed Himself to Thomas the next week on the first day of the week (cf Jn 20:26). Eight days being the next Sunday night, in the Jewish mind.
 - d. The church was established in Jerusalem (cf Acts 2:1).
 - e. Paul had given a command for a collection to be taken on the first day of the week in the churches of Galatia and Corinth (cf 1 Cor 16:1, 2).
 2. Here, in Acts 20:7, we have the first-time worship services are mentioned as a rite in New Testament scriptures.
 - B. The purpose stated for the gathering of disciples was “to break bread.”
 1. Two important factors need to be pointed out about the assembly:
 - a. They “came together,” which means if we do not assemble with the saints on the first day of the week, we cannot do what they did (cf Heb 10:25).
 - b. The main emphasis in their assembly was to take the Lord’s supper (cf 1 Cor 11:23-26).

Note: The Lord’s supper is not the most important part of our worship. There are no unimportant parts of worship. All parts have to be done and done correctly. But it was the focus of their assemblies.

Note: It is entirely possible that the reason Paul tarried for seven days at Troas was for the specific purpose of taking the Lord's Supper with them.

- c. "And upon the first day of the week" establishes the frequency the Lord's supper is to be observed. Some religious people question observing the Lord's supper weekly, but never hesitate to pass the collection plate each "first day of the week." The wording in 1 Corinthians 16:2 is exactly the same as here. Observing one of these acts of worship on a weekly basis validates the other. It is another example of religious hypocrisy.
2. Paul took the opportunity of the disciples being gathered together to preach to them (cf 2 Tim 4:2).
3. They gathered in an "upper chamber" (cf Lk 22:12; Acts 1:13; Acts 9:37), which had many lights (lamps, NKJ).
 - a. It was a well-lit, well attended service. People sitting anywhere they could to be a part of the worship (nothing secret or mystical, certainly not "mood lighting").
 - b. A "young man named Eutychus" sat in an open window (same word used in 2 Corinthians 11:33).
 - c. He fell three stories to his death. Luke, a physician, pronounces him dead. The text specifically states he "was taken up dead."
 - d. Paul immediately went down and "fell on him" in the same fashion we read Elijah and Elisha doing (cf 1 Kgs 17:21; 2 Kgs 4:34).
 - e. Eutychus was restored to life and Paul rejoined the disciples for food and conversation.
 - f. The casual meal and loquacious atmosphere lasted until the sun began to rise, so Paul departed to continue his journey.
 - g. The restoring of life to this young man brought a great deal of comfort to the disciples at Troas (cf 2 Cor 1: 3, 4).

III. Paul continues toward Miletus (13-16).

- A. Luke, and some of the other companions, sailed from Troas to Assos. Paul made the journey on foot, which appears to have been his preferred mode of travel (about twenty miles on foot and about forty miles by sea).
- B. The group is about to embark on several days of island hopping as they make their way to Syria.
 1. The entire group of men set sail from Assos and traveled about thirty miles, to the city of Mitylene, which was on the island of Lesbos.
 2. The next day they sailed to Chios. The text says they were "over against" this island, which may mean they never disembarked.
 3. The following day they sailed to the island of Samos, but stayed in a city on the main-land named Trogyllium.
 4. The next day they went south along the coast to Miletus.

5. Verse 16 says Paul was “determined to sail by (past, NKJ) Ephesus.”
6. He was determined to be in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost, so being delayed along the way was not in his plans.
 - a. Paul must have hired this sailing vessel in order for him to have control of the ports of call.
 - b. It appears he does not have time to stop in Ephesus, but will send for the elders of the church of Christ in Ephesus to visit him in Miletus, so he might impart further instructions on leadership obligations.

IV. The elders from Ephesus receive exhortation from Paul in Miletus (17-38).

- A. Ephesus was approximately thirty miles north of Miletus. A full day’s journey by foot each way.

Note: The term ‘elder’ refers to mature men who meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. If a man does not meet these qualifications he cannot serve as an elder in the church. We can misguidedly call a man an elder who fails to meet all these qualifications, but God will not recognize him as an elder and local churches should not either.

1. Elders, bishops and pastors are different names which refer to the same office in the New Testament church (cf Eph 4:11; Phil 1:1).

Note: The denominational concept of a pastor does not fit the New Testament definition. No congregation of God’s people is to be led by a single human being. Elders are always spoken of in the plural when referring to the leadership position, e.g., Acts 21:18, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1, etc.

- a. Paul will refer to these very men as “overseers” in verse 28.
 - b. The text does not reveal why he called for the elders to come to him rather than making the journey to Ephesus himself.
 - c. Possibly some business with the ship kept him close to it. His ultimate goal was to get to Jerusalem.
2. It would have taken a day’s journey to get the message to Ephesus and then another day for the elders to make the journey to Miletus.

Note: A few of the commentators record the distance as being forty miles between these cities. The discrepancy may be the difference between “as the crow flies” and actual road miles.
 3. Paul expressed a personal relationship with these elders “from the first day” he was in Asia. They knew each other well.
 4. The apostle then lists some of his hardships and trials that they knew first-hand, which came on him as a direct result of the Jews:
 - a. Many tears (cf 2 Cor 2:4; Phil 3:18).
 - b. Temptations (cf 1 Cor 4:9-13; 2 Cor 4: 8-11).
 5. He also had taught publicly and from house to house.

- a. It needs to be noted that the greatest of preachers preached from house to house, more than just a social visit.
 - b. What he shared was considered “profitable” (cf 1 Cor 12:7; 2 Tim 3:16).
6. Paul testified to both Greeks and Jews repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (cf Acts 2:40).
- B. Having reestablished his personal conduct in their presence, he declares the uncertainty that awaits him as he goes on to Jerusalem.
 1. “[B]ound in the spirit” means he was determined to get to Jerusalem (similar to Acts 19:21).
 2. It is possible Paul anticipated trouble when he would get to Jerusalem, “not knowing the things that shall befall me there” (cf James 4:14).
 - a. Hardships had followed him in many of the cities he visited. They had not stopped him before and they would not stop him now (cf Eccl 9:10; Acts 9:16; 14:19).
 - b. He was less concerned about what people might do to him and more concerned about spreading the good news and edifying the saints (cf 2 Tim 4:6).
 3. Paul states, emphatically, that those elders from Ephesus would not see him alive again.
 - a. It is impossible to know if Paul was referring to his impending death, imprisonment, or if he planned to spend the rest of his days traveling to other parts of the world (cf Rom 15:24).
 - b. He would not receive Agabus’ prophecy about being bound and delivered to the Gentiles until he arrived in Caesarea in Acts 21.
 - c. Inspiration reveals that Paul was indeed back in this same area several years later (cf 2 Tim 4:20).
- C. Paul then turns his attention to the elders for further instructions.
 1. We usually focus on the fact that Paul stresses “to feed” the flock, but that is not the first thing he presses on the elders from Ephesus.
 2. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves” is the first admonition.
 - a. Elders are examples.
 - b. Elders are not just bill payers. They are to be the standard of Christian excellence in any congregation. Their leadership in dedication, knowledge, understanding, evangelism and all other aspects of allowing Christ to shine in our lives and neighborhoods.
 - c. Elders are the overseers of the flock, but they are much more than just decision makers. They are to be example-setters as members of the congregation.
 1. If elders will not work, how can they expect the members to work?

2. If the elders will not evangelize, how can they expect the members to evangelize?
3. If the elders are not dedicated to Bible study, how can they expect the members to be dedicated to spiritual growth?
4. Far too many elders settle into the mind-set of the corporate world; of thinking a congregation has “a management force and a labor force.”
5. The admonition to “take heed” in verse 28 is a reference to spiritual matters in the lives of the elders and the flock they were over. It had nothing to do with budgets, buildings or billboards. Many 21st century elderships have lost sight of that.
6. The thought behind “which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” directly connects to the qualifications a man must meet to serve as an elder (see IV, A).
 - d. Elders are required to feed the flock (cf Jer 3:15; 1 Pet 5:2, 3).
3. The purchase price of the church of Christ was the precious blood of our Lord and Savior (cf 1 Cor 6:20; Rev 5:9).
4. After Paul’s “departing” he knew that “grievous (savage, NKJ) wolves” would enter in among them (cf Matt 7:15).
 - a. The wording indicates the warning about wolves would be men in the eldership position who would destroy the flock.
 - b. It appears that these elders did not fully heed Paul’s warning (cf Rev 2:1-5).
 - c. Over the next 500 years, elders and elderships would drift farther away from the true teachings of the gospel (v 30); and eventually the Catholic Church would come into existence, all because the eldership in Ephesus (and many other places) failed to heed Paul’s warnings.
5. Paul then reminds these elders that he had warned them for three years, without ceasing and with tears (cf Col 1:28).
6. Paul listed four prominent points in his preaching at Ephesus:
 - a. He preached what was profitable (v 20)
 1. The question should never be *do the people want to hear it*, it should always be, *is it the truth?*
 2. The truth of God’s word will always be profitable.
 - b. He taught in every circumstance; publicly and from house to house (v 20).
 1. Teaching the word of God means teach whenever you have the opportunity.
 2. A teaching Christian should always stand ready to teach.
 - c. He preached the whole council of God.
 1. Choosing the positive, to the neglect of the negative, falls far short of the whole council of God.

2. Many of our modern pulpits and classrooms often lack the scriptural balance of the mighty apostle's teaching.
- d. Paul was constant in the work, warning men night and day (v 31).
 1. His dedication to God was endless.
 2. He gave himself unselfishly to the work, around the clock.
- D. In verse 32 Paul concludes his discourse to the eldership from Ephesus.
 1. By what power, by what force, could an eldership obtain the necessary strength and wisdom to guard and direct God's people on earth? It can only come by "the word of his grace."
 - a. The word "commend" is often translated *to set before*, e.g., Mark 6:41 and Mark 8:6, 7 (cf Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 2:2).
 - b. "[T]he word of his grace" is not only the best guide for leaders of the church of Christ, it is the only acceptable guide for them (cf Heb 13:9).
 - c. Following "the word of his grace" will give them (and us) an inheritance that will last forever (cf Gal 3:29; Col 3:24; Heb 9:15).
 - d. The word "sanctified" means *to be made holy* (cf Heb 3:1; 1 Pet 1:15, 16).
 2. Paul did not preach because of a love of money (cf 2 Cor 7:2; 11:9).
 - a. It appears that some of Paul's critics were accusing him of collecting this money for his own use, rather than relief of the saints in Judea.
 - b. Paul was a man that worked hard to avoid being an unnecessary burden on his fellow Christians (cf 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8, 9).
 3. As Paul concluded his remarks to these elders, he reminded them that a leader is to be a servant (cf Matt 20:27; 1 Cor 9:6; 1 Pet 5:2).
 4. He then reminds the elders that they knew he was not above manual labor to support himself as he preached the gospel (cf 1 Cor 4:12).
 - a. His calloused hands had "ministered" (provided, NKJ) for his own necessities (cf Acts 18:3).
 - b. Ministers willing to work to support themselves, while sharing the gospel, will not be easily swayed into compromising the truth in order to keep a steady income.
 - c. Paul did more than just tell them what they needed to do; he showed them through example (vv 20, 27; cf 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17).
 - d. Paul then gives us a previously unrecorded statement of Jesus; "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
 - e. In light of the context, it would be proper for us to conclude that Paul is telling these shepherds to live like the Great Shepherd; be willing to sacrifice any and all things for the flock (cf Jn 10:10, 11; 1 Pet 5:2-4).
 5. Finally, Paul fell to his knees in prayer with these elders.
 - a. Kneeling is the most often mentioned position for prayer, but not the only acceptable position (cf Mk 14:35; Lk 18:11).

- b. A touching scene is revealed as these men, whom the apostle knew so well, they prayed and wept together at his departing (cf Rev 7:17; 21:4).
- c. Men kissing men was common in that culture (cf Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12, etc.).
- d. This intense affection is far too often missing in modern relationships within the Lord's church (cf 2 Tim 1:4).
- e. Paul was now going to continue his voyage to Syria, so the elders from Ephesus accompany him to the ship.

Acts 21

Paul arrives in Jerusalem

- I. Paul received warnings of impending doom before he arrived at Jerusalem (1-16).
 - A. The 3rd journey continues as they travel from Miletus to Tyre (1-3).
 - 1. The last chapter ended with the brethren burdened with heavy hearts at the departure of Paul from Miletus.
 - 2. They then launched (set sail, NKJ) “with straight course” to the island of Coos, about forty miles distance (cf Lk 8:22; Acts 27:2).
 - 3. The following day they sailed on to Rhodes, an important island in history.
 - a. It was the historical home of one of the Seven Wonders of the World; the Colossus of Rhodes.
 - b. It is the island that was famous for cultivating the rose, hence, the name of the flower.
 - 4. From Rhodes they sailed to the port city of Patara.
 - 5. The wording of verse 2 indicates they changed ships at Patara. They found a ship heading to Phoenicia, which was about 400 miles away.
 - 6. They sailed south of the island of Cyprus (“left it on the left hand”) and landed in the coastal city of Tyre, in Syria, where the ship unloaded its cargo (cf Acts 20:3).
 - B. Paul and his companions spent the next seven days with the disciples in the city of Tyre (4-7).
 - 1. After the persecution of Stephen, some of those scattered abroad had preached in Phoenicia, establishing the church of Christ in the area (cf Acts 11:19).
 - 2. Some of the disciples at Tyre warned Paul about going on to Jerusalem.
 - a. These warnings came from the Holy Ghost, but were nothing new to the apostle (cf Acts 20:23).
 - b. In spite of the warnings, Paul must have felt a sense of duty to continue.
 - 3. When the seven days were accomplished, Paul, his companions and all the disciples (along with the children) escorted the brethren out of the city and knelt down on the shore in prayer. (cf Acts 20:36-38).
 - 4. The ship departed Tyre and sailed to Ptolemais, which was about thirty miles south, where they stayed one day with the brethren.

Note: Most people think that the sea voyage ended here and the rest of the trip was accomplished by foot.
 - C. The traveling company arrived in Caesarea and entered into Philip’s house (8-16).
 - 1. Philip is called “the evangelist,” which means he was a preacher of the gospel.
 - a. Philip was one of the seven selected by the congregation to serve in Jerusalem when the need arose (cf Acts 6:5).

- b. This was the same man who took the gospel to Samaria (Acts 8:5) and to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26, 27).
 - c. This knowledge gives us a greater understanding of Acts 8:40.
 - d. Interestingly, Philip lived in Caesarea when Cornelius, the centurion, sent to Joppa for Peter to preach to him and those of his house (cf Acts 10:1-5).
2. Philip had four virgin daughters, which prophesied (cf Acts 2:17).
 - a. It appears that female prophets were not uncommon in the early church (cf 1 Cor 11:5).
 - b. It should be noted that Paul does not forbid women from praying and prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11, he forbids them from doing it with uncovered heads.
 - c. It is possible that twenty-five, or more, years have passed since Philip settled in Caesarea.
 3. Paul and his company tarried in Philip's house for many days, until a prophet from Judea by the name of Agabus, arrived with a prophecy.
 - a. Agabus is possibly the same prophet that announced the coming famine "throughout all the world" (cf Acts 11:28).
 - b. Agabus used Paul's own girdle (belt, NKJ) to bind himself up in order to illustrate what awaited Paul, at the hands of the Jews, in Jerusalem (cf Acts 12:8; 22:25; 24:27).
 - c. The text states that the Jews would bind him, but he would be turned over to the Gentiles (cf Acts 28:17).
 - d. Those of Philip's household and Paul's companions must have understood this prophecy to be contingent on Paul's travel plans (notice the "we," in verse 12, Luke included himself).
 4. Paul strongly protested their passive intent to avoid, what he must have thought of as, his duty to Christ and the gospel (cf Phil 1:20, 21).
 - a. He boldly declares, "I am ready" (v 13) (cf Phil 2:17).
 - b. He was ready to be bound and even to die, if need be, for the cause of Christ (cf 2 Tim 4:6; Rev 12:11).
 - c. They continued to try to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but he would not change his mind. Finally, they gave up and declared "The will of the Lord be done" (v 14).
 - d. Since these friends of Paul could not get their way, they were content for the Lord to have His way (cf 1 Pet 3:17; 1 Jn 5:14).
 5. After these events in the household of Philip in Caesarea they packed their bags and went to Jerusalem.
 - a. "[A]nd went up" (v 15) is used because Jerusalem was at a higher elevation. The Bible is always geographically and topographically correct (cf Acts 8:5).

- b. Paul's entire group of men, plus a few more disciples from Caesarea, now travel to Jerusalem.
 - c. Lodging this large number of men would be a problem. It was Pentecost and the city would be full of pilgrims, as was the case in Acts 2 (cf Acts 20:16).
 - d. This is why Mnason is mentioned; he will supply the necessary lodging for this group.
- II. The third journey ends with Paul telling James and all the elders in Jerusalem of God's ministry among the Gentiles (17-25).

Note: We have studied approximately thirty years of church history in the book of Acts to this point in time.

 - A. The text states the brethren "received us gladly," which may have been true for several reasons:
 - 1. When this group of men arrived in the Jerusalem area, they carried money designated for relief of the struggling saints (cf Acts 24:17; 1 Cor 16:2).
 - 2. Paul still had many enemies in the city, which the next few chapters will draw to our attention (vv 10, 11). The brethren may have feared for his safety.
 - 3. Paul had been gone from Jerusalem for a long time. His last visit was in Acts 18:21, 22 at the end of the second journey (this would probably be his fifth visit to Jerusalem since his conversion).

Note: Brother Coffman estimates that Paul had traveled 3,400 miles during this third journey (Coffman's Commentary on Acts, page 412).

Note: If we add the miles traveled to this point, we have 1,300 miles in the first journey; 2,800 miles in the second journey and 3,400 miles in the third journey. That is a total of approximately 7,500 traveled in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, that is the account of only one of the apostles.
 - B. The next day Paul had a meeting with the elders.
 - 1. It is not stated why James, the Lord's half-brother, was specifically mentioned.
 - a. It is obvious from many other passages that James held a high position in the early church, e.g., Acts 15:13, Galatians 1:19 and Galatians 2:9.
 - b. Galatians 2:12 should also be noted.
 - c. It is interesting that none of the apostles are mentioned as being present, only the church elders (cf Acts 20:28, "to feed" means *to shepherd*).
 - 2. To these elders Paul gave the report of the third evangelistic journey, which was the longest (geographically) of the three journeys.

Note: The first journey takes up more verses in scripture than either of the later journeys.

- a. In verse 19 the word “particularly” (in detail, NKJ) is from three words which mean *one by one*. Paul gave them details of what great things God had done among the Gentiles (cf Acts 11:4; 14:27; 21:19).
 - b. This detailed report must have included not only all the success, but also all the opposition the Jews had leveled at the preaching of the gospel.
 - c. This seems a natural segue for the brethren to state that many in Jerusalem believe, but were still zealous of the law (cf Rom 10:2; Gal 1:14).
3. During this elders meeting, Paul was informed of the great prejudice that existed in the city of Jerusalem against him.

Note: This extreme prejudice came from brethren in Christ (v 20).

- a. Thousands of Jews believed in Christ, but were so zealous of the old law they were not willing to give it up (cf Gal 4:17, 18; Phil 3:6).
 - b. They believed Jesus as the Messiah, but could not grasp that God would remove the Law of Moses (cf Rom 7:4; Eph 2:15, 16; Col 2:14).
 - c. Part of the prejudice against Paul was that they had heard he was teaching the Gentile converts not to circumcise their children.
 - d. Paul had made circumcision clear in the books of Romans and Galatians (cf Rom 2:28, 29; 3:1; Gal 5:6; 6:15).
 - e. Because of the prejudice of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem the elders warned Paul that they probably would not listen to him.
 - f. The question at the beginning of verse 22 could be thought of in this light, “What are we going to do about this situation?”
 - g. The elders then offer a solution that shows they are spiritually immature, in this writer’s opinion.
4. Their plan goes something like this: We have four men that are going to act like Jews. Go and act like a Jew with them and maybe the Jews (Jewish Christians) will accept you as a believer in the law.
- a. In this writer’s judgment, James was wrong, the elders were wrong (notice the “we” in verse 23) and Paul was wrong in complying with this idea.
 - b. Paul’s motives were good, maybe even James’ and the elders’ motives were good, but that does not make the action right.
 - c. This passage might give additional insight to Galatians 2:11, 12. They “came from James.”
- Note: This whole situation makes one wonder what would have transpired in Jerusalem if the apostles would have been present.
- d. Paul was then encouraged by the elders to take a vow, along with the four men mentioned, which included purifying himself, being “at charges” and shaving his head.

- e. This could possibly be some type of modified Nazarite vow (cf Num 6:1-18). There is no other vow which required the shaving of hair (cf Judges 16:17-19).
 1. Whatever this purification involved it could be completed in a short period of time (notice v 26).
 2. The words “at charges” (pay their expenses, NKJ) have even greater implications.
5. Are the elders suggesting he use part of the money sent by the Gentile churches for use in temple sacrifices?
 - a. Where else would Paul get enough money to pay the temple fees for these four men, plus himself?
 - b. If this was some type of a modified Nazarite vow, the person with the vow was required to offer a sheep as a burnt-offering, a ewe as a sin-offering, a ram as a peace-offering, along with bread, wafers and a drink offering (cf Num 6:12-15).
 - c. All this times five men. It was suggested that Paul bear the expense.
 1. According to the elders’ plan, if Paul would do this “all may know” that he still followed the law (cf 1 Cor 9:20).
Note: Do not lose sight of the fact that all this was done because “thousands of Jews there are those which believe; and they are zealous of the law” (v 20, emphasis added, jb).
 3. Paul had taught against these types of actions in many places, e.g., Romans 6:14; 7:4, Galatians 3:25, etc.
 4. In this writer’s opinion, Paul was given unscriptural advice from James and the elders, coupled with an overwhelming desire to win these Jewish Christians, which caused him to make a sinful decision.
Note: J.W. McGarvey wrote: “If disciples, either Jewish or Gentile, should now assemble in Jerusalem, construct an altar, appoint a priesthood, and offer sin-offerings, they could be but regarded as apostates from Christ. But why should it be regarded as a crime now, if it was innocent then?” (Original Commentary on Acts, page 260).
 - d. Verse 25 is probably a reference to the instructions given at the end of the first evangelistic journey in Acts 15:20, 29.
 1. This appears to be an attempt on the part of the elders to appease Paul concerning the converted Gentiles (cf Acts 15:19).
 2. A double standard had now been established for worshipping God. That has never be right nor can it never be right (cf Col 2:14)!
- III. Paul was taken into protective custody by the Romans outside the temple (26-40).
 - A. The words, “[T]hen Paul took the men” indicates that he agreed to the vow and the financial obligation suggested by James and the elders.

1. Paul and the other four men had purified themselves and then entered the temple to signify the accomplishment of the purification and to have an offering made for each of them.
 2. “The next day” probably refers to the day after the end of the purification.
 - a. There were several specific situations where Jews, under the old law, were to “purify” themselves, e.g., a leper, or the house of a leper (Lev 13 and 14), the Nazarite (Num 6:6, 7), touching a dead body (Num 19:11ff).
 - b. Scriptures do not tell us the purpose of Paul and the other four men being purified in this case.
 3. In the temple, sacrifices were made by the priests for each of them.
- B. It is difficult to say, with any certainty, if the seven days mentioned in verse 27 refer to the Passover week or to the time Paul was purifying himself in this vow. Based on the time frame from the apostle’s own lips, it seems prudent to lean toward the first idea (cf Acts 24:1, 11).

Note: The purification possibly lasted two days. Extrapolating regressively from Acts 24:11 we find:

Day 11 Paul is before Felix

Part of day 11 and days 10-7 were spent in Herod’s judgment hall (Acts 23:35-24:1).

Day 6 was the day of transportation from Jerusalem (Acts 23:32).

Day 5 was the day the Lord revealed Paul would go to Rome as a witness (Acts 23:11).

Day 4 was the day after he was taken into protective custody (Acts 22:30).

Day 3 was the day Paul and the four men went to the temple (Acts 21:26).

If this is correct, that leaves two days for purification.

1. The Jews from Asia (not the Jewish Christians) stirred up the people against Paul.
 - a. Paul had trouble with Jews from Asia before this visit to Jerusalem (cf Acts 13:50; 14:2; 14:19).
 - b. Some of these very Jews may have been in Jerusalem for Pentecost and continued their assault on the apostle.
2. “[L]aid hands on him” indicates a physical attack. The same word is used in Matthew 26:50, Luke 21:12 and Acts 5:18.
3. These Jews cried out for “help.” They wanted the other Jews to be involved in stopping this man.
4. They then presented charges against Paul:
 - a. “This is the man, that teaches every where against the people” (v 28).
 - b. This is the man that teaches against “the law.”
 - c. This is the man that teaches against “this place.”

- d. This is the man who “brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.”
 - e. If the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were prejudice against Paul, what chance did he have against the zealous, orthodox Jews?
 - f. The Jews of the first century did not mind using false witnesses to accomplish their desires (cf Matt 26:60; Acts 6:13).
 - g. It appears that bringing Greeks into the temple was the charge they found most offensive (cf Acts 24:5, 6), but it was pure supposition rather than fact.
- Note: These religious people were so filled with hatred that they were willing to take the life of a man based entirely on an assumption. We must learn from their mistake and be careful not to jump to conclusions.
- 5. Verse 29 is parenthetically inserted to help explain the wild charges these Jews made against Paul.
 - a. The Jews had a similar problem with a man named Tobiah, an Ammonite, who Eliashib allowed to live in the rebuilt temple (cf Neh 4:3; 13:7).
 - b. The difference with Paul is he never took Trophimus into the temple.
 - c. This is a case where assumption led to mob mentality. Many innocent people have been accused of evil based only on presumption.
 - d. The Jews were wrong about Paul and Trophimus, but it is likely that they simply did not care. It was more important for them to fabricate a case against Paul than to deal with facts.
 - 6. The whole city was stirred up by the accusation (cf Matt 2:3; 21:10).
 - a. They drew Paul out of the temple (they did not have to draw Trophimus out of the temple, because he was never in the temple) and closed the doors, for some unspecified reason.
 - b. Some think the doors were shut to prevent Paul from gaining sanctuary on the horns of the altar (cf 1 Kgs 1:50, 51; 2:28).
 - c. Since they intended to kill Paul maybe they were trying to keep a blood-bath out of the temple (cf Acts 22:22).
- C. When the Roman captain heard about the uproar he came down from the garrison and removed Paul from the vicious mob.
- 1. About thirty years earlier Paul (then known as Saul) was the ring-leader in a similar situation that cost Stephen his life (cf Acts 7:57-8:1).
 - 2. Josephus records that this garrison was called *Antonia*, after Mark Antony, and was used by the Roman army to keep the peace in the city (Jewish Wars, V, chapter 5, section 8).
 - a. There was a large number of Roman soldiers stationed in this garrison (cf Acts 23:23, 24).

- b. The fact that the “chief captain” took “centurions” (in the plural) indicates the Roman army used a show of force when this riot began.
Note: A centurion was in charge of one hundred soldiers, so we can conclude several hundred soldiers went down to quiet the riot.
- c. The Jews had begun to beat Paul (they intended to kill him, verse 31), but stopped beating him when the soldiers entered the fray.
- 3. The chief captain ordered Paul to be chained with two chains, possibly thinking he was some notorious criminal.
 - a. His intent was not too safe-guard the apostle. He did not know who Paul was at this time. His intent was to stop the riot (cf Acts 22:29).
 - b. The chief captain wanted to know who this man was and what he had done that caused such an up-roar.
 - c. He could not get a definitive answer from the Jews, so he commanded Paul to be carried away from the mob and into the castle (barracks, NKJ; cf Acts 22:24; 23:10).
- 4. For the prisoner’s safety the soldiers carried Paul up the stairs and away from the angry Jews (cf Acts 22:22).
 - a. The only other time the phrase is used “away with him” is in reference to the angry Jews wanting Jesus killed (cf Jn 19:15).
 - b. As he was being carried up the stairs Paul asked the chief captain if he could be allowed to speak.
 - c. The composure of Paul in this arduous setting is amazing. He was an unshaken reed in the midst of a blood-thirsty riot (cf Matt 11:7).
 - d. The chief captain was shocked that Paul could speak Greek. Expecting Paul to be the infamous Egyptian trouble-maker.
 - 1. Historically, this Egyptian was a leader of many (the text says 4,000) assassins, who did much killing during the time of Felix.
 - 2. In this tumultuous setting Paul was able to convince the chief captain to allow him to speak.
Note: Interestingly, this Roman chief captain had more character than the pseudo-pious Jews. Even if he had made an assumption, he was willing to straighten it out with facts. The Jews would not.
 - e. Paul explains that he is a Jew from Tarsus, not the infamous Egyptian (cf Acts 9:11; 22:3).
 - f. The chief captain was so moved by either Paul’s words or his conduct that he gave permission, right there on the steps, for Paul to speak to the Jews (cf 1 Pet 3:15).
 - 1. From that spot he beckoned with his hand for silence and when they quieted down, he addressed them in Hebrew.

2. The people would have been able to speak Greek, but Paul was trying to do more than just communicate with them. He was trying to win them over for Christ's sake. He resorted to a language they would feel as sacred (cf Acts 26:14).

Acts 22

Paul addresses the mob.

- I. Paul presents his “credentials” to the Jewish mob (1-5).
 - A. His defense begins with his birth and education as a Jew.
 1. Paul is charged with the same crimes with which Stephen was charged with decades earlier (cf Acts 6:11-14).
 - a. Notice Paul begins with the same words of courtesy that Stephen used before the council, i.e., “Men, brethren and fathers” (cf Acts 7:2).
 - b. Standing on the stairs, bloody, beaten and bruised, he still wanted to win these would-be killers to Christ. Remarkable.
 - c. He spoke to the mob in Hebrew. The Jews considered the Hebrew language to be sacred. Therefore, they “kept the more silent (v 2).”
 2. Paul wants them to hear his “defense.” Same word used in Acts 25:16, 1 Peter 3:15 and other places. Also, see 2 Corinthians 7:11, “clearing of yourself.”
 - a. His “defense” was not a defense for himself; it was a defense of the gospel he preached (cf Acts 20:24).
 - b. He never brings up Trophimus or the idea of defiling the temple with Greeks, which was the biggest issue leading to the riot (Acts 21:28, 29).
 - B. Paul had been charged with teaching against the people, the law and the temple (Acts 21:28). He answered each of those charges.
 1. As far as teaching against the people, he had “a good report of all the Jews” (v 12; cf Acts 26:4).
 2. As far as teaching against the law, he had always “taught according to the perfect manner of the law” (v 3; cf Gal 1:14).
 - a. Gamaliel was a much-celebrated teacher of the Jews in the first century (cf Acts 5:34).
 - b. We still use the expression, “At the feet of” as a colloquialism today. But, in the first century it had specific meaning. Students would sit around the teacher, on the floor, to learn. Hence, at the feet of (cf Lk 8:35; 10:38, 39).
 3. As far as teaching against the temple, he demonstrated that he still “prayed in the temple” (v 17).
 4. He reminds these zealous Jews of his unwavering dedication in persecuting the church of Christ when he thought the church was contrary to God’s will (cf Acts 8:1-4; 26:9-11).
 - a. Paul mentions he had letters of support from the high priest and the elders as he went about in his zeal of the law (cf Acts 9:2, 14).
 - b. This zeal caused Paul to persecute the Christians “beyond measure” (cf Gal 1:13).

- c. That persecution included the extraditing of the Christians back to Jerusalem to be punished for the crime of being Christians.

Note: The point of verse 5 is to show that these facts were a matter of public record, even if the same men were not still serving in office.

II. Paul then gives his account of his conversion to Christianity from Judaism (6-21).

Note: There is no way to account for Paul's dynamic conversion, the new direction of life and his willingness to suffer, apart from an authentic encounter with the resurrected Christ.

- A. Paul relates that on the way to Damascus, about noon (midday, Acts 26:13), a light shined so bright that it overpowered the sun (6-13).

Note: For additional references and information on Paul's conversion see Chapter 9, I and Chapter 26, III

- 1. Paul "fell to the ground" when the bright light shined (cf Rev 1:16).
 - a. The text does not say why he fell to the ground.
 - b. Shock, fear, being overwhelmed by the light, losing his balance, or maybe a combination of all these.
- 2. While on the ground he heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me" (cf 1 Tim 1:13)?

Note: In this passage, and the other account of his conversion in Acts 26, are the only two places he is referred to as Saul after Acts 13:9. Both times it is Paul using his old, Hebrew name,

- a. We can imagine Paul's thoughts there on the ground, "Persecute you? I do not even know who you are."
 - b. The risen Christ declared that persecuting Christians is the same as persecuting Him (cf Matt 25:40, 45; 1 Cor 12:26, 27).
 - c. If that was true then the same must be true today (cf 1 Cor 12:12).
- Note: Those who trouble the church trouble Christ, which is even so in our day.
- 3. For the first time in his address on the stairway to these Jews, Paul mentions Jesus of Nazareth (cf Matt 2:23; Acts 4:10).
 - a. Paul uses a word which indicates that those with him heard the sound, but did not understand what they heard (cf Jn 12:28-30).
 - b. The light and the sound caused them to fear (cf Dan 10:7).
- 4. Paul then tells the Jews that he asked the Lord what he was supposed to do (cf Acts 2:37; 16:30).
 - a. This was the turning point in Paul's life, but the encounter did not make him a Christian. There were instructions to receive and requirements to obey (cf Rom 6:1-6; 10:9-14).

- b. Jesus had established how a person could be saved from their sins before He returned to heaven (cf Mk 16:15, 16). He did not circumvent His own scheme of redemption. He connected the sinner with a teacher.
 - 5. Paul had to be led by the hand because he was blind (cf Acts 9:8, 9).
 - a. Being led by the hand implies they were walking to Damascus.
 - b. The mighty persecutor of the church was now reduced to a helpless blind man, who needed care and guidance.
 - c. His arrogance is now changed to humility and repentance while he waits to “be told” (v 10) what to do (cf Acts 9:6).
 - 6. Ananias is introduced to the Jewish mob as “a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews” (v 12).
 - a. This information is added to impress the minds of the Jewish mob. None of these facts are included in Luke’s account in Chapter 9.
 - b. Interestingly, Ananias is not introduced as a Christian, but rather an exceptional person that even the Jews would admire (cf Acts 9:10).
Note: Telling them Ananias was a disciple would not help Paul win these Jews. He needed to present the facts of salvation in Jesus before he incited their prejudice any further.
 - 7. Paul tells the Jews that Ananias came to him and called him, “Brother Saul.”
 - a. Immediately (the same hour), Paul’s sight returned (cf Acts 9:17).
 - b. The fact that a miracle was performed should have been proof to the Jewish mob that Ananias was working with the approval of God (cf Mk 16:20; Acts 4:30).
- B. Ananias tells Paul of God’s intent for his future (14-16).
Note: Paul repeats what Ananias said to him for the benefit of the Jewish mob.
 - 1. Paul was chosen by God (cf Acts 26:16).
 - 2. Paul should know the will of God (cf Gal 1:12).
 - 3. Paul should see the Just One (cf Acts 1:22; 1 Cor 15:8).
 - 4. Paul should hear His voice (cf Acts 9:4).
 - 5. Paul should be His witness “unto all men.”
 - a. It is interesting that Paul worded this in such a fashion as to not yet mention the Gentiles specifically (cf Acts 9:15).
 - b. He is still trying to win them for Christ.
 - 6. Paul then gives the mob the instructions he received for his own salvation; be baptized in order for sins to be washed away (cf 1 Cor 6:11).
- C. Paul then shares with the mob some events that led him to Jerusalem after his conversion (17-21).
 - 1. Verse 17 mentions, “when I was come again to Jerusalem.” Inspiration does not reveal the specific time of this visit. Most commentators believe it was after the three years mentioned in Galatians 1:17, 18.

- a. Paul tells the Jewish mob that after his conversion to Christ he still entered the temple in religious devotion.
 - b. This may have been pleasing for the Jewish mob to hear, but it is disconcerting for the twenty-first century Christian to reconcile (cf Phil 1:18).
 2. While in the temple Paul says he entered into a trance (cf Acts 10:9, 10 (Peter); 2 Cor 12:2-4 (Paul)).
 - a. In this trance Paul received instructions from the risen Christ.
 - b. Falling into a trance was a common thing in Biblical times, but this specific trance is mentioned in no other passage.
 3. The Lord warned Paul to get out of Jerusalem while he was in this trance.
 - a. Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion was a narrow escape with his life (cf Acts 9:26-29).
 - b. Paul would have been in a difficult situation upon his return to Jerusalem. The Jews would think him a traitor and an apostate, the Christians would think of him as a persecutor and one dangerously harmful to any in the church of Christ (cf Acts 21:31; Gal 1:13, 23).
 - c. Interestingly, verse 19 is part of a conversation Paul had with Christ during the trance (cf Acts 9:13; 26:10, 11).
 - d. Verse 19 also illustrates that Paul understood the problem and that he knew he had caused the problem by his own actions. We can be forgiven of our deeds if we repent of them (cf 1 John 1:9), but we often have to continue to bear the consequences of those deeds far beyond the forgiveness.
 4. Paul mentions his part in the killing of Stephen to the mob.
 - a. Paul uses the word "consenting" to his death. The same word used in Acts 8:1. The word means far more than mere approval, it carries the idea of pleasure in the death of Stephen (cf Rom 1:32).
 - b. Verse 20 indicates that this is still part of the conversation with Christ during the trance. Notice the words, "when the blood of thy martyr."
 5. In that trance Paul says he received instructions from the risen Christ to go to the Gentiles (cf Acts 9:15; Rom 11:13).
 - a. Paul made specific references to Jesus of Nazareth four times in twenty verses without a reaction from the crowd being recorded.
 - b. When Paul mentioned the Gentiles (v 21), which appears to be a loose quotation of Jesus' statement to Ananias (cf Acts 9:15), the mob would listen no more.
- III. With the mob once again agitated the chief captain made the decision to get Paul into the castle where he could be examined further (22-30).

- A. They seemed to have given Paul respectful attention up to the point where he mentions that God intended for him to take the gospel to the Gentiles (cf Acts 13:46; 18:6).
 1. The mob is once again ignited into an angry frenzy.
 - a. Interestingly, the Jews were not angered over the Gentiles being converted. The Jews had been converting Gentiles for centuries (cf Est 8:17; Matt 23:15).
 - b. The anger stemmed from the idea of Gentiles being converted without conforming to the Law of Moses (cf Gal 3:24, 25).
 2. Not just “away with such a fellow,” but “away with such a fellow from the earth.” They wanted Paul killed (cf Lk 23:18; Acts 21:36).
 3. Luke then describes these crazed Jews in three ways:
 - a. They cried out.
 - b. Cast off their clothes.
 - c. Threw dust into the air (cf 2 Sam 16:13).
 1. These were manifestations of uncontrolled, diabolical fury from these religious Jews (cf Eph 4:31).
 2. The rage they felt may remind us of some of the recent riots in our country. Common sense and reason being absent (cf Acts 7:54).
 3. It is possible that these Jews “cast off their clothes” so they might start stoning Paul (cf Acts 7:58). If this was true, the idea was misconceived. They could not throw stones at Paul and avoid hitting the Roman soldiers. The chief captain had to act fast.
- B. The chief captain ordered that Paul be taken up into the castle (barracks, NKJ) so he could ascertain the reason for this disturbance (cf Acts 21:31, 32).

Note: We will find out later that this chief captain’s name was Claudius Lysias (cf Acts 23:26)

 1. The method he chose for obtaining the information he desired was by scourging the detainee.
 - a. Most likely the chief captain did not understand the “Hebrew” language, so he had no idea of the defense Paul was making.
 - b. He could only gauge the situation by the reaction of the crowd. At this point he made the decision that torturing Paul was a way to get the answers he needed (cf Acts 9:16; Heb 11:35).
 2. They then tied the apostle with thongs in preparation for his scourging.

Note: Paul was tied up, which means he was stretched forward and tied to a post, in the position to receive the scourging.

 - a. The chief captain wanted answers about the source of the riot.
 - b. The centurion was simply fulfilling the orders of his superior officer to scourge the man they had wrestled from the angry mob.

c. At this point they both knew the man was not condemned, because they still did not know what had caused the up-roar. This scourging was nothing more than a part of an interrogation.

d. Paul tells the centurion who was about to scourge him that he was a Roman citizen. That piece of information changed everything (cf Acts 16:36-38).

Note: A Jewish citizen would have been unprotected in a similar situation. The same would be true of an Egyptian (who they thought Paul was) or any ordinary Christian. God's plan for the advancement of the gospel through the efforts of this "chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:15) was truly extraordinary. He was the perfect man, in the perfect time, for the work.

3. The centurion understood the potential for legal problems and wanted to keep himself and the chief captain from breaking the Roman law.
4. The chief captain verified that Paul was indeed a Roman citizen.
 - a. It appears that citizenship as a Roman could be purchased by the very rich.
 - b. Verse 28 indicates that the chief captain had been able to purchase his Roman citizenship with "a great sum."
 - c. Corruption within governments is nothing new.
 - d. Some historians teach that citizenship was granted to the inhabitants of Tarsus by decree of Julius Caesar. That would make Paul "free born."
 - e. If true, this may add a better understanding to Acts 21:39.

5. They immediately stop the examination by scourging and became afraid because they had "bound him" in preparation for the scourging.

Note: Albert Barnes quotes Cicero as saying, "It is a heinous sin to bind a Roman citizen; it is wickedness to beat him; it is next to parricide to kill him; and what shall I say to crucify him?" (Cicero against Verres, a trial in 70 B.C.)

6. The chief captain was still investigating the reason behind the riot.
 - a. The next day he gathered the Jewish leaders and sat Paul down before them with the intent to get to the bottom of the up-roar (cf Acts 23:28).
 - b. The chief captain was looking for answers, Paul was looking for justice and a platform to continue sharing the gospel, but the Jews still wanted to kill him (cf Acts 23:15).

Note: Verse 30 is another example of an improper division in the chapter separations done by Stephen Langton in 1228. It would make more sense to include verse 30 with chapter 23.

Acts 23

Paul before the chief priests and the council. A plot to kill Paul is uncovered.

- I. Paul delivers his defense before the assembled Jewish leaders (1-5).
 - A. Paul begins his defense by stating that he had “lived in all good conscience,” which caused the high priest, Ananias, to have him slapped on the mouth (cf 2 Cor 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; 1 Pet 3:16).
 1. Although Ananias is a common Jewish name, it is the first time the Bible mentions a man named Ananias as high priest (cf Acts 5:1; 9:10).
Note: A man named Annas was mentioned at the beginning and ending of Jesus’ earthly life (cf Lk 3:2; Jn 18:13).
 2. Paul’s “good conscience” offended the high priest. The Jews were probably still agitated from the riot of the previous day. Striking him on the mouth was intended to stop his talking (cf Micah 5:1; Jn 18:22).
 - B. Paul does not cower after being struck, but rather rebukes the high priest for hypocritical conduct.
 1. When Paul was struck, he immediately said, “God shall smite thee.”
 2. The next thing Luke records Paul saying is calling the high priest a “whited wall.” A likely reference to Matthew 23:27, 28.
 - a. The thought is of something giving the appearance of being something that it is not (cf Lk 11:44).
 - b. Serving God takes more than an outward appearance (cf 2 Tim 3:5).
 3. Paul confronts the hypocritical actions of the high priest.
 - a. How could the high priest judge Paul according to the law if he acted contrary to the law (cf Deut 25:1, 2; Jn 7:51)?
 - b. The fortitude of the mighty apostle was evident. He did not back down, even when having to stand alone in front of his enemies.
 4. Not everyone admired his strength. Some asked, “Revilest thou God’s high priest?”
 - a. Interestingly, this is another case of Jewish hypocrisy.
 - b. They were quick to point out it was illegal to use abusive language toward the authority of the high priest, while ignoring the fact of illegally striking an uncondemned man (cf Lev 19:35).
 5. Paul states that he did not know the man was the high priest. There could have been several reasons for Paul making this statement:
 - a. It is possible Paul did not know who gave the command to strike him.
 - b. Paul had been away from Jerusalem for many years. We have already noted this man, Ananias, had not been designated as high priest earlier in any scriptures.

- c. This was an informal gathering of the Jewish council, called together by the Roman chief captain, in order to gather facts concerning the riot. It was held somewhere outside of the temple, because the soldiers would have been present. Possibly no formal seating arrangements or special clothing were used by the council. Paul would not have known who was who unless someone told him, and he had no friends present.
- d. Some have tried to make this a case of Paul having poor eye-sight or possibly even sarcasm. Neither of these fit the circumstances.
- 6. Verse 5 is basically Paul saying he was wrong. Words we should never be afraid to say when we are wrong. Paul refers to Ex 22:28, indicating he knew the law.
 - a. It is interesting how Jesus handled this similar situation some thirty years earlier (cf Jn 18:22, 23).
 - b. Paul did not intentionally violate the law. It appears the high priest allowed anger to dictate his handling of the law.

II. The Sadducees and Pharisees had a great dissension about the resurrection and because of that Paul had to be rescued by the Roman army again (6-10).

- A. Paul knew there was a difference of doctrine between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and he used it to his advantage.
 - 1. Paul stated he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee (cf Acts 26:5).
 - 2. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead (cf Acts 26:6-8); the Sadducees believed there was no resurrection of the dead (cf Matt 22:23).
Note: The Pharisees and Sadducees were always at odds with one another, with the exception of opposing Jesus and occasionally opposing the church (cf Matt 16:1; Acts 5:17, 34).
 - 3. The resurrection of Jesus from the grave is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity (cf Rom 6:5; 1 Cor 15:13; 2 Tim 2:8).
 - 4. The Sadducees denied existence of angels and spirits also.
Note: This is the only verse (v 8) that states the Sadducees denied angels and spirits. We must keep in mind that these sects (Pharisees and Sadducees, along with the Essenes) did not come into existence until a few hundred years before Christ. That is why they are never mentioned in the Old Testament. They simply did not exist until after the old law was completely written.
 - 5. It was the scribes of the Pharisees in verse 9, that use this fact (not believing in angels or spirits) against the Sadducees in this dispute (cf Ps 104:4).
 - a. The scribes “strove” (protested, NKJ), which is a word that means *to fight fiercely* (Strong’s # 1264).
 - b. Scribes were “scholars” of the scriptures. Maybe something like lawyers. Verse 9 says, “Scribes *that were* of the Pharisees.” There is no verse that speaks of the scribes of the Sadducees.

- c. These lawyers found no evil in Paul (cf Acts 26:31). If an angel or a spirit spoke to him, that was good enough for them. Yet, Paul had stated Jesus spoke to him, not an angel or a spirit (cf Acts 22:7, 8).
 - d. They were not ready to admit that the risen Christ had appeared to Paul, but they were certainly ready to stir up the Sadducees in this argument.
 - B. This war of words became so heated the chief captain had to step in and save Paul from being “pulled in pieces” by the Jews (cf Acts 24:6, 7).
 - 1. These men of the council had forgotten the purpose in coming together (cf Acts 21:29). They supposed that Paul had brought a Greek into the temple? Had he defiled the holy place?
 - a. Those questions were no longer important. Now it was a battle between the doctrine of the Pharisees and the doctrine of the Sadducees.
 - b. It is common for people to get side-tracked in discussions and lose focus on why they came together to begin with (cf Jn 7:40-43).
 - 2. Paul is rescued and taken back up into the castle (barracks, NKJ) for his own safety.
 - a. The chief captain still had no answers concerning this man and the trouble that surrounded him (cf Acts 21:34).
 - b. Notice it says the Roman soldiers had to “take him by force” from these angry Jews (cf 2 Cor 6:5).
- III. The Jews form a plot against Paul’s life (11-22)
 - A. The next night the risen Christ came to Paul and gave him words of comfort.

Note: Some have tried to accuse Paul of immoral deception when he pitted one religious group against the other. Christ visited Paul “the night following” (v 11) and had no condemnation for him, his words or his actions. That should settle the matter.

 - 1. The encouraging words Christ gave to Paul that night, in such a dire situation, were words Paul was able to pass on to others who were struggling with doubt (cf Acts 27:22, 25).
 - 2. Christ reminded Paul what he had already accomplished (testified of Him in Jerusalem; Acts 20:22) and what he would do in the future (bear witness for Him in Rome also; Acts 28:14).
 - B. The next morning certain Jews secretly conspired together to kill Paul (cf Matt 26:4).
 - 1. They were bound under a curse (oath, NKJ), which means they would be cursed if they did not carry out this death threat (cf 1 Sam 14:24).
 - a. This “curse” is from the same root word that is used in 1 Corinthians 16:22.
 - b. They were so committed to Paul’s death that they were not going to eat or drink until the oath was sated (cf 2 Sam 3:35).

- c. No eating or drinking was an indication of how strongly and quickly these Jews wanted to carry out this oath (cf 1 Sam 14:27, 28, 43, 44).
 - d. More than forty Jews had conspired together to commit murder in the name of God (cf Ps 83:5; Jn 16:2).
- 2. They took their oath to the chief priests and elders, which was probably the undoing of the secret conspiracy to kill Paul.

Note: More than forty assassins, plus possibly twenty-four chief priests and, if the “elders” are the Sanhedrin, then an additional seventy-one persons. That would take the number of conspirators in this plot to over one hundred thirty-five. Far too many now knew the secret for it to remain hidden (cf Prov 18:7).

 - a. The more than forty men asked the leaders of the Jews to get involved in their conspiracy by convincing the chief captain to bring Paul down from the barracks so they might have an opportunity to slay him (cf Prov 1:16).
 - b. The plan was to lay in wait and kill him before he gets to the council (cf Mic 2:1).
- C. Paul’s nephew heard about the plan and came to Paul to tell him what they were planning (cf Lam 3:37; Jn 19:11).
 - 1. Verse 16 is all that we know about Paul’s earthly family. He had a sister and that sister had a son.
 - a. All the other “family” Paul refers to was his fellow Jews or his spiritual family in Christ (cf Rom 9:3; 16:7, 21).
 - b. How Paul’s nephew gained access to the castle (barracks, NKJ) is not specified. According to verse 18 Paul the centurion classified Paul as a prisoner (cf Acts 27:1; 28:17).
 - 2. Paul asks one of the centurions to take his nephew to the chief captain so the information could be made known about the conspiracy.
 - a. Verse 19 might help in our understanding of why he was allowed into the barracks. This nephew was taken “by the hand,” possibly indicating he was very young.
 - b. While verse 18 states he was a “young man” it is impossible from that word alone, to know his age. The word means someone *under forty*. It is the same root word used of Saul in Acts 7:58. (Strong’s # 3494).
 - c. The chief captain took Paul’s nephew to a private place so the young man could speak to him.
 - d. This scene reveals the courage of Paul’s nephew and the compassion, kindness and integrity of the Roman chief captain.
 - 3. The nephew told of the plot and then entreated the chief captain not to yield to their request (cf Ps 10:9).

- a. Interestingly, the nephew refers to the conspirators as “The Jews.” Maybe Paul’s sister had been converted to Christianity and this nephew knew the difference between Christians and Jews.
 - b. He said the Jews were ready and lying in wait for the opportunity to take Paul’s life.
 - 4. The chief captain believed Paul’s nephew and allowed him to depart the barracks with the instructions to let no one know he had revealed the Jews’ plot.
 - a. This shows common sense and sound military tactics.
 - b. If the conspirators knew their secret plot was foiled, they would come up with some other plan to kill Paul.
- IV. The chief captain began to make immediate plans to secure the safety of his “prisoner” and then he wrote a letter to Felix explaining his actions (23-30).
- A. Luke gives us a detailed account of his efforts to keep this “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15) safe from his enemies. This Roman officer, via providence, was used by God for the greater good of the gospel (v 11).
- 1. Two centurions to command two-hundred-foot soldiers.
 - 2. Seventy horsemen.
 - 3. Two hundred spearmen. A total of four hundred and seventy Roman soldiers to assure Paul was safe as he traveled to Felix the governor.
 Note: This is the approximate size of a modern-day Army Battalion of soldiers; assigned to keep Paul safe from the Jewish conspirators. Obviously, Claudius Lysias took the threat seriously.
 - 4. This large number of men and horses left Jerusalem under the cover of darkness (approximately 9 PM) to help ensure an additional measure of safety.
 Note: The distance from Jerusalem to Caesarea was about seventy-five miles.
 - 5. This is the last reference in the New Testament that the apostle Paul was in the city of Jerusalem. They had rejected Paul, the gospel and the Savior. God would use the Romans to destroy the city and the temple in the near future, forever ending the possibility of the Jewish system of religion.
- B. The chief captain’s letter was “after this manner.”
- 1. He greeted Felix in the noblest way possible. A greeting only used three other times in scripture: Lk 1:3, Acts 24:3 and Acts 26:25.
 - 2. He then explains Paul was a man he rescued from the Jews.
 - a. Then Claudius Lysias, for the first time since we have been introduced to him, falters in his character when he lies to make himself look better.
 - b. He tells Felix that he rescued Paul because he knew he was a Roman.
 - c. He also conveniently leaves out the fact that he made preparations to scourge a Roman citizen.

3. He then reveals to Felix that he took Paul to the Jewish authorities who seemed to accuse him of a point of their law, but nothing serious enough to warrant death or imprisonment (the word “bonds” is used in these passages: cf Phil 1:13; Col 4:18; Philemon 10, which are what some refer to as ‘prison epistles,’ which is a misnomer. He was not in prison).
4. He then tells Felix that when he learned of a plot against Paul’s life, he had sent Paul to him and then told his accuser to go to Felix with their issues against Paul.

Note: We learn from this letter that Paul was sent to Felix for his safety, not as a prisoner. Felix should have immediately released Paul. We will learn that Felix held Paul in some form of custody in Caesarea for the next two years.

- V. Two days later Paul and the letter were delivered to Felix in Caesarea (31-35).
 - A. The next night the four hundred and seventy soldiers arrived at a city named Antipatris, about forty miles from Jerusalem.
 1. It would not be a difficult achievement for military men to make the forty mile walk in a day’s period, arriving after dark.
 2. This city and time frame may have been planned, notice verse 31 says, “as it was commanded them.” Arriving after sunset would add an element of safety for Paul (v 24).
 - B. The next day the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem and those mounted soldiers continued with Paul to Caesarea.
 1. Safely away from the threat in Jerusalem Paul would not need as much protection for the last part of the journey.
 2. Four hundred soldiers returned to the barracks in Jerusalem and seventy mounted soldiers, along with Paul, continued on to Caesarea.
 3. The remaining distance would be an easy ride on horseback.
 4. It appears Claudius Lysias planned this mission with great care. He obviously took this threat with all gravity.
 - C. Upon Paul’s arrival in Caesarea, Felix made the decision to wait for Paul’s accusers to arrive before he would do anything.
 1. This was the beginning of the stalling tactics of Felix (cf Acts 24:22-25).
 2. His chief captain had found nothing wrong with Paul as a Roman citizen.
 3. If Felix was an honorable person he would have released Paul immediately.
 4. Instead, Paul was placed in custody in Herod’s judgment hall (Praetorian, NKJ). Same word used in Philippians 1:13 for palace (cf Acts 12:19).

Acts 24

Paul defends himself in Caesarea before the Jewish authorities and Felix.

- I. The high priest, elders and a lawyer bring charges against Paul in Felix's court (1-9).
 - A. "And after five days" probably refers to the number of days Paul was in Herod's judgment hall awaiting this hearing (see a possible explanation of the days between these events in Chapter 21, section III).
 1. An orator (probably a Roman lawyer), named Tertullus, was likely a paid spokesman, hired to make the case against Paul (cf Acts 25:2, 15).
 2. He begins with flattery and platitudes for Felix.
 - a. The Jews had attempted to end Paul's life several times over the last week and a half:
 - 1) The mob intended to kill him (21:31).
 - 2) The angry Jewish leaders were going to pull him apart (23:10).
 - 3) More than forty assassins made an oath to end his life (23:12, 13).
 - 4) All had been foiled by God's providence and the Roman army.
 - b. Now the tactics have been changed. Exaggerated flattery was heaped upon Felix, designed to win the governor over (cf Ps 5:9).
 - B. After his opening remarks Tertullus gets to the charges against Paul in verse 5.
 1. "[A] pestilent fellow."
 - a. Notice the word "fellow" is in italics, which means it was supplied by the translators. Tertullus was saying Paul was like a plague, a disease (cf Lk 21:11).
 - b. Possibly the greatest force the church has ever known is described in such a fashion (cf Matt 5:11, 12; 1 Cor 4:13).
 2. "[A] mover of sedition (dissension, NKJ)."
 - a. The same word was used in connection with Barabbas (cf Lk 23:19, 25).
 - b. According to Tertullus, Paul was causing riots and disorder among the Jews all around the world.
 3. "[A] ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."
 - a. This is the only place in the New Testament the word "ringleader" is used.
 - b. By definition it means *a chief, a champion, the highest ranking*.
 - c. The word does not carry a negative connotation; the context is needed to determine any negativity.
 4. "Who also hath gone about to profane the temple."
 - a. This refers to Acts 21:28 and is completely unfounded (v 18).
 - b. Tertullus uses the "sect of the Nazarenes" in a derogatory way.
 5. He then states that we would have judged Paul according to our own law, but the chief captain interfered "with great violence" and stopped us.

6. Tertullus then explains to Felix that the chief captain commanded the accusers to come to him (cf Acts 23:30, 35).
 7. The accompanying Jews confirmed the accusations (cf Jer 9:3).
- II. Paul gets a chance to answer the charges against him (10-23).
- A. Felix then “beckoned” (nodded, NKJ) for Paul to speak.
- Note: Paul uses verses 11-13 to refute each of the charges Tertullus had made against him.
1. Paul acknowledges that Felix had been a judge to the nation for many years.
 - a. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Felix ruled as Procurator of Judea from 52 to 58 AD.
 - b. Paul’s “many years” must indicate these events occurred near the end of that ruling cycle. That gives us a time frame from 56-58 AD for his arrest.
 - c. Paul states he would “cheerfully” answer for himself. The word carries the idea of being confident (cf Acts 22:1; 1 Pet 3:15).
 2. Paul states the charges could not be valid since it had only been twelve days since he returned to Jerusalem after being absent for many years (cf Acts 21:18, 27).
 3. Paul declares that the time was too short to be a mover of sedition, plus they did not find him in the temple making disputes, neither in the synagogues nor in the city stirring up the people (cf Acts 28:17).
 - a. “For to worship” at the end of verse 11 indicates Paul’s intention for visiting Jerusalem was peaceful.
 - b. This is disturbing since that “worship” centered around the activities at the Jewish temple (cf Acts 21:26).
 4. The accusations could not be proved (cf Acts 25:7).
- B. Beginning with verse 14, Paul takes advantage of the situation to present the truth of the gospel to this assembly.
1. He had been accused of being the “ringleader” of a sect. The word “heresy,” in verse 14, is the same word Tertullus used in verse 5, translated “sect.”
 - a. Paul will use the next few verses to show that Christianity was not a sect of the Jewish religion, but, rather the church of Christ is now the true Israel of God (cf 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 12:24).
 - b. The church of Christ is not a “sect” of Christianity (cf Matt 16:18, 19; Acts 28:23; 1 Tim 3:15).
 - c. Paul uses the statement recorded in verse 14 to teach that Christianity is the natural progression of worshipping God according to the law and prophets (cf Acts 26:6, 7).
 - d. H. Leo Boles correctly stated that “Christianity is the full, ripe fruit of Jerusalem.”

2. Verse 15 is used to show that Christianity is not some new, radical religion. Paul believed in the resurrection, but so did most of the Jews apart from the Sadducees (cf Matt 22:31, 32; 1 Cor 15:12-18).
 - a. Because there will be a resurrection Paul was living in such a fashion as to avoid offending God or man (cf 1 Cor 4:4; 2 Cor 4:2; Titus 2:11-13).
 - b. The word “exercise” (strive, NKJ) is used just like we would use it today. We set forth effort to grow or make gains, Paul was doing that spiritually.
 - c. By using the word “exercise” Paul was letting these accusers know that he, too, was striving to please God.
 - d. Paul understood judgment. He realized he would someday give an account of his actions on earth. He lived his life knowing he must reverence God and honor man without offence (cf Acts 23:1; 1 Cor 10:32; 2 Thess 2:10).
3. The Jews, through Tertullus, were trying to make Paul out to be an unrighteous monster. Paul’s retort was “I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.” (v 15).
 - a. There are numerous passages which refer to the alms brought to the poor Christians in Jerusalem, e.g., Romans 15:25, 26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Galatians 2:10.
 - b. The gathering of these alms for the poor saints in Jerusalem was obviously a priority for Paul. Interestingly, this is the only place in Acts that Luke mentions the alms.
4. To further prove he was not some type of monster, Paul tells Felix that when they found him in Jerusalem they found him “purified in the temple” not causing trouble or tumult (cf Acts 21:2, 27).
 - a. Paul tells Felix that there was trouble at that time, but they were the ones who stirred up the trouble, not him.
 - b. Paul then states that these “certain Jews from Asia” were not there to accuse him and the persons that were there had no first-hand evidence of what happened at the temple (cf Acts 25:16).
 - c. Then Paul points out that these same Jews had put him on trial and had not convicted him of any wrong in this matter.
 - d. The exception to Paul’s statement is contained in the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead that the Pharisees believed and the Sadducees denied (cf Acts 23:6).
 - e. This is the same “hope” that is mentioned in Acts 26:6 and 28:20.
- C. With the accusations presented and the defense made of those accusations, Felix was in an authoritative position to make a ruling in this case.
 1. Luke records that Felix had a “more perfect knowledge of that way,” which is probably a reference to his understanding of Christianity.

2. There are several possible reasons why Felix had this “more perfect knowledge” about Christianity:
 - a. Caesarea was where the Centurion and all those converted of his household lived (cf Acts 10:24, 44-48).
 - b. The city of Caesarea was where Philip lived (cf Acts 21:8).
 - c. The Christian influence must have been strong in and around Caesarea.
 - d. Plus, Felix was married to a Jew (v 24).
 - e. Interestingly, Paul will mention that King Agrippa had the same kind of knowledge and insight into Jewish customs (cf Acts 26:3).
3. Felix postpones his decision until the chief captain can come down from Jerusalem to Caesarea. There is no record of Claudius Lysias ever coming to Caesarea; he may have never been invited. Felix is stalling. In the next section we will see two reasons why Felix did not release Paul.
 - a. “[L]iberty” emphasizes that Paul was under some type of house arrest.
 - b. Paul often received this type of treatment while being held “prisoner” (cf Acts 27:3; 28:16, 31). Possibly attributed to the type of personal conduct Paul displayed (cf Prov 16:7).
 - c. Felix also allowed Paul’s friends to visit him and “minister” (provide for, NKJ) his needs.

III. Paul stands before Felix and Drusilla (24-27).

- A. “Certain days” (some days, NKJ) means an undetermined amount of time had transpired since Paul last stood before Felix.
 1. This time he appears with his wife, Drusilla, who the scriptures refer to as “a Jewess.” (v 24).
 2. Some of the infamous family history about Drusilla is necessary.
 - a. Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa 1 (the youngest of three daughters).
 - b. Her father had murdered James, the apostle and intended to murder Peter (cf Acts 12:1-4).
 - c. Other relatives of this woman had killed John, the baptizer (Matt 14:6-8) and murdered the babies in Bethlehem (cf Matt 2:16).
 - d. Supposedly renowned for her beauty, she was married to the king of Emesa and then was persuaded to leave that marriage and become Herod’s third wife, while still a teenager.
 - e. The scriptures as well as Josephus say she was Jewish. This writer can find no Jewish blood in her lineage.
 3. Paul was sent for in order to hear about his faith in Christ (cf Rev 14:12).
 4. Paul reasoned from three different areas before Herod and Drusilla:
 - a. Righteousness (upright conduct). All people are required to be righteous (cf Acts 10:34, 35).

- b. Temperance (self-control). The conquest of moral struggles is accomplished through the exercise of self-control.
 - c. Judgment to come (we will all answer for our sins). The judgment to come is as sure as death (cf Heb 9:27).
 - d. Probably not what these two wanted to hear. History reveals that this was Felix's third marriage and Drusilla's second marriage. They failed in both righteousness and temperance.
- 5. The text says "Felix trembled" (cf Lk 24:5; Rev 11:13).
 - a. He understood he was not upright in conduct and did not have self-control so he rightly feared standing in judgment for his actions.
 - b. This message from Paul must have been powerfully worded to affect Felix in such a fashion. Those who preach today could learn something here (cf 1 Cor 2:4; 2 Cor 4:7).
 - 1) We need to confront the consequences of sin with all gravity.
 - 2) It will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (cf Heb 10:30, 31).
 - c. I find it fascinating that Felix was so moved he trembled at the message, yet nothing is said of Drusilla's reaction.
 - d. The word "trembled" (was afraid, NKJ) means *fear* or *to be alarmed* (Strong's # 1719). Same word used in Luke 24:5, 37.
- 6. Trembling and fearful for his eternal soul, Felix makes a common mistake, he decides to wait instead of respond to the gospel message (cf James 2:19).
 - a. Waiting for "a convenient season" is still rejection.
 - b. We may think of it as rebellion in the least offensive form, but it is rejection, nevertheless (cf Jn 12:48).
 - c. There is no Biblical record of Felix ever calling for Paul to make his life right. To be almost persuaded is to be completely lost (cf 1 Cor 6:9, 10).
- B. The first reason Felix refused to release this innocent man is stated in verse 26.
 - 1. There was an evil hope in Felix that a bribe would be paid to remove Paul from his present situation (cf 1 Tim 6:9).
 - a. A bribe from whom? The Jews pretty much had Paul where they wanted him, he was not dead, but he was out of circulation.
 - b. The Christians were so poor in the area Paul had to bring relief into the city to help them.
 - c. Possibly Felix wanted Paul to give him some of the money he had brought from the Gentile congregations. Maybe expecting Paul to purchase his freedom with the saint's money (cf Prov 17:23).
 - d. It is possible that Felix had heard of the generosity of the Gentile churches and was hoping they would raise money to liberate the apostle.

2. Felix often brought Paul to him for company and conversation. The KJV uses the word *communed*, the NKJ uses *conversed*.
 - a. It is the same word used in Luke 24:14 and Acts 20:11 for “talked.”
 - b. It appears the trembling concerning his eternal soul had passed from the mind of Felix.
 - c. There is no indication of abusive, physical treatment of Paul during this confinement (v 23).
 - d. It causes one to wonder how much influence Drusilla had on Felix’s actions. She may have felt toward him like Herodias felt toward John, the baptizer (cf Mk 6:17-19).
 - e. Felix had the same mentality that developed in the minds of Samuel’s sons (cf 1 Sam 8:1-3).
- C. This house arrest lasted for a period of two years (cf Acts 28:30).
 1. There is no scriptural information concerning Paul’s activities during this two year captivity, other than visiting with Felix. Luke does not record any conversations or letters written during the Caesarian bondage.
 2. After two years Porcius Festus arrived in Caesarea to replace Felix.
 3. We see at the end of verse 27 the other reason Felix continued to confine Paul, he wanted to please the Jews (cf Mk 15:15; Acts 12:3; Gal 1:10).
 4. No doubt Felix’s life was a little easier with the fanatical Jews in his favor, so he “left Paul bound.”
 5. The Roman official changes in Caesarea, but Paul’s situation remains the same.

Acts 25

Paul appeals to Caesar

- I. Two years of house arrest in Caesarea had not diminished the Jews' desire to take Paul's life (1-12).
 - A. The Roman government (the infamous Nero was Caesar at this point in history) replaced Felix with Festus as governor of Judea in about 60 AD.
 - 1. The Jews immediately petitioned this new official for another "trial" so they could once again attempt to kill him (cf Acts 23:14, 15).
 - a. Festus "ascended" (went up, NKJ) from Caesarea to Jerusalem.
Note: Jerusalem was built on a mountain, approximately 2,500 feet above sea level. Caesarea was a sea-port city on the Mediterranean Sea (cf Acts 9:30).
 - b. Felix did not get the money he was hoping to receive by leaving Paul "bound" (cf Acts 24:26).
 - 2. The leaders of the Jews informed Festus of the charges against Paul from two years earlier and "besought" (petitioned, NKJ) for a favor.
 - a. This "favor" was a ruse to get Paul on the road between the two cities so they might have the chance to kill him.
 - b. An ambush along the road would surely have been a suicide mission for the Jews. The plan to attack a guarded Roman prisoner was the result of blind passion against this man they hated (cf Acts 9:24; 20:3).
 - 3. Festus denied their request to move the prisoner.
 - a. The scriptures do not reveal why he refused this request.
 - b. He invited all who "are able" to make the journey down to Caesarea to see if there was "any wickedness" in Paul.
 - B. A period of "more than ten days" (v 5) passed with Festus in Jerusalem before he returned to Caesarea.
 - 1. Festus sat on the judgment seat and the Jews gathered around him making "grievous" (serious, NKJ) complaints against Paul (cf Matt 27:19; James 2:6).
 - a. This time they did not bring a lawyer with them. Tertullus did not appear to help when they went before Felix two years earlier.
Note: It is good to keep in mind that the Jews were not interested in this trial before Festus. The plot was engineered to get Paul out in the open so they could take his life.
 - b. Since Luke does not give specifics concerning the charges it is likely that they were the same charges as before (cf Acts 24:5, 6).
 - c. Luke does record that the charges could not be proven (cf Acts 24:13).
 - 2. Paul defended himself, but Luke only gives a terse account of the proceedings.

3. We will notice under Section II that Festus was ignorant of the Jewish religion and of Christianity in general.
 - a. The “pleasure” (favor, NKJ) that Festus was willing to do for the Jews was to ask if Paul would be willing to go back to Jerusalem to stand trial.
 - b. Caesarea was the capital of the region; hence the rightful place for the trial. Jerusalem was the hot-bed of the opposition of Paul by the Jews. There was going to be no justice for Paul.
 - c. Verse 10 states that Paul was already standing where he “ought to be judged.”
 - d. The words “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat” (v 10) could have been translated “*I have been standing*,” indicating Paul had been waiting for Roman judgment for a long time.
- C. Paul appealed to the prerogative of a Roman citizen to have his case heard by a higher court. Such an appeal was the undeniable right of a Roman citizen.
 1. God had selected the perfect person to be his spokesman in the Roman world. A man who had all the privileges of citizenship in a hostile environment (cf Acts 16:37, 38; 22:25-28).
 2. Paul boldly states “No man may deliver me unto them” (v 11), indicating that as a Roman citizen even a man as powerful as Festus did not have the authority to hand him over to the Jewish leaders.
 - a. It seems that Paul had been pushed into a corner by the unscrupulous procrastination of two Roman governors and the blood-lust of the insatiable Jews, so he made an appeal to Caesar (cf Acts 28:19).
 - b. Paul had long desired to take the saving gospel to Rome. He would get his wish, but not exactly as he hoped (cf Acts 19:21; Rom 1:15).
 - c. This decision by Festus fulfills the Lord’s words in Acts 23:10, 11.
 - d. Paul eventually understood that the events in this portion of his life were stepping stones for the advancement of the gospel (cf Phil 1:12-14).
- II. Paul stands before King Agrippa (13-27).
 - A. Agrippa and his wife/sister make the journey to Caesarea (v 13).
 1. This Agrippa was the son of the Agrippa that took the life of James, the apostle, and had Peter imprisoned (Acts 12). We know he died a violent death.
 2. Inspiration does not call Bernice Agrippa’s wife, though history records they were married.
 - a. She has a checkered history of incest and infidelity.
 - b. By the time she was sixteen she had been married twice, once to her uncle, Herod, and then to the king of Chalcis (Josephus, Antiq, lib, cap, 9, s. 1).
 - c. After his death she moved in with the Herod mentioned here.
 - d. Historians say she later became the mistress of Titus Vespasian, who ruled Rome from 79 to 81 AD.

- e. Bernice was probably the sister of Drusilla mentioned in Acts 24:24. These sisters were the great-granddaughters of Herod the Great (cf Matt 2:1).
- B. After “many days” Festus mentions the prisoner left over from Felix’s reign (vv 14-21).
 1. As Festus relates the case to Agrippa, he tells of the Jews who wanted “judgment against” Paul.
 2. Festus states that the Roman law requires a man to stand before his accusers “face to face.” The Jews had the same law (cf Deut 19:17, 18).
 3. Festus tells Agrippa that he gave Paul a quick trial, but did not hear any accusations as he supposed against the man (cf Jn 18:31; Acts 18:14).
 - a. He does say that the accusations centered on “their own superstition” (cf Acts 18:15; 23:29).
 - b. If you read Paul’s defense before Felix in Acts 24:10-21 and then in Acts 25:8 before Festus he does not mention Jesus’ name.
 - c. This tells us one of two things took place: either Luke did not record all that was said at the trial or Festus had done some research on the accusations of the Jewish leaders.
 - d. Festus conveniently failed to mention to Agrippa that he was trying to do the Jews a favor (v 9).
 - e. In verse 20 Festus does admit he “doubted of such matters” (I was uncertain of such matters, NKJ). Possibly admitting he did not know what to do, and also, that he did not know Jewish law well enough to even understand the accusations.
 - f. Some commentators feel Agrippa was better versed on the Jewish law and customs. That is possible, but he was not Jewish by either blood or by religious practice.
 4. Festus then states that he is now just holding Paul until he can be sent to “the hearing of Augustus.”
 - a. The Caesar in power when Paul was held prisoner in Caesarea was Nero, not Augustus.
 - b. Augustus was the first Emperor to rule after the republic ended. He also reigned the longest of any Caesar in history, over forty years. The reading in verse 21 should probably be “the hearing of *the* Augustus,” being a reference to the person ruling at the time.
- C. This is the perfect segue for Agrippa to say “I would also hear the man myself” (vv 22-27).
 1. It appears Agrippa was interested in hearing the Christian himself. With his family history interwoven so closely with John, the baptizer, Jesus, Peter and maybe others I am sure he had heard many stories.

2. It is possible this was a political courtesy; more likely his personal curiosity was piqued.
3. Arrangements were made for the next day and Paul was brought before them, “with great pomp.”
 - a. The risen Christ had stated that Paul would stand before kings “and bear my name” (cf Acts 9:15).
 - b. About thirty years earlier Jesus had prepared the original apostles with the same information about their future deeds (cf Lk 21:12).
 - c. The “pomp” must have been a spectacle to behold. All the important dignitaries were present, dressed in the finest garments.
 - d. With the visual display of all these worldly riches packed into the meeting place they bring forth the prisoner and place him in the midst of all this grandeur, in bonds (chains, NKJ; cf Acts 26:29-31).
 - e. This is the same city, and possibly the same room, that Herod sat “arrayed in royal apparel” and was eaten of worms (cf Acts 12:21-23).
4. Festus tells King Agrippa that “all the multitude of the Jew” had wanted Paul put to death.
 - a. Festus is giving King Agrippa a short explanation of the prisoner.
 - b. He tells Agrippa that he has found no reason worthy of death (similar to Jesus’ situation near His death; cf Lk 23:4, 14).
 - c. It appears Festus is hoping King Agrippa can give him some help or insight about the situation he had gotten himself into by trying to please the Jews (v 9).
 - d. Since Paul had appealed unto Caesar, Festus would be obligated to write formal papers to the emperor. The problem for Festus was that he had no idea what the charges against Paul actually were.

Acts 26

Paul's discourse before Agrippa and Bernice

- I. Paul is permitted to speak for himself (1-3).
 - A. Even though Agrippa was the visitor in Caesarea it appears he had the higher political position because he gave permission for Paul to speak.
 - 1. "Paul stretched forth the hand" which seemed to be a common mannerism of Paul, and others, at the beginning of a speech (cf Acts 12:17; 13:16; 21:40).
 - a. It is possible that in this case Paul was emphasizing the chains on his wrists (see 26:29). The text does not reveal if Paul was chained to soldiers or if he was chained similar to handcuffs or shackles.
 - b. Since Paul was given freedom within the palace at Caesarea it is possible he was put in chains prior to the formal gathering before Agrippa.
 - 2. Paul was "happy" to answer the King about why he was being held captive.
 - B. A possible reason Paul was "happy" to speak about his accusations before this king was because Agrippa was known "to be an expert in all customs and questions" concerning the Jews.
 - 1. Agrippa was not Jewish, but it is said that his family had long since adopted the Jewish religion (even though history does not prove they followed it).
 - 2. Add to that the fact that his wife, Bernice, was the sister of Drusilla, who is called a Jewess (Acts 24:24), we can see a Jewish connection; even if there is no Jewish blood in his veins (cf Acts 16:1).
 - a. Therefore, inspiration records Agrippa was qualified to understand the events that led to Paul's captivity.
 - b. Paul politely asks Agrippa to patiently hear him.
- II. Paul gives an account of his history (4-11).
 - A. Paul's discourse begins "from my youth."
 - 1. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but was soon sent to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel (cf Acts 22:3).
 - 2. The account of his early years and his education would be well known by all the Jews (cf Gal 1:13, 14; Phil 3:4-6).
 - a. In verse 5 Paul states "after the strictest sect of our religion" (emphasis added, jb).
 - b. It is possible he is including Agrippa in the "our" of the Jewish religion.
 - B. Paul then moves from the past to the present in verse 6; "And now I stand and am judged."
 - 1. The "hope" that is revealed within the context is the resurrection of the dead (cf Acts 24:19).
 - a. The theology of life after death is basically a New Testament doctrine.

- b. Only a few places in the old law hint of the resurrection, and fewer deal with it specifically, e.g., Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2.
- 2. Many feel that “the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers” refers to the Messiah (cf Gen 3:15, 16; 49:10; Deut 18:15; Isa 9:6; Rom 1:1-3, etc.). While this is certainly true, the context seems to be slanted toward the question of Jesus’ resurrection.
- 3. “[T]welve tribes” is used by Luke to indicate the whole of Judaism. The same term is used by James in James 1:1 and by John in Revelation 21:12.
 - a. It is often stated that there were not twelve tribes any longer in Israel because of the Assyrian captivity, circa 722 BC.
 - b. Jesus made regular references to the “twelve tribes” in His ministry on earth (cf Matt 19:28; Lk 22:30).
 - c. Verse 7 states that this “hope of the promise,” which the twelve tribes “instantly” (constantly, NKJ) served God because of the “hope to come” (obtain, NKJ) was the reason he was being accused by the Jews.
 - d. Paul, addressing Agrippa, turns to the assembly in general (the “you” in verse 8 is a plural word) and asks them why is it unbelievable to them that God should raise the dead?
- C. Paul then switched from the resurrection of Jesus to things he had done contrary to Jesus and the will of God (cf Gal 1:13, 14; Phil 3:6).
 - 1. These types of events were predicted by Jesus (cf Jn 16:2, 3).
 - 2. In verse 9 Paul includes that he did “many things” against Jesus. The thought is that he did as much as he possibly could in opposition to Jesus and the church of Christ (cf 1 Tim 1:13).
 - 3. Paul relates to Agrippa the events we have studied in Acts 8 concerning the horrific persecution after Stephen’s death (cf Acts 8:1).
 - a. He shut up good men and women (saints).
 - b. He was involved in the deaths of many of those good people (when they were put to death, v 10).
 - c. The Christians were meeting in the synagogues of the day.
 - 1. He went into the synagogues and caused the Christians to deny (blaspheme) Jesus as their savior; probably under threat of death or great physical harm (cf Acts 18:6).
 - 2. “[A]nd being exceedingly mad” (exceedingly enraged, NKJ) expresses the violence and anger Paul felt for the Christians. He was like a madman.
 - d. Even taking his compulsion into other cities to carry on his punishment of the Christians.

- e. It is possible he had done such a thorough job of persecuting the Christians in and around Jerusalem that he needed to move on to other cities in order to find large numbers to victimize.
- III. Paul then gives the account of his conversion (12-18).

Note: This is the third account of Paul's conversion, which has been covered in our study of Acts Chapters 9 and 22.

 - A. The fact that Paul had "authority and commission from the chief priests" would be of significance to King Agrippa because of his knowledge of Jewish affairs (cf Acts 9:1, 2).
 - B. In this third account there is some information that had been previously undisclosed.
 - 1. The light on the Damascus Road was brighter than the noonday sun (v 13).
 - 2. The light covered all that were traveling and they all fell to the ground (v 14).
 - 3. When Jesus spoke, He used the Hebrew language (v 14). It is probable that the language Jesus used was Aramaic. It was the common language of the day and Jesus often used phrases from the language in His teaching, e.g., Mark 5:41 (Talitha cumi) and Mark 7:34 (Ephphatha).
 - 4. In the conversion account that Paul gives before Agrippa, inspiration records Jesus saying more than three times the number of words to Paul as the other two accounts.
 - a. Chapter 9 has Jesus saying 38 words.
 - b. Chapter 22 records Him saying 36 words.
 - c. Chapter 26 says He spoke 121 words.
- IV. Paul next tells Agrippa of his personal conduct after his conversion (19-23).
 - A. Paul tells King Agrippa that the evidence was too strong; he had to obey the splendid appearance that was sent to him from heaven (cf Gal 1:16).
 - 1. Verse 20 is a brief summary of the places he visited after his conversion.
 - a. Damascus (cf Acts 9:19-21)
 - b. Jerusalem (cf Acts 9:28, 29).
 - c. All the coasts of Judea (?).
 - d. Then to the Gentiles (cf Acts 13:46).
 - e. In all these places he preached repentance and turning to God as evidenced by works, which indicate a change of life (cf Matt 3:8; 1 Thess 1:9).
 - f. We cannot say we regret our sin, and we are ashamed of the sins we have committed and then chose to live in sin. That is hypocritical conduct (cf Job 13:16; Matt 7:5).
 - 2. Paul tells Agrippa the reasons for his arrest, "For these causes" (v 21). His obedience to the heavenly vision caused the Jews to turn on him.
 - a. Paul mentions the three reasons in verse 20 as evidence that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

- b. Paul does not choose to mention to Agrippa that the focus of the Jews' hatred was still centered in the false conception that Paul had taken a Gentile into the temple (cf Acts 21:28-30).
 - B. Paul then attributes his deliverance from the Jews and his continued strength to preach the gospel to be directly from God's help (cf 2 Tim 3:11; 4:17, 18).
 - 1. He had witnessed (notice verse 16) to small (a word that is also translated *least, less, little*) and great (a word also translated *great, high, mighty*).
 - 2. The apostle got to present the saving message to those humble and obscure in life as well as those who were rich, royal and noble (cf Rev 20:12).
 - 3. Paul's message was "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come."
 - a. He is telling Agrippa that he preached no new doctrine.
 - b. He presented well known information from the prophets and the fulfillment of those prophecies in Jesus the Christ (cf Jn 1:45; 5:39).
 - c. Specifically, that Christ should suffer, be the first raised from the dead and to show light to both the Jews and Gentiles.
 - 1. Suffer: Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 53:1-5.
 - 2. First fruit from the dead: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5.
 - 3. A guiding light to all people: Luke 2:32; Acts 26:17, 18.
- V. At this point Festus interrupts Paul's message with condemnation (24-32).
 - A. With an elevated voice Festus declares Paul to be mad (Strong's word # 3105, *to rave as a maniac*; it is same word used in John 10:20; Acts 12:15; 1 Corinthians 14:23 and again later in verse 25 of our text).
 - 1. Festus was ignorant of Jewish law and the prophets. The message he heard Paul present must have been difficult to grasp.
 - a. Paul was saying that the people he once persecuted, imprisoned and even put to death are now his closest friends.
 - b. Because of a vision from heaven, he was willing to suffer confinement, hardships and beatings.
 - c. He taught about the resurrection of a man who was known to have been killed on a cross.
 - d. He had opportunities to defend himself in various courts, yet rather took those opportunities to attempt to convince and convict his judges.
 - 2. Festus commented on Paul's high degree of education (much learning), which he deduced had driven the apostle mad (cf Mk 3:21; 2 Cor 5:13).
 - 3. It must have been something spectacular to hear this apostle make apologetic speeches in intimidating situations.
 - B. Paul's response to Festus, "I am not mad."
 - 1. A calm and dignified retort to the accusation.

- a. He adds “most noble Festus” indication proper decorum on Paul’s part (cf Acts 24:3).
 - b. Paul had unusual self-control in difficult and stressful situations.
2. Festus may have decided that since he did not understand Paul’s message he had to be speaking “crazy talk.”
 - a. His words were not the ravings of a maniac. Paul declared them to be “words of truth and soberness” (cf Tit 1:9; 2:7, 8).
 - b. It is not unusual for a person to set forth a fresh idea and then be condemned for it. We see it today in academic circles and even in our Bible classes from time to time.
 - c. Our minds need to be open and fearless. If a doctrine is wrong it will be proven wrong by God’s word. If it is sound, it should be considered to the advancement of our own understanding.
 - d. In this context it is obvious that Festus did not understand what Agrippa understood.
3. Paul then directs his message to Agrippa because the King “knoweth of these things” (v 2).
4. Luke records three points made by Paul in this situation:
 - a. He was persuaded that the things concerning Jesus were not hidden from Agrippa.
 - b. “[T]his thing was not done in a corner” (cf Isa 30:20; Acts 4:16).
 - c. These things were not hidden away, they were not done secretly and they were common knowledge to anyone being an “expert in all customs and questions” of the Jews (v 3).
- C. King Agrippa is asked if he believes the prophets. Paul had worked Agrippa into a position where he would be forced to admit he believed the prophets.
 1. The reason Paul could say he knew “that thou believest” is due to the knowledge of the prophets and the Jews’ history the King possessed.
 2. What is King Agrippa to do? Will he admit that Jesus is the Christ? Will he become a Christian? Not in this text!
 - a. Agrippa says “almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (cf Ezek 33:31; Mk 10:17-22).
 Note: This is the second time the word “Christian” is used in the Bible. In this case a non-Christian uses the word to describe Paul’s efforts.
 - b. *Almost persuaded, leaning in that direction, knowing it is the right thing to do, I will do it someday, when the time is right* are all common expressions. Expressions of good intent, but are still absolute rejection.
 - c. To be almost persuaded is to remain totally lost (cf Matt 15:24; 2 Cor 4:3).
 - d. Paul wanted Agrippa to become “altogether” as he was that day.
 - e. He mentions the bonds (chains, NKJ) that symbolized his lack of freedom.

Note: In the two years Paul was held under house arrest at Caesarea under Felix first, then Festus, he had not won anyone to Christ (that we know of) and he had not won his own liberation from his chains. This would change when he arrived in Rome (cf Phil 1:13, 14; 2 Tim 1:16; Philemon 10).

- D. At this gesture with his chains thrust out before him the three dignitaries, along with the gathered officials went aside to discuss Paul's fate.
1. It appears they unanimously decided he had done nothing worthy of death or even of being held captive (cf Acts 28:18; 1 Pet 4:14-16).
 2. Festus now knows that he should have set Paul free, but the prisoner had appealed unto Caesar, and to Caesar he must go (cf Acts 25:11; 28:19).
 3. After more than two years of confinement in Jerusalem and then Caesarea Paul will now have an eventful trip to Rome to stand before Caesar.

Acts 27

Paul (along with Luke and Aristarchus) begins the voyage to Rome.

- I. Julius takes charge of the prisoner as the adventure of the sea voyage begins (1-8).
Note: The events that transpire in Chapters 27 and 28 of the book of Acts are the direct result of Paul ending his third evangelistic journey in Jerusalem, where he was led to make some poor decisions concerning Jewish worship (cf Acts 21:23, 24, 26). Consequently, the Jews wanted to kill him (cf Acts 21:30, 31). Those events led to more than two years of confinement, first in Jerusalem and then in Caesarea.
 - A. “And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy” indicates that Luke is once again Paul’s traveling companion.
 1. Festus had made arrangements to transport Paul to Rome, per his appeal.
 - a. We see Paul with privileges afforded. He was allowed to take friends with him on this voyage.
 - b. This might seem strange in our minds, but Paul was always treated with consideration and even kindness during his confinement by both the Romans and the Gentiles, with the singular exception of Philippi (cf Acts 16:22-24).
 - c. This might have been divine providence or it might have been a direct result of the character Paul demonstrated, even in adversity.
 2. Paul was traveling with prisoners to Rome.
 - a. The centurion responsible was of the Augustan band.
 - b. We have noted a centurion of the Italian band in Acts 10 by the name of Cornelius. The notes in Acts 10, I, A, 1, b. concerning Roman centurions would be applicable here.
 3. Luke recorded where the ship was from (in Mysia, not far from Troas) and reveals the intended course to be taken.
Note: This would have been a port at the northeast corner of the Aegen Sea.
 - a. Close to the shore line would be the safer place to sail, plus the owners may have had the desire to load or unload merchandise in the coastal towns along the way.
Note: It is probable that the ship from Adramyttium was a smaller ship, designed to sail close to shore. Possibly on its way back to its home port for the winter. Robertson writes that the normal sea voyage would have led from Alexandria directly to Rome, which would require a large ship in the dangerous winter months (Robertson’s NT Word Pictures).
 - b. We are once again introduced to Aristarchus from Macedonia (v 2).
 - c. Aristarchus was right in the middle of the riot in Ephesus (cf Acts 19:28, 29). He also accompanied Paul in Asia (cf Acts 20:1-4).

4. The first day at sea was a short trip to the city of Sidon, just north of Caesarea, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (cf Gen 49:13; Acts 12:20).
 - a. It was about seventy miles. The most obvious reason to stop at Sidon was to trade merchandise.
 - b. At Sidon Paul was treated “courteously” (kindly, NKJ) by the centurion.
 - c. This courtesy would continue throughout the voyage to Rome (cf Acts 27:43; 28:16).
 - d. Paul had Christian friends in the area of Sidon who were allowed to “refresh” him (receive care, NKJ). The persecution that arose from Stephen’s death caused the gospel to be taken to this area (cf Acts 8:1; 11:19; Heb 13:3).
 - e. Paul had spent a week with brethren just south of Sidon as he traveled to Jerusalem prior to his arrest (cf Acts 21:2-4).
 5. When they left Sidon, they sailed “under Cyprus” or sailed near the protection of Cyprus. The leeward side of the island would provide natural protection from the contrary winds blowing from the west and north.
 - a. They sailed near Cilicia and Pamphylia until they arrived at the port city of Myra, a city of Lycia.
 - b. This area would be familiar to the apostle. He had sailed these waters at the beginning of the first evangelistic journey and then again near the end of the third journey (see maps and charts for a better understanding).
 - c. Myra was a substantial port for the shipment of grain to Rome. It is possible that the port at Myra was the destination for the centurion and the prisoners when they left Caesarea. A likely place to find a larger ship headed to Rome.
- B. They had no trouble finding a large ship of Alexandria that was sailing to Italy.
 Note: We know it was a large ship hauling grain from verses 37 and 38.
1. The contrary wind caused many days of slow sailing in the new vessel.
 - a. Sailing into the wind is near impossible, so a maneuver known as “tacking” was necessary. Sailing a zig-zag course in an effort to move forward. This is both slow and time consuming. With a large ship it would also require a great amount of effort.
 - b. After many days of sailing they came to a city named Cnidus, which means they sailed many days to travel about 150 miles in a westerly direction.
 - c. From Cnidus they turned southwest and sailed “under Crete,” (south side) which means they were trying to escape the contrary wind while using the island of Crete as protection (similar to verse 4).
 - d. Salmone was located on the extreme east end of Crete. This port city was first visited by Paul, Barnabas and John Mark in Acts 13:4, 5.

2. With great difficulty they sailed around the eastern end of Crete and found a safe harbor in a port named, “The fair havens.”
 - a. This location would be in the center of the island and on the leeward side (in this case the south side of the island), thus protecting them from the north and westerly winds.
 - b. They were temporarily safe in this port, but it afforded no long-term protection from the winter weather (see verse 12).
- II. The centurion believed the master and owner of the ship more than he believed Paul concerning the dangers of leaving “The fair havens” (9-13).
- A. It appears that when the centurion started the sea voyage he intended to arrive in Rome before the dangerous season of sailing on the Mediterranean set in.
1. “Now when much time was spent” references the days at sea battling the contrary wind, which had caused them to be delayed in their schedule (see vv 4 and 7).
 2. Luke recorded that “sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past” (emphasis added, jb). This was a time of year reference recorded for the reader’s knowledge.
 - a. This fast was probably the fast associated with the Day of Atonement (cf Lev 16:29-31).
 - b. Since the Jewish calendar was different than our Julian calendar this could have been in either late September or early October, depending on the exact year this voyage took place.
 Note: The Jewish calendar was based on the phases of the moon. That corresponds with a twenty-nine-day cycle. That accounts for the possible variance of late September or early October.
 - c. According to scripture it was unsafe to sail in the Mediterranean in the fall of the year (cf 2 Tim 4:21a).
 - d. Paul knew what was going to happen if they ignored his council. Paul does not claim to have this knowledge supernaturally, nor does Luke record the Spirit gave him this information. We should use caution in giving Paul divine insight here. It is most likely attributed to his knowledge of the sea and the region (see comments under IV, C).
 - e. How often do people follow poor advice (or the multitude) to their own destruction or harm (cf Ex 23:2)?
 - f. Julius, the centurion, seemed to have the final say of what the ship and crew would do. He shunned Paul’s advice and listened to the majority, leading the ship to destruction.
- B. Because “The fair haven” was not a good winter port they decided to sail on to Phenice (Phoenix, NKJ), which would offer more protection for a prolonged stay.

1. Luke records the reason Phenice was more desirable to winter in is because of the direction of the port entrance.
 2. The desired harbor was only about forty or fifty miles west on the southern coast of Crete. Only forty or fifty miles, but they never made it.
 - C. The violent westerly (or northwesterly) wind abated and a soft, south wind began to blow. They saw this as their chance to set sail for a better harbor west of “The fair havens” and they took it.
- III. A tempestuous wind, named Euroclydon, drives the ship away from shore (14-20).
- A. A sudden storm caught the ship and drove it off course.
 1. This is similar to what happened to the ship Jonah was on as he fled the presence of the Lord. It even happened near the same geographical place (cf Jonah 1:3-5).
 2. Violent storms in this part of the Mediterranean were not unusual.
 - a. There is a high mountain range on the island of Crete, with an elevation of approximately 7,000 feet.
 - b. This mountain range would offer protection from a northwesterly wind, but would add to atmospheric changes to a wind coming from the northeast.
 - c. Most commentators write that the word “Euroclydon” is a compound word, which comes from combining words meaning north and east. The name is actually the wind direction (similar to a nor’easter in the New England states).
 - d. If this is the case, then what they were using for protection (the island and its mountains) increased the devastation which befell them.
 - e. Paul warned the church at Ephesus against being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14).
 3. Because the wind was coming from the stern of the ship, they had no opportunity to turn into the wind in order to control the ship.
 - a. This was no quick, small storm or squall. It was a typhoon/hurricane type storm that lasted for weeks (v 27).
 - b. When they realized the wind had taken control of the ship, they decided to let the ship “drive,” which means they no longer tried to control the ship, but just let the wind push it where it may.
 - B. The original idea was to sail to the port city of Phenice (Phoenix, NKJ), but the wind has now driven them south, away from Crete and they were blown to the south side of an island named Claudia.
 1. This small island was about twenty-three miles southwest of Crete. The south side of the island (leeward side) would offer some protection for the ship from the wind.

2. With calmer waters on the south side of the tiny island the crew secured the small boat (skiff) to the main boat to keep it from being destroyed.
 3. Another possible explanation for bringing the smaller ship on board the larger ship was to have an escape vessel (a life boat) if the large ship sank in the storm.
 4. In verse 16 Luke uses the word “we” indicating that everyone on board was involved in saving the ship in this storm.
 5. The text says they used “helps” (cables, NKJ) to undergird the ship. Strong’s word # 996, *a rope or chain for frapping a vessel*.
 6. Since the ships were made of wood, the cables, or chains, were used to hold the planks of the ship in place during violent storms. The cables would be passed under the prow and then wrapped around the ship securely to better hold the wooden planks in place (cf Jonah 1:4).
 7. The next step was to lower the sails so they would not be driven by the wind to the sand beds (quicksand) possibly near the northern African coast.
 - a. The largest of these shifting sand beds, named Syrtis Major, (see NKJ) was located off the coast of Africa, near Cyrene, which was not many miles to the south. It appears the storm was forcing them in that direction.
 - b. Running aground on a sand bar is exactly what happened to the ship several days later (cf Acts 27:41).
- C. The storm was exceedingly violent so they began throwing cargo overboard to lighten the ship (cf Jonah 1:5).
1. It was a desperate attempt to keep the ship afloat in this prolonged tempest. They had gone from the shipping business to the survival business. Possessions (cargo) did not mean as much in this life-threatening situation (cf Matt 16:26).
 2. After three days with the sails down and the cables wrapped around the ship the situation was no better. They decided to throw the tackling overboard, which indicates the dire circumstances.
 - a. The word “tackling” means furniture. They threw everything that was not necessary overboard.
Note: According to Merriam-Webster’s dictionary the tackling of a ship would include the equipment used to rig the ship, including pulleys and ropes for hoisting the sails.
 - b. All this was done to get the ship to float higher in the water during the storm, giving them a better chance at survival.
Note: The term for throwing the cargo overboard is *jetsam* or *jettison*, which have the same definition.
 - c. Everyone on board (including Luke) was involved in lightening the load, as indicated by “with our own hands” (v 19).

3. The significance of neither the sun nor stars shining for “many days” means they had no idea how far the storm had blown them off course or even what direction they might have been pushed by tide and wind.
 - a. The sun and stars were used to navigate. The magnetic compass would not be introduced into the Mediterranean area for another 13 centuries.
 - b. Luke records “All hope that we should be saved was then taken away.”
 - c. Lost hope is crushing. Even more so in spiritual applications (cf Eph 2:12; 1 Thess 4:13).
 - d. They had attempted every possible stop-gap measure to stay afloat. The storm still raged, the tackling of the ship was thrown overboard, the ship was most likely taking on water and they did not know where they were.
- IV. Paul reveals to the crew what the angel of the Lord told him (21-26).
- A. Paul appeared among the sailors and basically said, “I told you this would happen” (vv 9, 10).
 1. “But after long abstinence” indicates the entire crew had gone without food.
 - a. An understandable circumstance in view of the horrific storm. Every effort was invested in trying to keep the ship afloat.
 - b. Cooking would be difficult, if not impossible, even if they had time to think about food.
 - c. If they had any “ready to eat” rations, they would be soaked in rain and salt water, along with the grain stored in the haul.
 2. In this despairing and desperate situation Paul tells the people on board the ship “to be of good cheer” (cf Acts 23:11; 2 Cor 4:8).
 3. The reason for “good cheer” was that no one would lose their life during, or as a result of, the storm (vv 34, 44).
 - B. Paul reveals the source of this cheerful news, “the angel of God” came to him and said “Fear not.”
 1. He acknowledged he was God’s and that he served God (cf Acts 9:15; Rom 1:1, 9; Titus 1:1).
 2. The angel reminded Paul of the promise for him to stand before Caesar (cf 2 Tim 4:17).
 - a. The angel also said, “God hath given (granted, NKJ) thee all them that sail with thee” indicating Paul had been praying for the entire crew.
 - b. God had granted (as if a gift) all two hundred and seventy-six souls on board.
 - c. We should never lose sight of the importance of a righteous person praying for others (cf James 5:16).

Note: Paul originally predicted they would lose the ship, cargo and lives (v 10). He did not speak by inspiration then, now he does.

3. Paul then encourages the sailors to be of good cheer, because, he says, “I believe God.”
4. There is a vast difference in believing in God and believing God.
 - a. Paul was not saying he believed in the existence of God.
 - b. Many people in our world believe that God exists. That belief does them no good in eternal matters (cf Mk 5:7; James 2:19).
 - c. To believe God means acceptance of what He has to say on:
 1. The remission of sins (cf Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet 3:21).
 2. The one church (cf Acts 2:47; Eph 5:23-25).
 3. The coming judgment (cf 2 Thess 1:7-9; 1 Pet 4:16-18).
 4. The eternal punishment of the wicked (cf Matt 25:41, 46; Rev 21:8).
 - d. Walking by faith is not believing God exists, it is believing that He means what He says (cf Jn 12:48; Rom 10:17).
- C. In this hopeless situation, in a raging storm, Paul reveals that they would be shipwrecked on an island as a way of escaping death at sea.
 1. Paul was no stranger to shipwreck (cf 2 Cor 11:25).
 2. If Paul wrote 2 Corinthians about 57 AD or 58 AD and the events in Acts 27 happened about 59 AD or 60 AD, that means those three shipwrecks mentioned in 2 Corinthians occurred prior the shipwreck that is recorded by Luke in this chapter.
- V. Salvation is only in the ship (27-38).
 - A. “But when the fourteenth night” was from the time they set sail from “The fair havens.” The context goes back to verse 13.
 1. The ship was driven up and down (to and fro, about, across, here and there) the Adriatic Sea. The words “up and down” mean *this way and that* (Robertson’s NT Word Pictures).
 2. The fact that they were drawing near to land could possibly be attributed to several factors. In the darkness they might be able to see a change in wave forms as they broke in shallower water. The waves often sound different when water depth changes.
 - a. The experienced sailors “deemed” (sensed, NKJ) they were near land.
 - b. “[S]ounded” is to make use of a line with lead attached to determine the depth of the water.
 - c. The first sounding measured twenty fathoms. A fathom is a unit of measurement, which equals six feet. The depth of the sea was one hundred and twenty feet.
 - d. They went a little farther and sounded again, finding the depth to be fifteen fathoms, or ninety feet deep.
 - e. From these measurements they were able to ascertain land was near. The fear was being cast upon the rocks near the shore.

- f. They had a two-fold problem; shallowing water in a raging storm and darkness.
 - g. The decision was made to cast four anchors out of the rear of the ship to hold it in place and then wait for day light to determine what they were dealing with. Casting anchors out the stern of a ship is unusual.
 - h. Making this decision afforded the events of verse 40 possible.
- B. The “shipmen” (sailors, NKJ) secretly planned to abandon ship by taking the smaller boat they had secured back in verse 16.
- 1. “Under colour” (pretense, NKJ) to put out anchors from to bow of the ship.
 Note: The word translated “under colour” is often translated by the word “*pretence*” in other passages (cf Matt 23:14; Mk 12:40). Also translated by the word “*cloke*” on two occasions (cf Jn 15:22; 1 Thess 2:5).
 - a. In dire circumstances the best and the worst of people’s character will be seen. When circumstances become dire make sure people see more of Paul and less of these sailors in your character.
 - b. The text does not say how many of the sailors were part of this pretense. It could have been all or most of the sailing crew.
 - c. These sailors would be needed the next day to attempt to get the ship and passengers ashore (cf 1 Kgs 9:27).
 - 2. We have what appears to be a stark contrast between Paul’s calm demeanor and the fear which caused the sailors wanting to abandon the ship and all those souls that needed them to guide the ship ashore.
 - 3. In light of the intended mutiny Paul turned to the centurion for order and authority on board the ship.
 - a. Paul informed the Roman centurion that unless the sailors abide on the ship “ye cannot be saved.”
 - b. Even though Paul had been promised safety he did not stop setting forth efforts for his own protection. Men and women must exercise every effort that God requires to reach the desired ends. What we cannot do for ourselves we trust God to take care of.
 - c. Paul made his plea personal; if you do not stop this escape “you cannot be saved” (NKJ).
 - d. There was no safety anywhere except in the boat, just like in Noah’s day (cf Gen 7:23; Heb 11:7).
 - e. In our modern time God extends salvation to all who will obey Him. He alone has the power to extend salvation, and He alone says where that salvation can be found. If a person refuses to get in the ship (church) or refuses to abide in (stay in, NKJ) the ship (church) they are refusing salvation (cf Jn 15:4, 7; Acts 2:47). It is dangerous, eternally dangerous to refuse to stay in the ship.

4. The centurion believed what Paul said because he had his soldiers cut the ropes which were holding the smaller boat in place, letting it fall free from the ship.
 - a. When the decision was made to heed Paul's advice the commitment was total. Remove the boat, remove the temptation.
 - b. This is another case where it appears the centurion had the final say on board the ship.
- C. When the day was about to dawn (v 29) Paul encouraged those on board the ship to take time to eat a meal "for your health" (survival, NKJ; cf Matt 15:32).
 Note: This indicates they had food to eat and the means to prepare the food, but could not do so during the height of the storm (v 33).
 1. Paul emphasizes their safety by using a popular biblical proverbial expression; "there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you" (cf 1 Sam 14:45; 1 Kgs 1:52; Lk 21:18).
 2. Fourteen days without any food (if this is to be taken literally) would cause the crew to become increasingly weak. They would need physical strength to get from ship to shore (cf Matt 15:32; Acts 9:19).
- D. Paul gave thanks for the food they were about to eat in the presence of all (cf Matt 15:36; Mk 8:6; 1 Tim 4:3, 4).
 1. This was an acknowledgement of God's mercy and grace done in full view of the non-believers on board the ship.
 2. When we offer thanks for our food in public places, we are obviously thanking God for His blessings and goodness, but we are also giving an example for the non-believers around us.
 3. In this raging storm and precarious position Paul thanks God for food. There can be little doubt this made a lasting impression on those two hundred and seventy-six souls.
- E. Because of Paul's words and conduct the men were "all of good cheer" (encouraged, NKJ) and ready to face the task at hand.
 1. The first task was to lighten the load by casting the grain into the sea. This would make the ship float higher in the water, thus allowing them to get closer to shore before hitting the sea bottom.
 - a. It is possible that back in verses 18 they had thrown part of the cargo overboard. They may have thought that it would still be conceivable to salvage some of the cargo if the storm dissipated. That hope has now passed (cf Ecc 3:6; Phil 3:7).
 - b. This is now the third time they had tried to increase their chances by lightening the load (vv 18, 19).
- VI. Shipwrecked on the island of Melita (Malta, NKJ; 39-44).

- A. When day light came (see v 29) they were not able to determine what island they were near and therefore what possible dangers were waiting for them.

Note: There are several possible explanations for the sailors not recognizing the island of Malta: visibility in the storm, unknown location, miles from the common port on the island, the north side of the island may have been unfamiliar, etc.

1. Anchored at sea, some distance from shore, they “discovered” (observed, NKJ) a creek (bay, NKJ) with a shore.

Note: The word translated “creek” in this verse is used five other times in the New Testament. Every other time the word is translated by “bosom” (cf Lk 16:22, 23). From this we can gather that they saw what appeared to be a safe place to direct the ship.

2. The necessity of keeping the sailors on board is evident in verse 39. A spot on shore had been selected and they were going to attempt to run this large ship aground at the safest place observable. That would take sailing skill.

- B. The commitment being made, they took up the anchors (let go the anchors, NKJ) and freed the rudder for steering.

Note: Robertson says the words carry the idea of the anchors were *left in the sea*.

1. The mainsail was hoisted and the ship was pointed toward shore.
2. Being propelled by wind and sea the ship ran aground “where two seas met.”
 - a. This means that the ship had waves coming at it from two different directions.
 - b. This would cause additional stress to the wooden ship resulting in the back part of the ship breaking away from the front of the ship, which was firmly stuck on a sand bar or a shoal.
 - c. The silver lining of having the ship stuck on this sand bar or shoal was that it had moved close enough to shore for the crew to escape by swimming to safety.
 - d. The down side of this was that the soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners so none would escape.
 1. At this point in the voyage the Roman soldier could not simply rejoice in finding safety from the two-week long storm. He had to be concerned about the code he was obliged to follow in not allowing a prisoner to escape.
 2. The Roman soldier would be held life for life if one escaped (cf Acts 12:18, 19; 16:27). Many think the Roman soldiers were being overly cruel, but they were simply following orders. It is what soldiers do.
 - e. It may have been God’s providence, it may have been the result of Paul’s kindness (Acts 27:3, 10) or it may have been the compassionate heart of the centurion, but in any case, he wanted to save Paul from certain death at the blade of his soldiers.

- f. Every centurion mentioned in the New Testament was a man of the highest character (cf Matt 8:8; 27:54; Lk 7:6; Acts 10:22).
- g. Those that could swim were told to “cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land.”
 - 1. As the ship was broken up in the waves those who could not swim were using any piece of the ship that would float as an aid to safety.
 - 2. They all made it safely to shore (cf Acts 27:22, 24).
 - 3. All two hundred and seventy-six men, exhausted from the struggles with Euroclydon, crawled out of the turbulent waves of the Adriatic Sea onto the north shore of Malta.

Acts 28

After three months on Melita, Paul travels on to Rome.

- I. The kindness of the people of Melita was immediately evident (1-10).
 - A. When the passengers of the wrecked ship arrive on shore, they are told the island is named Melita (modern Malta), which is located about sixty-five miles south of Sicily (cf Acts 27:26).
 1. The KJV calls the inhabitants of this island “barbarous” (natives, NKJ), which means they were of Phoenician descent (cf Rom 1:14; 1 Cor 14:11).
 - a. The name sounds insulting to the modern ear, but it meant nothing more to the Greeks than someone who did not speak Greek (cf Col 3:11).
 - b. The island was famous for producing honey. The name “Melita” is derived from the Greek word for honey (same root word as Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6).
 2. The natives showed great kindness to the castaways.
 - a. The continued inclement weather added to the plight of the crew. It was cold, they were wet from the sea escape and it was still raining (cf 2 Cor 11:27).
 - b. The natives built a fire for their comfort (cf Lev 19:34).
 3. Paul, a man of action, began gathering sticks for the fire in which a poisonous snake was concealed.
 - a. The heat of the fire caused the torpid viper to become active.
 - b. The snake fastened itself to Paul’s hand (cf Amos 5:18, 19).
 - c. The circumstances centered around this fire changed the course of events dramatically for the next three months on the island.
 4. When the natives saw the viper fastened to Paul’s hand, they thought it was some type of cosmic justice. Notice the words “No doubt.”
 - a. They inferred that since he was saved from drowning in the sea only to be bitten by a poisonous snake, he had to be someone who deserved to die, i.e., proof of guilt.

Note: The word Luke uses for viper is the same word Jesus used when referring to the Pharisees and Sadducees (cf Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33).
 - b. The mental image is graphic; Paul with a viper hanging from his hand and then shaking the viper off into the fire without it doing him harm.
 5. The natives were watching and waiting for the venom to take effect.
 - a. To their astonishment nothing happened.
 - b. They expected Paul to swell and then fall down dead from the bite.

Note: There are no poisonous vipers on the island of Malta today. The fact that the natives anticipated a specific reaction to the snake bite shows that during the first century, poisonous snakes were on the island.

- c. When nothing catastrophic happened to Paul they changed their minds about him. He went from being a certain murderer who deserved to die to being a god (cf Acts 14:11).
 - d. It is uncertain what the inhabitants of the island worshipped, but they had little trouble attributing deity status to one who survived the bite of this serpent.
- B. In the same section of the island where they came ashore there were “possessions” (estate, NKJ) of the chief of the island, named Publius.
 - 1. The ship-wrecked crew had lost everything to the sea. It appears that Publius housed the men for three days while other arrangements could be secured.
 - 2. He did this “courteously” which means *with friendliness of mind* or *kindly* (Strong’s # 5390). We get our English word “philanthropy” from this word.
 - a. We cannot lose sight of the fact that there were two hundred seventy-six men castaway on Melita.
 - b. To shelter and feed such a number in the midst of a raging storm is a remarkable undertaking (see v 2).
 - c. This is the type of mentality Peter instructs all Christians to have (cf 1 Pet 3:8).
 - 3. At some point the father of Publius became very ill.
 - a. The King James version uses the words “fever and of a bloody flux” (fever and dysentery, NKJ). Luke was not only inspired, but a medical doctor as well.
 - b. According to J.B. Coffman, there was a disease known in this nation as “Malta fever” as recently as 1976 (Coffman’s Commentary, page 514).
 - 4. Paul prayed for him, laid his hands on him and healed him (cf Mk 16:18).
 - a. God’s power of healing through His servants is something Paul often mentions in his writings (cf 1 Cor 12:9, 28).
 - b. Some in our world claim to have these same powers. We would see a demonstration before we believe. Our hospitals are full of candidates.
 - c. It is fascinating that the physician (Luke) was circumvented by the healer (Paul). If Luke had packed medicine for the trip, it was most likely lost to the sea.
 - 5. As news spread of this healing others came with diseases and were healed during the three months the castaways were stranded on the island.
 - a. They were “honoured with many honours,” which means they were paid, or given many benefits for the great good they performed (cf 1 Tim 5:3, 4 with reference to widows; 17, 18 with reference to elders).
 - b. “They laded us with such things as were necessary” means they were given everything they needed for the rest of their journey to Rome when they were ready to leave the island.

- c. It was a generous display of appreciation for healing the people of Melita.
 - d. The text never mentions all these good things being done in the name of Jesus Christ. We would have to assume He was preached at every opportunity, and that He was given credit behind the healing power, but it is not specifically mentioned.
 - e. The fact is the names Jesus or Christ are not mentioned anywhere in chapters 27 or 28 until the very last verse of the book.
- II. Paul makes the journey from Melita to Rome (11-16).
- A. The crew was ship-wrecked on the island for three months, which would make their departure in either January, February or even March.
- 1. The dangerous season had passed or a favorable weather pattern had developed affording safe travel on to Rome.
 - 2. A ship of Alexandria had wintered on the island of Melita and when that ship set sail, they joined the crew and sailed with them.
 - a. The text does not say if the entire crew that was ship-wrecked left Melita on this ship or just those soldiers and prisoners destined for Rome.
 - b. The latter would make more sense. The sailing crew would need to get to another ship and begin hauling cargo in order to make wages.
 - c. It should be noted that the ship that sank off the shore of Melita was also a ship of Alexandria (Acts 27:6), which allows the possibility of the ships being from the same owner or shipping company.
 - 3. The ship from Alexandria, “whose sign was Castor and Pollux” (figurehead was the Twin Brothers, NKJ), which were the mythical twin sons of Jupiter (Zeus, NKJ; cf Acts 14:12, 13).
 - a. The superstitious people of that day would have designated these two as, what Catholics might call the patron saints of sailors.
 - b. This sign, or figurehead, could have been anything from carved figures in the front and/or rear of the ship to nothing more than the name of the ship.
 - 4. They sailed away from Melita and went to Syracuse, on the island of Sicily.
 - a. It was a distance of about eighty miles and it was the closest port from Melita.
 - b. They stayed in Syracuse for three days. The scriptures do not disclose why they delayed there. Verse 13 might indicate they were waiting for a favorable wind direction.
 - 5. From Syracuse they sailed to Rhegium, which is located at the southern entrance to the straits of Messina.
 - a. The strait which separates Sicily and Italy. It would be a dangerous strait to navigate unless the wind was favorable. At the northern end of the strait, it is only two miles wide with strong currents.

- b. “Fetched a compass” (circled around, NKJ) indicated they could not sail directly to Rhegium, but had to do some circling around to get there.
Note: When the KJV uses the word “compass” it never means our modern magnetic compass. The magnetic compass did not yet exist.
 - 6. When the south wind began to blow, they set sail and came to Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli), which is about one hundred and eighty miles from Rhegium.
 - a. This port was near Naples and was the common port for grain ships.
 - b. At this point Paul, Luke and Aristarchus are done with sea travel as far as the book of Acts is concerned.
- B. How exciting it must have been for these three men to find brethren in the city of Puteoli. And how exciting it must have been for the brethren to have these three men in their midst.
 - 1. There is no scriptural information about the gospel being preached in this area, but we do have “strangers from Rome” (Acts 2:10) in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (cf Acts 18:1, 2).
 - a. Julius granted the Christians seven days together before they embarked on the one hundred thirty-mile journey to Rome.
 - b. That seven-day respite gave Paul a chance to worship with these brethren (cf Acts 20:6; 21:4).
 - 2. News of Paul’s arrival traveled all the way to Rome during the seven days in Puteoli (cf Rom 15:24).
 - a. Luke mentions the “Appii forum and The three taverns” as places the brethren came to meet them as they traveled to Rome.
 - b. The brethren knew which road Paul and his companions would be taking because the famous Appian Way ran between Puteoli and Rome.
 - 1. The Appii forum was located about forty miles from Rome.
 - 2. The three taverns was about thirty miles from Rome.
 - c. When Paul saw the response from the local brethren Luke records that he “thanked God and took courage” (cf 1 Cor 16:18).
 - 1. Even the undaunted and mighty apostle needed to be encouraged and appreciated (cf 2 Cor 7:13; 1 Thess 3:7).
 - 2. We would do well to encourage one another (cf 2 Cor 1:4; Philem 20).
- C. Many months after they left Caesarea they finally arrived in Rome.
Note: It probably took four or five months to get from Caesarea to Rome. If we extrapolate the time traveling from Caesarea to Myra under contrary winds (27:4), sailed slowly for many days (v 7) “the wind not suffering us” all before they arrived at The fair havens. It does not record how long they delayed at The fair havens before the south wind started blowing, but it appears they were there for an extended amount of time (v 9). Then a two-week storm and a three month stay

on Melita before they set sail to Syracuse and then to Rhegium, from which they walked another one hundred and thirty miles to Rome.

1. Upon arrival, the centurion fulfilled his mission and delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was under a different situation and was given special consideration.
 - a. It is highly likely that Julius gave Paul the highest recommendations to the officers in Rome.
 - b. His life had been saved by Paul. He witnessed the healing of those on the island of Melita. If Julius had any influence in Rome it was used it for Paul's benefit.
2. It appears that, unlike the common prisoners, Paul enjoyed drastically different living arrangements in Rome (see verses 16, 23 and 30).

III. Paul has to explain himself before the Jews in Rome (17-22).

A. Three days after arriving in Rome Paul calls the Jewish leaders together to testify why he was in Rome and was being held captive (cf Acts 22:27, 28).

1. The manner in which Paul explains the circumstances of his imprisonment indicates that the Jews in Rome did not know what had taken place in Jerusalem or in Caesarea concerning his arrest (see v 21)
2. The Jews were the ones responsible for Paul being a prisoner in Rome.
 - a. They had pushed accusations against him they could not prove (cf Acts 25:7, 8).
 - b. For additional information concerning Paul's being taken into protective custody and the accusations leveled by the Jews, see Chapters 21-26 of this book.

Note: The events leading to Paul's arrest (and his detention in Jerusalem and then Caesarea) is the one item that receives the most attention from Luke as he pens this book. Either all or parts of six consecutive chapters are devoted to the circumstances of his detention before the trip to Rome begins.

3. Paul tells the Jews there was no cause for death (cf Acts 26:31).
4. He was forced to appeal to Caesar (cf Acts 25:11).

B. While Paul is explaining to the Jewish leaders about his circumstances he tells them about the hope of Israel.

1. That hope is the Messiah had come in the form of Jesus of Nazareth.
2. The reason he stood before them chained was for proclaiming Jesus Christ as the universal savior, the hope of the world.
 - a. Paul had mentioned "the hope and resurrection of the dead" when dealing with the Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:6).

- b. He also had mentioned, “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers” (Acts 26:6), which refers to the promise of a coming Messiah.
 - c. The Jews needed to know that those outside of Christ were without hope (cf Eph 2:12).
 - 3. The Jews said they had received no negative information out of Judea concerning Paul.
 - a. This would probably mean they had received no official documents from the Sanhedrin concerning Paul.
 - b. It is highly likely that they had heard a great deal about this man and his deeds (v 22b), just nothing official.
 - 4. They then expressed a desire to hear what he had to say.
 - a. The Jewish leaders called the church of Christ a sect. They followed that with the declaration “we know that every where it is spoken against.”
Note: Both the Sadducees and Pharisees are called “sects” in the book of Acts (cf Acts 5:17; 15:5; same Greek word). Paul uses the word about himself in a non-condemning fashion in Acts 26:5.
 - b. This could mean the church was small in Rome at this time and not very influential.
 - c. It could also mean that the Jewish leaders in Rome were extremely biased against the church and were speaking with condescension.
 - d. Most scholars have Paul writing the book of Romans in 55-58 AD. That would be years before he actually arrived in Acts 28. If that is true then there was a sufficient number of Christians in the city to warrant an inspired letter long before these events take place. Notice the long list of names and apparent home churches in Rome in the first 15 verses of Romans 16.
- IV. The Jews came to Paul’s house and were taught from the Old Testament concerning salvation for the Gentiles (23-29).
 - A. A formal day was arranged and “many” came to Paul’s house to hear him explain and testify concerning the kingdom and Jesus (cf Lk 24:27, 44; Acts 17:3).
 - 1. The word “many” means *in great number* (Robertson).
 - 2. The Jews had been taught about a coming kingdom and the coming Messiah in both the law of Moses and in the prophets.
 - 3. There was sufficient information in those sources to allow Paul to expound and testify to these Jews “from morning till evening” (cf Dan 2:44; 4:3).
 - B. After a day filled with teaching, some of the Jews believed the evidence concerning the kingdom and Jesus and some did not.

1. This is the common reaction to truth being taught, some will accept it as truth, others will not be moved to change their lives or beliefs (cf Acts 14:4; Rom 3:3; 2 Thess 3:2)
 - a. Some people express this as a difference of opinion, but nothing could be further from the truth. In matters of faith and salvation we get no opinion.
 - b. It is either the acceptance or the rejection of God's salvation (cf 1 Thess 5:9; Heb 5:9). The acceptance or rejection of God's word (cf Jn 12:48).
2. From verse 25 we can conclude there was a lively discussion between Paul, the Jews that believed and the Jews that disbelieved.
3. Before the Jews would leave Paul's house, he had one more thing to say:
 - a. Paul then quotes from Isaiah the prophet (Isa 6:9, 10). Jesus used the same quotation in Matthew 13:14, 15 in explaining the purpose of parables. Note: Mark and Luke use the same passage from Isaiah in exactly the same fashion (Mark 4:14; Luke 8:10), but John uses the quotation from Isaiah with reference to the rejection of the miracles He had performed (John 12:37-41).
 - b. Both Jesus and Paul were using the passage as a condemnation of the Jews rejecting the Messiah.
 - c. Isaiah prophesied that some people with ears would not understand and some with eyes would not see.
 - d. Nearly two thousand years have passed since Jesus made application of this verse to the Jews of the first century, yet man has not changed.
 - e. We cannot help but to be discouraged when a person hears the gospel taught and then rejects the gift of God's salvation.
 - f. We must realize that people have been rejecting it from the beginning. Let us continue to sow and pray God gives the effort increase (cf 1 Cor 3:6).
 - g. Here, at the very end of the book of Acts, we have Paul reiterating that his purpose in preaching included the Gentiles (cf Acts 9:15).
4. As the Jews departed Paul's house, they "had great reasoning among themselves" (great dispute, NKJ).
 - a. The believers and the non-believers continued their discussion after they left Paul's presence.
 - b. Hopefully the unbelieving Jews searched the scriptures and came to an understanding of the Messiah (cf Jn 5:39).

V. The book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome for a period of two years (30, 31).

Note: Paul was held captive for at least four and a half consecutive years in the closing chapters of Acts. During this extended period of time, it appears he was treated with great kindness by his Roman captives.

- A. “[T]wo whole years in his own hired house” (rented, NKJ) reveals that someone had sufficient money to rent a house for Paul to dwell instead of the common prison cell.
 1. Luke does not record who might have been the patron(s) or sponsor(s) of Paul in Rome. Speculation will not help us decipher the conundrum.
 2. Comfortably ensconced in his own hired house Paul writes four powerful inspired letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, which are incorrectly referred to as his prison epistles for this very reason.
Note: See “PAUL’S LETTERS FROM ROME.” Same author.
 3. He also received all that came to him. He was able to speak to Christians, possibly teaching and encouraging them. He may have received Jewish leaders that had questions or wanted more information.
 - a. We might ask why the trial was delayed. Why did it take two years to get before Caesars’ judgment seat?
 - b. The official records from Festus were most likely lost at sea. No official documents would constitute a necessary delay to get proper replacement documents.
- B. During the delay to stand before Caesar’s judgment seat Paul took full advantage of his present situation and was involved in preaching and teaching Jesus Christ (cf Eph 6:19).
 1. Luke makes a distinction between preaching and teaching, which he has done before: Acts 5:42, 15:35. Paul makes the same distinction in Ephesians 4:11.
 2. He would have constant opportunities to share the gospel with the visitors; in addition, he was chained to a member of the Praetorian guard at all times.
 - a. They might have been holding Paul captive, but the circumstances gave Paul a captive audience that was rotated on a regular basis (cf Phil 1:12, 13).
 - b. Paul’s constant preaching and teaching converted souls in the palace of Caesar (cf Phil 4:22).
 - c. Paul made lemonade from circumstances that were beyond his control. What a wonderful example for us. He would not let “things” defeat him.
 - d. Paul was not alone during these two years (cf Col 4:7-14).
 3. Luke records Paul’s confidence and the free course the gospel enjoyed even in captivity in Rome. In less than perfect circumstances God still wins!
- C. Luke ends his second letter to Theophilus with the gospel going throughout the world. Nothing could stop what God started. Not the stiff-necked Jews, not the idolatrous Gentiles, not even the powerful Roman government. It was God’s will that the gospel be preached first “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”
Amen.