

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

ACTS



Roger E. Dickson

2016

ACTS

WRITER

Luke, a physician, was the writer of this document (See intro. to Lk). He was the companion of Paul on several mission journeys (See the “we” sections of 16:10-17; 20:5 – 21:17; 27:2 – 28:16). Both the documents of Luke and Acts were addressed to the same man, Theophilus. These two documents should thus be read together in order to see the complete story the author desires that we understand concerning the effect of Christ on the lives of men and women in the 1st century (1:1; Lk 1:3). Luke set out to write an orderly account in order that Theophilus might know the certainty of those things he had been taught concerning Christianity (Lk 1:3,4). He wrote these two defense documents of Christianity in a historical arrangement in order to give a chronological order of events in the life of Jesus (Luke) and the life of the early disciples (Acts), specifically, Paul. Luke emphasizes those things in the ministry of Jesus and the disciples of the 1st century that give testimony to the truth of Christianity.

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

Luke was also a doctor (Cl 4:14). He was therefore educated for the work of drafting two eloquent documents in Greek for those of a similar educated group of people.

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

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

All that would be needed as far as a qualified author to write a defense document for a distant unbelieving court is found in Luke. He is the Holy Spirit’s perfect choice to write a defense for Christianity that would defend throughout history the fact that it was of Divine origin.

PURPOSE

Luke’s purpose for writing the document of Acts varies from one student to

another. Many have agreed that the nature of the contents of the document are apologetic. In other words, the document was written as a defense document of Christianity. Since the major part of the book focuses on the ministry of Paul, leaving him in prison in Rome, we would assume that the document was written on behalf of Paul. This primary purpose for the writing of the book answers several questions. Why does the book close with Paul in prison in Rome? Why is the document primarily about the work of Paul? A "book of Acts" could have been written about John, Matthew, Bartholemew or any of the other apostles, if the book was simply historical. Bible students have wondered why so much was written concerning Paul in the document. Why is Paul's ministry confined to the center of the Roman Empire? Why not Africa? Europe? China? These and many other questions lead us to believe that the Holy Spirit's intentions were more than providing a simple "history of the early church," "acts of the apostles," or "work of the Holy Spirit." Such views of Acts are too narrow to answer the many questions concerning the nature and content of the book.

We would assume that it was the plan of God to put Christianity on trial before the world in order to distinguish it from all religions of the world for all history. If this assumption is correct, then we would ask for occasions or circumstances that would produce "contests" between Christianity and other religions. We would select key men who would initiate the movement. We would concentrate on test cases to prove the truth of Christianity. We would choose the best writer for the defense documents and the highest court of the world before whom our case would be tried. God did all the preceding in the historical development of Christianity in a world of man-made religions. The historical defense of Jesus and His disciples is outlined in the documents of Luke and Acts.

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

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

Luke and Acts are the most powerful documents available to man for the defense of Jesus and Christianity. God stated to Paul, "... as you have solemnly witnessed for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome" (23:11).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit directed not only the life of Paul, but also the hand of Luke to write Paul's defense for trial in Rome. God wanted Christianity put on trial. Paul was the occasion for God to do this. Therefore, these documents to Theophilus (Luke and Acts) are God's defense to the court and the world that Jesus was who He claimed to be. Those who believed were innocent of all accusations of wrong doing that the world had and would accuse them of doing because of their belief. They believed because of their personal encounters with God. Their belief was based on facts, not on wishful thinking. And because their belief was based on facts, they had to give their personal witness of God's intervention into this world through Jesus. The disciples proclaimed who Jesus was because of their experience with the transcendent God. They could not deny the fact that they had experienced God in the flesh.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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

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

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

tation of God on earth. The teaching He brought originated from God. The following historical document, therefore, is set forth to prove this divine origin of Christianity.

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

Therefore, as Luke presents to us the life and work of the early Christians, we must not simply look at this as a casual historical narrative of righteous men and women. Revealed herein is the proof of the Cause. How else can we explain the lives of these heroic sages without a real Christ who touched and radically changed the lives of so many?

THE PENTECOST OF A.D. 30

Acts 2 marks a paradigm shift from the Old Testament era to the New Testament era. All history of God's people that took place before the Pentecost of Acts 2 would be judged by their living under the Sinai law. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are records of Jesus' ministry under the Sinai law in order to prepare Israel for His ascension to the right hand of God to assume all authority from throne of David.

It is difficult to determine the year for the crucifixion of Jesus, and thus, the year for the establishment of the church in Acts 2 in reference to our calendar today. In order to come to some conclusions concerning the year of the Acts 2 Pentecost and establishment of the church, however, there are some specific historical facts that we should know. These are historical facts that we cannot ignore, neither can we discount them because of any previous assumptions, or mistakes on the part of past scholarship. It is the objective of the biblical scholar to absorb all known facts concerning a proposition. Objective minds seek to base beliefs on facts, regardless of traditional beliefs. Therefore, we are challenged with the following points in order that we draw a conclusion for ourselves concerning the date of the Acts 2 Pentecost and the establishment of the church.

A. Jesus was crucified immediately before the Passover feast.

There is little debate over the fact that Jesus was crucified at the beginning of the Passover feast of the Jews, though there is some debate over the exact day of the week Jesus ate the Passover feast with the disciples. The Passover lamb was traditionally eaten on the 14th of Nisan, on Friday evening before the Sabbath and the Pentecost that followed the Sabbath. Because the 14th of Nisan was determined by the new moon, it would be very difficult to determine the exact day in reference to

our calendar today when Jesus ate His last Passover meal with His disciples. The biblical text is not clear as to when Jesus ate this meal with His disciples. Because the New Testament writers left us little information on this subject, we would conclude that the Holy Spirit does not want us to ponder the matter in reference to an exact day, even the exact day of the week Jesus ate His Passover meal with the disciples. Our focus should be on the event, and that He was three days in the tomb as He prophesied (Mt 12:40), with His resurrection early on the first day of the week (Mk 16:9). The important thing to remember is that He was the Passover lamb, and the crucifixion took place during the Passover feast of the Jews.

B. Jesus visited Jerusalem on possibly three Passovers.

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

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

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

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

3. *Third visit to Jerusalem:* The last feast of Passover that Jesus attended is recorded in John 13:1. This was the feast during which He was crucified. Since John 2:13 was the first Passover visit, and assuming John 5:1 was a Passover, and thus the second Passover visit, with John 6:4 being a Passover that was not attended, then the John 13:1 would be the third Passover visit.

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

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

"Now when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age ..." (Lk 3:23). Under the Sinai law, this was the common age when priests began their ministry (Nm 4:1-3,22,23,29,30). The word "about" in Luke 3:23 adds some ambiguity to the matter, but we assume that Jesus was somewhere in His 30th year at the beginning of His earthly ministry. We could assume that the Holy Spirit added the word "about" in order for us not to focus on exactly what we are doing here, that is, trying to determine an exact date for the crucifixion and establishment of the church. Nevertheless, when we add "about" thirty with the time of the earthly ministry of the preceding point, we come up with Jesus' approximate age at the time of His death. Jesus would have been at least thirty-three years of age when He was crucified.

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

In reference to the Roman Empire, Jesus was born when Augustus was Caesar of Rome. Luke records that a census was taken during this time, which census

affected the lives of Joseph and Mary (Lk 2:1-4). It was because of this census that Joseph and Mary made their way to Bethlehem, the prophesied place of the birth of the Messiah (Mc 5:2).

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

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

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

1. *The testimony of encyclopedias and dictionaries:* Since Jesus was born during the final days of Herod, then it is imperative that we determine the date of the death of Herod in reference to our calendar today. Now keep in mind that the establishment for the birth of Jesus is dated from our modern-day calendars. We are not judging the date from the Roman calendar, though the Roman calendar must be considered in order to determine the date of Herod's life history. As will be pointed out later, there was a discrepancy made in affixing the Roman calendar dates with our modern-day calendar, which discrepancy was noted and corrected over a century ago. But in reference to our calendar today, all secular and biblical encyclopedias and dictionaries establish the date of Herod's death to have occurred in Jericho the last of March in 4 B.C. *The World Book Encyclopedia* states, "Herod the Great (73? - 4 B.C.) ruled all Palestine from 37 to 4 B.C." (1976, Vol. 9, p. 198). Other encyclopedias or dictionaries do not contradict this statement. Though first published in 1917, the 1939 edition of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states that Herod died in 4 B.C. (1939, Vol. 2, p. 668). The *New Bible Dictionary* affirms the 4 B.C. date, as well as A. T. Roberston in his renowned *Harmony of the Gospels*. Historically speaking, therefore, one will not find any encyclopedia or dictionary that will disagree with the 4 B.C. date for the death of Herod.

2. *The record of Josephus:* Josephus was a Jewish historian whose work transitioned from the latter part of the 1st century into the 2nd century. In his *Antiquities*, XVII, 6, 4, he alluded to an eclipse of the moon that occurred shortly before the death of Herod. Thus the birth of Jesus could not have occurred after the death of Herod, or after this eclipse since Jesus was born during Herod's reign. The eclipse establishes the time of Herod's death, which eclipse also helps us to deter-

mine the time of Jesus' birth in reference to our calendar today.

Now here are some conclusions to ponder. According to our calendar today, Herod died in 4 B.C. Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry. His ministry was about three and a half years in length, which means that He was about thirty-three years old when He was crucified. We can place the birth of Jesus somewhere in the two-year window of Herod's slaughter of babies. Add the figures and we come up with the crucifixion and establishment of the church around A.D. 30 according to our calendar today. This is the date that all current Bible resource books use in reference to the events that transpired and were recorded in Acts 2.

CHAPTER 1

Commission To The Apostles

(1:1-11)

Outline: (1) Witness to the resurrected Jesus (1:1-3), (2) Promise of the Spirit (1:4-8), (3) The disciples witness the ascension (1:9-11)

WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTED JESUS

1:1 *The former account I made:*

Luke wrote a previous letter to the "most excellent" Theophilus whose name means, "dear to God" or "friend of God." The former account was the letter of Luke. Theophilus was probably a prominent government leader who may have lived in Rome (See comments Lk 1:1-4). **Of all that Jesus began both to do and teach:** The former letter of Luke explained what Jesus did and taught during His ministry on earth. What Jesus had taught He illustrated in His life. The document of Luke, therefore, explained the cause of the effect that is explained in this document. Christ was the cause. The church was the effect.

1:2 *Through the Holy Spirit:* Jesus

spoke instruction to the twelve apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He also promised that the Spirit would later guide them into all the truth (Jn 14:26; 16:13,14). However, until His ascension into a heavenly realm of authority with the Father, He personally instructed them concerning the kingdom reign that He would establish in their lifetime (vs 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31; Mk 9:1; see Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21).

1:3 *Showed Himself alive:* After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to part or all of the disciples on at least ten different occasions (See Mt 28:17; Mk 16:12,14; Lk 24:34,36; Jn 20:18,26; 21:1,14; 1 Co 15:1-8; see the chronology in *Encyclopedic Study Guide*). By His appearances He gave the apostles positive proof of His resurrection. During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus continued to instruct the apostles. He instructed them concerning His kingdom reign over all things (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; 17:2; see comments Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt

3:22). At this time in His ministry, His reign over all things was about to be established. He would receive His kingdom authority when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven (Dn 7:13,14; Cl 3:1; Hb 8:1). It would be announced on the day of Pentecost (ch 2). After the announcement, repentant believers would submit to Jesus' lordship by obedience to the gospel, and thus, the church would begin. The kingdom reign of Jesus would be manifested on earth through the submission of men to the kingship of Jesus (See comments Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38). His authority would be through His word that would be preached and obeyed throughout the world (Jn 12:48).

PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

1:4 *Promise of the Father:* The promise of the Father would be the coming of the Holy Spirit. During His final meeting with the eleven apostles on the Mount of Olives, a short distance east of Jerusalem, Jesus commanded the apostles to return and remain in Jerusalem (Is 2:3). They were to remain there until they received the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit that was made in Joel 2:28-31. They would be the first recipients of the fulfillment of this promise. Jesus had explained this promise to them during His ministry. During His ministry, the apostles received special promises concerning the Holy Spirit that were not meant for all the believers (See Lk 24:47-49; Jn 14:16-18,26; 15:26; 16:13,14). However, from the promise of Joel 2:28-31, God had promised that

the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh (See comments Mk 16:14-20). The continuation of the giving of the Holy Spirit would occur through the laying on of the apostles' hands. By the laying on of the apostles' hands, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given to others (See comments 8:18; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11).

1:5 *Baptized with the Holy Spirit:*

By the command of God, John the Baptist had previously immersed the apostles in water for the remission of their sins (Mk 1:4,5). However, Jesus would baptize them in a different manner—"with the Holy Spirit"—and for a different reason—to be "endued with power from on high" (See Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; 24:45; compare Lk 11:13; 12:12; Jn 14:26; 16:12,13). It must be noted that Jesus was the one who baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit did not baptize people with Himself. Though the apostles did not understand what Jesus said at the time this statement was made, this baptism took place on the following Sunday morning after Jesus made this promise. It was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

1:6 *Restore the kingdom to Israel:*

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

time of Jesus' coming, Palestine was an occupied land. The Romans had control of the country. It was the ambition of the Jews, however, to free themselves of Roman rule and once again be an independent nation. But such was not to be. Unfortunately, unto this time in the work of Jesus on earth, the disciples maintained this nationalistic thinking, and thus, during the earthly ministry misunderstood much of the teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom (See comments Mk 10:33-45). However, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, who revealed to them all truth, they fully understood that the kingdom of Jesus was spiritual and within the hearts of men (Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38).

1:7 *It is not for you to know the times or the season:* Jesus did not at this time correct their nationalistic understanding of the kingdom. He simply delayed the explanation until the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth a few days after this incident (Jn 16:13). They would then realize that the kingdom of Jesus was not as the physical kingdoms of this world (Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38). At this time, they had to trust in the Father who was working all things according to His plan (See Mt 24:36; Lk 1:26-33). We must keep in mind, therefore, that the Father was going to establish the kingdom reign of Jesus regardless of the misunderstandings of the Jews as a whole or the disciples in particular.

1:8 In this context, Jesus is specifically talking to the apostles. He is not directing these statements to all Christians in general. He thus gives them some

special promises that He does not intend to be applicable to all the disciples. **You:** The antecedent of the pronoun "you" is the apostles of verse 2. Therefore, Jesus is directing these promises specifically to the apostles. **You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you:** The apostles would soon be given the responsibility to command the miraculous power of God's supernatural environment (2:1-4; see comments Jn 16:13). This would come from God after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Lk 24:49). The Spirit would empower them in the sense that they would be given the responsibility to command the miraculous work of God. Though the apostles had worked miracles during the ministry of Jesus, they would after their empowerment by the Holy Spirit command the supernatural according to their own choice. Christianity would not be the invention of one man who supposedly received a miraculous experience in some cave or religious monastery. It would be founded upon the witness of many who experienced the miraculous work of God (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). The apostles would then be Jesus' special witnesses of His resurrection (vs 22; Lk 24:48). Their witness would begin in Jerusalem and spread to all the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). Luke's argument in recording these statements is to affirm that Christianity had a specific time and place of beginning. It did not result from an evolutionary development of religious thinking as is typical of fables, myths or legends. **Be My witnesses:** The apostles

would be the special witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (See Lk 24:48; Jn 15:27).

THE DISCIPLES WITNESS THE ASCENSION

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

begin the mission of going into all the world that Jesus had commanded them (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). As they went forth, the angels reminded them of the promise of Jesus, that He would come again to receive them unto Himself (Jn 14:1,2).

Early Beginnings Of Evangelism

(1:12 – 8:3)

Outline: (1) The disciples go to Jerusalem (1:12-14), (2) Another personal witness is chosen (1:15-26), (3) Immersed with the Holy Spirit (2:1-4), (4) The apostles witness to the Jews (2:5-13), (5) Peter announces the kingdom reign (2:14-39), (6) The church begins (2:40-47), (7) A public healing (3:1-10), (8) Divine source of power (3:11-16), (9) Call to repentance (3:17-26), (10) Truth versus religion (4:1-3), (11) Rapid church growth (4:4), (12) Supernatural foundation (4:5-12), (13) Boldness of the apostles (4:13-22), (14) The disciples grow bolder (4:23-31), (15) Manifestation of love and unity (4:32-36), (16) The body is strengthened (5:1-11), (17) God confirms the apostles (5:12-16), (18) Apostles are unjustly arrested (5:17-21), (19) Apostles resist murder plots (5:22-25), (20) Obeying God and not man (5:26-32), (21) The church is the work of God (5:33-42), (22) Wise leadership decisions (6:1-7), (23) Stephen testifies of Jesus (6:8-15), (24) Prophecy fulfilled in Jesus (7:1-8), (25) The heritage saved through Joseph (7:9-16), (26) Deliverance through Moses (7:17-53), (27) Murder of Stephen (7:54-60), (28) Growth under persecution (8:1-3)

THE DISCIPLES GO TO JERUSALEM

1:12 *Olivet:* This small mountain, or ridge, was located a little over a kilometer east of Jerusalem across the Kidron

Valley (Mt 21:1; Mk 13:3; Lk 22:39; Jn 8:1). After the disciples had worshiped Jesus at the Mount of Olives from where He had ascended (Lk 24:52,53), they joyfully returned to Jerusalem because now they truly believed. However, they still did not understand the full implications of their commission to all the world. Their understanding of these things would come as a result of the Spirit's work when He came upon them a few days from this last encounter with Jesus (See Jn 14:26; 16:13,14) **Sabbath day's journey:** This was the distance of about a kilometer. It was not a law of the Old Testament, but one of the restrictions that the Jewish religious leaders had bound on the Jews in order to guarantee the keeping of the Sabbath. The Sinai law of the Sabbath was to keep people at rest in their homes. The religious leaders simply enacted their own restrictions in order to keep people from going great distances on the Sabbath (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

1:13 All eleven disciples whom Jesus called apostles (Lk 6:13-16; see Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19), assembled in an upper room where they waited in prayer for the fulfillment of Jesus' promise (See vs 8). These apostles were Peter, James, John (James and John were brothers), Andrew (Peter's brother), Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew (this was possibly Nathanael), Matthew, James (the son of Alphaeus), Simon (a former Jewish terrorist) and Judas (the son of James).

1:14 Jesus' brothers (Jude and James) and mother were there (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). At this time His brothers be-

lieved in Him, though previously they did not believe (See intro. to Js and Jd). There were also other women present. These were the women who had ministered to Jesus during His earthly ministry (Lk 8:2,3; 23:49,55). While they waited, all of the disciples continued in prayer to and praise of God (2:1,46).

ANOTHER PERSONAL WITNESS IS CHOSEN

1:15 *Peter stood up:* After other disciples had joined the apostles, Peter initiated a desire of the disciples to select someone to take the place of Judas who had betrayed Jesus. It is not stated that Peter's desires were motivated by the direction of God. He is here seen to understand that someone must take the place of Judas in order that there be twelve apostles.

1:16-21 *Scripture had to be fulfilled:* The prophecy of Psalm 41:9 that one would betray Jesus had been fulfilled (See Mt 26:47; Mk 14:43; Lk 22:47; Jn 18:3). Peter said that since the Spirit-inspired prophecy of David was fulfilled, one must be chosen to take Judas' place as a special Christ-sent apostle. **He was numbered with us:** Though Judas was counted with the original twelve apostles, and took part in their ministry during the earthly ministry of Jesus (Mt 10:1-5), he manifested his true feelings. He did such by allowing the devil to use him, and thus, he disqualified himself by betraying Jesus. Though he was numbered with the apostles, he fell from God's grace, and thus, was lost. **Purchased a field:** A field had been bought by the chief

priests with the thirty pieces of silver that Judas had received for betraying Jesus (Mt 26:14-26; 27:3-8). After the betrayal, Judas hung himself because of remorse. After he hung himself, his body fell to the rocks below where it burst open (Mt 27:5). **Reward of iniquity:** Money that is acquired through evil means and evil motives was considered “the reward of iniquity.” **Field of Blood:** Because of Judas’ disgraceful manner of death, the field that was purchased with the betrayal money became known as the “Field of Blood.” This field is believed to be south of Jerusalem in the area of the Valley of Hinnom which was an ancient burial place of the Jews. **It is written:** Peter reminded the disciples of Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 in saying that someone must take Judas’ place as a Christ-sent apostle. Peter’s reminder of the prophecy would bring comfort to the disciples in the sense that they would remember that God had known of Judas’ betrayal from the beginning of time. Throughout His ministry, Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him. **Of these men:** The candidates to replace Judas must come from those who had walked with Jesus during the entire time of His coming and going among the disciples.

1:22 To that day when He was taken up: Peter established the time in which qualification for a Christ-sent apostle had to take place. This would be from the time of John the Baptist to the event of Jesus’ ascension. No one today can qualify to be a Christ-sent apostle because no one today can fulfill this qualification. Jesus appeared to Paul on the

Damascus road in order to give him a personal witness that He had been resurrected (1 Co 9:1). However, though he was a Christ-sent apostle, he still said that he was an apostle who was born outside the time Christ-sent apostles were called (1 Co 15:8,9). In his writings he also refers to the twelve as a special group. **Become a witness:** In reference to the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the apostles walked by fact, not faith. They personally encountered Jesus. And because they had personally been with Jesus they were to be special witnesses throughout the world to the fact of Jesus and His resurrection (vs 8; 2:27,32; Lk 24:48; 1 Jn 1:1-3).

1:23,24 They appointed two: Both Joseph (Barsabas or Justus) (15:22) and Matthias fulfilled the physical qualifications. After the disciples selected two, they then called on the Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, to make the decision as to which one should serve as a Christ-sent apostle. They assumed that the choice would be based upon spiritual qualifications of the heart (1 Sm 16:7; Jr 17:10).

1:25 Judas by transgression fell: Judas had sinned, and thus, fell from his saved relationship with God and chosen ministry of apostleship. Now another was to take up his ministry and do the work of a Christ-sent apostle of Jesus. **His own place:** At the time this statement was made, Judas was in torments in the hadean realm of existence (See comments Lk 16:29-31).

1:26 After a custom of the Jews to make random decisions, lots were cast

(Lv 16:8; Nm 26:55). In trusting that God had directed the casting of the lots, the eleven apostles accepted the results, and thus, brought Matthias into the apostleship as a Christ-sent apostle. Since he was more qualified in character than Joseph, Matthias became a part of those who would initiate the church by witnessing to the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 12:2,

James, who was one of the apostles, was killed. However, after he was killed by Herod, the other apostles did not select another apostle to take his place. Therefore, after this selection of Matthias, no more Christ-sent apostles were added to the original twelve. Paul was a unique apostle who was chosen personally by Jesus for a specific reason.

CHAPTER 2

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

There has been some discussion concerning the actual year in which Jesus was born in reference to our calendar today, and thus the year in which the church was established as recorded in this chapter of Acts. Most scholars have agreed that the year for the birth of Jesus was 6

or 5 B.C., and subsequently the year for the establishment of the church was around A.D. 30. These dates are suggested because of some clear events that happened at this time in history (See comments in introduction).

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

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

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

IMMERSED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

2:1-3 The antecedent of the pronouns in the following verses is found in the last verse of chapter 1. In the original Greek text there is no chapter or verse division between chapters 1 and 2. Therefore, reference in 2:1-14 is to the apostles of 1:26. Luke's emphasis is here on the apostles who were all together in one room. It was upon them that the Spirit came. The time of this event was early Sunday morning, the fiftieth day after the Jewish Passover feast (Lv 23:15,16). **Day of Pentecost:** The day was called Pentecost after the Greek word for fifty. Pentecost came the day after seven consecutive weeks from Passover.

This was the same as the Feast of Weeks (Ex 34:22; Lv 23:15-21; Nm 28:26ff; Dt 16:9-11). This feast is sometimes called the feast of Harvest (Ex 23:15-21) or the day of Firstfruits (Nm 28:26). The year is around A.D. 30 according to our calendar today. **A sound ... like a rushing mighty wind:** The whole city of Jerusalem suddenly heard a great sound from heaven. It sounded like a mighty wind, though it was not a literal wind. The sound filled the whole house where the apostles were gathered. **Tongues:** "Divided tongues," which looked like fire, appeared to and sat upon each of the twelve apostles. Such was the Spirit's signal to all present as to whom He had endowed with great power, for only the apostles in this upper room were baptized with the Spirit (See Mt 3:11; 10:20). The divided tongues were the Spirit's reaffirmation that the twelve apostles only were the Christ-commissioned apostles through whom He would deliver all truth. Jesus had promised that they would be baptized with the Spirit (1:5). The Spirit is simply giving a visual indication by the "tongues of fire" that He had immersed them.

2:4 As a result of this baptism, the apostles were all miraculously filled with the Holy Spirit. All truth that Jesus had promised was delivered to the apostles (Jn 14:16; 16:13). All things that He had taught them were brought to their remembrance. **Began to speak with other languages:** By the inspiration of the Spirit, therefore, the apostles began to speak in languages that they had never before studied (10:46; 19:6; Mk 16:17). Refer-

ence here is to languages, not ecstatic gibberish, for in verses 8 and 11 the context defines that languages are discussed here. The promise of Joel 2:28-32 was first fulfilled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. It would be from this outpouring that the Spirit would later go to the other disciples (See comments 8:18; Mk 16:14-20). Therefore, this is the initiation of the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles in order to deliver the miraculous ministry of the Spirit to those who believed (See comments Mk 16:14-20).

THE APOSTLES WITNESS TO THE JEWS

2:5 *Dwelling in Jerusalem:* There were gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 devout Jews from many of the nations throughout the Roman Empire. They had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover that took place fifty days before this day of Pentecost. According to the Sinai law, Jewish males were to come to Jerusalem for Passover. This was the appropriate time, therefore, on which to begin the new dispensation of time in which we now live.

2:6-8 *When this sound occurred:* The great sound of the coming of the Spirit, and the event of the apostles' speaking in every man's language, caused great confusion and wonder among all the residents and visitors to Jerusalem. ***Heard them speaking in his own language:*** They heard the apostles miraculously speaking in the native languages of the foreigners who were in Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast.

Galileans: The ones speaking were the apostles who were men known to be from Galilee (vs 11). However, people wondered why these Galileans could clearly speak without accent the languages of foreign countries of which they were not native. The miracle of the speaking in languages, therefore, was upon the apostles, not on the audience who heard. ***In our own native dialects:*** The apostles even spoke in the dialects of foreign languages, for the Greek word used here by Luke is *dialektos* which refers to dialects. The apostles spoke in the dialects of those Jews who had been scattered throughout the world by wars of conquering armies. There were also in Jerusalem those Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism. The apostles also spoke the gospel in their languages. These apostles were speaking in languages that people could understand. They were not speaking some gibberish that was the result of a moment of emotional hysteria.

2:9-11 Those in the audience were Jews of the Dispersion (See Js 1:1). They were Jews that had been scattered throughout the Roman world through the captivities of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires. There were present Parthians, Medes and Elamites who had come from east of the Tigris River. They were descendants from those taken in the Babylonian Captivity of 586 B.C. (See 2 Kg 17:6; 25:11). There were Jews from Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia and Pamphylia of Asia Minor. From North Africa there were visitors from Egypt, Cyrene and Libya. A great number had come from Rome. Jews from Arabia

were there, even those from the island of Crete. After the conversion of many of these visiting Jews, they would return to their home countries to preach the gospel in synagogues throughout the Roman Empire. **Proselytes:** These were Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism. Jews and proselytes from all the Roman Empire were present in Jerusalem in order that God establish His new covenant with Israel and all nations. All these things He had promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Is 2:1-4). These visitors heard the miraculous speaking of the apostles in the language of their home countries. **We hear them speaking in our languages:** Herein is the purpose for the miraculous gift of languages. The primary purpose of the languages was God's signal to the Jews concerning the fulfillment of Isaiah 28:11,12, whereby God signaled to the world that Christians were His people (See comments 1 Co 14:21). Another purpose was that the gospel could be communicated quickly to all the world without the long process of learning languages. With the gift of languages the early evangelists could go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature in his own language in a short period of time (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). In this way, the gift of languages was for the practical purpose of world evangelism (See comments 1 Co 12,14).

2:12 The miracle of the apostles' speaking in different languages thus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 28:11,12. Men recognized the miracle and sought an explanation for the phenomenon, for they knew that God would reveal His

people to the world through the new languages (Mk 16:17).

2:13 Others mocking: As always, there were those who would not accept the testimony of this miraculous event. Their explanation for the phenomenon was that these men were drunk with sweet wine. These accusers could possibly have been the same religious leaders who had fifty days before crucified Jesus. They begin here to explain away the continual miraculous events surrounding the change from the old wineskins of the Old Testament era to the establishment of the kingdom reign of Jesus and establishment of the church.

PETER ANNOUNCES THE KINGDOM REIGN

2:14-16 Peter, standing up: When Peter stood up, the eleven who were already speaking allowed him to address the audience concerning the death, resurrection and kingdom reign of Jesus upon the throne of David. Peter was the one whom Jesus promised would have the keys of the kingdom, and thus, the privilege of making the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus (Mt 16:18,19). **These men are not drunken:** Peter first explained that since it was only 9:00^{am}, the eleven could not be drunk. It was too early in the morning. **This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:** Peter went on to affirm that the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 had been fulfilled by the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit on this day of Pentecost. The miraculous event of verses 1-14 was the fulfillment of Joel 2.

2:17 In order to remind the Jews of the prophecy of Joel 2, Peter quoted the Greek Septuagint translation of Joel 2:28-31. **In the last days:** Peter and the apostles were already in the last days when this outpouring occurred because it was “in” the last days that this event took place. Therefore, the term “last days” refers to the last days of national Israel. **Upon all flesh:** Joel had prophesied that in the last days of His covenant with Israel, God would pour out His Spirit upon all classes of people, not just aged Jewish prophets as in the Old Testament. In this new age sons and daughters would miraculously proclaim the truths of God. Young and old, including the Gentiles, would command the power of the supernatural environment of God. Others would receive the blessing of the miraculous work of the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (See comments 8:18; Rm 1:11). The promise of Joel 2:28 (vs 39) was first fulfilled in a miraculous manner on this day of Pentecost. It was then fulfilled in the group of all believers as the promise of the Spirit went to those who obeyed the gospel in the 1st century. The results of this fulfilled promise extended to all Christians through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (See vss 38,39; comments Mk 16:14-20). We must also understand that the fulfillment of Joel 2:28 was not fulfilled with only the outpouring of the Spirit in verses 1-4 upon the apostles and a few select disciples on whom they laid their hands. Every believer in the 1st century with whom the apostles had contact through the laying on of hands also had a right to

the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See comments Hb 6:4-6). Since Jesus had earlier commanded that they freely give as they had freely been given to in reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit, we must assume that wherever the Christ-sent apostles went, they imparted the miraculous gifts of the Spirit upon those who obeyed the gospel. **Visions ... dreams:** See 9:10; 10:3,13,17; 11:5; 16:9; 18:9ff; 22:17ff; 23:11; 27:23. Keep in mind also that those who traveled to Jerusalem during the approximate fifteen years the apostles remained in Jerusalem after the Pentecost of A.D. 30, came into contact with the apostles who laid hands on them after their obedience to the gospel.

2:18-20 On My men and women bondservants: Every class or race of men and women would work miracles. They would preach or teach by inspiration the marvelous word of God. **Prophecy:** This would be inspired preaching, singing, prayer and teaching (See comments 1 Co 12,14). **Wonders in heaven above:** The apocalyptic language that was used in the Old Testament to signify the downfall of nations was used by Joel to show the end of national Israel (Is 13:9,10; 34:4; Jr 31:31ff; Ez 32:7; Ml 4:1,5,6; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24,25; Lk 21:25; Rv 6:12).

2:21 Whoever will call on the name of the Lord: Calling on the Lord would be the plea of those who repentantly converted to Jesus by obedience to the gospel (Rm 10:13). When one recognizes his inability to save himself, he will call upon the grace of God for salvation.

2:22 A Man approved by God: On

the day of Pentecost, Peter continued to proclaim that Jesus was divinely proved to be the Son of God by mighty deeds, wonders and signs which He did before thousands of people (See 10:38; Jn 3:2; 5:6). His miraculous works were not done in secret. Everyone knew of His works (26:26). The wonders stimulated amazement in the minds of people, and signalled that God was with Him (Jn 3:2; 20:30,31). The purpose of miracles in the life of Jesus, therefore, was to testify to the fact that Jesus was sent from God. He was more than a good teacher of Israel. He was the Christ and Son of God (See comments Mt 16:13-16).

2:23 *Determined counsel and fore-knowledge of God:* God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit planned redemption of man before the creation of the world. The Son carried out His foreordained death, burial and resurrection (3:18; Mt 26:4; 4:28; see Rv 13:8). However, God used the sinful acts of man in crucifying the Son in order to accomplish His redemption plan for the atonement of man's sin. Though Satan had worked against the plan of redemption, God turned the work of Satan against him in order to bring into existence the mystery of redemption that had been planned before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8). ***Lawless hands:*** God used the wickedness of Satan, that was carried out in the behavior of evil men, to accomplish the redemption of man (3:18; 4:28; Mt 26:4; Lk 22:22). God used the Jewish religious leaders who violated Sinai law to have Jesus delivered over to the Romans for execution.

2:24 *God raised Him up:* Though crucified and buried in a Roman sealed tomb, God, the Father, raised Jesus from the dead (Rm 8:11; 1 Co 6:14; 2 Co 4:14; Ep 1:20; Cl 2:12). Jesus was bodily raised up in order to give hope to those who obey the gospel that they too will be raised when He comes again (Rm 6:5; 2 Co 5:1-8; 1 Th 4:13-18).

2:25,26 David prophesied of the resurrection of Jesus (Ps 16:8-11; see 1 Pt 1:10-12). The Lord was portrayed to be eternally before the face of Deity. He is now at the right hand of the Father (Hb 8:1) and is reigning over all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22). Though the flesh of Jesus would die, He would have hope of resurrection.

2:27 The Father would not allow Jesus' soul to stay in the hadean world of disembodied spirits. Nor would Jesus' flesh be allowed to deteriorate away. After being in Paradise in the hadean existence (Lk 23:43), Jesus was raised from the dead. The point here is that Jesus in soul and spirit did not remain in the tomb. His body was there but He was in Paradise (See comments 2 Co 12:1-4).

2:28 Jesus knew He would be resurrected because He had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again (Jn 10:17,18). He knew He would go back to the Father from whom He had come (Jn 14:28; 16:17,28).

2:29 *The patriarch David:* Peter then contrasted the death of David with the death of Jesus. David was still dead (13:36). Jesus still lives. Christianity is based on the fact of a living Founder. Christians do not worship the tomb of any

dead patriarch or founder. They worship a risen Lord who is reigning in heaven as head over all things.

2:30 *God had sworn:* God revealed to David that One would sit upon his throne, which throne received authority from heaven (2 Sm 7:12-16; Ps 110:1; 132:11; 89:3,4; see Lk 1:31-33). Therefore, Jesus ascended to sit on the throne of heaven (Hb 8:1). David knew that when God swore with an oath it was as if it had already happened.

2:31 *Spoke of the resurrection of the Christ:* Since David foresaw the seating of One upon his throne, he prophesied of the resurrection of Jesus (13:35; Ps 16:31; 132:11). He prophesied that Jesus' soul would not be left disembodied in the hadean abode of the dead (Ps 16:10; see Is 53:10). Jesus' body would not decay in order to return to dust.

2:32 *We all are witnesses:* Peter affirmed that he and the other apostles personally witnessed Jesus after His resurrection (1:8; 3:15; Lk 24:48; see 1 Co 15:6). The strength of the apostles' witness to the resurrection of Jesus is seen in the testimony of their persecuted lives. They suffered great persecution because of their beliefs. One of Luke's arguments throughout Acts to the validity of Christianity is the fact that the apostles and early disciples who personally experienced Jesus and the manifestation of the supernatural through miracles, willingly suffered persecution for their beliefs. They willingly suffered death because they believed in the fact of the miraculous manifestation of God through Jesus.

2:33 At the very moment he was

speaking, Peter affirmed that Jesus was reigning as King at the place of all authority in heaven (5:31; Hb 8:1; 1 Pt 3:22). His kingdom reign had been established in the heavens. Neither here nor anywhere else in the Scriptures is revealed another kingdom reign of Jesus that is yet to come. The totality of His reign is now expressed in His present authority as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15). ***The promise:*** Peter affirmed that he and the eleven had received the miraculous gift of the promised Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26; 16:13). This reference to the promise, therefore, refers to the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Though there was the promise of salvation through the revelation of the mystery of God, it would be consistent throughout this address to affirm that the promise in Peter's speech also refers to the coming of the Spirit as prophesied in Joel 2:28. ***That you now see and hear:*** The fact that the promise here refers to the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, is evidenced by the fact that Peter emphasizes the event of something that was seen and heard. Those in the audience could not deny the claims of Peter for they were all witnessing the speaking in languages that had come upon the apostles. They were hearing the gospel preached through miraculously inspired languages. Herein is the definition of true miracles. They can be "seen and heard." True miracles are revealed to the senses of man, and thus, are not hidden (See comments 4:14-16).

2:34 Peter stated that David was still in his tomb. He was not resurrected and

did not ascend to heaven as the One he called Lord in the prophecy of Psalm 110:1. David prophesied that the Father had said to the Son to sit on His right hand of authority. The Father as Lord said to David's Lord, who was Jesus his descendant, to sit at His right hand (Ps 68:18; Mt 22:44; Lk 23:43; Jn 20:17; 1 Co 15:25; Ep 1:20; Hb 8:1).

2:35 From the right hand of the Father, Jesus reigns in a position of all authority. He will reign until the last enemy, which is death, is destroyed (See comments 1 Co 15:24-28).

2:36 *God has made this same Jesus ... Lord and Christ:* Peter proclaimed that this Jesus the Jews had crucified had been made Lord of all things (Mt 28:18; 1 Pt 3:22). He was the anointed One, the Messiah of the Jews. He was the Messiah for which all Israel had been waiting for centuries. Peter thus concludes by warning those in Jerusalem who had crucified Jesus, that Jesus is now in heaven and He is there with all authority of a lord in control of all things (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:6-11; 1 Pt 3:22). The fact that He is now Lord of all things should move sincere people to submit to His lordship.

2:37 *Now when they heard this:* When those in Peter's audience who were sincere, heard of the lordship of Jesus and the fulfillment of prophecy that proved Him to be the Messiah, they were smitten in their hearts. They were grieved and moved to do what they had to do in order to save themselves from the just punishment they deserved for crying out for the crucifixion of Jesus. *What will*

we do: The multitudes knew that Peter and the other apostles had been with Jesus. They knew, therefore, that only the apostles knew what they must do (See 16:30).

2:38 *Repent:* Peter said that each one who believed must repent. All must change their hearts, thinking and lives in response to God's grace that was revealed through Jesus (8:19; 8:22; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Lk 13:3; 24:47). However, their belief and repentance would not take care of their sin. Belief and repentance were their response to what they should do in reference to the Savior of the world. This response must lead one to do that which God requires as a manifestation of remorse for one's sin. Their response, therefore, can never be a work of merit.

Be baptized: Baptism is not a meritorious work in order to earn salvation. It is a response to the gospel of Jesus. The Greek word that is used here (*baptizo*) means "to dip," "plunge," "immerse" or "overwhelm." "Baptize" is a transliterated word that was introduced through the original King James Version in order to accommodate those who were sprinkling and calling it baptism. Unfortunately, the true meaning of the Greek word *baptizo* has been lost among many religious groups who practice the tradition of sprinkling that was introduced no earlier than A.D. 250 where it was recorded by Eusebius (A.D. 260 - 340) that a person by the name of Novatian was sprinkled because he was too sick to be removed from his bed. Nevertheless, the mode of baptism is immersion, which, according to this text, one must do in or-

der to come into a saving relationship with God. Every person who responds to God's grace that was revealed through Jesus on the cross (Ti 2:11), therefore, must be immersed in water (Jn 3:23) in obedience to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Cl 2:12). In doing this, one comes into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Since Jesus died for us, we must die for Him (See 2 Tm 2:11,12). The people to whom Peter preached had to crucify themselves in a spiritual manner as they had physically crucified Jesus (Rm 6:6; Gl 2:20). Their obedience to the gospel resulted in remission of all their past sins (22:16; 1 Pt 3:21). They were thus born again of the water and Spirit through immersion in and resurrection from water (See comments Jn 3:3-5). Peter affirms here that upon their obedience they would also receive the blessing of the gift of the Holy Spirit which God had promised He would pour out upon all flesh. Their obedience to Peter's command to be baptized, therefore, was not a legal work in order to earn salvation. Their immersion would be a response to God's grace as it was revealed through Jesus whom they had crucified. ***In the name of Jesus Christ:*** Jesus was in heaven with all authority on earth at the time Peter made these statements. It was thus by His authority that people were baptized (8:16; 10:48; 19:5; see comments Mt 28:18-20). ***Remission:*** This same Greek word is used in Matthew 26:28. It is at the point of immersion that one contacts the blood of Christ, and thus, receives from God the remis-

sion of sins. It is God who remits one's sins by His grace. One does not obligate God to forgive sins through the action of immersion. Forgiveness of sins is the result of the free gift of God's grace. ***Gift of the Holy Spirit:*** This has been a greatly discussed statement and one that must first be understood in the context of Peter's audience. Peter's explanation must be accepted in the context of prophecies that led to the event of verses 1-4 and his statement of verses 16,17 concerning the fulfillment of the promise of Joel 2:28. Therefore, in view of "the promise" of the following verse 39 that refers us back to Joel 2:28 when the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit was made, it is consistent to affirm that Peter here refers to the Holy Spirit being poured out on "all flesh." Specific reference in the context is to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit that was openly given to the apostles on this day of Pentecost. However, we must also affirm that the result of this outpouring affected others through the laying on of the apostles' hands in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See comments 1:8; 8:18-20; Mk 16:16-20; Lk 24:49; 1 Co 12-14). Joel prophesied that the Spirit was to be poured out upon "all flesh." We must affirm, therefore, that all the work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation originated first with the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2. Originally, however, the Spirit gave miraculous power to the apostles and to the ones on whom the apostles personally laid their hands (8:18). By His own initiative the Spirit also came upon the Gentile household of

Cornelius in order to prove a point to the Jewish Christians (See comments ch 10; 1 Co 12:11). Joel 2:28 is definitely a prophecy of a miraculous reception of the Spirit. This understanding harmonizes with what Jesus promised both in John 7:37-39 and Mark 16:16-20. This also harmonizes with the conversion of the Samaritans in 8:12-20. The Samaritans did not receive the Spirit until the apostles had laid hands on them (8:17,18). This is also in agreement with 19:1-7 in the conversion of some Ephesians who did not receive the Spirit until Paul, an apostle, laid his hands on them after they had been baptized in the name of Jesus (19:2-6; see comments Gl 3:3ff). We must conclude, therefore, that this miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit ceased when all the Christ-sent apostles died. It ceased because only the apostles could transmit to other people the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands (See 8:18-20; Rm 1:11; 2 Tm 1:6). **Gift:** Notice that where the term “gift” is generally used in reference to that which the Holy Spirit gives, it is in the context of the miraculous activity of the Spirit such as prophesying, speaking in languages, and the other miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See 11:16,17; 10:44-46; see comments 8:18-20). In the New Testament, the singular word “gift” would refer to the whole of the promise that was first poured out on the apostles. The plural word “gifts” of the Holy Spirit would refer to individual miraculous powers that resulted from the outpouring (1 Co 12:8ff). Only the Christ-sent apostles could give these miraculous gifts

to others (8:18; compare the parallel use of the word “gift” in passages as 10:45-47; 11:17; Rm 12:6; 1 Co 12:4; Ep 4:8, 2 Tm 1:6). Peter’s emphasis in his Pentecost address includes this fulfillment of the miraculous benefits of the Joel 2 prophecy. The secondary emphasis is on the indwelling of the Spirit in God’s family that would not be defined with the word “miraculous.” This indwelling of the Spirit comes as a result of the obedient individual’s choice and allowance of the Spirit to rule and guide one’s life by the Spirit-inspired word of God. This would be a real and actual indwelling of the Spirit since the Spirit would be directing the life of the obedient by one’s voluntary submission to the Spirit-inspired word of God. Therefore, the promise of Joel 2:28 would also include a non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit that continues in and with the believers until the final coming of Jesus. This belief is sustained by a literal understanding of passages as Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 6:19. Thus, the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh on Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. The Spirit manifested His works in the 1st century through those whom He chose (1 Co 12:7,11). Though the word-confirming miraculous manifestations of the Spirit have ceased, His present indwelling in the disciples will continue until Jesus comes again. This does not mean that God has ceased to work. He continues to work in the lives of Christians, which work is perceived by faith. Regardless of our understanding of verse 38 and all its implications concerning the work of the Spirit, we

must affirm that all the work of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation of time finds its beginning in Peter's affirmation that the promise of Joel 2:28 was fulfilled on the Pentecost of A.D. 30. Though we may not understand all the implications of the outpouring of the Spirit and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we do know that the Spirit will do what His work is in the life of the Christian regardless of our understanding of His work. His work in our lives is not controlled or limited by our lack of understanding of His work. We do not presume to know all the workings of the Holy Spirit. Our limited knowledge of how God works does not limit His work in our lives.

2:39 *The promise:* Paul wrote that all the promises of God in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Christ (2 Co 1:20). "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made*" (Gl 3:16; see Hb 6:12; 11:13). In this statement reference is made to promises in the plural. God made several promises to the fathers concerning the coming of the dispensation that Peter is here announcing. Therefore, there is no need to make the promise here refer to that which is discussed in verse 33. There was the promise of the Holy Spirit that would go to those who obeyed the gospel (See comments Mk 16:14-20). Some have affirmed that Peter here refers to the promise of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on the apostles (vss 1-4). This would be the promise that was poured out on this very day upon the apostles (vs 33). Peter would thus be affirming that the promise of the Spirit was to all obedient people.

All who would repentantly seek salvation in Christ would receive the blessings that would come as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on this day. Both Jew and Gentile would receive the Spirit and all spiritual blessings (Ep 2:13). Though the manner by which they would receive the Spirit was not explained by Peter, they were promised that they would partake of the blessings of the Spirit. The fulfillment of this promise again moves us back in history to the prophecy of Joel 2:28, a unique prophecy in the Old Testament where God made a specific promise concerning the outpouring of the Spirit that would signify the beginning of a new dispensation. Jesus reaffirmed this promise to the apostles in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4. Peter announced its fulfillment at the beginning of this sermon in verses 16,17. Here he would be reaffirming that its fulfillment was to those of his immediate audience and to those who were "afar off." Since the promise of verse 33 referred to the event of the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles, then it is affirmed by some that in order to be consistent we must affirm that the promise of the Spirit here would go beyond the apostles to all flesh. It is true that the promise of the Spirit was to all flesh. All that the Spirit would do in this dispensation since the outpouring in verses 1-4 and thereafter, was in fulfillment of the promise of God in reference to the Spirit's work. However, since there were many promises of God concerning this dispensation of God's work, we must not limit Peter's use of the word promise in this

context solely to the promise in reference to the Spirit. Since Peter is discussing remission of sins, and thus salvation, in this context he is talking about promises in reference to our salvation. **Afar off:** Those "afar off" would be the Gentiles and other immersed believers upon whom the apostles would later lay their hands in order that they receive the blessings of the outpouring of the Spirit that was promised in Joel 2:28 (See 8:18-20; 19:1-6; Rm 1:11; 2 Tm 1:6). The promise of the Spirit in Joel 2:28 would go not to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles. The fulfillment of promises in reference to our salvation would go forth to all the world and to every nation (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15). **As many as:** All Christians of all history receive the blessings of the promises of God. Through the miraculous outpouring and working of the Holy Spirit in the 1st century, the church was firmly established and the word of God was openly confirmed as God's will for man (Mk 16:17,20; Hb 2:3,4). As a result of this outpouring, men were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the word of God. Therefore, the word of God which we have as a guide in life resulted from the promise which God made through Joel and was fulfilled in the first century. Though the confirming miracles of the Holy Spirit ceased in the 1st century (1 Co 13:8-10), the Spirit continues to work on the hearts of men today through the preaching and teaching of His word. He continues to dwell within the hearts of those who obediently submit to the instructions of His word. He continues to work in the lives of those who have

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

THE CHURCH BEGINS

2:40 With many other words: A few days before this day of Pentecost, Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Dn 7:13,14; 1 Tm 6:15). On this day, Peter publicly announced for the first time in history this kingdom reign of Jesus (See Mt 16:18,19). After the initial message of the gospel, He continued to testify to the works of Jesus and urged people to respond to the lordship of the reigning King. **Save yourselves:** Men and women must voluntarily respond to God's conditions for their salvation. God will not subject one to His will. As free-moral people, we are accountable to ourselves in reference to our response to the gospel (Ph 2:12,13). It is not the Holy Spirit who will save one. People must decide for themselves to respond to the gospel by obedience (4:4).

2:41 Received his word were bap-

tized: Those who receive the messengers of Jesus also receive Jesus (Lk 10:16; Jn 13:20). Therefore, when one receives the word of God, he receives Jesus by obeying the word of God. On this day, all those who willingly and joyfully responded to the grace of God that was revealed through the cross of Calvary were immersed for the remission of their sins. They were immersed, not as a work, but as a response to the gospel of God's grace. About 3,000 people submitted to the lordship of Jesus in their response to God's grace. They were added to the community of believers by God as a result of their immersion into Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27; 2 Tm 2:10). This obedience to the gospel brings the Father, Son and Holy Spirit into the life of the obedient who seek to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:3-9). **About three thousand:** The church of Christ (the called out assembly of God's people) was established when men and women first submitted to the gospel to this day. These who were immersed were the first souls who had submitted to the announced kingdom reign of Jesus. When the word of the kingdom was preached, men and women responded to the lordship of Jesus. The respondents on earth to the kingdom reign of Jesus in heaven, therefore, are the church (*ekklesia*) on earth. The universal *ekklesia* is the assembly of those who have been called out of the world by their voluntary obedience to the gospel (See comments Mt 16:18,19). **There were added ... souls:** God is the one who adds to His flock (See vs 47). Whenever one obeys the gospel in the right way and

for the right reasons anywhere in the world, he is added to the universal body of Christ, and thus, the brother or sister of all those who have also done the same. It is God's work to both determine the conditions upon which the brotherhood of believers is established and to add to His flock those who submit to those conditions. One's inclusion in the *ekklesia*, therefore, is not determined by his assembly with other brothers, but by his inclusion in the universal church by God upon his obedience to the gospel.

2:42 They continued steadfastly:

Those who submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus continued in unity with the apostles by submitting to the inspired teaching that was revealed by the apostles. The believers continued in (1) the truth that was taught by the apostles (Mt 28:20; Jn 14:26; 16:13), (2) fellowship in the breaking of bread (20:7), and (3) the prayers (1 Th 5:17). We must keep in mind that there is no conjunction between "fellowship" and "breaking of bread," and thus, fellowship was accomplished in the breaking of bread. **Breaking of bread:** There is no reason to define this as the Lord's supper alone. In the context of both Luke and Acts, Theophilus would have understood this phrase to mean a full meal, which is brought out in verse 46 and Luke 24:30-35 (See 20:7; 27:35). There is no contextual justification to state that verse 42 refers to the actual Lord's supper and verse 46 refers to a fellowship meal. The disciples continued with the Lord's supper. But it was a part of the fellowship meal that they enjoyed with one another

(1 Co 11:17-34; see 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12). Verse 42 explains what they did. Verse 46 explains where and with what spirit they continued with their fellowship in love feasts.

2:43 Wonders and signs: The apostles were miraculously confirmed to be messengers of God (See Mk 1:20; Hb 2:3,4). People feared because of the great manifestation of the presence of God through the miracles of the apostles.

2:44 All those who had submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus, and had humbled themselves to His lordship, remained together as one (1 Co 1:20; Ph 1:27; Ep 4:4-6). They were God's community of new born creations (2 Co 5:17). They were called out of the world by their obedience to the gospel (1 Th 2:12; 2 Th 2:14). Because of their mutual love of one another, they shared their possessions according to needs (4:32-37; 5:2). The fact that they were together does not infer that they all met together at the same place on the first day of the week. Since there were thousands of Christians through the city of Jerusalem, it was impossible for them to meet together at the same place. They met in houses throughout the city, but they were together as the one *ekklesia* of Christ. Being together as the *ekklesia* of Christ does not mean that all the members must meet at one place (See comments 1 Co 1:10).

2:45 Some Jews who were now Christians had journeyed long distances in order to come to Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost. They were now growing low on provisions because they continued learning at the apostles' feet.

Therefore, resident Christians of Jerusalem sold their possessions in order to raise money for these visiting Jews. This was done in order that they continue in Jerusalem to receive more teaching from the apostles before they returned to their home countries to proclaim what they had heard and experienced. The resident disciples understood the commission of Jesus, and thus, they were benevolent toward those who would take the gospel to all the world (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; see Is 2:1-4). The resident Jewish Christians also believed Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and thus, disinvested their interests in order to accomplish the mission of Jesus throughout the world (See comments Mt 24).

2:46 In the temple: The new converts to Christianity continued evangelism in the temple courtyard (Lk 24:53). This place of evangelism evidently continued for some time after the establishment of the church (5:42). It was the place where the religiously dedicated came, and thus, the outer courtyard of the temple offered an ideal opportunity for the preaching of the gospel. The early Christians took every opportunity to preach the gospel. **Breaking bread:** This is where and how the early disciples broke bread (See vs 42). They shared common meals with one another in their homes. They praised and thanked God for their food (20:7; 1 Co 10:16). Fellowship meals were a common practice of the early church. During or after such love feasts, the Lord's supper was celebrated (See comments 1 Co 11:17-34). In doing this, they manifested their fel-

lowship as the one body of Christ.

2:47 The disciples gained respect from the unbelievers because they served and praised God with holy living. *The Lord added:* Every day more people submitted to the lordship of Jesus by obeying the gospel. People obeyed the gospel daily because the gospel was being preached daily (5:42). Their names were recorded by God in the book of life, and thus, they were added to the community of the submitted believers. The church was composed of a community of believers who had submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus that Peter first announced on this day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Therefore, on this day the church was established when people submitted to the lordship of Jesus. The church is thus the manifestation on earth of the kingdom reign of Jesus in heaven. Those who submit to the kingship of Jesus, obey the King's word. World evangelism began on this day as men and women from all the Roman world obeyed the gospel and were prepared in teaching to take the gospel to all the countries from which they came. When these first converts returned to their homelands from which they came for this particular Passover and Pentecost in Jerusalem, world evangelism took place in a short time. The global body of Christ rapidly expanded throughout the world (See comments Is 2:1-4). God's first messengers to preach the gospel to the world, therefore, were those who were the first converts in the context of Acts 2. In the following year

another Passover/Pentecost feast occurred when other Jews came to Jerusalem. The apostles were there waiting for them as they did for several years after this initial Passover/Pentecost of A.D. 30. **To their number:** The word *ekklesia* ("church" or "assembly") is not here in the Greek text, and thus the number to which the saved were added by God was the body of believers who obeyed the gospel. We have no record of these being called the *ekklesia* (church) until 5:11, which was about five years after this event. Wherever in the world one obeys the gospel for remission of sins (baptism), God adds that person to the universal *ekklesia*, and thus the *ekklesia* exists where that person lives. The existence of the church is not defined by the assemblies of the members, but by those who have obeyed the gospel as the 3,000 did on this day of Pentecost. The 3,000 were the *ekklesia* before they had a chance to assemble. And thus, one becomes a member of the *ekklesia* apart from the assembly of the members, though assembling with other disciples is necessary to maintain the fellowship of the body. The *ekklesia* is not defined by its assemblies, but by those who have obeyed the gospel and go to work for Jesus (See comments Jn 13:34,35). If one obeys the gospel through immersion in the middle of a wilderness, then the *ekklesia* exists in the wilderness where he was immersed. The *ekklesia* exists wherever there is an immersed believer, regardless of where that member is any day of the week.

CHAPTER 3

A PUBLIC HEALING

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

3:2 The crippled man in the temple area was over forty years old (4:22). He had begged daily on the steps before the temple gate called "Beautiful." Everyone knew of him for he continually begged for food and money from those who went by him into and out of the temple courtyard. This was one of those individuals Jesus had not healed on His personal visits to the temple. The healing of this crippled man was thus reserved for this occasion when Peter and John healed him.

3:3-5 When this man saw Peter and John, he asked for something to be given to him. We wonder if he had asked of Jesus for something during one of Jesus' three trips to Jerusalem during His ministry, or even before Jesus began His ministry, for the man had begged at the temple for many years. ***Fixing his eyes on him:*** Peter asked the man to give them his direct attention. With an intense gaze,

as is indicated by the Greek text, Peter and John demanded the attention of this man who had been crippled for forty years (4:22). They were not calling on him to have faith, but to focus on them for something other than a contribution of material things. ***Expecting to receive something:*** The man responded to Peter, expecting that Peter and John were about to give him some food or money.

3:6 Peter responded by saying that he had no gold or silver. He also was poor (See comments Ph 4:12). But Peter did have the authority to command God's miraculous power that was more valuable than money. Freely he had received the authority to heal, so freely he healed (Mt 10:8). Therefore, by the authority of Jesus' name, Peter unleashed the healing power of God upon the man. Peter did not call for an expression of faith on the part of the crippled man. He simply healed him. Nowhere in the Bible is faith in God made a condition upon which a miracle was worked. God's power is not determined by the faith of men. In this case, and many others, the healing took place on an unbeliever.

3:7 When Peter raised the man up by his hand, his crippled ankles and feet were instantly healed. This miracle, as all miracles, was instantaneous and visible to all (Mk 1:41,42).

3:8 The healed man was so jubilant that he jumped and leaped everywhere. He praised God for his healing because he knew that the source of his healing did not originate with Peter and John.

3:9 Saw: Everyone saw the excitement of the man (4:16,21). A miracle is here defined as an event that can be perceived through the senses. True miracles were not hidden from the sight and sound of men. Though God can work within an individual to bring about health, such work would not be called a miracle according to the biblical definition of a miracle as explained by incidents as the miracle in this context (See comments Js 5:13-15). God's work that is not perceived by the senses of men is still His work. It is God's work that is not according to the natural processes of physical laws. Is it, however, only "miraculous" in the sense that it would be God working without the perception of man through the senses. The religious world today confuses the biblical definition of the work of God today in the lives of disciples with the nature of confirming miracles as this that took place at the temple courtyard. God continues to work, but there is a difference between what is defined as a confirming miracle in this and other biblical texts, and the work of God today to answer our prayers for the restoration of health or His changing of events in history.

3:10 Everyone knew that it was the man who had begged from them every day for many years as they came and went from the temple (See Jn 9:8). Luke's recording of this particular miracle was for the purpose of giving evidence that this miracle could not have been the work of someone who worked magical tricks. The fact that the crippled man was so well-known adds to the fact of his heal-

ing. Many people did not see the actual healing take place. Because they had not seen the healing by Peter, they were now completely puzzled as to how the man could walk. **Filled with wonder and amazement:** True miracles cause this response from the multitudes, not just a few who already believe in the miracles. It was the purpose of miracles in the ministry of the apostles to stimulate a response. The response came from those who beheld the miracles, not simply from those who already believed. Confirmation through miracles was for the unbeliever, not the believer.

DIVINE SOURCE OF POWER

3:11 Held to Peter and John: The healed man clung to Peter and John. He wanted to be with them because he was so grateful for his healing (See Lk 8:38). **People ... ran together:** As a result of the healing, an amazed multitude of people hurriedly gathered around Peter and John at the place in the temple area called Solomon's Porch. They wanted an explanation for the healing. Herein is revealed one purpose for miracles. Miracles were meant to arouse the attention of unbelievers in order that the gospel be preached (Mk 16:17,20).

3:12 After all the miraculous wonders that the apostles had previously worked in the city, Peter asked the people why they would believe that such power could personally originate from them. Peter stated that they were mere men. No man had miraculous power that originates from himself. All miraculous power originates from God. Man is only

given the authority to command supernatural power that originates from God alone. So herein is reaffirmed the purpose of miracles. They were to confirm the true messengers of God because the messengers had been given authority to command the revelation of the supernatural (See Mk 16:20; Jn 3:2; 20:30,31; Hb 2:3,4). One who claims to command the miraculous power of God, but has not been commissioned by God, is acting presumptuously before God. He is a deceiver.

3:13 *You delivered up:* Peter took the opportunity to convict the Jerusalem multitude for their crucifixion of Jesus. They were responsible because they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah that their fathers had looked forward to receiving. The very people to whom Peter now spoke were only a short time before wildly bitter against Jesus (See Mt 27:20; Mk 15:11-14). Their rage had driven them to crucify Jesus.

3:14 *You denied the Holy and Just One:* Jesus was holy before God and stood just according to Roman law. Nevertheless, the Jews had rejected the Holy and Just Jesus, who was the Messiah (Ps 16:10; Is 45:21; Zc 9:9). Instead, they asked Pilate to free Barabbas (13:28; Mt 27:20; Mk 15:11-14; Jn 18:40). They had the murderer released and the Mediator crucified.

3:15 They had crucified the One who was the Prince of eternal life (2:30-36). Nevertheless, God did not allow Jesus' body to decay away in a tomb outside Jerusalem. He did not allow Jesus' spirit and soul to remain in hades. Therefore,

the Father raised Jesus from the dead (2:24; Ep 1:20). ***We are witnesses:*** Peter and John, as well as the other apostles, were witnesses of Jesus after His resurrection because He had appeared to them (1:22; 2:32). His appearances verified His resurrection.

3:16 *Faith in His name:* Peter said that it was his faith in the authority of Jesus that made it possible for him to heal the crippled man (See comments Mt 9:22; Lk 17:6). In other words, the faith that they had in Jesus resulted in the healing (See 4:10; 14:9). The faith was with Peter and John, not with the crippled man. The condition for the crippled man's healing was not his faith in God.

CALL TO REPENTANCE

3:17 *Through ignorance you did it:* Peter reminded the audience that if those who were visiting Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified had really understood that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, they would not have joined the crowds who refused to accept Jesus. Therefore, they would not have cried out for the crucifixion of Jesus (Lk 23:34; Jn 16:3, 1 Co 2:8; 1 Tm 1:13; see At 13:27; 17:30). Even if the resident religious leaders actually understood that Jesus was God on earth, they would not have crucified Him.

3:18 *He has thus fulfilled:* God used the ignorance of the people and the wickedness of Jesus' enemies to carry out His eternal plan to save man. All these things God had foretold through the prophets (26:22; Ps 22; Is 50:6; 53:5; Dn 9:26; Hs 6:1; Zc 13:6; Lk 24:44; 1 Pt 1:10-12). The cross was not an accident that oc-

curred as a result of the Jews' rejection of Jesus (See Jn 1:11). It was in the foreknowledge of God that Jesus go to the cross for the salvation of all men (See Ep 1:3-14; 3:3-5).

3:19 *Repent and be converted:* Peter commanded the people to turn to God in sorrow and submit to His conditions for their salvation (2:38; 26:20; Lk 13:3). God would forgive all their sins upon their obedience to the gospel (See comments Rm 6:3-6). ***Times of refreshing:*** If they were baptized for the remission of their sins, they would become new creatures (Rm 6:3-6; 2 Co 5:17). They would become new creatures by coming into a covenant relationship with God (26:20; see comments Jn 3:3-5). If they were born again they would be spiritually revived in their relationship with God (See 22:16).

3:20 They must repent and turn to God through obedience to the gospel in order to receive Jesus who was prophesied by the prophets to be the Savior of the world (Ps 111:9; Is 53; Jr 25:5,6; 30:10; Dn 9:24-26; Mt 3:1).

3:21 *Restoration of all things:* Jesus is now reigning (1 Tm 6:15). He will reign on David's throne from heaven until the last enemy, death, is destroyed (1 Co 15:24-28). Peter proclaimed that men must be restored to a reconciled spiritual condition as Adam had with God before his sin in the garden of Eden. This would happen when men accepted Jesus as the Messiah and Savior and were obedient to the gospel. After men and women have responded to the gospel throughout this dispensation of time, Jesus will then

come to do away with this world in order to bring the saved into a new heavens and earth (See comments 2 Pt 3:13).

3:22 *A Prophet:* Moses prophesied that Jesus would be a prophet, and like himself, a leader of many peoples (7:37; Dt 18:15,18,19). Moses urged the Jews, as Peter did his audience, to listen to this prophet. Peter thus identified the prophesied Prophet of the Old Testament to be Jesus.

3:23 Moses had instructed Israel that they were to listen to the Prophet (See Jn 5:46). If they did not, then they would be cut off from God. Those who would not be obedient to Jesus, therefore, would be cut off from God's people.

3:24 *Foretold these days:* Beginning with Samuel, all the prophets confirmed what Moses had prophesied concerning these days of the Messiah (See 2 Sm 7:12; Is 53; Ps 22; Lk 24:44). There are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Jesus and His work. God's plan of redemption is interwoven throughout the Old Testament in that all prophecies pointed Israel toward the salvation that would come through the Messiah.

3:25 *Sons of the prophets:* They were heirs of the promises that were made through the prophets (See 2:39; Rm 9:4,8; 15:8; see comments Gl 3:26-29). God had made a covenant with Abraham that He renewed with Isaac and Jacob (Gn 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). Jesus, who was the blessing that was promised to come through Abraham's seed, would be a blessing to all who would obey Him.

3:26 Because the prophecies were first made to the Jews, Jesus came first to the Jews (13:46; Mt 15:24; Jn 4:22;

Rm 1:16; 2:9,10). Those who will voluntarily obey Jesus will turn away from sin (Is 42:1; Mt 1:21).

CHAPTER 4

TRUTH VERSUS RELIGION

4:1 *Came upon them:* On this particular occasion, Peter and John were speaking to the people concerning the resurrection of Jesus and His reign over all things. However, as they were speaking, the Jewish religious rulers came to stop their preaching to the people. *Sadducees:* This group was particularly upset about the preaching of the apostles because they did not believe in the resurrection (See Mt 22:23).

4:2 *Being disturbed:* These leaders were exasperated with the apostles' preaching of Jesus as Lord and the peoples' acceptance of the apostles and their teaching. Their positions of leadership in Jerusalem were endangered by the apostles' proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Multitudes were accepting their message, and thus, accepting their spiritual leadership.

4:3 *Laid hands on them:* Because it was late in the evening, the religious leaders physically took Peter and John and placed them in custody until they could be questioned and threatened the following day.

RAPID CHURCH GROWTH

4:4 The truth of Christianity was manifested by its growth in the face of much opposition in the 1st century. During these early beginnings of Christianity, multitudes of people were submitting

to the lordship of Jesus. They were turning away from the invented religions of man and submitting to the lordship of Jesus in their lives by obedience to the gospel (2:38). At this time in the history of the church the number of disciples was about five thousand men, which meant that the total group, including women and children, could possibly have been well over ten thousand. Luke frequently mentions the growth of the church in Acts in order to prove a point (See 5:14,42; 6:7; 8:4; 9:31,42; 11:19; 12:24; 13:49; 14:27; 15:35; 19:20). The point is that religions of men do not grow rapidly in a short time as the church grew after its establishment in Acts 2. One can answer the rapid growth of the church in such a short time only on the basis that God was miraculously proving the message of the disciples (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4).

SUPERNATURAL FOUNDATION

4:5,6 *Rulers and elders and scribes:* The day after Peter and John were arrested, the combination of all the Jewish religious power structure of the Sanhedrin gathered to confront and suppress the evidence of the lame man who was healed by Peter and John. It was a time when truth confronted religion in an environment where religion had taken the people into bondage. *Annas ... Caiaphas:* See comments Lk 3:2; Jn 1:49; 18:13. *John and Alexander:*

These were relatives of Annas and Caiaphas.

4:7 In the meeting hall of the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders surrounded Peter and John in order to interrogate them concerning the healing of the crippled man. In their questions to the two apostles, they wanted to know the source of their power and the authority of their actions, for they could not deny the miracle. A similar question was asked of Jesus by those who falsely accused Him (Mt 21:23). In their confrontation with the work of God in the apostles' lives, these religious leaders did not deny that a miracle had been worked. The problem was that their position of prominence in the community was being threatened by the power of the apostles. The religious leaders cared more for their positions of authority than the healing of a poor lame man. Religious leaders whose positions in the community are threatened by the word and work of God will often rise up with unreasonable opposition against those who preach the truth. Nevertheless, the truth must be preached regardless of the opposition of those who do not love the truth (See 2 Th 2:10-12).

4:8 In the face of opposition and having been filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter delivered an inspired message to these persecutors of the church (Mt 10:17-19; Lk 12:11,12; see Mk 13:11; Lk 21:14,15). The boldness of great church leaders is revealed in the midst of opposition.

4:9,10 Peter was direct in his speech. He was not intimidated. He stated that it

was by the authority of Jesus that this act of kindness was done. The validation of the message of the Christians was from God, not man. Peter preached the gospel event by identifying it as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (2:22; 3:6,16; 1 Co 15:1-4). By the same power that Jesus was raised from the dead, the crippled man was healed. The conclusion to his argument was obvious. Since they had healed the crippled man, God was with them.

4:11 *The stone that was rejected:* The cornerstone in building in ancient times was the marker by which the measurements of the building were determined. Jesus was the prophesied guiding rule of life. The Jewish leaders should have received this guiding rule in order to lay the foundation for God's house (Is 28:16; Ps 118:22; Mt 21:42; Rm 9:32ff; Ep 2:20; 1 Pt 2:4-7). However, they rejected Him (Jn 1:11).

4:12 *There is salvation in no other:* Regardless of their rejection, Jesus is the only authority through whom men can be reconciled to the Father (10:43; Is 42:1,6; Dn 7:24; Mt 1:21; Jn 14:6; 1 Tm 2:5,6). All other religions were useless in man's struggle to acquire eternal life. Neither can men change the truth of God and the church to suit their own desires (Gl 1:6-9). Men must come to God on the terms that God demands through Jesus. Men must be willing to do that which God requires to be saved (See comments Mt 7:21-23).

BOLDNESS OF THE APOSTLES

4:13 *The boldness of Peter and*

John: The Jewish leaders marveled at the confidence and boldness that Peter and John manifested. They manifested such even though they were men who had not been trained or influenced in the Jewish religious schools (See Mt 11:25; 1 Co 1:27). Such confidence and boldness could be understood only upon the basis that they had actually experienced a supernatural revelation of God through Jesus. Their behavior clearly manifested that they had been in the company of Jesus and had been influenced by His teaching. Because Jesus had invested His life and teaching in them, they were a testimony for Jesus to all those with whom they had contact.

4:14 *They could say nothing against it:* Even these unbelievers and murderers of Jesus could not deny the public miracle of a true healing. And so it is with true miracles. They cannot be denied, even by unbelievers. For this reason, true miracles must be manifested to the senses of those who behold the miracles. The happening of a true confirming miracle was clearly evident.

4:15,16 Everyone in Jerusalem had either heard of or seen the healing of the crippled man (3:11). Nevertheless, the religious leaders were so hardened in heart that they would not accept Jesus, though they realized that a remarkable miracle had occurred.

4:17 *Sternly threaten them:* In order to silence their preaching, the religious leaders resorted to intimidation against Peter and John. They agreed among themselves to threaten Peter and John in order to make them afraid to

speak their convictions (5:40).

4:18 By their presumptuous Jewish legal authority, they commanded the apostles not to preach Jesus (5:28,40).

4:19 The apostles explained to the religious leaders that it was their own personal decision, not God's, to judge whether or not they should preach Jesus (5:29). Since they had personally experienced the work of God in their lives and the lives of multitudes who were healed, they could not but speak what they had seen and heard. They were preaching by fact, the fact that they had been with Jesus and personally experienced His resurrection.

4:20 *We cannot but speak:* The apostles affirmed that they had no choice concerning what they preached. They knew the facts of Jesus and the resurrection. Since their faith in the future was based on the facts of the past, they had to speak what was true, for they had seen and heard the Son of God (See 1:8; 2:32; 22:15; 1 Jn 1:1-3). They preached the facts that they had personally experienced. Today, we preach by faith in the facts that have been recorded in order to produce faith (Rm 10:17). Because they walked by fact in the things they personally experienced, we walk by faith in their testimony.

4:21 The public's knowledge of the apostles' work saved them on this occasion. They had publicly stood up and proclaimed Jesus. Therefore, all the people glorified God because of the apostles' word (See Mt 21:26; Lk 20:6,19; 22:2). The religious leaders knew the public's favor of the apostles.

Therefore, they had to let them go in order to save face and prevent opposition against themselves.

4:22 The strength of the miracle of healing the lame man was in the fact that everyone who had frequented the temple knew the healed man, for he had begged at the temple for many years. This was not a miracle that was secretly worked. It was one that was witnessed by a great number of people. It could not even be denied by those who opposed Christianity. Confirming miracles cannot be denied. They can be witnessed and confirmed by many people.

THE DISCIPLES GROW BOLDER

4:23,24 *They went to their own:* After their release, Peter and John went straight to the company of the disciples. Though the disciples were meeting in homes throughout Jerusalem, they knew the homes to which they could go. When the disciples heard of the apostles' bold stand before the intimidating religious leaders, they praised God. They were reassured that the God who had created everything could easily deliver the saints from religious oppression (Ex 20:11; 2 Kg 19:15; Ne 9:6, Ps 146:6).

4:25,26 David had prophesied that the unbelieving nations would rage against God's work (Ps 2:1,2). *Why did the nations rage:* Political leaders would stand against Christians who sought to carry out God's work to proclaim the good news to all. Those who walk in darkness will always wage war against the sons of light. They will do such because the preaching of the truth manifests

the shame of those who refuse to live according to God's will.

4:27 The leadership of Israel, with Rome and all unbelieving Jews, stood against Jesus and His disciples (Lk 22:2; 23:1,8). Regardless of such great opposition, the church continued to grow.

4:28 *Determined before to be done:* God used the wicked motives and deeds of Jesus' enemies to carry out His foreplanned redemption to offer Jesus as the Passover Lamb for the sins of man (2:23; 3:18; see Is 53; Ps 22). God uses Satan's work to work against Satan. Because of this work of God, all things are working together for the good of those who have committed themselves to serve God (Rm 8:28).

4:29 Though Peter and John manifested great boldness, they and the disciples asked God to grant them more boldness so that they could continue to proclaim Jesus in the face of hostile opposition (4:13,31; 9:27; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; Ep 6:19). They knew that because the world hated Jesus, it would hate them (Jn 15:18,19).

4:30 The disciples asked God to continue confirming the preached word by His manifestation of the supernatural power of His existence (2:22,43; 5:12; Mk 1:20; Hb 2:3,4; 1 Co 2:4).

4:31 *Shaken:* God answered their immediate prayer with a miraculous manifestation of His presence. Subsequently, the earth quaked. The Holy Spirit continued to inspire their preaching which they did with great boldness. *Filled with the Holy Spirit:* The definition of being filled with the Spirit here is

the same as verse 8. Being filled with the Holy Spirit resulted in the disciples' speaking by inspiration the word of God.

MANIFESTATION OF LOVE AND UNITY

4:32 *One heart and one soul:* The disciples maintained unity among themselves, which unity was the blessing of God that came from their common obedience to the gospel and common cause (See 5:12; Rm 15:5,6; 1 Co 1:10; 2 Co 13:11; Ep 4:4-6; Ph 1:27; 2:2; 1 Pt 3:8). They continued to be together and enjoy a common fellowship with one another (5:12; Rm 15:5,6; 2 Co 13:11; Ph 1:27; 2:2). The Judean church practiced the sharing of their possessions in order that the physical needs of all Christians be met (See comments 2:44,45).

4:33 God continued to confirm miraculously the apostles' witness that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead (1:8; Mk 16:16-20; Hb 2:3,4). As a result, people of the community showed great favor toward the disciples. The people believed the apostles' message of the gospel. **Witness:** See 1:22; Lk 24:48. **Grace:** This same Greek word that is often translated "grace," is also translated "favor" in 2:47. Therefore, the disciples here have gained great favor in the eyes of the multitudes. However, the misguided and self-deceived religious leaders harshly opposed them.

4:34 In the Christian community no one went without what was necessary for living. Because they knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies (See Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk

21), and because of their loving care for one another, they sold their possessions (2:45). The reason for selling their possessions was to support the work of benevolence and world evangelism (See comments 2:44,45). **Sold:** Luke does not tell how they should sell their possessions. They simply sold their material possessions in order to raise funds. Not everyone sold their houses, for they met in the homes of the members throughout the city.

4:35 The money from the sales was brought to the apostles in order that distribution be made to all who had need (5:2). By making a common collection, the contributors turned over their individual right to distribute their funds to the decision of all the disciples.

4:36

was a Jewish Levite who also had the name, Joses. His name was changed to Barnabas (13,14) which means "son of exhortation" (11:22,30; 12:25; 13-15; 1 Co 9:6; Gl 2:1,9,13; Cl 4:10). Joses' name was changed by the apostles because he had a gift of encouraging people, a sign of a good leader. As a Levite, Barnabas owned a heritage of land in Palestine (Compare Ex 18:20,21; Jr 1:1; 32:6-15). However, he knew that the Sinai law was dead, and thus he could sell his possession. The Sinai Law had died on the cross and all Christians were made dead to all other religious laws by the body of Christ (Rm 7:4; Cl 2:14). He sold his inheritance and gave the total price of the sale to the care of others and the preaching of the gospel. These Jewish Christians were making a great sacri-

fice because land ownership was a strong custom and part of the Sinai law. Their fellowship with one another was mani-

festated in the fact that they sold their lands in order to minister to the needs of the church as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

THE BODY IS STRENGTHENED

5:1,2 On this occasion, Ananias and Sapphira used a common brotherhood ministry of loving fellowship as an occasion for selfish ambition and recognition among the disciples. The occasion was that Ananias and Sapphira sold one of their possessions and held back part of the money when they made a contribution for the benevolent needs of the disciples. Their sin was that they said to Peter and the disciples that they had contributed everything they had received from the sale of the possession. They thus lied concerning the amount of their contribution.

5:3 *Lie to the Holy Spirit:* When one lies to the church as Ananias and Sapphira, he is being filled with the motives and actions of Satan (Mt 4:10; Lk 22:3; Jn 13:2,27). The lie of Ananias and Sapphira, therefore, was not actually to Peter or the church. It was to the One with whom Peter had been filled, the Holy Spirit.

5:4 *Was it not your own:* Actually, Ananias and Sapphira did not have to sell their possession. It was their choice concerning the selling of the possession and the amount that should be contributed. It was also their decision as to how much of the sale they would contribute. Though selling of possessions and distributing to the needy was an example that was approved by the apostles, it was

not a binding example (See 4:32-37). However, the selfish ambition of Ananias and Sapphira to be recognized by the church moved them to do the deed of lying concerning their contribution.

5:5 *Fell down and breathed his last:*

As a result of Ananias' deception, he was immediately struck dead by God. The reason for this immediate punishment was evidently to manifest to the rest of the disciples for all time that God will bring judgment on all sinners. One must not feel that he will escape punishment for sin simply because his sin is not disclosed. However, the manner by which the death took place on this occasion is significant. God had given the Christ-sent apostles the authority to inflict with physical discipline those who would endanger the moral foundation of the church (See comments 1 Tm 1:20; compare 2 Co 10-12). In this case, God took direct action, seeing that Peter was somewhat apprehensive or unsure of this authority and responsibility as a Christ-sent apostle. Regardless of Peter's lack of direct response to the immediate death of Ananias, God took action and the total destruction of the flesh happened. After the death, however, Peter was not apologetic or surprised. He simply followed through with the responsibility that God had given to him and the other Christ-sent apostles. For this reason,

great fear came upon the disciples and no one attempted to be an apostle as the chosen twelve (2:43; 5:11,13; 9:32). **Great fear came on all:** As a result of Ananias' death, the disciples were held in awe of the power of God. The fear of God that was manifested in the hearts of the disciples on this occasion must be carried on throughout the existence of the church on earth. The purpose for the immediate punishment was manifested in the fact of the great fear that came upon the church.

5:6 Buried him: After Ananias was dead, his body was wrapped according to Jewish custom (Jn 19:40). This judged brother was then carried away for burial.

5:7 Three hours after Ananias died, Sapphira came into the presence of those who had just witnessed the death of her husband. She was unaware of Ananias' death because no one told her what had happened.

5:8 Knowing that the example of God's judgment must be imprinted upon the minds of the disciples for all time, Peter presented the opportunity for Sapphira to join her husband in deceit and death. Those who join with sin must also suffer the consequences of sin.

5:9 She tested the Spirit by thinking that God does not know evil plans and deceitful hearts (Mt 4:7). The fact is that God knows our hearts. Evil morals that conflict with the moral standards of God will not go unpunished.

5:10 She also lied, and thus, fell dead immediately before the apostles and the other disciples. Though judgment is not immediate in the church today as in this

case, judgment will eventually come when Jesus comes again (2 Th 1:7-9). God is saving up wrath for final judgment upon all those who would seek to deceive His flock for their own selfish ambitions as Ananias and Sapphira (Rm 1:18; 2:5; 1 Th 1:10; Rv 6:16). There is no room in the church for leaders to use the church as the occasion to exercise their desires to be prominent among men (Compare comments 8:22-24; Mk 10:35-45; 3 Jn 9,10).

5:11 Great fear came upon all: The example of immediate judgment in this case accomplished its purpose. Fear came upon all who heard of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira (See 2:43; 5:5; 19:17). **Church:** This is the first time after the A.D. 30 Pentecost that the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is here translated "church," is used in reference to the community of God's people (See comments Mt 16:18,19). The word refers here to God's called out assembly of people who have submitted to the lordship of Jesus. The time of these events was about five years after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. The word is also used in 19:32 in reference to a general assembly.

GOD CONFIRMS THE APOSTLES

5:12 Many signs and wonders: Throughout the early beginnings of the church, God continued to confirm the apostles with miracles and their message (2:43; 4:30; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12; Mk 1:20; 2 Co 12:12; Hb 2:3,4). The apostles preached and taught every day from Solomon's Porch of the temple where

they regularly met for evangelistic outreach (3:11; 4:32). The temple was a location for evangelism, for religious people continually came there for prayer and sacrifices.

5:13 *The rest did not dare join with them:* No one who knew the miraculous works of the apostles dared claim the authority of the apostles. They did not because they understood that the apostles were men who had been given special responsibility to release the power of the supernatural (2:43; 4:21). No one tried to imitate their miraculous works. In these first years of the existence of the church it was God's intention to firmly establish the apostles as the source from which truth for the church would come. The people had before feared the Jewish religious leaders (Jn 9:22). Now they fear the apostles. It must be noted also that they did not join themselves to the apostles because of the miraculous works of the apostles. The apostles, therefore, did not work miracles in order that they gain a following. Their miraculous works pointed the people to God, not to the apostles.

5:14 *Added to their number:* Those who were old enough to believe the witness of the apostles were added to the Lord by God upon obedience to the gospel (See Rm 6:3-6). Added to the Lord is the same as being added to the body of believers (2:41,47). Men and women, or adults, were obeying the gospel by immersion for remission of sins (2:38). The history of the church here indicates that when the members of the church are doing the work of Jesus, the church grows.

5:15 God gave great miraculous testimony to all the apostles (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). He allowed unique healings to take place by their hands in order to reaffirm that they were God's special witnesses of Jesus and His resurrection (See 19:12). The atmosphere in Jerusalem was filled with great excitement. It was as in the days of Jesus' personal ministry (See Mk 1:32-34).

5:16 *They were all being healed:* This was certainly the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to the apostles in John 14:12. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also. And greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."* People came from all the area cities around Jerusalem. They brought their sick, even those who were possessed with unclean spirits (See comments Mt 4:24; Mk 16:17,18). Therefore, the apostles were miraculously confirmed to have power over every manifestation of Satan. As a result, great multitudes were drawn to the message of the apostles.

APOSTLES ARE UNJUSTLY ARRESTED

5:17 *The high priest rose up:* This was either Annas or Caiaphas (4:6). The popularity of the apostles became too much for the religious leaders of the Jews who loved to be first among the people (See comments Mt 23:6,7; 3 Jn 9,10). The high priest and Jewish Sadducees recognized that their leadership positions were being threatened by the apostles. Their guilt over the murder of Jesus was continually brought before public eyes by

the preaching of the apostles who proclaimed that they had crucified Jesus (See 2:23). As a result, these pompous religious leaders were jealous and intimidating. Some were possibly stricken with guilt for participating in the death of an innocent man (See 4:2; 6:7; 13:45).

5:18 This arrest took place from three to five years after the events of Acts 2. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem in order to preach to the Jews who came to the Passover/Pentecost feast every year. The religious leaders' jealousy was too great for them to remain silent. Thousands of Jews were being converted. Therefore, the frustrated religious leaders in Jerusalem unleashed their indignation upon the apostles by arresting and imprisoning them (See 4:3; 16:37; Lk 21:12). Instead of being led to repentance, they were led to continued rage against Christ and His disciples.

5:19 *The angel ... opened the prison doors:* See 5:19; 8:26; 10:3; 12:7,23; 27:23. God would not allow Satan's work through jealous religious leaders to stop the momentum of the growth of the church. He thus sent His angel on this unique occasion to release the apostles from jail.

5:20 *Words of this life:* The angel who freed the apostles encouraged the apostles to continue their public proclamation of the words that lead to the abundant life (Jn 6:63,68; 10:10; 17:3; 1 Jn 5:11).

5:21 *They entered into the temple ... and taught:* The apostles set an example of bravery and boldness by continuing their preaching in the temple

court yard. When faced with opposition in a hostile environment, they did not keep silent. **Council:** This was the Sanhedrin council that was the highest council of religious leaders of Israel. **Sent to the prison:** Unaware of the apostles' escape, the religious leaders sent for the apostles whom they planned to judge publicly before all religious leaders of Jerusalem. However, an angel of God had foiled their evil intentions. Prayers had been answered and the apostles were freed. Thus God's work of preaching Jesus continued, regardless of the opposition of all the powers of the Jewish religious organization. Christians must never underestimate the power that is available to them through prayer. The power of God is unleashed through persistent prayers that are based on faith. It was through the prayers of the disciples that the power of God was brought into action in this situation (See Js 5:16).

APOSTLES RESIST MURDER PLOTS

5:22,23 The Jewish prison officers confirmed to the self-appointed delegation of self-righteous religious leaders that the persons upon whom they would release their frustration had escaped. Even the guards of the prison had not witnessed the angelic jail break of God's messengers. They simply reported that the prisoners were not in jail. **The guards:** These were Jewish civil officers, not Roman guards.

5:24 *They wondered what the result would be:* The chief priest and captain of the temple were worried. Those

they sought to intimidate into subjection and submission were in a position of popularity with the people that could be used to intimidate them (4:21). However, the apostles would not digress to the use of such worldly tactics as those who opposed them and Jesus (Jn 9:22). They simply continued with their mission of preaching the gospel (Mk 16:15,16).

5:25 Though under threats and intimidation by the Jewish authorities, the apostles continued preaching and teaching (5:42). The examples of the apostles here must be noted. They preached those things that they had seen and heard. They preached upon the foundation of facts, and thus, their great bravery and boldness can be answered only on the basis that they had actually experienced the unveiling of the supernatural power of God in Jesus (See Jn 3:2). The abrupt change in their lives and the boldness of their preaching can be answered only in the fact that they actually experienced the Son of God. They walked by the fact that they had personally experienced the miraculous work of God in their lives. They walked by sight. We walk by faith in the fact that they actually experienced the work of God. Our faith is thus based on the recorded word of what historically happened in their lives (See Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17).

OBEYING GOD AND NOT MAN

5:26 *They feared the people:* With a delegation of temple soldiers, the captain was cautious when he again brought the apostles to the Jewish hierarchy of leadership. He, as the religious leaders,

feared the people. God would not allow to happen again what He allowed to happen in order to take Jesus to the cross. He would not allow the religious leaders to do as they pleased to have the apostles either jailed or killed. The religious leaders came to fear the same crowds they had previously motivated to cry for the crucifixion of Jesus (Mt 21:26).

5:27,28 The apostles would not be intimidated by the threats of the religious leaders (4:17,18). The apostles reminded them that the blood of the prophets had now come upon them because of their rejection of Jesus. Not only had the blood of the prophets come upon them, but also the blood of Jesus (2:23,36; Mt 27:25). All the blood of innocent martyred prophets came upon this council of religious leaders who manifested the same corrupt motives as those who actually killed the prophets (Mt 23:35). As their fathers had killed the prophets, they had killed Jesus. Therefore, they would not escape just judgment. The blood of Jesus was upon their shoulders because as religious leaders they had personally carried out an attack against the work of God. This judgment would first come in time with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The end-of-time judgment would come when they all stood in judgment before the Jesus whom they had condemned (2 Co 5:10). *Filled Jerusalem with your teaching:* And so it should be with the work of the church in any village, town or city throughout the entire world. The presence of true Christians in any area should result in the same that happened in Jerusalem (vs 42). The disciples of

Jesus cannot help but teach about Jesus.

5:29 Obey God rather than men: Peter stood up to their threats. He affirmed that the preaching of the gospel could not be stopped by the unjust censorship of men who had ungodly motives (4:19). Man's unjust laws will eventually pass away, but God's law will continue throughout eternity (Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:25). And when all things of this world have passed away, it will have been better to have obeyed God rather than man.

5:30 You killed: These religious leaders were the murderers of Jesus. However, their evil deed was used by God to bring about the salvation of man. God uses the work of Satan to work against Satan. God raised Jesus up (3:13,15; 22:14; Ep 1:20). **Hanged on a tree:** See 10:39; 13:29; 1 Pt 2:24; compare Dt 21:22,23. See comments Gl 3:13,14.

5:31,32 Exalted Him to His right hand: God highly exalted the Son to David's throne as King of kings and Lord of lords (2:33-36; Lk 1:30-33; Ep 1:20-23; Ph 2:9-11; 1 Tm 6:15). Through Jesus, God now gives remission of sins to those who repent and obey Jesus' death, burial and resurrection (Lk 24:47; Rm 6:3-6; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14). The apostles were personal witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (1:8; 2:32; 3:15; Lk 24:48; Jn 15:27). The Holy Spirit gave His miraculous witness through the apostles (2:43; 5:12,15,16; Jn 15:26). Even the group of the obedient worked confirming miracles. They did so if they had hands laid on them by the apostles in order to receive miraculous gifts of the

Spirit (8:18; Mk 16:17,18). God was miraculously confirming Christianity as true, and thus opposed to either Jewish traditionalism or man's religions that had been created after the misguided desires of men. **To give repentance ... and forgiveness:** God gives repentance by making known to man the occasion for man's repentance and the direction in his life to which he must turn. Through Jesus, God has revealed His will that all men must repent. When repentance that leads to obedience is carried out in the life of any man, God forgives sin (See 2:38; 3:26; 13:38; Lk 24:47; Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14). **The Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him:** As on other occasions, the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit through the early messengers of God is used as an open manifestation that God was with His people in confirming His word (See comments Mk 16:14-20; Hb 2:3,4; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13). It was the work of the Spirit to confirm the word of these early disciples (Mk 16:20). By the laying on of the apostles' hands, the early Christians received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (See comments 2:38; 8:18; Rm 1:11; 1 Co 12). From this context it is also seen that every immersed believer had a right to receive from the apostles these miraculous gifts (See comments Mk 16:16-20). The miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, permeated the establishment and existence of the 1st century church. This was the purpose for the giving of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner. After the early church was firmly established, however, the miraculous activity of the Spirit was no longer

needed, for the word of the apostles had been confirmed (See comments 1 Co 13:8-13). When the need for the miraculous gifts ceased, the gifts ceased. The Spirit is given to those today who obey the gospel (2:38). There is no longer a need for the confirmed word of God to be confirmed again. The witness of the Holy Spirit today to the disciples of Jesus is in the fact that they live according to the Spirit-inspired word of God. In this way, the Spirit bears witness to the obedient spirit of the Christian in order to confirm his sonship (Rm 8:16).

THE CHURCH IS THE WORK OF GOD

5:33 *They were cut to the heart:*

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

5:34 *Gamaliel:* Gamaliel was a teacher of Jewish law. He was the grandson of Hillel, a well-known teacher of the Sinai law who emphasized the mercy of the law. After the tradition of his grandfather, Hillel, Gamaliel was one of the

greatest contemporary religious teachers of the Jews (22:3). On this occasion, he calmed the outrage of the offended council. Because of his tolerant attitude, he counseled for mercy, not rage.

5:35,36 As a result of Gamaliel's counsel, a murder plot was squelched by the wise counsel of this great religious leader. Gamaliel reminded council that Theudas was a former insurrectionist against Rome. He proclaimed himself to be a deliverer of oppressed Israel. However, he was killed and his followers scattered. ***Theudas:*** It is not known who this insurrectionist was. During these years of Roman occupation of Palestine, there were many who rose up to lead small bands of Jews in rebellion against Rome. All such rebellions were brutally suppressed by the Roman armies.

5:37 *Judas:* Judas of Galilee also led a similar rebellion against Rome. However, he too was slain and his followers dispersed. Josephus, a Jewish historian who reported during these years, mentions that Judas led a rebellion against the Romans because of a census that was ordered by Augustus and carried out by Quirinius.

5:38 Gamaliel's argument was to wait and see. He wisely counseled the council to allow history to make the judgment in reference to the apostles and Christianity. If the apostles were seeking selfish goals, their work would come to the same end as the work of Theudas and Judas. If they were calling for insurrection against Rome, they would reap Rome's swift suppression. If the apostles were self-centered men who sought a fol-

lowing of people, they too would be put down as Theudas and Judas. Gamaliel perceived that the council members themselves were bringing false accusations against the apostles because they were men who held on to their positions of authority, and thus did not want any competition from the apostles.

5:39 *Be found fighting against God:*

If the work of the apostles was truly of God, as the apostles proclaimed, then men could not stop it lest they be found fighting against God (7:51; 9:5). Every evangelist of God must be assured that his work is of God. By living and preaching the word of God, one's assurance that he is working for God's cause will bring boldness.

5:40 *They agreed with him:* Fortunately, the enraged council agreed with Gamaliel. But to satisfy their immediate resentment and frustrations with the apostles, the council had them beaten. Before letting them go, they again threatened them not to preach and teach by the authority of Jesus whom they were claiming was raised from the dead.

5:41 *Counted worthy to suffer shame for His name:* The apostles could not be discouraged. Instead of mourning over their experience and predicament with the council and subsequent beating, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer persecution for the sake of Jesus' name (See 14:22; Mt

5:10-12; Rm 5:3; 2 Co 12:10; Ph 1:29; Hb 10:34; Js 1:2,3; 1 Pt 4:13-16; see Mt 10:17; 23:34). Their persecution by misguided religious leaders, and miraculous confirmation by God, were actually two evidences that proved they were on God's side. Satan was being crushed under their feet, though he was raising all his forces against the church. However, in view of 14:22, struggle for one's faith was at the time common with being a Christian (See comments 1 Pt 1:6,7; 4:16).

5:42 *Daily ... teaching and preaching:* Regardless of the persecution, public preaching and teaching continued daily in the temple courtyard where religious minded people continued to meet (2:46; 4:20,29). They preached that Jesus was the Messiah who fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah (9:22; 17:3; 18:5; 18:28). As a result, the number of disciples continued to multiply throughout all Palestine (See 4:4). The early disciples' work in the temple courtyard was for the purpose of preaching Jesus as the Messiah, which proclamation was to the unbelieving Jews. Their preaching was not to the disciples, for the disciples already believed in Jesus as the Messiah. This preaching in the temple, therefore, was evangelistic, not edification for the church. These temple meetings were the evangelistic work of the disciples to the unbelievers, not the work of the disciples to the disciples.

CHAPTER 6

WISE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS

Luke records in this context the leadership skills of the apostles that they used

in order to train the leadership of the church. The following situation arose after the church had been in existence for

at least four or five years. During these early days of the existence of the church, the widows were being cared for without the designation of any committees to do the distribution of food. However, when a problem of prejudice developed among the disciples, it was necessary that an unprejudiced group of men make sure that the regular distribution of supplies equally go to all widows of the church throughout Jerusalem.

6:1 While the number of disciples was growing in Jerusalem, a problem arose in the church that manifested the great wisdom of the apostles to allow the members of the disciples to direct and carry out their own responsibilities. The situation also manifested the apostles' desire not to have the church centered around their leadership, nor to be viewed as lords over the church. ***Arose a murmuring:*** The occasion was that the Greek-speaking Jewish widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of the churches' contributions for its widows (See 4:32-37). The Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews who were born outside Palestine (9:29; 11:20). The Hellenists who are under consideration in this context had moved to Jerusalem and were residents in the city. It is evident from the situation that developed here, that the Judean-born Jews were somewhat prejudiced against those Christian Jews who were not born of natural citizenship in Palestine. Some brethren, therefore, justly complained about the matter of the Hellenist widows being neglected in the daily distribution (Compare Ph 2:14; 1 Pt 4:9). Prejudiced feel-

ings between the Judean-born Jews in Palestine (Hebrews) and the Greek-speaking Jews, who existed in the society, could not be allowed to exist in the fellowship of the disciples.

6:2 *The Twelve:* The apostles were still in Jerusalem at the time this problem developed. They remained in Jerusalem since the time of the establishment of the church in Acts 2 in order to preach the gospel to those Jews who were continually coming to Jerusalem for the Jewish feasts. Those who would come to Jerusalem would be taught that Jesus was the Messiah (5:42). Those who were converted while in Jerusalem would later return to their own countries and preach the gospel (See comments Is 2:1-4). It was through this method of world evangelism that the apostles were able to preach the gospel to the world (Compare comments 19:8-10). ***Called the multitude:*** The problem of distribution was first presented to the apostles. However, because the apostles had been given the God-ordained work of preaching and prayer, they called on the church to make the necessary decisions concerning the work of benevolent distributions. At this time in the early establishment of the church, the apostles' work was evangelistic and not serving tables. It would have been wrong for them to leave their designated ministry in order to serve tables. Therefore, they wanted the church to carry out the decisions and work concerning the administration to the widows. The apostles did not wish to tell the church what to do in this matter. It was their duty to stay with their God-commis-

sioned work of teaching the word and prayer.

6:3 *Look out from among you seven*

men: The apostles gave general directions in order to solve the problem. A plurality of men was to be chosen. These men had to be directed by the Spirit-inspired word of God in the sense that they had given themselves over to submission to God (See 2:4; 4:8; 6:3; 11:24). They had to be men of great wisdom (See 1 Co 12:8). They had to be men who had a good reputation among the disciples (10:22; 16:2; 1 Tm 5:10). ***Over this business:*** These men would be delegated responsibility by the church to make decisions concerning the distribution of funds or supplies to the widows (See 1 Tm 3:8-13). What these men would do, therefore, was to work on behalf of the desires of the church to accomplish the benevolent work of the church. These men were not designated as officials of the church to work contrary to the wishes of the church. Their designation by the church was to serve the church. The church thus delegated to them the responsibility to carry out the work of the church to distribute to the widows.

6:4 The apostles refused to allow their God-ordained direction of work to pray and preach to be detoured by that which others could do. Neither were they appointing a committee that would be under their direction. They were asking the church to give this group of men the responsibility to lead in this matter of distribution to the widows. This work had been carried out since the establishment of the church. The justification for the

seven men, therefore, was necessary only when the distribution problems developed. The group was to exist only until the problem was sorted out. After the problem was solved, the distribution could thus rely on the example of how the seven men accomplished the task. Committees, therefore, do not exist in order that the work of the church exist. They exist only for the purpose of expediting what Christians should be doing in the first place. When Christians are individually doing that which they are to be doing as disciples of Jesus, there is no need for committees.

6:5 *Pleased the whole multitude:*

The entire church was given the responsibility of making the decision, and thus, the entire church agreed with the apostles' suggestion because they understood the apostles' work. The men who were to accomplish this specific work were chosen by the whole church. Representatives from both Judean-born Jews and Greek-speaking Jews were chosen to be servants in this work. Stephen (6:8 - 7:60), Philip (8:4-40; 21:8), Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a Gentile proselyte, were chosen as servants of the church to accomplish this specific ministry.

6:6 *Laid hands on them:* The church set the selected men before the apostles in order that the men be identified before the church. The apostles simply laid hands on them for the purpose of signifying to all the church that these men be publicly announced before all that they had the responsibility of the distribution.

6:7 *The word of God increased:* As a result of this wise decision on the part of the apostles, the church grew (12:24; Cl 1:6). The word of God was proclaimed throughout the region. Even Jewish priests obeyed the gospel (See Jn 3:2; 12:42). Therefore, when Christian leaders do the right things, the church grows (See 4:4). The church grew because the apostles maintained their God-ordained work of prayer and preaching in order to fulfill the commission of Jesus to evangelize the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). It grew when disagreements were cared for by the leadership in order that members focus their attention on evangelism. When disciples are at peace within, they can focus better on taking the gospel to the lost.

STEPHEN TESTIFIES OF JESUS

6:8 *Full of the grace and power:* The apostles had imparted miraculous gifts to Stephen. He was one of the original seven men chosen by the church to minister to the widows (vs 5). The apostles had imparted to Philip the responsibility to speak the word of God by inspiration, which speaking is recorded in this and the following chapter (See comments Mk 16:14-20; Hb 2:3,4).

6:9 *There arose some ... disputing with Stephen:* The opposition arose from the Libertines or Synagogue of Freedmen that consisted of liberated slaves. A delegation of Jews and proselytes from North Africa, Cyrenians and Alexandrians, with those of Cilicia and Asia, also withstood the preaching of Stephen. That which Stephen preached

conflicted with their heritage and traditions.

6:10 *Not able to resist:* Regardless of their opposition, they could not make valid arguments against the wisdom of the Spirit who was speaking through Stephen (Ex 4:12; Is 54:17; Lk 21:15). And since they could make any valid arguments from the word of God, they eventually resorted to violence. When men know that their religious beliefs are contrary to the word of God, they often resort to violence in order to suppress their opposition.

6:11 *Secretly stirred up men:* These enemies of truth did a common thing that wicked men do when they cannot refute the arguments of sound reasoning. They bribed men to slander and discredit their opposition (See Mt 26:59,60,65; Mk 2:7). They bought men with support in order to preach against those who were preaching the truth. ***Blasphemous words:*** The men who were bribed by the religious leaders accused Stephen of blasphemy. Under the Sinai law blasphemy was punishable by death (Lv 24:16; Dt 13:6-10; see Mk 14:64).

6:12 *They stirred up the people:* These blinded religious legalists incited the religious leaders of Jerusalem to seize Stephen and stop his testimony. They brought Stephen before the Sanhedrin council and accused him of blasphemy against God, Moses and the temple ("holy place").

6:13 *False witnesses:* False witnesses were brought forward to distort what Stephen was actually preaching (See Mk 14:56,57). Such is the tactic of

those who are religiously misguided. They resort to slander because they are not interested in the facts of what their opposition is saying. In this case, they twisted Stephen's words in order to stir up prejudiced opposition against him by accusing him of blaspheming God, Moses and the temple.

6:14 Stephen had affirmed that the Jews had rejected the law of God in order to keep their religious traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They had confused their traditions with the actual law of Moses. They also misunderstood the purpose of the law of Moses. They thought the Sinai law was God's final law for man. They failed to see, however, that the law was a means to an end. The end was Christ (Mk 5:17,18; see comments Gl 3:21-29). Therefore, instead of looking for the Christ, they fought to maintain their positions in the institutional religion that they had invented after the tradition of the fathers. However, Stephen continued with the proclamation of the prophecy of Jesus that the temple

would be destroyed, which prophecy would be fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem (See comments Mt 24; Mk 13:2; Lk 21).

6:15 Stephen's prosecutors were relentless because he preached to them that of which they were guilty. However, God stood with him in this hour of trial as He will stand with everyone who will stand for Him (See 18:9,10; 23:11). God's presence with Stephen was evidenced by the glowing face of Stephen as he stood boldly before these misguided and arrogant religious leaders. It is probable that even Saul of Tarsus was in this group of accusers. If he was, then certainly these events stayed with him as he began and continued his ravaging of the church. Years after his conversion, he would certainly have recalled this event, and thus, willingly accepted the same treatment from misguided religious people. In fact, Paul would teach the churches he established that through many tribulations we will enter the kingdom (14:22).

CHAPTER 7

PROPHECY FULFILLED IN JESUS

7:1 The high priest gave Stephen the opportunity to defend himself against charges of blasphemy by demanding that he explain his teaching.

7:2,3 Brethren: Reference is to the Jews as brethren in the flesh. **Listen:** Stephen began his defense by revealing that the God of glory appeared to Abraham while he still lived in Ur of the

Chaldees in Mesopotamia (Gn 11:31,32; 12:1-3; Ne 9:7). Abraham was told to journey to a land that he did not know. By faith he went forth in obedience to the command of God (Hb 11:8,9).

7:4 Terah, Abraham's father, and Lot, his nephew, went to Haran where Terah eventually died (Gn 11:27-31). From there Abraham journeyed to the land of Canaan, for it was the trade route of the land of Canaan that God would

give to the descendants of Abraham.

7:5 Abraham was only a sojourner in Canaan. However, God promised that one day He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants as a possession (Gn 12:1-3,7; 13:15; 15:3,18). But at the time God made the promises to Abraham, Abraham had no children to carry on his family name.

7:6 *A foreign land:* Though God did not identify the foreign land at the time, He told Abraham that his descendants must first sojourn in a foreign land. This foreign land was later identified as Egypt (Gn 15:13,14; 47:11). In fact, Abraham's descendants (the children of Israel) would be residents in Egypt for about four hundred years (Ex 1:8-14; 12:40,41; Gl 3:17). While in Egypt, they were foreigners. From the time Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, he was a foreigner, as well as all his descendants. They were foreigners until they possessed their own land, the land of Palestine, about five hundred years after Abraham.

7:7 *They will come out:* At the end of their captivity in Egypt, God brought judgment upon Egypt for their oppression of His people (Gn 15:14; Ex 6:6). Israel, therefore, was delivered from bondage in Egypt in order to serve God in the promised land (Gn 15:16; Ex 3:12; Ja 3:1-17).

7:8 *The covenant of circumcision:* God made a covenant with Abraham while he was in Canaan (Gn 15:18; 24:7). Circumcision was a sign of this covenant (Gn 17:9-14,21). This covenant was continued with the son and grandson of Abra-

ham, Isaac and Jacob. The twelve sons of Jacob eventually brought forth the twelve tribes of Israel (Gn 29:31 - 30:24; 35:18-26). Abraham was a Gentile when God called him, for the nation of Israel did not exist until God made a covenant with the nation at Mount Sinai. Abraham was called outside this special covenant while being an uncircumcised Gentile. He is thus the father of faith to both Jews and Gentiles.

THE HERITAGE SAVED THROUGH JOSEPH

7:9 *Sold him into Egypt:* Because Jacob showed favoritism to his son Joseph, Joseph's brothers were jealous, and they sold him into captivity (Gn 37:4-28). He was eventually taken to Egypt by Medianite traders. This was in the plan of God to take His people into Egypt. **God was with him:** Though the sale of Joseph appeared to be unfortunate for Joseph at the time, in God's plan to build the nation of Israel in Egypt (Gn 39:2,21-23). God wanted to send a forerunner to Egypt in order to prepare the way for Jacob and his sons who would eventually follow (Gn 45:7). Joseph became a cultural bridge for Israel when Jacob and his sons later came into the land of Egypt.

7:10 *Gave him favor and wisdom:* God was with Joseph in Egypt (Gn 41:38-44). As a result, Joseph found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh, and eventually he was made governor over all Egypt and Pharaoh's house (Gn 41:38-44).

7:11 God used a great famine in Egypt and Canaan to providentially relocate Jacob's household to Egypt (Gn

41:54; 42:5). God took Israel into Egypt for two reasons. First, the twelve sons of Jacob had to develop into a nation in the pasture lands of Goshen. Second, the wickedness of the Canaanites in Palestine had not yet developed to the point where God would be just for their destruction by the armies of Israel (Gn 15:16).

7:12 In a manner unknown to Jacob at the time, God worked behind the scenes in order to get Jacob and his family out of Canaan and into to Egypt (Gn 42:1,2). He did this in order to remove Jacob's family from the influence of the wickedness of the Canaanites. During the time of Israel's captivity, the wickedness of the Canaanites increased in the land of Canaan.

7:13 When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to ask for food relief because of the famine in Canaan, Joseph made himself known to his brothers (Gn 45:4,16). He reassured them that what they had done in selling him was actually in the plan of God to bring them to Egypt.

7:14 Jacob and all his relatives were subsequently called to Egypt by Joseph (Gn 45:9,27). Pharaoh gave to Israel the best of the land in Egypt, the land of Goshen (Gn 47:6,11). There were seventy-five in all in Jacob's clan, counting Joseph and his sons, who now composed the family of Jacob in Egypt. Seventy actually came with Jacob out of Canaan (Dt 10:20; see Gn 46:27; Ex 1:5).

7:15 Jacob and all his sons, the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, died in Egypt (Gn 46:1-7; 49:33).

7:16 After the captivity, the bones

of the patriarchs were carried back to Shechem in Canaan and buried. They were buried in a place that Abraham had originally purchased as a burial site (Gn 23:1-16). However, Jacob had repurchased the land in Hebron for his personal burial site. The burial site was called Machpelah (Gn 33:18,19; 50:13).

DELIVERANCE THROUGH MOSES

7:17 *Time of the promise drew near:* When the end of the four hundred years of captivity in Egypt drew to a close, the Israelites continued to multiply greatly (Ex 1:7-9). We give credit for the fertility of the wives to the work of God, for God was building a great nation in fulfillment to His promise that He had made to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3).

7:18 *Who did not know Joseph:* A new king that was not of the Hyksos Dynasty under which Joseph served, became Pharaoh of Egypt. This new Pharaoh did not know Joseph, nor show Israel any favors (Ex 1:8).

7:19 *Dealt treacherously:* The new Pharaoh of Egypt exploited Israel and enslaved them. He sentenced Israel's babies to death in order to stop the multiplication of Israel (Ex 1:22). He knew that if the Israelites grew in number to be larger than the Egyptians, then the Egyptians would be in danger of losing their identity, and their kingdom.

7:20 *Moses was born:* Moses, Miriam and Aaron were born to Amram and Jochebed (Ex 2:1,2; 6:20). Moses was in his father's house for three months before he was laid by his mother in a

basket and placed in a river (Ex 2:2-4).

7:21 *Pharaoh's daughter ... nurtured him:* Pharaoh's daughter found Moses in the river and took him to be her own son in the house of Pharaoh (Ex 2:5-10). We must assume that God's providential care was working in this case in order to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity many years later when Moses would return from Sinai. He would return to be God's spokesman to the Pharaoh in order to free God's people.

7:22 *All the wisdom of the Egyptians:* As Moses grew up, he was trained in all the engineering skills, philosophy and religions of Egypt. He became a great speaker and a great worker in Egyptian society. Though he grew up in a land of idols, he was taught by his mother to believe in the one God of Israel and to understand that Israel was God's people.

7:23 *Visit his brethren:* When Moses was forty years old (Ex 2:11; Hb 11:24), he went out among his Jewish brethren who were oppressed as slaves in Goshen of Egypt (Ex 2:11,12). We are not told why he made this venture among his brethren, other than to consider their treatment under the Egyptians.

7:24 *Seeing one of them suffer wrong:* While visiting his fellow Jews, Moses witnessed the unjust treatment of an Israelite slave. His identity with the Israelites at this time in his life moved him to be enraged when he saw the mistreatment of an Israelite at the hand of an Egyptian taskmaster. He subsequently killed the taskmaster and buried him in a secret place. He committed the crime, thinking that no one saw him.

7:25 *He supposed his brethren would have understood:* At this time in his life, Moses possibly thought that Israel would recognize him as a deliverer of their misery in bondage, though he certainly did not see himself as one who would deliver them from Egypt. Nevertheless, they rejected him because they only saw him as one of the taskmasters of Israel.

7:26-28 The following day after Moses had killed the taskmaster, he tried to reconcile two Israelites who were fighting among themselves (Ex 2:13). But the one who did his neighbor wrong would not submit to his mediatorship. He, as well as others, knew that He had killed the Egyptian. His crime was known, and thus his only alternative was to flee. He possibly concluded that his killing of the Egyptian would be understood by the Egyptians that his identity with the Israelites was greater than his identity with them.

7:29 *Moses fled:* Because his killing of the taskmaster was known to many, Moses forsook the riches of Egypt (Hb 11:24-26). He fled Egypt to the area of Midian where he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, a Midianite priest (Ex 2:15,21). He had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Ex 2:22; 4:20; 18:3,4).

7:30 For forty years Moses learned how to live in the desert of Sinai. We must assume that God was preparing him to lead later the nation of Israel in this region for forty years. ***An angel:*** On Mount Sinai the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush (Ex 3:1-10). Some Bible students believe that

this was the Son of God who was at work with the nation of Israel before His incarnation (See vs 35).

7:31 *Marveled at the sight:* The bush burned but was never consumed. As Moses drew near to the bush, the Angel of the Lord spoke to him.

7:32 *God of your fathers:* Moses trembled with great fear as the voice identified Himself as the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex 3:6,15). The natural response of any in the presence of God, is fear. On this occasion, Moses realized the direct presence of God. As a man, this realization moved him to great fear. He was in the presence of a manifestation of the God who created all the galaxies of space. Any man in the presence of God can exist only if God allows him to exist. Otherwise, we would assume that one would disintegrate in the presence of God.

7:33 *Holy ground:* The Lord commanded Moses to take off his sandals because he was on ground that had been set apart for this special encounter (Ex 3:5-10).

7:34 *The oppression of My people:* The Lord said that He was aware of Israel's suffering. He had thus come close to man in order to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage. In order to establish the ministry of mediatorship, God would deliver Israel through Moses whom He would send to Egypt. Moses would be a type of Jesus, who would eventually be the only mediator between God and man (2 Tm 2:5).

7:35 *Moses ... they rejected:* When Moses went to Egypt, Israel did not at

first accept him as their deliverer. Nevertheless, the Lord had sent Moses to be both a lawgiver and deliverer of Israel. Jesus would be the same for Israel (3:22,23; Dt 18:15). As Israel first rejected Moses, so they were rejecting Jesus at the time of Stephen's preaching. ***An Angel who appeared to him in the bush:*** We must assume that before His incarnation, Jesus was not idle with the work of the Godhead among men. Stephen here gives credit to Jesus being the Angel who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. In Exodus 3 reference is first given to the "Angel of the Lord" for appearing in the bush (vs 2). However, it was the Lord God who called out of the bush to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Acts 7:38 says that the "Prophet" (Jesus) was with the Angel who spoke on Mount Sinai. Therefore, we would assume that before His incarnation, the Son of God was working as one with the Godhead in the affairs of Israel.

7:36 Regardless of the rejection of Moses by some in Israel, through Moses God delivered Israel from bondage by miraculous power (Ex 12:41; 14:21). Because of their refusal to trust in God, and to enter immediately into the promised land, Israel was condemned to wander in the wilderness for forty years (Ex 16:1,35). ***Wonders and signs:*** See Ex 7-10. Miracles as wonders caused the beholders to marvel concerning the work and power of God. As signs, miracles indicated that there was supernatural power behind the event.

7:37 *A Prophet:* Moses prophesied of the Prophet, the Christ, who would be

like him. He would be a lawgiver and a deliverer (3:22,23; Dt 18:15-19). Jesus was this Prophet. However, the unbelieving Jews treated Jesus as they treated Moses on his initial delivery of the nation from captivity (Gl 3:19).

7:38 Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai: Before His incarnation, Jesus was with Moses on Mount Sinai and spoke to him out of the burning bush (Ex 3). He was with Israel in the wilderness. **Living oracles:** The Sinai law was given to Israel through Moses (Rm 3:2; compare Hb 5:12; 1 Pt 4:11).

7:39 Our fathers ... rejected: Stephen said that Israel's rebellious forefathers rejected the Lord (Jesus) at Mount Sinai as they were rejecting Jesus again even as he spoke (Ps 95:8-11; see Ex 16:3; Nm 11:4,5; 14:4). They rejected Moses as a mediator, and on this occasion, they were rejecting Jesus as their mediator with God.

7:40 Make us gods: Israel had been affected by the idolatry of Egypt. They sought to trust in gods that they had created after their own image (Ex 32:1,23; Dt 9:16; Ps 106:19; compare Is 44:9-20). Stephen's audience had done the same. They had created a religion that conformed to their own traditions and behavior (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They subsequently deceived themselves into believing that God would condone their religious behavior (See comments Cl 2:20-22).

7:41 Offered sacrifice to the idol: Israel formed their concept of God into an idol, to which they gave their worship and submission. While in Egypt they had

been infected with the spirit of idolatry. Their faith was in gods they had created after their own imagination.

7:42,43 God ... gave them up: God turned away and gave them up to follow after their own gods and their own religious behavior because they had given up the true God of heaven (Am 5:25-27; Rm 1:24-28). While in the land of promise, Israel digressed to create religious belief and behavior after their own desires, sacrificing even their children to Moloch whom they had imagined in their minds to be a true deity (1 Kg 11:7; 2 Kg 17:16,17; 21:3,6; 2 Ch 33:3-5; Jr 8:2; 19:13; see Dt 4:19; 17:3). Because they grew ignorant of the true and living God, they created their own gods and religion that agreed with their evil desires (Hs 4:6). **Moloch:** This was the god the Amorites created after their imagination, and the one to whom children were offered as sacrifices (See 1 Kg 11:7; 2 Kg 17:17; 21:6). **Remphan:** Egypt, among other countries, worshiped the star that was the planet Saturn. In the same manner, Stephen's audience had rejected the will of God by going after their own religion. As a result of their apostasy, God condemned Israel's forefathers to Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (Jr 25:9-12). During the ministry of the apostles, Israel was again being cast off because of her rejection of Jesus. She was again headed for the judgment of destruction, which judgment occurred in A.D. 70 with the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24; Lk 21).

7:44 The tabernacle: Stephen continued to state that through a cloud that

gave witness to His presence, God manifested that He was with Israel. He was with them in the tabernacle that Moses had constructed according to God's plans (Ex 25:40). The tabernacle was with them during their forty years in the wilderness (Ex 33:7; Hb 8:5). It remained with them until David conceived the idea of building a temple.

7:45-47 This very tabernacle was taken with them from the wilderness wanderings into the land of Canaan. Through Joshua's leadership, Israel drove out the Canaanites (Ne 9:24; Ps 44:2). The Canaanites were kept out of the land until David finally brought peace to the land (2 Sm 6:2-15). Though the building of a temple was never in the original plan of God for Israel, David sought to build a memorial to God, a temple as the nations around them. But God would not allow David to build the temple because he had been the occasion for the death of many people (1 Ch 22:7,8). Therefore, Solomon, David's son, built the temple in Jerusalem (2 Sm 7; 1 Kg 6; 8:20,21). The temple was built as a concession to David's desires.

7:48 *Does not dwell in temples:* Israel was wrong in thinking that they could place the God of heaven in a construction that had been made by the hands of man (17:24; See 1 Kg 8:27; 2 Ch 2:6; 6:18). It is not possible to construct out of the things God created a dwelling place for the Creator of all things. Those who have created a god that is limited to some building have imagined a god who is confined to the building materials that He created (See comments Jn 4:20-26).

7:49,50 God said that He created man and the worlds (Ps 102:25; Is 66:1,2). That which is created cannot build a dwelling place for the One who creates. Man's efforts to build temples in order to house God manifests the spirit of idolatry of man to create a god he can understand and locate. If we lead ourselves to believe that God seeks to dwell in sanctuaries that we create, then we have created a god who is limited to the confines of men's creations and imaginations.

7:51 *Stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart:* Stephen compared the stubborn attitude of his immediate accusers with those of Israel who had rejected Moses and the prophets (Ex 32:9; 33:3; Dt 10:16; Is 6:10). Even at the time he was speaking, they continued to fight against the work of the Holy Spirit through inspired men (See 1 Th 5:19).

7:52 Their fathers rejected God's prophets who prophesied of Jesus (See Lv 26:41; 2 Ch 36:16; Jr 6:10; Ez 44:7; Mt 21:35; 23:35). These Jewish leaders were still rejecting God's prophets. They were the ones who actually murdered Jesus (3:14). They were at this time rejecting Stephen who was speaking to them by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

7:53 Though they had miraculously received the oracles of God through angels (7:38; Rm 3:2; Hb 2:2), Israel would still not obey even at the time of Stephen's preaching. We must understand that the traditional religious beliefs of men are always stronger than the truth of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9; 2 Th 2:10-12).

MURDER OF STEPHEN

7:54 The religious leaders of the Sanhedrin clearly understood the implications of Stephen's message. He was identifying their rebellious actions against Jesus as actions against God. This made them furious (5:33). Hate was stirred in their hearts because their hearts were rebellious against God's law. This case illustrates what men often do when confronted with the truth of God. They take their frustrations out on those who are the messengers of the truth. They react with violence.

7:55 *Full of the Holy Spirit:* See 4:8,9. Though faced with death, Stephen would not be intimidated. Because he was filled with the Holy Spirit, God allowed him to miraculously see into heaven. He saw God's glory and Jesus standing beside the Father. Jesus stood up for this special martyr for the Christian faith. The miracle of his vision was evidently for the disciples who would later be scattered because of what happened on this occasion.

7:56 *I see the heavens opened:* Stephen was privileged to be given a direct vision from God. As a result, he boldly proclaimed the vision to those who were about to kill him. He said that Jesus was standing at the right hand of God (Dn 7:13,14). He was standing because one of His faithful prophets was again about to suffer at the hands of misguided religionists.

7:57 The religious leaders could no longer withstand the powerful witness of Stephen. They cried out and stopped their ears. As an enraged mob, these suppos-

edly dignified religious leaders raced upon and grabbed Stephen. The Holy Spirit wanted recorded for posterity by Luke this case where religiously misguided men violently released their frustrations with the truth by attacking those who were the messengers of God.

7:58 They threw Stephen out of Jerusalem and proceeded to stone him. At the time, there was a young witness of this spectacle who did not throw stones, but stood watching as murderers threw their garments at his feet. His name was Saul, a man born in Tarsus who was one of the Jewish military authorities in Jerusalem. We are sure that this image remained in the mind of Paul until the day of his own execution. ***Threw him out of the city:*** The hypocrisy of these religious people is here manifested. They wanted to keep the law by not stoning Stephen in the city (See Lv 24:10-16; Nm 15:35,36; 1 Kg 21:13; compare Hb 13:12). Such is the behavior of legalistic religionists. They will condone wicked behavior because they have kept the legal points of their law that they have created after their own beliefs and traditions. As long as the requirements of the law are kept, one is allowed to release the wickedness of his heart in ways that do not conflict with his established religious codes (See comments in intro. to Gl).

7:59 The enraged multitude then proceeded to stone Stephen. Stones thus smashed against Stephen's body as he praised God. Though dying, his attention was not on the vicious crowd, but on Jesus. He called on Jesus to receive

his spirit after death. This was not a prayer, but a personal request addressed directly to Jesus whom he saw standing at the right hand of God.

7:60 *Do not lay this sin to their charge:* As Jesus on the cross, Stephen characterized his Master by asking forgiveness for those who ignorantly carried out this human tragedy (Mt 5:44; Lk 23:43). His spirit of forgiveness manifested the nature of Jesus in his heart and the principle of Christianity that serves

as the foundation upon which spiritual growth is maintained. One cannot spiritually grow unless he has a spirit of forgiveness. Stephen's death finalized his ministry, though his martyrdom continues as a testimony to all who would take a stand for Jesus. His legacy was sealed as the Holy Spirit relates to us that Stephen fell asleep amidst a fury of angry and misguided religious zealots. ***He fell asleep:*** See Mt 9:24; Mk 5:39; Jn 11:11,12; 1 Co 15:18,51; 1 Th 4:13,14.

CHAPTER 8

GROWTH UNDER PERSECUTION

8:1 Saul (7:58), who would later be called by his Greek name, Paul, consented with the Sanhedrin to the stoning of Stephen. His official approval made him also guilty (11:19). Beginning with Stephen's death, a zealous hostility of the Jews was launched against the disciples. A great persecution began in all Judea that spread throughout Palestine. Christians were scattered everywhere as they fled from the persecuting Jews who were led by Saul. However, the apostles bravely remained in Jerusalem in order to evangelize those Jews who continually traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast. By Acts 15 we still see the apostles in Jerusalem, receiving, converting, and teaching the Jews who came to the Passover/Pentecost feast. Upon their return to the synagogues of their hometowns, they preached Jesus as the Christ.

8:2 Devout men took Stephen's

body, buried it and lamented over the loss of this great soldier for Christ. However, Stephen's testimony was in the fact that he believed in Jesus to the point that he would give his life for what he believed. This was one of Luke's points in the book of Acts to confirm the divine origin of Christianity. Stephen had personally experienced the miraculous wonders of God that confirmed the word of the apostles (See Mk 16:15-20). He believed to the point of death (Rv 2:10).

8:3 *Made havoc of the church:* Saul ravaged the disciples (1 Co 15:9; Gl 1:13; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13). Because the disciples were meeting in their homes, he went into their homes, dragging mothers and fathers to prison because of their belief in Jesus. He viewed the disciples as the enemies of the Judaism that he had been taught since childhood. Therefore, he set all his energies against what he believed to be an apostasy from God. ***Entering into every house:*** Saul entered their houses in order to destroy the church.

However, after his conversion he went house to house to build the church (20:20). Since the disciples in Jerusalem were meeting in their homes, Paul broke up many house fellowships by entering homes and taking to prison those who assembled there.

Evangelism Beyond Judea

(8:4 – 11:18)

Outline: (1) Disciples in Samaria (8:4-8), (2) A sorcerer is converted (8:9-13), (3) Simon thirsts for power (8:14-25), (4) A government official is converted (8:26-40), (5) Saul's conversion (9:1-9), (6) A preacher is sent (9:10-19), (7) Paul goes to work (9:20-22), (8) Paul escapes to Jerusalem (9:23-30), (9) Peace from persecution (9:31), (10) Peter's mission journey (9:32-35), (11) Peter raises Dorcas (19:36-43), (12) A Roman officer is converted (10:1-8), (13) Peter sees a vision (10:9-16), (14) Peter goes to Caesarea (10:17-23), (15) Peter meets Cornelius (10:24-33), (16) Evangelism of the Gentiles (10:34-43), (17) The Gentiles are accepted (10:44-48), (18) Peter returns to Jerusalem (11:1-3), (19) Peter's explanation (11:4-18)

DISCIPLES IN SAMARIA

8:4 *Went everywhere preaching the word:* Throughout the turmoil of the church, God used Satan's persecution as a tool for evangelism. Though the Christians were under the great persecution of Saul, they continued to preach wherever they went (Mt 10:23). The persecution did not detour them from their responsibility of preaching the gospel to the world. What often happens in times of peace is that Satan uses the indifference of Christians to destroy the zeal of the

Christianity. Persecution in hostile environments, therefore, is often a stimulant to intensify the commitment of Christians to carry out their responsibility to evangelize the world.

8:5 *To the city of Samaria:* Philip, who was one of the original seven (6:5; 21:8), fled Jerusalem and went down to the city of Samaria. The Samaritans were a racial mix of people between Jews and Gentiles. In Samaria, Philip stood before the people and preached the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4).

8:6 A great number of people listened to what Philip preached. This is one of those contexts where the word "preach" finds its definition. A preacher preaches the gospel to unbelievers. The word "teach" is used in reference to imparting information to those who are believers. ***Hearing and seeing the miracles:*** They heard and saw the miracles that God worked through Philip in order to confirm the message he preached (Mk 16:17; Hb 2:3,4). These miracles, therefore, could be perceived by the senses of men. Philip's authority over Satan was manifested in his casting out demons (See comments Mt 4:24).

8:7 The people heard the crying out of exorcised demons. They saw people restored to complete health. They had never before seen something as this. No one had ever worked miracles in their area, neither had anyone cast out demons. The working of miracles and casting out of demons, therefore, was something that only the early disciples could do. No unbeliever either worked miracles or cast

out demons.

8:8 As a result of Philip's preaching and working of miracles, the entire city was full of joy. The confirming miraculous work of God manifested the presence of God, and the message of the gospel brought joy to their hearts.

A SORCERER IS CONVERTED

8:9,10 *Formerly ... practiced magic:* Simon was a man of deception. He was a sorcerer, or witch, who claimed to have miraculous powers. However, he was actually practicing magic. His magical tricks were so convincing that he had deceived the entire city of Samaria into believing that he could do miraculous wonders. But his tricks were not miraculous because God never gave Satan any power to allow his agents to work miracles in order to prove his cause. Simon simply worked magical tricks and claimed that he was someone great. Because he had convinced even the most intellectual of the city, the residents claimed that he was the great power of God on earth.

8:11 *Giving heed to him:* They listened to Simon because they thought he was doing miraculous wonders. For a long period of time Simon had astonished the people with his magical arts. People can be deceived into believing something to be miraculous, and believe such for a long time. Even an entire village can believe such works to be miraculous. We must never underestimate the deceptive works of individuals who seek a following. Neither should we underestimate the willingness of individuals to believe such

deceptions (See comments Mt 24:24). True miracles were never accepted to be such by the unanimous belief of the multitudes. Every individual of the multitudes believed the occurrence of a confirming miracle because of the power that was manifested through the miracle. No group of men ever had to make a decision as to whether a miracle had occurred.

8:12 When the people saw true miraculous works by the hand of Philip, they were convinced that they should follow what Philip was saying because his miraculous works confirmed his message (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Those who were able to perceive and understand both the preaching and miracles of Philip, were baptized under the authority of the kingdom reign of Jesus. *Men and women:* Only adults were baptized. No infants are mentioned in this case of baptism simply because infants cannot make a choice to obey Jesus.

8:13 *Simon ... was amazed:* Even Simon was convinced that Philip was working true miracles. He was so convinced that he was also baptized for remission of his sins (2:38; 22:16; Mk 16:16). As a master of magical arts, Simon gave testimony that true miracles are different than the trickery of men who seek to deceive people. Both Simon and the Samaritans, therefore, gave their testimony that even a master of sorcery cannot perform miracles. Their obedience to Philip's message proved that Christianity originated from true supernatural means. It was not based on the trickery of those men who have deceived so many throughout the world. Luke gives this

account, therefore, as a witness from a master of sorcery that true miracles were worked by the hand of Philip.

SIMON THIRSTS FOR POWER

8:14,15 The Samaritans were baptized by Philip, but they had not yet received the Holy Spirit (See comments 2:38,39; 19:1-6). Therefore, the Christ-sent apostles who were still in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria in order to impart the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit to those who had been baptized (2:38; 19:2). When they arrived in Samaria, Peter and John prayed for the new converts in order that the Spirit choose to come into their lives and endow them with miraculous gifts.

8:16 *Fallen on none of them:* Emphasis in the context is on the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands. The text is not discussing the indwelling of the Spirit, whose presence is in every Christian. ***Baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus:*** See comments 10:48; 19:5; Mt 28:19,20).

8:17 *They laid hands on them:* Peter and John had come in order to carry out one of the major works of the Christ-sent apostles, that is, to lay hands on baptized believers in order that they receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit (6:6; 19:6; Rm 1:11).

8:18,19 *The laying on of the apostles' hands:* The apostles had freely received the authority from Jesus to impart miraculous power. They were to freely give to others as they freely received. In this case, therefore, they were

freely giving the miraculous gifts baptized believers (Mt 10:8). As Christ-sent apostles, they came to Samaria for this very reason. This was one of the works that God had given them to do. Therefore, Simon recognized that it was only through the apostles, not Philip, that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given. Though Philip had hands laid on him by the apostles to receive the Spirit, he could not lay hands on others in order that they receive the Spirit in order to work miracles. Only the Christ-sent apostles could do this. It was their ministry. When the apostles died, therefore, the transmission of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands ceased to exist. ***He offered them money:*** Because of Simon's unconverted thirst for position and power among the people, he asked to buy this ability. He wanted this gift so that he could impart the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to others. He sought with money to purchase and control the work of God in order to regain his position among the people. By imparting the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, he could have the same influence over the people that the apostles had.

8:20 *Your money perish with you:* Peter condemned Simon for his belief that he could buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. God's work cannot be bought. If Simon persisted in his evil motives and scheme, he would be condemned. Peter knew the motives of Simon. Simon was condemned for his motives. ***The gift of God:*** The term "gift" here refers us back to the "gift" of 2:38. This gift is here explained in a con-

text of miraculous activity. This context, therefore, is a good commentary of 2:38 since we must first define the words in the document of Acts by the book itself. Theophilus had only Luke and Acts to define what was meant by Luke's use of words in writing the two documents (See 11:16,17). The giving of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the early disciples finds its beginning in Acts 2 (See comments Mk 16:14-20).

8:21 *Neither part nor portion:* Simon could never be a Christ-sent apostle. He sought for the position, but this ministry could never be his ministry (See comments 1:21-26). ***Your heart is not right:*** Though Simon was baptized, his heart was still not right with God (See Jn 17:9). His heart was filled with selfish ambition.

8:22 *Your wickedness:* Simon's selfish ambition and thirst for a position of authority was wickedness from which he had to repent. One would do well to meditate on these words of Peter if he seeks to lead the disciples. God would forgive Simon if he were truly repentant of such selfish ambition and his desire to rule over the people of God. ***Repent:*** Simon did not have to be rebaptized. He had to change his heart to conform to the submissive nature of a true disciple (See comments Mk 10:44,45; Ep 5:21; 1 Pt 5:6,7; 3 Jn 9,10).

8:23 *Full of bitterness:* Bitterness is in the heart of someone who has lost that which he formerly coveted. Simon was bitter because he had lost his position of greatness among the people and had to submit himself to the leadership

of Philip and the apostles. His bitterness had poisoned his mind (Hb 12:15). These are hard words by which the Holy Spirit here warns everyone who would covet leadership as Simon. Church leaders should thoroughly examine their hearts. Leadership among the disciples of Jesus is not by authority and position, but by submission and servanthood (Mk 10:44,45).

8:24 *Pray to the Lord for me:* Because of Peter's warning that something dreadful was going to happen to Simon, Simon realized the wickedness of his pride and asked the apostles to pray for him (Js 5:16). ***That none of these things:*** In the record that is given here, Luke does not mention the things that Peter said would come upon Simon. However, we could assume that the power of a Christ-sent apostle could be used to cause blindness or some other physical punishment to come upon this sinning disciple (See comments 13:9-12; 1 Co 5:5; 1 Tm 1:20). We must remember that Ananias and Sapphira fell dead before Christ-sent apostles (5:1-11).

8:25 Peter and John continued in Samaria to give their personal testimony to the resurrection of Jesus (1:8). They delivered more revelation from God to the people. On their return to Jerusalem, they preached the gospel in the villages of Samaria along the way.

A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IS CONVERTED

8:26 Luke includes this special case of conversion in order to witness to the fact that even government officials

obeyed the gospel. He also records this account to show how God intended to preach the gospel in Africa. ***An angel of the Lord:*** In the following conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the angel of the Lord did not go himself to the eunuch. God does not send angels to do the work of evangelism. In this case, He sent a preacher to communicate the gospel. Philip, therefore, arose in obedience to the angel's command to go to a desert place in order to encounter this prospect.

8:27 *He arose and went:* Without questioning, Philip immediately left Samaria. He went to a road that extended seventy-five kilometers from Jerusalem to Gaza. When he arrived, he found a man who had come over 1,500 kilometers from Ethiopia to worship God in Jerusalem. This man was now returning to Ethiopia (See Ps 68:31; 87:4; Is 56:3; Zp 3:10). ***A eunuch:*** He was a eunuch, which was a special social order that demanded the great commitment of being castrated. He was a government official of great responsibility who had been given extensive authority over the treasury of the nation of Ethiopia. He was submissive in his appointed role under Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians. He was an honest man and unaffected by government corruption.

8:28 *Reading Isaiah the prophet:* The eunuch was an educated man. He could read, and thus, was sitting and reading in his chariot a scroll of Isaiah on his return from worshiping in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem he had undoubtedly encountered Christian teachers who were teaching daily in the temple that Jesus was the

Messiah (5:42). He loved God's word for he evidently paid a large sum of money to be able to own a hand-copied scroll of the book of Isaiah.

8:29 *Then the Spirit said:* The Holy Spirit did not directly teach the eunuch, nor did the Spirit help him to interpret the Scriptures (See comments 2 Pt 3:15,16). The Spirit sent the preacher Philip to the eunuch in order to help him understand the Scriptures and to tell him what he had to do to be saved.

8:30,31 *Do you understand:* In obedience to the Spirit, Philip ran to the chariot of the eunuch. He did not approach the eunuch with an arrogant attitude. He simply asked a question to begin a discussion concerning the Bible. ***How can I:*** The eunuch was confused concerning the interpretation of Isaiah 53 which he was reading. The Jewish teachers in Jerusalem had said that Isaiah prophesied about himself. However, in Jerusalem the Christians, whom the eunuch had surely encountered in the temple courtyard, affirmed that Isaiah was talking about the crucified Messiah they identified as Jesus (5:42). In any case, the eunuch realized that he needed further instruction.

8:32,33 *The Scripture that he was reading:* The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53:7,8 which was a prophecy that Jesus would be led to crucifixion as an innocent sheep is led to slaughter and an unknowing lamb to the shearer. Jesus, in His humiliation as the Son of God, submitted to the cross because He knew that it was for the salvation of man.

8:34 *Of whom does the prophet say*

this: The eunuch was confused as to whether this passage was speaking of Isaiah as the Jewish Rabbis taught, or if it was a prophecy of Jesus as the Christians in Jerusalem affirmed (5:42).

8:35 Preached Jesus to him: Philip then took this opportunity to complete the eunuch's knowledge of Jesus. Jesus was the subject of Philip's preaching (1 Co 1:23; 2:2; Gl 6:14). It is God's system of evangelism to use preachers and teachers of the word of God in order to communicate the gospel (See Rm 10:14,15).

8:36 What hinders me from being baptized: After Philip had declared the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the eunuch realized that according to Philip's instructions, he must obey this good news by immersion in water for the remission of his sins (2:38; See comments Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4).

8:37 (Some ancient manuscripts do not contain the statements of this verse. However, the Western Texts, as well as the translations into Latin contain the statements. Because the verse is not included in some texts, it is left out of some translations.) **If you believe:** Philip was not asking for a public confession. He was asking if the eunuch believed what he had just heard. The eunuch's request to be immersed indicated his belief in Jesus.

8:38 Commanded the chariot to stand still: The eunuch knew that he had

to obey God immediately. Philip took him down into the water and immersed him (Rm 6:4; Cl 2:12) for the remission of sins so that he might come into a covenant relationship with Jesus (2:38; 22:16).

8:39 The eunuch saw him no more: The Holy Spirit then instructed Philip to go to other areas. His brief encounter with the eunuch was enough to send the gospel message on to Africa through the voice of a well-qualified person as the eunuch (Ps 68:31). The eunuch responded to the gospel without ever seeing a miracle, and now, he had the responsibility to be faithful without miracles as he returned home to Ethiopia. **Went on his way rejoicing:** The eunuch was very excited about his belief and obedience to Jesus. His sins were washed away (22:16). He was in Christ (Gl 3:26,27). He was saved (2 Tm 2:10; 1 Pt 3:21). He went on his way to Africa rejoicing over his obedience to the One who was now reigning over all things.

8:40 Philip continued his evangelistic work of preaching wherever he went. He was found at the city of Azotus where he also preached. From the desert to Caesarea, he preached in every village along the way. As Jesus, he preached from village to village in order to proclaim the message of the gospel.

CHAPTER 9

SAUL'S CONVERSION (See At 22:4-11; 26:9-18)

Through the inspiration of Luke, the Holy Spirit now turns in Acts to record

the conversion of another great leadership personality with the same character qualifications as the eunuch. His Hebrew name was Saul. His Greek name was

Paul. God considered him to be faithful to his beliefs (1 Tm 1:12). God desired to have Saul working to preach the gospel message cross-culturally to the Gentiles (See comments Gl 2:7-10). God chose this man in order to direct his ministry throughout the Gentile world. God's purpose was to have the gospel preached in areas where Christianity would be contrasted with pagan beliefs. Therefore, Paul's conversion begins with a supernatural intervention from heaven. This manner of conversion would be necessary in order to give Paul evidence of the risen Christ. It is thus not without purpose that God called Paul through special means. Luke will concentrate on the life and work of the converted Paul throughout the remainder of the document of Acts. His purpose for doing such is founded on the fact that at the time of writing, Paul was in Rome on trial for his life. The document of Acts was thus a defense document for Christianity on behalf of Paul. Luke's argument with the record of Paul's conversion that Paul recounted in his defense on two occasions during his ministry, is mentioned here as a defense of Paul. In other words, the changed and committed life of Paul can be answered only on the basis that he experienced the following revelation of Jesus on a road to Damascus.

9:1,2 *Breathing threats and murder:* After the death of Stephen, Saul continued to ravage the church (Gl 1:13,14). He finished his persecution work in Jerusalem and then headed to Damascus. He received authority from Caiaphas, the chief priest in Jerusalem,

to imprison Christians in Damascus who had submitted to the Way of Jesus (22:5). ***The Way:*** This was a common term that was used to refer to Christianity in the first century (See 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; compare 16:17; 18:15,16).

9:3 *Came near Damascus:* Damascus was at least a six-day walking journey from Jerusalem. Thus Saul had time to think about what he was doing to the disciples of Jesus. When he and his company were outside Damascus, a sudden and bright light from heaven shined around him.

9:4 *Why are you persecuting Me:* Jesus said to Saul out of heaven that he was personally persecuting Him because he was persecuting His body, the church (Mt 10:40; 25:40,45; Lk 10:16; Jn 15:1-5).

9:5 *Lord:* Saul realized that it was a voice from heaven, and thus, he referred to the one speaking as the Lord. Saul knew what Christians believed. He knew of the evidence they claimed concerning who Jesus was. He simply fought against the evidence in order to maintain his traditional religion, and surely, his position in the Jewish leadership.

9:6 *Told you what you must do:* Saul accepted the authority of Jesus who was speaking. Therefore, he was not disobedient to the command of the Son of God to go to Damascus to receive further instructions. He later told King Agrippa, "*I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision*" (26:19). This statement reveals the purpose of the work of God through the miraculous encounter of Paul with Jesus on the Damascus road. The

encounter was meant to give Paul visible evidence that Jesus was truly resurrected from the dead. The experience of his personal encounter with Jesus would thus be the foundation of his ministry to preach the gospel.

9:7 *Hearing the sound:* Those who were with Saul had also fallen to the ground. They were speechless. They had heard the sound of the voice, but they did not understand what was said by Jesus. Acts 22:9 says that they “did not understand the voice.” The Greek word in 22:9, though the same as the one used in this context, is in the accusative voice. The meaning in 22:9, therefore, is that they did not hear with understanding. Here in 9:7 the word for “voice” is in the genitive and can be translated “sound.” The meaning here is that they heard the sound of the voice but they did not understand what the voice was saying.

9:8 *Eyes were opened:* Saul was blinded by the glory of the light (22:11). Therefore, he arose from the ground and was led by hand into Damascus.

9:9 *Three days:* For three days God left Paul alone for prayer and fasting in order for him to rethink his life. We wonder concerning the great mental anguish this harsh persecutor of the disciples of Jesus went through as he recalled all the pleas and cries of those he had persecuted. God wanted the event on the road to sink into Saul’s mind before he was baptized because Saul would recount this event for the rest of his life. It would be a testimony that his conversion was the result of a miraculous encounter with the Son of God.

A PREACHER IS SENT

(See At 22:12-16)

9:10,11 *Go to ... Saul of Tarsus:* A devout Jewish Christian by the name of Ananias was called by the Lord through a vision to go to Saul (22:12). Saul was residing at the house of Judas whom Luke does not identify.

9:12 Saul had already been told by Jesus that one was coming to restore his sight. He had also seen a vision of Ananias coming to him. Jesus thus prepared him to receive the one who was coming with instructions on what he must do to be saved.

9:13,14 *How much evil he has done:* Ananias was first hesitant about going to Saul because he had heard of the great persecution Saul had launched against the disciples. Ananias had even heard that Saul had authority in Damascus to imprison the saints. ***Saints:*** These were living Christians. They were those who had been sanctified by the blood of Jesus (1Co 1:1).

9:15 *Go:* Jesus reassured Ananias by telling him that Saul was a uniquely chosen worker for a unique work. Because of Saul’s faithful personality and leadership abilities, Jesus chose and commissioned him to give testimony of his faith before the Gentiles, world kings and the Israelites (21:14; 25:22,23; 26:1; Rm 1:1,5; 11:13; 1 Co 15:10; Gl 1:15; 2:7,8; Ep 3:7,8; 1 Tm 2:7; 2 Tm 1:11). Jesus personally gave him his destiny for the rest of his life.

9:16 *Suffer for My name’s sake:* Before Saul was baptized, Jesus explained to him all the persecutions

through which he had to go in order to accomplish his divine destiny (See 20:22-24; 2 Co 4:11; 11:23-28; 12:7-10; Gl 6:17; Ph 1:29,30). Paul thus counted the cost of discipleship before he obeyed the gospel (See comments Lk 14:25-35).

9:17 *Ananias went:* After being reassured of his safety, Ananias went to the house of Judas to see Saul. As a fellow Jewish brother, Ananias greeted Saul and laid hands on him in order that he receive his sight. However, on this occasion Jesus directly filled Saul with the Holy Spirit (2:4; 4:31; 8:17; 13:52).

9:18 *Fell from his eyes:* When Ananias laid hands on Saul, something as scales immediately fell from Saul's eyes and he was again able to see. Ananias asked him why he tarried to be baptized in order to wash away his sins (22:16). This was a good question to ask anyone who had heard the gospel. And Saul had heard the gospel from many of those whom he had persecuted. He knew what to do in order to be obedient to Jesus. Saul thus obeyed the gospel by being immersed for the remission of sins (2:38; Rm 6:3-6). In verse 17 Ananias told Saul that he was sent by the Lord to accomplish two things: (1) He was sent to restore Saul's sight. (2) He was also sent so that Saul might be filled with the Holy Spirit. When Ananias came, he first laid hands on Saul to restore his sight. He then baptized him for the remission of his sins (22:16). We could conclude that he was filled with the Spirit after he was baptized. For this reason, Ananias did not come to lay hands on him in order that he be filled with the Spirit. Saul

was filled with the Spirit in the same manner as those in 4:31.

9:19 *Received food:* Saul then ended his fast, ate food and was strengthened. He stayed in Damascus for a few days, meeting with the disciples and testifying that Jesus was the Messiah. From this time it would be from five to seven years before he went on his first missionary journey to Galatia (See 13:1-3).

PAUL GOES TO WORK

9:20,21 *Immediately he preached Jesus:* Saul did not waste time in carrying out his Christ-commissioned apostleship and destiny. He went straight to the Jewish synagogue and began preaching Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. We can understand that the Jews would be startled at his sudden change of belief and life. Such a sudden change in behavior could not be explained without a supernatural happening in the life of Saul. Luke wants us to understand that men as Saul do not naturally make such rapid changes in belief and behavior. We can understand Paul's immediate change of mind only in the fact that he actually experienced something miraculous on the Damascus road.

9:22 *Confounded the Jews:* Regardless of Jewish opposition, Saul increased in boldness. He proved from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah (5:42; 9:22; 17:1-3; 18:28). After this initial preaching and confrontation with the Jews, Saul journeyed to Arabia for a period of time. It is difficult to determine how much time he spent in Damascus and Arabia (See comments Gl 1:15-

17). After being in Arabia, he returned to Damascus. It is probable that Paul's journey to Arabia for communion with God (Gl 1:17,18) took place before the events that begin with this verse, but after his temporary preaching period of verses 20,21. We could assume, therefore, that he spent three years in Arabia.

PAUL ESCAPES TO JERUSALEM

9:23 *Plotted to kill him:* As the Jews and Saul himself murdered Jesus in Jerusalem about ten years before, so they now laid a plot to murder the converted Saul in Damascus (23:12; 25:3; 26:21; 2 Co 11:26,32). This was the beginning of a ministry during which Paul (Saul) would have many murder plots laid against him. Here, the Jews continually watched the gates of the city in order to find him.

9:24,25 The disciples saved Saul's life by letting him down the wall of Damascus in a basket in the middle of the night. The forgiving spirit of the disciples is certainly manifested here. The disciples whom Saul came to persecute were now seeking to save his life.

9:26 *Tried to associate with the disciples:* Saul returned to Jerusalem in order to correct previous wrongs he had done to the church. However, the disciples in Jerusalem were still afraid of him (22:17-20; 26:20). They had evidently not heard of all the preaching he had done in Damascus.

9:27 *Barnabas took him:* When Saul came to Jerusalem, Barnabas (4:36; 13:2) received him and took him to Peter, with whom he stayed fifteen days (Gl

1:18). Saul also met with James, one of the brothers of Jesus, who was a church-sent apostle (Gl 1:19). It was Barnabas who informed the church concerning the boldness of Saul in his preaching during the time he worked in Damascus, which conversion was certainly surreal news to them.

9:28,29 Saul stayed in Jerusalem, talking with the apostles and brethren concerning the things of the kingdom of heaven. It would have been interesting to sit in on these discussions. He debated with the Greek-speaking Jews (Hellenists) (6:1; 11:20) who would not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Because of their blinded arrogance against the disciples of Jesus, these Hellenists tried to murder Saul in order to stop him from preaching (2 Co 11:26).

9:30 On this occasion, the disciples again saved Saul from death by taking him to Caesarea. This would probably be the Caesarea which was about 100 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem (See 22:17-21). However, in view of Galatians 1:21, this Caesarea may have been the one called Caesarea Philippi that was near Mount Hermon. The disciples then sent Saul back to his homeland of Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia in Asia Minor (Gl 1:21; see At 15:23,41; 23:16; Rm 16:7,11,21). He also went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, preaching the gospel. Paul possibly stayed in these regions from two to four years. Combined with three years in Arabia, it would have been five to six years before Barnabas went to bring him to Antioch. After a period of evangelizing his family and

homeland, Barnabas went to Cilicia in order to bring him to Antioch. It was in Antioch that he was prepared for the mission that Jesus had given him on the Damascus road (13:1-3).

PEACE FROM PERSECUTION

9:31 *Peace and were edified:* When Saul was converted, God had gained the leader of the persecution force against the disciples in Palestine. As a result, all the church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed an atmosphere of peace (5:11; 8:1; 16:5). The result of the peace was that the church was built up in the Lord. Christians walked in the commandments of the Lord (1 Jn 1:5-10) and in the comfort that proceeded from the Holy Spirit because they were walking after the will of God. The church subsequently grew, being relieved of great persecution (See 4:4). When in times of peace, Christians can work freely among any particular nation that is in peace.

PETER'S MISSION JOURNEY

9:32 Peter made several preaching tours throughout the southern regions of Palestine. He traveled about 45 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem to the city of Lydda and stayed with the brethren.

9:33 In Lydda Peter met a man named Aeneas who had been confined to his bed for eight years because he was paralyzed. The man was well known to have been a cripple in the community.

9:34,35 By the miraculous power that proceeded from Jesus Christ, Peter healed Aeneas. In this case of healing, the marks of a true miracle can be seen.

The man was truly paralyzed. He was truly healed. *He arose immediately:* One characteristic of a true miracle is that it happens immediately. It is not delayed over a long period of time. Neither does the ailment reoccur. As a result of this miracle, all in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord because they knew that the man was truly paralyzed. This would also identify a true miracle. It is known to be such by those who observe the result of the miracle. There is a public response to a true miracle. A miracle must be observed by the unbelievers so that the event of the miracle encourages a response to the message of the gospel.

PETER RAISES DORCAS

9:36 *At Joppa:* The coastal seaport city of Joppa was about 60 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. In Lydda there was a sister in Christ by the name of Tabitha, whose Greek name was Dorcas. She was a very benevolent sister who spent her time in helping others (See 1 Tm 2:10; Ti 3:8).

9:37 As a result of her illness, Dorcas died and was prepared for burial. Her death thus became the opportunity for the power of God to be manifested through Peter. She was laid in an upper room where she was remembered for her good works. We would assume, therefore, that there was a group of people gathered at the house of Dorcas who could witness her resurrection.

9:38,39 Since Peter was in Joppa, the brethren in Lydda sent two brothers to implore Peter to come and help them. For some reason, these disciples believed

that Peter, a Christ-sent apostle, could help in this situation in more ways than comforting the bereaved. It may have been that they had experienced the power of a Christ-sent apostle to raise the dead. ***Peter arose and went:*** Without hesitation, Peter arose and went to Lydda with the two brethren. When he arrived, he went immediately to where they had laid the body of Dorcas. Those at the house mourned over the loss of such a great servant of God. They showed Peter the great works that she had done, which works were a testimony to her benevolence.

9:40 *Peter put them all out:* The account here indicates that Peter knew why he had responded to the request of the disciples to come to the house of Dorcas. Peter put everyone out of the room where Dorcas was lying. Only he and Dorcas were in the room (See Mt 9:25; Mk 5:40). As a Christ-sent apostle, Peter had the authority to raise the dead, which he did on this occasion.

9:41 *He presented her alive:* When Dorcas arose, Peter took her by the hand and presented her to her friends who had mourned over her death. This particular case of a miracle was certainly an awe-

some event in the history of the early church. The friends (witnesses) were with the body for some time. There was no question that she was dead. The miracle confirmed the apostleship of Peter.

9:42 As a result of this most publicized miracle, many in the region of Joppa obeyed the gospel. Luke wants us to understand that true miracles affect entire communities. They are not believed by a select few who are grasping for a miracle to substantiate their weak faith (See comments Jn 20:25). True confirming miracles are believed by all, for even unbelievers cannot deny them (4:16).

9:43 This miracle accomplished the purpose for which miracles were allowed to be worked by the disciples of Jesus (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). It produced wonder in the minds of those who beheld it. It thus opened a door of opportunity for the preaching of the gospel throughout the region. For this reason, Peter stayed in the house of a brother named Simon who was tanner by profession, while he preached in the area.

CHAPTER 10

A ROMAN OFFICER IS CONVERTED

In the following case of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, God worked several unique things in order to move the evangelistic efforts of the Jews from the culture of the Jews to the Gentiles. The uniqueness of the following

events affirms that God was doing something in reference to Cornelius for a specific purpose. Therefore, since these events take place as a unique conversion experience, we must be cautious about apply the events surrounding the conversion of Cornelius to all conversions in general.

10:1,2 Cornelius was a Centurion, a commander of 100 Roman soldiers. His command was in the Italian Regiment that was made up of 600 to 1,000 soldiers. He was a devout man who was obedient to God's will. He was benevolent toward the poor and a spiritual leader of his family and friends. He was also a prayerful man who had a good reputation in the community where he lived. However, he was not saved, nor could he be saved by his good works (See comments 11:14).

10:3 It was around 3:00^{pm} one afternoon when Cornelius saw clearly in a vision an angel coming to him.

10:4 Though Cornelius was afraid, the angel reassured him by saying that his prayers and benevolent deeds had not been unnoticed by God. God took notice of his prayers in order that He might accomplish the purpose for which He wanted to use this devout Gentile. That purpose was to manifest to the Jews that the Gentiles must also hear the gospel.

10:5,6 Because God does not send angels to communicate the gospel to people (8:26; see comments Gl 1:6-9), He commissioned this angel to instruct Cornelius to send to Joppa to get Peter who was staying in the house of Simon, the tanner (See comments Rm 10:14,15; 1 Co 1:21; 2 Co 4:7). Because Cornelius was not saved, he needed to send for someone who would instruct him concerning what he must do to obey the gospel. The angel said that when Peter came he would instruct him on what to do to be saved (11:13,14).

10:7,8 After seeing the vision,

Cornelius immediately called for two of his household servants and a devout soldier. He explained to them all he had experienced and what the angel had said, for they had no knowledge of the vision.

PETER SEES A VISION

(See At 11:4-12)

10:9,10 It was the next day, after Cornelius had seen the vision at about 12:00^{pm}, when Peter went up to the top of a house in Joppa to wait for lunch that was being prepared. He fell into a trance, which was a state of mind where one was mentally freed from the confines of the body in order to perceive that which was beyond the physical world (11:5; 12:11; 22:17; see Nm 24:4,16). There is no biblical definition of a trance or a vision. We can only assume that God influenced the mind of an individual in some way in order to allow one to perceive something in a manner that was more vivid than a dream.

10:11,12 In the trance in which Peter was, heaven was opened to reveal truth. Something like a great sheet was lowered from heaven by the corners. In the sheetlike object there were all kinds of four-legged animals. There were wild beasts and creeping things, even birds.

10:13-16 A voice then told Peter to kill and eat any of the animals. But as a Jew who had never eaten something that was classified as unclean according to the Sinai law, Peter said he would not eat anything unclean. The voice reminded Peter that God is the one who determines what is either clean or unclean. **Unclean:** The Jews, under the Sinai law, were for-

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

PETER GOES TO CAESAREA

10:17,18 *Peter was perplexed:* Peter understood what occurred during the vision. However, he did not understand what the vision meant. He did not understand that several miraculous events were occurring in order that God open the door to the evangelization of the Gentile world. It was at this time that Cornelius' messengers arrived and were calling for Peter at the door. At the time all these events were happening in the Jewish environment of Palestine, God was also preparing Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles. The case of Cornelius prepared the Jewish Christians to accept the coming ministry of Paul to the Gentiles.

10:19, 20 *The Spirit said to him:* We do not know how the Spirit communicated with Peter. He was told that there were men searching for him, and that he must go with them without asking any questions. Peter knew that something unique in history was occurring, though he did not completely understand the world-changing nature of the events.

Therefore, the Spirit had to reassure him that what was happening was from God.

10:21,22 Peter greeted the Gentiles who had been sent from Cornelius. He asked them to explain why they were there. They briefly explained the appearance of the angel to their master and the instructions that the angel had given to him.

10:23 It is interesting that Peter invited the three men, who were probably Gentiles, to stay overnight. When they departed the next morning, six Jewish disciples from Joppa also went with them. They went with Peter because he was going to the house of a Gentile (11:12). It was not lawful according to Jewish custom that Jews eat in the house of a Gentile. Therefore, Peter took witnesses with him in order to confirm the unique events that were happening (See vs 28).

PETER MEETS CORNELIUS

10:24-26 Caesarea was a coastal city about 55 kilometers north of Joppa. When Peter and his company arrived, they found Cornelius anxiously waiting for them. He had already called all his family and friends together as a group in his house in order to hear what Peter had to say. *Cornelius ... fell down at his feet and worshiped:* When Peter approached Cornelius, Cornelius respectfully fell down at his feet and worshiped him. However, Peter would not allow such because he realized that he was only a man and not one to receive worship that should be given only to God (See 14:14,15; Rv 19:10; 22:8). Though he

was a Christ-sent apostle, Peter still would not allow anyone to bow down to him.

10:27-29 Peter was encouraged when he saw so many who had gathered together to hear what he had to say. **Unlawful thing:** He reminded Cornelius that according to Jewish custom it was not lawful for Jews to associate with other races or tribes in the manner that he was doing on this occasion (See 11:3; Jn 4:9; 18:28; Gl 2:12). Peter's actions of meeting in the house of a Gentile that was against Jewish custom, illustrates the fact that the disciples of Jesus must be willing to overlook any custom that would hinder the preaching of the gospel to the lost. **God has showed me:** Peter said that God had shown him that it was not in the power of man to determine what was either right or wrong religiously in such social matters. Christians have no right to practice racism (vs 14,35; 15:8,9). Because of these events, Peter was beginning to understand the meaning of the vision, though he did not understand all the implications of what it meant. Though Peter knew that what he was doing was contrary to Jewish custom, he came to Cornelius' house without objecting to the Holy Spirit's instructions. He thus asked for Cornelius to fully explain why he had sent for him and why everyone was gathered together.

10:30-33 Cornelius explained to Peter what happened when the angel appeared to him. He explained that four days previous to this encounter an angel had stated that God took notice of his spirituality and good deeds. The angel

had instructed him to send for Peter and that Peter would explain what he must do to be saved. Both Cornelius and Peter had obeyed God to bring about this special meeting. Now Cornelius wanted to know what God had instructed Peter to tell them. Peter then proceeded to teach the entire household of Cornelius the good news of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope.

EVANGELISM OF THE GENTILES

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

10:36,37 Peter stated that faithful preachers were sent out to all Israel to preach the gospel of peace (Is 57:19; Mk 16:15,20). **He is Lord of all:** The message was that Jesus is now Lord over all things (Mt 28:18; Rm 10:12; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22). Men must submit to His lordship by obedience to the gospel (2:37,38). Cornelius and his household had already heard some things about Jesus because the message was proclaimed first by John the Baptist, and then it was spread throughout all Judea where they lived (8:4).

10:38,39 Anointed: God had proved Jesus to be the Messiah through the fulfillment of prophecy. He empowered Him through the Holy Spirit to be able to work miracles in His humble state of being a man on earth (Lk 4:1,14; Jn 3:2; 8:29). Jesus was able to cast out demons and work every good work that was against the kingdom of Satan (Mt 4:23). The apostles were witnesses of the miraculous works of Jesus, as well as His resurrection (1:8; 2:23). It was the unbelieving Jews who caused the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross (2:23; 3:13; 5:30; 13:29; 1 Pt 2:24). God had used their wicked deed to accomplish the gospel event.

10:40,41 God raised Him up: Though crucified, God would not allow Jesus' body to decay away to the dust of the earth. Therefore, He was raised from the dead (2:24). God chose those to whom Jesus appeared to be credible witnesses of His resurrection (See Lk 24:30,41-43; Jn 21:13). Such appearances guaranteed for all time that Jesus was no longer buried in a forgotten tomb in Palestine. He was resurrected to eat and drink with the witnesses of the resurrection (Lk 24:30,41-43).

10:42 He commanded us to preach to the people: Herein is Peter's reference to the command of the great commission. After His resurrection, Jesus commanded the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). God wanted all the world to know that Jesus now rules over all things. When He comes, Jesus will judge both those who are living and

those who have died (17:30,31; Rm 14:9; 2 Tm 4:1; 1 Pt 4:5).

10:43 All the prophets prophesied of Jesus (Ps 22; 110:1; Is 42:1; 53:11; 61:1; Jr 31:34; Dn 7:13,14; 9:24; Hs 6:1-3; Mc 7:18; Zc 7:12,13; 13:1; MI 4:2; Lk 24:44). There are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the life and ministry of Jesus. All these prophecies have been fulfill. Jesus went to the cross in fulfillment of prophecy, and now He is the only one through whom salvation is possible (2:38; 4:12; 22:16; Jn 3:16; 14:6; Rm 10:11).

THE GENTILES ARE ACCEPTED

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

10:44 The Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word: When Peter began to speak these words (11:15), the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on all those who were present. The purpose for this spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to give a special divine and miraculous signal to the Jews that God wanted the gospel to be preached to all people of the world. The Gentiles were confirmed by the speaking of unlearned languages to be accepted by God as prophesied in Isaiah 28:11,12. This outpouring, therefore, explains the uniqueness of this God-ordained event that the Gentiles were also confirmed to become the people of God. The event was unique in the sense that such had not happened since the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2:1-4 when the Spirit came upon the apostles (11:15). The purpose of this outpouring of the Spirit is explained in 11:18. The purpose was to give

a divine demonstration to the Jews that the Gentiles were also to become God's people. The Gentiles should have all the blessings of the gospel, including the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit's miraculous outpouring on this household was God's proof to the Jews that the Gentiles were just as important in His plan of salvation as the Jews. The Jews, therefore, should accept the Gentiles (See 1 Co 14:21).

10:45 *Those of the circumcision ... were astonished:* The six witnesses who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38) had come upon the Gentiles in a similar manner as He came on the apostles when the church was first established (11:17; see 15:8,9). Except for the events of Acts 2:1-4, this was the only time when something as this had happened since the Pentecost of A.D. 30. The Jews knew the prophecy that God would confirm His people with inspired languages (Is 28:11,12). They were surprised that Gentiles would also be confirmed by God with the miraculous speaking in languages.

10:46-48 *They heard them speak with languages and magnify God:* The visual evidence that the Spirit had been poured out on them was the fact that they

magnified God through inspired foreign languages that they had never studied. This was God's signal that the disciples must make special efforts to evangelize the Gentiles. ***Can anyone forbid water:*** Peter asked if there would be any who would object that these now be baptized for remission of sins, since God had already indicated by the outpouring of the Spirit that they be accepted. Therefore, the outpouring of the Spirit on the household of Cornelius did not save them, for they had to be baptized for the remission of their sins (2:38; 22:16). ***He commanded them to be baptized:*** Peter commanded that they be immersed in order to wash away their sins (22:16). ***In the name of Jesus Christ:*** They had to be immersed under the authority of the name of Jesus and into a spiritual relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). Cornelius and his household then asked Peter and his company to stay with them for a few days of Christian fellowship and teaching. We must not miss the great cultural change this event signified in Jewish-Gentile relationships. Almost everything that happened was contrary to the Jew's cultural relationship with the Gentiles.

CHAPTER 11

PETER RETURNS TO JERUSALEM

11:1 The news of the great miraculous event and conversion of the Gentile household of Cornelius had already traveled throughout all Judea before Peter returned to Jerusalem to explain what had

happen. The news of the event was astonishing to the Jewish disciples because nothing as this had happened among the disciples since the Pentecost of A.D. 30.

11:2,3 *Disputed with him:* When Peter came to Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians were still misguided by their

failure to understand that God wanted the Gentiles grafted into His people. They thus confronted Peter for breaking Jewish customs by going into the house of a Gentile. They contended with Peter for even sitting down at the same table and eating with someone other than a Jew (See 10:28; Gl 2:12). The fact that they contended with Peter about this matter is evidence that the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the house of Cornelius was to move the Jewish brethren to out of their culture and into the culture of the Gentiles. It is interesting to note that the brethren who contended with Peter were initially more concerned about his entering a Gentile house than the salvation of the household of Cornelius. Legalism and violation of culture often distorts the minds of those who are more concerned about obedience to traditions and opinions than obedience to the gospel.

PETER'S EXPLANATION

11:4-18 Peter explained to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that while he was in Joppa, he had received a special vision from God concerning what he must do. He carefully explained the vision concerning the sheetlike object that descended from heaven with four-legged animals, wild beasts, creeping things and birds. **Kill and eat:** He explained that a voice out of heaven told him to kill and eat any of the animals that he saw. But he told the voice that as a Jew who was faithful to the Sinai law, he had not and would not eat anything unclean. **You must no longer call common:** Peter

stated that the voice said that what God has cleansed one must not call unclean. The Gentiles were once excluded from a covenant with God. Now they must be accepted. **Three men already at the house:** At the conclusion of the vision, the three men whom Cornelius had sent arrived at the door of Simon, the tanner. The Spirit told Peter not to question, but to go obediently with the men. Knowing the predicament of going to a Gentile house, Peter said that he took six Jewish witnesses with him. When they arrived at the house of Cornelius, Cornelius explained to Peter and the six witnesses everything that had happened. Cornelius explained how an angel appeared in his house. The angel told him to send for Peter because Peter would give him instructions on how to be saved. **As I began to speak:** Peter then explained to the Jerusalem Jews that as he began explaining how one must understand and obey the gospel, the Holy Spirit came upon all who were in the house of Cornelius. Cornelius and his household began speaking in languages that they had never before studied. This was God's signal that the Gentiles would be cleansed by the blood of Jesus and accepted into a covenant with God. The Jewish Christians, therefore, must not reject their duty to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. **I remembered:** The manner of how the Spirit came upon them reminded Peter of the Lord's promise during His ministry that the Spirit would come upon the apostles. Peter was also reminded that the Spirit did come on the apostles in a baptismal manner at the beginning of the

church in Acts 2 (1:5; Mt 3:11). The fact that the event sparked Peter to remember what had happened to him and the apostles several years before, indicates that such had not happened among the disciples since the event of Acts 2. Though this outpouring of the Spirit did not save Cornelius, Peter explained how it happened and how he commanded them to be baptized for the remission of sins. In fact, Peter explained that if God gave them the same miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit that they had received when they believed, who was he to withstand such a powerful testimony of God that the Gentiles be accepted. **They ... glorified God:** When Peter finished his explanation, everyone rejoiced. They proclaimed the reason for the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentile household of Cornelius. It was most evident that God wanted the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles (See Is 42:1,6; 49:6; Lk 2:32; Jn 11:52; Rm 10:12,13; 15:9,16). The purpose of the event was to convince the Jewish Christians that they must make every effort to communicate the gospel across cultural barriers to every ethnic group throughout the world (See comments Mt 28:19,20). They must bypass cultural behavioral practices and traditions that would separate them from fellowshiping with the Gentiles (See comments 15:16-21).

Evangelism Into All The World

(11:19 – 21:14)

Outline: (1) Growth evidences God's presence (11:19-26), (2) Prophecy of famine (11:27-30),

(3) Peter is arrested (12:1-4), (4) God's power prevailed (12:5-11), (5) Peter encourages the saints (12:12-17), (6) Herod unleashes his frustration (12:18-25), (7) The first mission journey (13:1-3), (8) Jesus preached in Cyprus (13:4-12), (9) Preaching in Antioch of Pisidia (13:13-41), (10) Many Gentiles believe (13:42-52), (11) The Iconians believe in Jesus (14:1-7), (12) Unbelievers see the supernatural (14:8-18), (13) Stoning of Paul (14:19,20), (14) Work among the Gentiles (14:21-28), (15) Christians reject Jewish legalism (15:1-5), (16) Exhortation of Peter (15:6-11), (17) Testimony of Paul and Barnabas (15:12), (18) Exhortation of James (15:13-21), (19) Letter to Gentile Christians (15:22-29), (20) The church in Antioch (15:30-35), (21) The second mission journey (15:36-41), (22) Worldwide expansion of the church (16:1-5), (23) Detour to Macedonia (16:6-10), (24) The Philippians believe (16:11-15), (25) Unjustly beaten and imprisoned (16:16-24), (26) A jailor is converted (16:25-34), (27) Public apology (16:35-40), (28) Community leaders believe in Jesus (17:1-9), (29) Many Thessalonians believe (17:10-15), (30) Paul meets Greek philosophers (17:16-21), (31) Some philosophers believe (17:22-34), (32) Many Corinthians believe (18:1-17), (33) Paul returns to Antioch (18:18-22), (34) The third mission journey (18:23), (35) The work of Apollos (18:24-28), (36) Ephesian disciples believe (19:1-7), (37) Christianity prevails over religion (19:8-10), (38) True miracles and magical tricks (19:11-20), (39) False faiths fall before Christianity (19:21-41), (40) The disciples preach in Greece (20:1-6), (41) The disciples preach in Troas (20:7-12), (42) Paul travels from Troas to Miletus (20:13-16), (43) Paul encourages elders (20:17-38), (44) Paul continues toward Jerusalem (21:1-14)

GROWTH EVIDENCES GOD'S PRESENCE

11:19 Luke explains here the continued scattering of Christians that resulted from the persecution in Judea after Stephen's death (8:1-4). Christians traveled as far as Phoenicia, to the island of Cyprus, and on to Antioch in Syria. However, most of those who went out were still preaching the gospel primarily to the Jews (6:1; 9:29).

11:20-22 The city of Antioch was composed of Gentiles and Greek-speaking Jews. In Antioch, the Christians preached to and converted many of the Greek-speaking Jews. Many Gentiles were also converted. *The hand of the Lord was with them:* God went with these Christians and confirmed their preaching and teaching by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Such was a fulfillment of Jesus' promise that their word would be confirmed by miraculous works (See comments Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). As a result of their preaching and God's confirming of the word, the universal body of Christ grew. The Christians in Jerusalem subsequently heard of the great number of conversions in northern Palestine. In order to exhort the new converts, they commissioned Barnabas, a man gifted in exhortation, to go to Antioch (See 4:36,37; 9:27; Gl 2:11-21). Through Barnabas, therefore, the disciples in Jerusalem manifested the oneness of the global body ministering to itself by sending a teacher where there was a spiritual need in the body.

11:23-25 When Barnabas came to Antioch, he was overwhelmed by the

growth of the body. He thus encouraged the disciples to remain faithful to the Lord. The teaching of Barnabas was effective because he was a man with a good character. He taught by inspiration of the Spirit and manifested a spirit of great faith. The greatness of his character was manifested in the effectiveness of his teaching (See 4:4). The effect of one's teaching is always enhanced by the dedicated life of the teachers. *Barnabas went to Tarsus:* After a period of time in Antioch with the disciples who were primarily Gentiles, Barnabas realized the need that one with the abilities of Saul was needed in Antioch. He realized this because he knew that God had chosen Paul to be a special apostle to the Gentiles. He thus departed for Tarsus in search of Saul. Some Bible students believe that it had been five to seven years from the time of Paul's conversion in Damascus to the time that Barnabas brought him from Cilicia in Antioch.

11:26 *Brought him to Antioch:* When Barnabas eventually found Saul and brought him to Antioch, the two teachers grounded the new disciples in Antioch in the faith by teaching for a period of about one year. During this year, people of the community started calling the disciples Christians for the first time because the community saw that they identified themselves with the teaching and behavior of Christ (26:28; 1 Pt 4:16). Some Bible students have concluded that the name "Christian" was the new name prophesied by Isaiah that should be used to refer to the followers of Jesus (Is 62:2-4,12; 65:15). In the

context of what happened in Antioch, it seems that the name "Christian" was given by unbelievers as a derogatory reference to the disciples. The followers of Christ were called Christians because they functioned as a group who separated themselves, as followers of Christ, from the commonly accepted religious groups of the community. However, if this was the manner by which God wanted to give the new name to the disciples, such would have happened. We must keep in mind that the disciples were not referred to as Christian for several years after the establishment of the church. The most common New Testament term that is used in reference to the followers of Jesus was simply "disciple." However, this term is not unique in reference to Christians. The term disciple was simply a reference that was given to anyone who was a follower, learner or apprentice of a teacher. The name Christian means that one is "of Christ," and thus, a disciple of Christ is one who learns from Christ by enrolling himself as an apprentice in the life and teachings of Christ (See comments 1 Co 1:12,13).

PROPHECY OF FAMINE

11:27-30 Prophets: During the time Barnabas and Paul were in Antioch, inspired teachers came up from Jerusalem to Antioch (2:17; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9; 1 Co 12:28; Ep 4:11,12). One of the prophets, Agabus, prophesied that there would be a devastating famine in the near future (See 21:10). This famine would happen during the reign of Claudius Caesar

of Rome who ruled from A.D. 41 to 54 (18:2). According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, the famine began in A.D. 44 and extended through to A.D. 48. The worst of the drought was centered in Judea. **The disciples ... determined to send relief:** The disciples throughout all the areas where there was no famine, made a special contribution and sent it to the disciples of Judea (Rm 15:26; 1 Co 16:1,2; 2 Co 9:1). The contributions were sent to the elders of all Judea by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (12:25). From the elders, distribution was made throughout the region of Judea. This cooperative effort on the part of Gentile disciples manifested the Gentiles' concern for Jewish brethren. It also manifested the fellowship Christians had for one another as the one universal body of Christ (See comments 2 Co 8:1-4). The famine became an occasion for the one body of Christ to function as one body. Though members were scattered throughout the world, they nourished any part of the body that was suffering. This was a historical lesson that confirmed the universal oneness of the body, though not all the members were in one location, or assembled together at one location. The church is never defined in the New Testament according to how the disciples conducted a ceremony in their assemblies. The church was identified by the individual covenant relationship that each member had with God because of his or her obedience to the gospel of Jesus.

CHAPTER 12

PETER IS ARRESTED

12:1,2 Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, died in A.D. 44. Therefore, the date of the following events happened a short time before A.D. 44, or about fourteen years after the Pentecost of A.D. 30. Herod Agrippa's three children were Drusilla (24:24), Herod Agrippa II (25:13), and Bernice (25:13). **To harass some from the church:** At this time in the early beginnings of the church, Herod took it upon himself to afflict some of the disciples. **He killed James:** Herod killed the apostle James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee (Mt 4:21; 20:20-25; Mk 10:35). James was thus the first martyred apostle. We are not told why God allowed the death of James at the hand of Herod. Luke gives this record in order to remind us that all of us are subject to the hostile environment in which we dwell. It may be that God allowed this death in order to manifest that in the matter of life and death, He showed no respect of persons in reference to the apostles. However, the reason for the early death of one of the Christ-sent apostles was to be a witness to the world that the apostles' faith was so great in what they had actually experienced with Jesus, that they were willing to die for their faith. A faith that is not worth dying for is not worth having. Since the death of James took place about fourteen years after the A.D. 30 Pentecost, then the special ministry of the Christ-sent apostles was coming to a close, for James had completed his min-

istry. The apostles' ministry now was to suffer martyrdom for Jesus.

12:3 *Saw that it pleased the Jews:* Herod saw that this murder greatly pleased the Jews who were antagonistic to the disciples. He thus proceeded to do the same to Peter as he had done to James. At the time, many Jews had journeyed from distant lands and assembled in Judea because it was the time of the Unleavened Bread (Passover) (Ex 12:12,13,29,30; Lv 23:5-8; Dt 16:1-8). Those who knew James knew that he would have been an innocent man. The events of this Passover/Pentecost feast, therefore, seem to be parallel to the death of Jesus who was also innocent of any crimes, and yet, He was executed by the religious leaders of Jerusalem. It could be, therefore, that God allowed the death of another innocent man (James) at the time of the Passover/Pentecost feast in order to excite the religious sensitivities of the Jews that they be more receptive to the gospel. We do know that the Jews who experienced the murder of these innocent leaders on the Passover/Pentecost feast would return to the synagogues throughout the world from where they came and tell of these events. The conviction of those who gave their lives for Jesus would go into all the world.

12:4 *Four squads of soldiers:* Peter was arrested and imprisoned. He was placed under the security of four different groups of guards who watched his cell around the clock in four shifts. As was customary, two of the guards were placed

inside the cell beside Peter and two were placed outside the cell. He was also put in chains. It was Herod's intentions to thoroughly guard Peter in order to bring him out and place him before the people after the Passover Feast.

GOD'S POWER PREVAILED

12:5 *Prayer was earnestly made:*

The disciples earnestly and continually prayed for Peter (See 2 Co 1:11; Ep 6:18; 1 Th 5:17; 1 Pt 1:22). They did not want him to be killed as James was killed by Herod. The brethren knew that if it was God's will Peter could be freed. They had surely prayed for James. However, it was not God's will that James be delivered from Herod. On this occasion, it was God's will that Peter be delivered as a testimony of God's protection of His people. Those who were attending the Passover/Pentecost feast needed to know that God was protecting His people. God thus answered the disciples' prayer for Peter to have him delivered from Herod.

12:6 The night before Herod was going to bring Peter out before the Jews, God answered the prayers of the saints. Though Herod had taken every precaution to secure Peter, God's power was greater. Christians must remember that the power of God will always overcome the greatest efforts of man. There is power in prayer simply because the power of God is able to accomplish exceedingly abundantly more than we can imagine (Ep 3:20).

12:7-9 *An angel of the Lord:* That night an angel appeared in the cell (See 5:19). The guards were made uncon-

scious (See Mt 28:4). The bright light did not awaken the calmly sleeping Peter who had little worry concerning his dim predicament. He slept in peace, knowing that God was with him. Therefore, the angel had to strike him on the side and lift him up. When he did strike him, the chains of iron miraculously fell from Peter's wrists and ankles. *Follow me:* The angel told Peter to put on his sandals and garment, which he did without question. Peter then followed the angel out of the prison. *Thought he was seeing a vision:* Peter thought he was seeing a vision as the experience he had when the sheetlike vision appeared to him with the animals before he went to the house of Cornelius (10:11-17). This in some way would explain the experience of a vision. A vision was so real that it was difficult for the individual who experienced it to distinguish the experience from a real-life experience. Therefore, Peter obeyed what he thought was only a vision, and thus obediently followed the angel out of the cell.

12:10,11 When Peter and the angel were past all four guards, they came before a strong iron gate that led to the city. God's power easily opened the gate. As they went down the street in the darkness of the night, the angel immediately left Peter's side. *Now I know for sure:* It was at this time that Peter finally came to himself. He then realized that he was not experiencing a vision. He was thoroughly awake. He realized that it was God's great power that delivered him from Herod and his death that the Jews expected. *Sent His angel:* As on many

other occasions when God had specific plans for different individuals, He sent an angel to deliver Peter out of this prison (See Ps 34:7; Dn 3:28; 6:22; Hb 1:14). **Delivered me:** See Jb 5:19; Ps 33:18,19; 34:22; 41:2; 2 Co 1:10; 2 Pt 2:9. God had greater plans for Peter and his wife. As a Christ-sent apostle, their ministry would extend far beyond the land of Palestine.

PETER ENCOURAGES THE SAINTS

12:12 Peter immediately went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, which house was evidently one of the common meeting places for the saints in Jerusalem (vs 25; 13:5,13; 15:37,38; 2 Tm 4:11; 1 Pt 5:13). Mark was the nephew of Barnabas (See intro. to Mk). The Christians had gathered in this and many other houses to pray for Peter. These Christians believed in the power of prayer, and thus, they continued in prayer for Peter that God deliver him from Herod's prison.

12:13-15 When Peter knocked on the door, Rhoda answered, but did not open the door. When Peter identified himself, Rhoda recognized his familiar voice. However, because of her great excitement, she ran to tell the disciples without letting Peter in. When she reported to the disciples that Peter was at the door, they did not at first believe her. They actually doubted the answer of their prayers to have Peter released. Nevertheless, Rhoda kept telling them that it was Peter. **It is his angel:** They believed that it could possibly be Peter's angel

(See Mt 18:10; Hb 1:14). The Jews believed in the concept of a guardian angel (See Gn 48:16; Mt 18:10). This belief was evidently carried over into the thinking of some Christians in the 1st century. It is a belief that has interested Christians for centuries. There is no theological difficulty in believing such, especially in view of statements as Hebrews 1:14. In this context, the disciples may have assumed that Herod had already killed Peter, and thus his angel came to notify them.

12:16,17 While the disciples considered these things, Peter patiently kept on knocking at the locked door. When the brethren finally opened the door they could not believe what they saw. As a result of their surprise, they loudly praised God. When Peter had calmed them down, he explained to them how God had miraculously delivered him from all of Herod's security. He told the disciples that they must now go and tell James, the brother of Jesus and all the brethren (15:13-21; Gl 1:19; Js 1:1). Peter then left them and went to another house where brethren were also meeting and praying. From Mary's house, therefore, brethren went to all the houses where the disciples commonly met for their assemblies throughout the city of Jerusalem.

HEROD UNLEASHES HIS FRUSTRATION

12:18,19 *No small stir among the soldiers:* If prisoners escaped under guard, it was Roman law that the guards should suffer the punishment that was

due the prisoners (Compare 16:27; 27:42ff). Therefore, the next morning there was great fear among the guards concerning the whereabouts of Peter. They knew that some of them would have to pay the price for the escape of Peter. Herod thoroughly questioned the guards, but they had no explanation for what had happened. ***That they should be put to death:*** Herod had the guards killed. Because he was humiliated before the Jews in Judea, and all those who had come to the Passover/Pentecost feast, he retreated to the seaport city of Caesarea.

12:20 Tyre and Sidon were seaport cities about 200 kilometers north of Jerusalem. For some reason Herod was angry with these two cities. But the people of Tyre and Sidon had made Blastus, Herod's chamberlain, their friend. Through him they asked Herod to restore peace with them because their food supplies came from the territory over which Herod reigned.

12:21-23 The Jewish historian, Josephus, also records that Herod had a great festival at this time. He records that the people praised Herod as a god. Luke explains that Herod pompously presented himself in a beautiful garment. He sat on his throne and delivered a speech to the people. ***The voice of a god and not of a man:*** The people ignorantly praised pompous Herod as a god (See 14:11-15). They may possibly have done this in order to appease his wrath. Nevertheless, because of his arrogance, Herod accepted their praise and worship. ***Angel... smote him:*** An angel of the Lord struck Herod

with worms. He was struck down because he did not give glory to God (Ps 115:1), but accepted worship of himself. Herod Agrippa I subsequently died in A.D. 44. The lesson from the angel striking Herod with worms should be remembered by any who would seek to accept any worship that should be given to God alone. God may have delivered Peter from prison in order to present Herod with the opportunity to condemn himself to death.

12:24 ***The word of God grew and multiplied:*** In the death of Herod, God had again relieved the church of a second great persecutor and persecution. He had converted the first persecutor (Saul) because Saul had a faithful heart (1 Tm 1:12-17). He killed the second (Herod) because he had an arrogant and proud heart (vss 21,22). In both cases, when the leading persecutor was removed, the church had peace and subsequently grew (See 4:4). In times of peace, the church was able to grow because evangelists could freely and openly proclaim the message of the gospel. It is for this reason that Christians should pray for peace in order that they might lead lives of active evangelism in their communities and throughout the world (1 Tm 2:1,2).

12:25 Paul and Barnabas had left earlier for Judea, taking with them famine relief contributions from the Gentile brethren. When they had completed this mission (11:30), they returned to Antioch of Syria. They took with them the young John Mark who was from Jerusalem (See comments in intro. to Mk).

CHAPTER 13

THE FIRST MISSION JOURNEY

Antioch of Syria was the third largest city of the Roman Empire. It was the ideal location from which the gospel could go out to the unbelieving Gentile world. Therefore, the Holy Spirit chose this predominantly Gentile city to accomplish a major evangelistic work.

13:1 *Prophets and teachers:* Barnabas (4:36,37), Simeon (Niger), Lucius of Cyrene in North Africa (Rm 16:21), Manaean, who grew up with Herod Antipas, and Saul (Paul) were teachers in Antioch.

13:2 *As they ministered:* The emphasis here is that their ministry and fasting were ongoing activities. In ministering the word of God to the disciples, they ministered to the Lord. In their ministry to the Lord, they fasted (14:23). Their fasting was thus a part of their ministry (See Lk 2:37). The fact that their fasting was coupled with prayer manifested that they were serious about God working in their lives as they ministered. Their prayers and fasting manifested that they were serious about world evangelism, and thus, God gave them a serious evangelistic task. ***Separate for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work:*** During one of their fasts, the Holy Spirit called to them as a group for the two teachers, Barnabas and Paul. These two teachers had special talents for mission outreach, and thus, the Spirit called them to do a specific cross-cultural work of evangelism among the Gentiles (Gl 1:15; 2:9).

13:3 After the Spirit made known to

them what their work was, all the disciples fasted and prayed for Barnabas and Paul for the special mission the Spirit had revealed to them. It seems that fasting was a central behavioral practice of the Antioch Christians. Through fasting and prayer, Paul and Barnabas prepared themselves to be called by the Holy Spirit. Through fasting and prayer, the Antioch Christians prepared to send them out. ***Laid their hands on them:*** The disciples in Antioch commissioned them to carry out the Spirit-directed mission work of going to Asia Minor. After much fasting and prayer, they were thus sent away on this most important outreach to the Gentiles.

JESUS PREACHED IN CYPRUS

13:4 The Holy Spirit directly sent out Barnabas and Paul. He did so in order to initiate evangelism among the Gentiles. Because the Holy Spirit wanted to use the life of Paul as a testimony before Caesar that Christianity was from God, He wanted to lead Paul through those areas of the ancient world that would establish cases that could be used to prove the Divine origins of Christianity. Paul and Barnabas were thus sent from Antioch to the port city of Seleucia, from where they sailed to the island of Cyprus, the homeland of Barnabas (4:36), and then on to the Gentile world of Galatia.

13:5 *Preached the word of God in the synagogues:* When Barnabas and Paul arrived at the port city of Salamis

of Cyprus, they went straight to the synagogue of the Jews to preach Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. Jesus had come to the Jews first. It was the custom of the early evangelists, therefore, to also go to the Jews first (Rm 1:16). They did this by going to the places where the Jews regularly met, that is, the synagogue. God had scattered the Jews throughout the world through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Therefore, there were Jews throughout the Roman Empire in the 1st century who became the foundation upon which the first evangelists went forth to preach the gospel (See Js 1:1; 1 Pt 1:1). Many of the Jews in these synagogues had already been to Jerusalem during at least one of the Passover/Pentecost feasts since A.D. 30. When a Christ-sent apostle arrived at a synagogue where some of the Jews had visited and witnessed the preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem, they were ready for the live appearance of a Christ-sent apostle to prove what they had told fellow Jews concerning the events in Jerusalem (See comments Is 2:1-4). **John as their apprentice:** On this first journey, John Mark, Barnabas' cousin, went along as an assistant of Barnabas and Paul (Cl 4:10; see "Writer" in intro. to Mk).

13:6,7 The evangelists preached in the villages throughout the island of Cyprus until they came to the seaport of Paphos, the seat of Roman government on the island. **A certain sorcerer, a false prophet:** In Paphos they encountered a worker of magical tricks. This was a Jewish sorcerer named Bar-jesus, who was also called Elymas, a false teacher and a

worker of deception (See 8:9). **A prudent man:** Sergius Paulus was the Roman proconsul on the island. Though he was an intelligent man, he had been led astray by the magical tricks of Bar-jesus. One must never underestimate the ability of men to deceive other men. Neither should one underestimate his ability to be deceived (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). Because of his honest integrity, Sergius Paulus, also listened to Barnabas and Paul.

13:8-12 Elymas ... withstood them: Bar-jesus stood against the preaching of the two evangelists. He evidently saw Paul and Barnabas as competition in his relationship with Sergius Paulus. Those who have been led astray by the deceptions of Satan will always stand against those who preach the gospel. **Filled with the Holy Spirit:** Reference here is not to a non-miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Luke wants us to know that the power of the Holy Spirit was upon the apostle Paul to put to silence any opposition that Satan might present to the work of God through him (See comments Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Paul became irritated with the opposition of Bar-jesus. And since he was filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul leveled his eyes on Bar-jesus in order to unleash the power of the Holy Spirit. **Full of all deceit and all fraud:** Paul did not give Elymas any credit for working any miracles. He correctly affirmed that Elymas was full of deceit. He was a fraud. Since Paul made this inspired assessment of Elymas and his work, then we conclude that Elymas, as all such workers of magical tricks,

worked no miraculous power that was supposedly given to him by Satan. In other words, the things that he claimed to be of supernatural origin were actually works of fraud. His works were only magical tricks that he claimed to be miraculous happenings and were perceived by innocent people to be miraculous. He had deceived intelligent people into thinking that his magical tricks were actually miraculous. He had done this for a long time. In behaving after such deceitful ways, he was of Satan who leads men through deception to believe in lies (Jn 8:44; 2 Th 2:9-12). In behaving after the desires and manner of Satan, Elymas made himself an enemy of all that was right. Paul asked if he would ever cease behaving and practicing the work of Satan. The answer to the question would be that he would not. Therefore, Paul took action on this agent of Satan's deceptions. ***The hand of the Lord is upon you:*** The time had come for God to prove His messengers and message to be greater than the magical tricks of a deceived and arrogant man (See Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). Through the authority that God had entrusted to the Christ-sent apostles, Elymas was struck blind for a period of time (See 1 Sm 5:6). Paul had been given the authority to unleash the power of the supernatural power of God. It was this power that set aside natural laws, and thus, Elymas immediately went blind. From this case and others (see 6:1-7), it is evident that the Christ-apostles were given authority to deliver physical punishment of the flesh to those who opposed the truth (See comments 2 Co 12:19 -

13:4). ***The deputy ... believed:*** The result of this event was profound. Sergius Paulus was convinced. He was astonished at the true miracles of the evangelists and their teaching. There is no comparison between true miraculous power of God and the magical tricks of men that are performed by those who profess to work the miracles of God (See comments 8:9-13). This case of a true miracle would be one that Luke, in writing to Theophilus, wanted as a case for the defense of Paul. Paul had the testimony of Sergius Paulus, a Roman official, concerning the authenticity of a true miraculous work. And since the work was truly miraculous, then what Paul preached was of Divine origin. Christianity was not just another religion of the Roman Empire.

PREACHING IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA

13:13 The prominence of Paul was now confirmed. Luke defended him as a prominent proclaimer of the Christ and one to whom God had given great authority to command the supernatural work of God. The three evangelists then left Cyprus and arrived on the mainland of Asia Minor at the port of Perga in Pamphylia. ***John ... returned to Jerusalem:*** Unfortunately, the young John Mark became discouraged with the demands and danger of the work, and thus, he did not continue with Paul and Barnabas (15:38). He possibly returned to the comforts of Jerusalem to be with his mother, since he had lived a protected life in his familiar Jewish culture in Jerusa-

lem. Though we do not know all the reasons that moved Mark to turn from his commitment to continue. We do know that after his maturing, he was profitable to Paul for the ministry (2 Tm 4:11).

13:14 When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Antioch of Pisidia, they again went to the religious center of the Jews. They went to the synagogue to announce that the Messiah had come. They confirmed the message that Jews who had earlier visited Jerusalem during the Passover/Pentecost feast, spoke the truth to their fellow Jews. They did not go to the synagogue to worship on the Sabbath (16:13; 17:1). They went there because that was where many of the religious Jews were gathered on the Sabbath. Evangelists should always go where religious people gather in order to seek an opportunity to preach the gospel.

13:15 *Any word of exhortation:* After the traditional Jewish practice of reading the Sinai law (Gn through Dt) and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue asked if Paul and Barnabas had any encouraging words to say. It seems to have been a custom to allow visiting people the opportunity to speak. Since Paul and Barnabas knew this, this helps us understand why they made it a common practice to go to the synagogues when they visited those cities that had a synagogue. Evangelists should seek every opportunity to teach those who are interested in studying the Bible.

13:16-18 On this occasion, Paul addressed the Jews. In the audience there were also many Gentile proselytes who had accepted the belief of the Jews con-

cerning the one true and living God. **Paul stood up:** The Greeks and Romans stood while speaking (17:22), but the Jews sat down (Lk 4:20). **Chose our fathers:** Paul began his address by stating that God chose the fathers from whom the nation of Israel came (See Gn 12:1-3; Dt 7:6,7). When Israel was in Egyptian captivity, God sent Moses to call them out of captivity (7:17). After over 400 years of bondage, they were brought to freedom (Ex 14:30). **He put up with them:** Because the Israelites refused to enter immediately into the land of Canaan, God condemned them to forty years of wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai until all who were over the age of twenty had died in the wilderness (Nm 14:33,34). The older culture of Israel who had grown up in Egypt had to be taken out of Israel in order to allow a new generation to emerge. The older generation had a mentality of bondage, whereas the next generation grew up in freedom. It was this new generation of Israel that eventually conquered the promised land of Canaan.

13:19,20 *Divided their land to them:* After the forty years in the wilderness, and by the leadership of Joshua, God worked through the army of Israel to destroy seven Canaanite nations in the land of Palestine (Dt 7:1). Through this conquest, God wanted to purge the land of idolatrous cultures. However, Israel failed to purge the land of all the Canaanites. Though Israel did not completely purge the land, God gave the land to Israel in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Ja 14:1,2; 19:51; see Gn 12:1-

3). **He gave them judges:** From the beginning of their Egyptian captivity to the time Israel possessed the land after it was distributed to the tribes, 450 years had passed. After they were settled in the land, God worked through judges in order to keep Israel from turning away to the worship of gods that they created in their own minds after the influence of the people they failed to remove from the land of Canaan (Jg 2:16). Samuel was their last judge to turn them back to God (1 Sm 3:20). **Four hundred and fifty years:** In 1 Kings 6:1 it is recorded that in the 480th year after Israel came out of captivity, Solomon began to build the temple. By comparing Paul's 450 years here after the exodus when Samuel began his ministry, with the 480 years mentioned by 1 Kings 6, there is a difference of 93 years. Account can be given for these years if the years when Israel was ruled by a foreign power are not added to the number. This was a customary accounting of time by the Nazarites (Compare Nm 6:12; Jg 3:8,14; 4:3; 6:1; 13:1). Paul's 450 years could also mean that he included the years of captivity in Egypt (7:6), the period of wilderness sojourning in Sinai (about 40 years), and the time until Israel possessed the land after ten years of conquest, and finally, distribution of the land to the tribes.

13:21-23 They asked for a king: Israel clamored for a king after they had been in the land for about 400 years (1 Sm 15:23-28). They wanted to be like the nations around them. Though it was not God's original plan that Israel be ruled by an earthly king, He allowed them

to make Saul their first king. It was God's original plan that He remain the heavenly king of Israel and rule them from heaven through the law that He gave to them on Mount Sinai. Israel accepted this system of government for forty years in the wilderness and for about 400 years in Canaan (1 Sm 10:20-24). **Removed him:** When Saul left God, God left him. Because he forsook the will of God, he was subsequently rejected as king over Israel (1 Sm 13:1,14; 15:23-28; Is 44:28). **A man after My own heart:** The throne of Israel was given to David because David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sm 13:14; 16:1-13; Ps 89:20). He was a man who understood the grace and mercy of God toward people and sought to do the will of God out of a pure heart. **According to promise:** God promised David that in the future He would raise up one of his descendants to sit on his throne (2 Sm 7:12; Ps 132:11; Is 11:1,10; Jr 23:5,6; Zc 3:8; Mt 1:21). Paul announced that Jesus was the One God that had been raised up and seated on David's throne (2:29-35; Lk 1:30-33). Jesus was thus the prophesied Messiah of Israel.

13:24-29 After John had first preached: The resurrection and ascension of Jesus took place after the death of John the Baptist. The Jews on this occasion had heard that John preached that Israel should repent and be baptized for remission of sins (Mt 3:1; Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3). John's message of repentance and baptism was to prepare Israel for the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. **There is One coming after me:** John would not allow the Jewish people to make him

the Messiah. He said that they must look for one who would come after him (Mk 1:7; Jn 1:20,27). John was a true example of one who would serve Jesus. He had the opportunity to accept a position of leadership from the people, but he directed the minds of the people to Jesus. **To you the word of this salvation has been sent:** All the things that John had previously preached had reached their ears. Paul affirmed that he and Barnabas had been sent by God to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus was the Prophet to whom Moses said they must give heed (Dt 18:15-22). **Word of this salvation:** It was the word they spoke that was the medium through which the gospel was communicated (See 17:14; 1 Co 15:1-4; Js 1:21; 1 Pt 1:22,23). Therefore, it was the word of salvation. Salvation comes through hearing the word of the gospel, and one obeying the preached gospel. **Did not know Him:** Paul explained that Jewish residents of Jerusalem and their religious rulers did not fully understand who Jesus was because they were blinded by their prejudices and religious traditions (Lk 23:34; see comments Mk 7:1-9). They twisted the prophecies of the prophets who clearly pointed them to Jesus as the Messiah (Compare comments 2 Pt 3:15,16). By condemning Jesus to the cross, they actually fulfilled God's promise that Jesus would be the Savior of the world. God turned the evil work of Satan to crucify Jesus into the fulfillment of prophecy that Jesus would die for the sins of the world (See Ps 22; Is 53). **Found no grounds for death in Him:** Jesus was

innocent, because no reason for death could be found in Him (Mt 26:65,66; 27:22-24; Lk 23:22). Nevertheless, unbelieving Jews asked for His death because He threatened their religious positions. **When they had fulfilled all that was written about Him:** In putting Jesus to death, the religious leaders of Jerusalem were fulfilling all prophecies concerning His atonement on the cross (Lk 18:31; 24:44). After His death on the cross, the disciples took Jesus from the cross and buried him in the newly prepared tomb of Joseph of Aramathea (Mt 27:57-61).

13:30-32 Raised Him: God would not allow Jesus' body to decay into dust. He was raised by the power of God (Ps 16:10,11; Hs 6:2; Mt 12:39,40; 28:6; Ep 1:20). **He was seen:** In order to prove His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the apostles throughout the forty days from His resurrection to His ascension (1:3; Mt 28:16). He appeared to numerous people on different occasions in order to prove that He had been raised from the dead (1:3,11; 1 Co 15:1-8). However, the twelve apostles became His special witnesses of His life, death and resurrection (1:8; 2:32; Lk 24:48). **We declare to you the good news:** Paul stated that he had now brought to them the good news that was centuries before promised to Abraham (Gn 3:15; 12:3; Gl 3:8). This was the good news of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (1 Co 15:1-4).

13:33-35 God has fulfilled: God had fulfilled the promises to the fathers (Lk 24:44; 2 Co 1:20). The promise of

the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus who had brought the blessing of salvation to all who would believe on Him. Jesus was the Son of God who had been brought forth for the salvation of all (Ps 2:7). ***He raised Him up from the dead:*** Unlike the forefathers, Jesus was raised never to die again (See comments 1 Co 15:20-22). He has thus bought and guaranteed with His blood the blessing of God's grace that was declared through David (Ps 16:10; Is 55:3). This blessing of grace is made sure because Jesus will live forever as the surety of our salvation (See Ps 16:10). His body is not dead in a tomb. He is living in heaven (Ep 1:20-22; Hb 8:1). His eternal existence guarantees the eternity of all those who believe in Him and obey the gospel.

13:36,37 *David ... fell asleep:* Paul contrasted the eternity of Jesus with David who had died. David's grave still existed at the time of Paul's preaching. However, the grave of Jesus was empty. ***Saw no decay:*** Since Jesus was raised from the dead, His body was not allowed to decay away to dust (2:25-31).

13:38,39 *Forgiveness of sins:* It was through and because of the resurrected Jesus that forgiveness of sins was preached to all men. ***All who believe are justified:*** One could not keep the Sinai law perfectly in order to save himself. Even good works under the Sinai law could not atone for our sins because no one could do enough good works in order to deserve salvation (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; 3:11). Under the Sinai law, animal sacrifices could not take away sin (Hb 10:1-4). Therefore, while

living under the law, men lived with the dilemma of not being able to atone for their sins through either good works or animal sacrifices. It was good news to honest Jews that the grace of God was manifested through Jesus (Ti 2:11). One is now justified through obedient faith in response to the grace of God (Rm 5:1,2; Ep 2:8-10).

13:40,41 *Beware:* Paul warned that one must not fall into the same sin of willful ignorance and arrogance that the murderers of Jesus committed when they nailed Him to the cross (2:23). Habakkuk had prophesied that they would do such, which thing they did (Hk 1:5). When people are religiously misguided, they will do that which is contrary to the will of God. The prejudiced Jewish religious leaders did not accept Jesus as the Messiah because they willfully rejected the word of God concerning Jesus (See comments Mk 7:1-9; 2 Th 2:9-12).

MANY GENTILES BELIEVE

13:42,43 *The Gentiles kept begging that these words might be preached:* Truth seekers want to hear the preaching of the word of God. The Gentiles, who were proselytes to Judaism, were very receptive to what Paul had preached because they realized the bondage of the traditional religion of the Jews (See comments Mk 7:1-9). However, they expressed their receptivity only when the oppressing and intimidating Jewish leaders had left the synagogue. ***Proselytes:*** These were Gentiles who had been converted to the Jews' system of religion (See 2:10; 6:5; Mt 23:15). Though it was

a mission of Israel under the Sinai law to proclaim the praises of God to the Gentiles (see 1 Pt 2:9), by the time of Jesus' ministry, the Jews in Palestine had created an institutional religion after their own traditions that shut out the Gentiles. **Continue in the grace of God:** They asked Paul and Barnabas to return the following Sabbath to teach again. Upon hearing these words, Paul and Barnabas urged the people to continue in the favor of God by being receptive to His word (See Ti 2:11; Hb 12:15; 1 Pt 5:12).

13:44,45 The message that Paul and Barnabas had taught spread throughout the whole city. Therefore, when the next Sabbath came Paul was ready to continue his teaching. The Jews on the following Sabbath discovered that Christianity was not a part of Judaism. They discovered that it did not grow out of Judaism, neither was it a sect of Judaism. The religious leaders saw that the multitudes seriously listened to Paul and Barnabas. They were thus filled with envy. Such is often the case when those who feel superior in a system of institutional religion are rejected by those who are more interested in the truth than personalities who would claim to be leaders (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). **Filled with envy:** About fifteen years before, this same envy had moved proud religious leaders in Jerusalem to crucify Jesus. This envy was now moving the religious leaders against Paul and Barnabas who were preaching submission to Jesus (1 Pt 4:4). As a result of their envy, these arrogant and hard-hearted religious leaders began to publicly disrupt the teaching of Paul (vs 26;

18:6; Dt 32:21; 1 Pt 4:4; Jd 10). **Blaspheming:** They publicly spoke against the words of Paul and Barnabas, saying that they were speaking against the teachings of God. However, they were not teaching against the word of God. What Paul and Barnabas were teaching contradicted the legal system of religion that was taught by the Jews. They were the ones who were actually guilty of blasphemy. When Jewish leaders saw the people turning from their religious leadership to Jesus, their jealousy stirred up evil in their hearts. They were more interested in maintaining a following than in hearing the gospel.

13:46,47 Paul and Barnabas grew bold: Paul and Barnabas continued to remain bold in the situation, and because they did they continued to speak. They reminded the people that it was necessary that the gospel first be preached to the Jews (3:26; Mt 10:6; Rm 1:16; see 18:6; 28:28). But since the Jews in Antioch had rejected the gospel, it would be taken to the Gentiles (Ex 32:10; Dt 32:21; Is 55:5; Mt 21:43; Rm 10:19). Therefore, the Jews, by their rejection of the gospel, judged themselves (Ex 32:10; Jn 12:48). They had been given an opportunity to believe and obey the gospel. However, they rejected the gospel, and thus Paul and Barnabas turned to the receptive Gentiles (18:6). When men reject the gospel, evangelists must turn to the receptive of the community. In this case, the receptive of the community were the Gentiles. The Jews had become satisfied with their religion that they had created after the traditions of the fathers

(See comments Mk 7:1-9). **Light of the Gentiles:** Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6 and 42:6 (Lk 2:32). Isaiah had prophesied of the light that would be sent to the Gentiles (See Jn 8:12). It was to the Gentiles that Paul and Barnabas said they must turn in Antioch since the Jews rejected the gospel. In this way, Paul used the Old Testament Scriptures to prove to the Jews his ministry to the Gentiles (9:15,16). Unfortunately, the Jews, as disciples often become, were so introverted that they forgot their mission to proclaim the gospel to the receptive (See comments 1 Pt 2:9).

13:48 The Gentiles ... were glad: The Gentiles in the city were again excited about what Paul and Barnabas were doing. They were first receptive to the message (See 17:11). They were then receptive to the ministry of preaching specifically to the Gentiles. They had grown weary of the burdens of Jewish religious traditions (See 15:10). They were tired of being intimidated by the self-righteous and arrogant attitudes of the Jewish religious leadership. They saw deliverance from both institutional religion and self-righteous leadership in the message of grace and faith that was preached by Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, all those who had a receptive attitude, gladly received their preaching. They gladly obeyed the gospel by immersion for remission of sins (2:38; Rm 6:3-6). **Disposed unto eternal life:** Before creation, God determined that all who would freely choose to believe and obey the gospel would become a part of the group (the church) that He destined for

eternal life in heaven. Therefore, all in Paul's audience who were disposed, or of an openhearted disposition to accept individually the gospel that he was preached, would become a part of this group that was destined for heaven (See Rm 8:28,29; Ep 1:5,11; 2 Th 2:13; 1 Pt 1:20; Jd 4).

13:49,50 The word ... was published: As a result of the receptivity of the Gentiles, the church grew tremendously among the Gentiles in the region of Antioch (See 4:4). The church grew because of the preaching of the message of the gospel throughout all the region. **The Jews stirred up ... women ... men of the city:** Satan would not remain quiet while he was being crushed under the feet of great men who were preaching the gospel. Therefore, Jewish opposition again arose against the disciples. The Jewish religious leaders felt greatly threatened. They stirred up the civil leaders of the community against Paul and Barnabas, and thus, they had the two preachers driven out of town (7:52; 2 Tm 3:11). When evangelists are doing their work they must always be looking out for the schemes of Satan that will arise against them. Satan never remains idle when the gospel is being proclaimed.

13:51 They shook off the dust from their feet against them: Paul and Barnabas indicated to the Jews, by shaking the dust off their feet (See Mt 10:14; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; 10:11), that they had relieved themselves of the responsibility of preaching to these stiffnecked religious people. The religious leaders rejected the gospel because they were more con-

cerned about preserving their religious traditions than obeying the truth of the gospel. The evangelists thus turned from the unreceptive of the community to the receptive. This is a difficult decision that all evangelists must often make.

13:52 Filled with joy: Before Paul left for Iconium, they laid hands on the converted Gentiles in order that they receive miraculous gifts of the Spirit, especially the gift of prophecy (See comments 8:18; Rm 1:11). He did this in order that they continually be edified with inspired preaching, teaching, singing and prayer (Mt 5:12; Jn 16:22; 1 Co 14:15).

Filled ... with the Holy Spirit: See 2:4; 4:8,31; 9:17; 13:9. Since the disciples were filled with an indwelling of the Spirit at the time of their baptism, this statement of being filled with the Spirit refers to something else. They were filled with the Spirit when a Christ-sent apostle laid hands on them in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (See comments 2:38,39; 8:18; 1 Co 12:8ff). Thus in the presence of a Christ-sent apostle, they were given gifts both for edification of the body, but also to enhance their evangelistic outreach to a lost world.

CHAPTER 14

THE ICONIANS BELIEVE IN JESUS

14:1 The distance from Antioch to Iconium is about 20 kilometers. **Synagogue:** Paul and Barnabas again went to the Jews first in order to give them the first opportunity to hear that the Messiah, who had been promised to the Jews, had come (See 13:5,15). They also went to the Jews first because the Jews believed in the God who had made the promises to the fathers concerning the Messiah (See Gn 12:1-3). The receptivity of the Jews in Iconium was immediate. Open-hearted Jews and proselytes believed. The Gentiles in this city were also receptive (18:4; Jn 7:35; Rm 1:14,16; 1 Co 1:22). When considering Paul's going to the synagogues on his mission to preach the gospel, we must keep in mind that the same Jews who were connected with these synagogues had already heard

of Jesus. Those Jews who returned from the Passover/Pentecost feasts since the establishment of the church in Acts 2 spoke to those of the synagogues. They spoke what they had heard from and experienced with the apostles who stayed in Jerusalem over fifteen years after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30.

14:2 Unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles: As in every location to which the evangelists went, there were those Jews who refused to believe. These unbelievers agitated the Greeks to reject Paul and Barnabas and the message they were preaching. **Embittered their minds:** One's mind is poisoned when he believes the slander of others, and thus partakes of their sin. Evangelists must always be on guard against religious leaders who will poison the minds of others concerning their word and work (3 Jn 9,10).

14:3,4 Stayed there a long time:

Because of the receptivity of openhearted Jews and Greeks, the evangelists stayed in Iconium for several weeks, regardless of the persecution. They boldly spoke the message of the gospel. God allowed both Paul and Barnabas to work miraculous signs in order to confirm their message (4:29; 5:12; 20:32; Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4; see 5:12; 8:18,19; 13:11; 14:3; 28:8). **The city was divided:** Some believed and some did not believe. Nevertheless, the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, who had been sent out by the Antioch church in Syria, continued their preaching. They were bold and persistent in their work. **The apostles:** The Greek word *apostolos* is here used in a generic sense, which means, "one sent." Paul and Barnabas are referred to here as church-sent apostles, for they were sent out by the Antioch church (vs 14; 13:2,3; Ph 2:25). Bible students must distinguish between Christ-sent apostles and church-sent apostles. The twelve who were specifically sent out by Jesus were given special responsibilities. They were to give their personal witness to the resurrection of Jesus (1:8; 2:23,24). They had authority to impart miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (8:18). But the church-sent apostles were simply sent out by the churches to preach the gospel. Today, they are generally referred to as missionaries or evangelists.

14:5-7 Mistreat and stone them: The unbelieving Jews and Greeks made an attempt to murder the church-sent apostles by stoning them (2 Tm 3:11; 4:7). **Fled to Lystra and Derbe:** Paul and Barnabas heard about the murder

scheme. They were not going to senselessly die at the hands of religiously misguided men who refused to believe the truth. Therefore, they fled to the cities of Lystra and Derbe. Regardless of the threats, they continued preaching wherever they went. They were determined to complete their mission. Successful evangelistic efforts are accomplished by those who are determined to overcome all obstacles, including persecution, in order to preach the gospel to the lost. God can do great things through brave men and women.

UNBELIEVERS

SEE THE SUPERNATURAL

14:8-10 Who had never walked: In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas encountered a man who had been crippled since birth. Everyone knew the man for he had been in such a condition all his life (See 3:2). Luke mentions this specific case of healing in order to give Theophilus verifiable evidence that Paul was not a religious fake-healer as the sorcerers of the religious world. In Paul's defense before a Roman court, this healed man and any witnesses could be called to testify in Rome on behalf of Paul in the years to come. **Faith:** This man listened intently to Paul's message. He believed. **Had faith to be healed:** His belief was in Paul that he could heal him. The faith was not in reference to belief in God. Faith in God was never used in the 1st century as a meritorious condition upon which one was healed. Because this man believed in the power of God in Paul, Paul shouted so that everyone could hear. The

man instantly stood up on completely healed legs and feet. The true miracle was instantaneous and viewed by all.

14:11-15 *The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men:* The people of Lystra were so astonished, they thought Paul and Barnabas were gods who were visiting in the flesh of man. They thus recognized the miracle to be supernatural. They had never seen anything like this before (Compare 8:10; 28:6). All that happened in this case of healing defines a true confirming miracle. Miracles were not subjectively perceived by beholders in the sense that they had to determine whether a miracle occurred by questioning the healed. Neither did miracles need to be explained by those who were healed. All miracles were confirmed as such by those who beheld the miracle. Even unbelievers confirmed the healing. ***Zeus:*** As a result of their religious fanaticism, the people called Barnabas Zeus (Jupiter), who was the principal god of all Greek gods. ***Hermes:*** Because Paul was the principal speaker of the two, they called him Hermes (Mercury), who was the god of eloquent speech among Greek gods. ***Wanted to offer sacrifice:*** On this wondrous occasion, the priest of Zeus began the ceremonies to offer sacrifices with the people to Paul and Barnabas. Tremendous excitement was in the air to honor Paul and Barnabas as gods. ***They tore their clothes:*** The two church-sent apostles tore their clothes in fear of receiving worship that belongs only to God. ***We also are men:*** Paul and Barnabas shouted that they were also men with the

same physical nature and emotional passions as the people (10:25,26; Js 5:17; Rv 19:10). They were not an incarnation of their gods. They had preached that the Lystrians turn from senseless idols that they had made for themselves to represent their imagined gods. One must notice how Paul and Barnabas would not allow men to reverence them as the people had revered false gods. No New Testament Christian ever allowed himself to be placed in a position of worship by the people. ***The living God:*** The living God is in contrast to all dead idol gods, relics or anything that men would consider with superstition and reverence (1 Th 1:9). An idol is the physical representation of the deity one has created after his own image. The living God of heaven is the one who created man after His image (Gn 1:26,27; see comments 17:22-29). ***Made heaven and earth:*** See 4:24; 17:24; Gn 1:1; Ex 20:11; Ps 146:6; Rv 14:7.

14:16-18 *Walk in their own ways:* They proclaimed that before Jesus came, God allowed men to stumble in religious chaos (Ps 81:12; Mc 4:5; 1 Pt 4:3). But now He wants all to turn from idolatrous gods to the true and living Son of God (17:30). ***He did not leave Himself without witness:*** God never left Himself without evidence of His existence in the created world (See comments 17:24-27; Rm 1:20; see Ps 8; 19:1,2). All of the orderliness of the seasons, plant and animal life, give evidence to the fact that there is a Creator of all things. Even our hearts were made religious by God in order that we seek a Supreme Being who

is greater than our existence (17:27,28). **Scarcely restrain the multitudes:** Because of Paul and Barnabas' explanations, the Lystrian people were thus restrained from offering sacrifices to them.

STONING OF PAUL

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

14:20 The disciples stood around him: By this time, conversions had already happened in this part of southern Galatia. The disciples evidently thought that Paul was dead. They stood around him in shock. But Paul regained consciousness, stood up, and walked into the city to dress his wounds. The young man Timothy was probably among this crowd of disciples (2 Tm 3:11). On the following day, with bruises and healing cuts, Paul walked over 80 kilometers to the city of Derbe. He would not stop preaching Jesus because of hardships, for he knew that men must obey the gospel in order to be saved (4:12; 2 Co 11:23-26; 2 Tm 3:11). His determination to continue is

evidence that he truly experienced a personal encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road before he obeyed the gospel.

WORK AMONG THE GENTILES

14:21,22 Preached the gospel ... taught many: The church was established in Derbe when many heard and obeyed Paul's message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15,16; 1 Co 15:1-4). Though Paul and Barnabas had been persecuted in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, they bravely returned to these cities and encouraged the new converts. **Exhorting them to continue in the faith:** They exhorted the new disciples to remain in the faith of Jesus' lordship (15:32,41; 16:40; 18:23; 20:1,2; compare Rm 1:11; 16:25; 2 Th 2:17; 3:3). Paul and Barnabas taught and practiced in their lives the principle of suffering as a good disciple. They taught the principle that Christians must through many tribulations enter into the eternal kingdom reign of God in heaven (See Mt 10:38; Lk 22:28; Rm 8:17; 2 Tm 2:12; 3:12).

14:23 Designated elders: They designated elders among the disciples in every city (See Ti 1:5). These men were possibly the converts of godly Jewish who had been faithful for many years, though here they had been disciples of Jesus for only a short time. The words "presbyters," "bishops," and "pastors" are also used in the New Testament to refer to these men who are to care for the flock of God (See comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:5ff). In this case, as well as in other churches, there was a plurality of men

designated to be pastors of the church in the cities. Nowhere in the New Testament is there a case where a single pastor maintained control of a single assembly of disciples. Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted with the new Christians and entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had believed (20:32). ***In every church:*** Titus 1:5 must be used to define what Luke here means by the phrase “in every church.” Since Paul left Titus with the responsibility of making sure that elders were designated in every city, then Luke’s meaning here would be the same. Paul and Barnabas instructed the disciples to set forth mature men in every city whom they designated to be elders (shepherds). The disciples were scattered throughout the cities. They were meeting in the homes of the members. However, the disciples as the ekklesia (church) of God were never identified as such by where they assembled with other disciples. The ministry of the shepherds was to organically function among the people, wherever the people lived. In this case, therefore, Paul and Barnabas designated elders for the disciples who lived in the cities of Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Antioch, regardless of where the disciples assembled. Without reading any preconceived interpretations into the text, this is what the text says. The Bible student must be cautious about reading any present religious structures or functions into the Scriptures. A church is not defined by the ability of all the members to meet together at the same place on Sunday morning, and subsequently, perform some ceremony of identity. Wherever the

disciples assembled on Sunday was never the occasion for them to denominate from one another. This context would refer to all members of the body in each of the cities that are mentioned.

14:24-28 From Antioch Paul and Barnabas walked through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. They preached in Perga and went on to Attalia. From Attalia they sailed to Antioch of Syria from where they had been commissioned by the disciples to preach to the Gentiles. Their mission was thus completed. They had been away from Antioch anywhere from two to three years. ***Gathered the church together:*** Christians that are mission-minded are always eager to hear about mission ministries (See 15:4,12). The church-sent apostles reported everything that God had done. God had worked through them, and thus the work was of God, not of Paul and Barnabas. As a result of the reports, the disciples rejoiced over the news, realizing that there was tremendous receptivity among the Gentiles (1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12; Cl 4:3; Rv 3:8). Evangelists must always keep in mind that it is one of their works to report to the sending disciples what God is doing among the nations. Reporting on God’s work is a means by which the church is edified. Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch about two years. It was around A.D. 50 when Paul received a revelation from God to go to Jerusalem (See comments Gl 2:1,2). This was the trip to Jerusalem for the purpose of confronting legalistic Jews who had come in among the disciples to spy out their liberty in Christ.

CHAPTER 15

THE ONE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The historical setting of this chapter was a problem of Jewish legalism that was threatening the very existence of Christianity (15:1,2; see comments in intro. to Rm and Gl). The problem was so severe, that a special assembly of the disciples was called in Jerusalem. It is significant to note who was called together to deal with the problem, and how the church as a whole, under the inspired direction of the apostles, made a decision concerning the problem. The following overview establishes the historical setting by which the Palestinian disciples functioned in dealing with the problem:

Luke recorded that Paul and Barnabas, with others, were commissioned by the disciples in Syria to go meet with the apostles, elders and disciples in Jerusalem (15:2). These were the elders of the entire city of Jerusalem, not just the elders of one assembly of the church within the city. Keep in mind that this event took place about fifteen years after the establishment of the church in Jerusalem in A.D. 30. The church at this time in Jerusalem consisted of thousands of members who were meeting in hundreds of homes throughout the city.

When Paul and Barnabas arrived, Luke records that, "*they were received by the church and the apostles and elders*" (15:4). Notice that they were received by the church. They were not received by the churches of Jerusalem, but by the church of Jerusalem. Therefore, it was not the elders of the churches of

Jerusalem, but the elders of the church in the entire city of Jerusalem. Luke was not using the phrase, "the church" to refer to all the autonomous or independent churches in Jerusalem. Since the disciples were not autonomous from one another because they were present in different house assemblies, Luke wants us to understand that all the disciples were the one church.

Luke also recorded, "*Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter*" (15:6). The elders of all the disciples in Jerusalem came together from all over Jerusalem in order to have a meeting concerning the problem.

After speeches were made during the meeting, "*it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas ...*" (15:22). Notice how Luke recorded what happened. He stated that the Jerusalem elders, with the whole church of Jerusalem, not churches, consented to what was said. They then chose men "*of their own company*" to go with Paul and Barnabas back to the church in Antioch. Chosen men were designated out of the company of the church of Jerusalem to return with Paul and Barnabas. The "company" did not refer to Paul and Barnabas and those visiting Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were the ones leaving in order to return to Antioch. The word "company" refers to the church of Jerusalem from which representatives were chosen to accom-

pany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch. These representatives were from the one church of Jerusalem.

Barsabbas (Judas) and Silas were chosen to return with Paul and Barnabas (15:22). Luke records that these were “*leading men among the brethren*” (15:22). They were leading men among the disciples (the church) in Jerusalem. All the Jerusalem disciples, regardless of where they assembled on Sunday, were the one church in Jerusalem. Barsabbas and Silas were “leading” because they were known by all the disciples throughout Jerusalem. The fact that they were known as leaders indicates that they were circulating among the house fellowships in order that they be known by every disciple in the entire city of Jerusalem. This should give us some idea of what at least teachers should be doing, that is, circulating among the house assemblies, not settling into one group.

Luke continued his account of the Acts 15 event by saying that a letter was written to those outside Jerusalem, to those Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia where the problem prevailed that was discussed during the meeting. The letter originated from “*the apostles and elders and brethren [the church] ...*” (15:23). These were the apostles in Jerusalem, the elders in Jerusalem, and the church (brethren) in Jerusalem. All the apostles, elders and brethren were considered the one church in Jerusalem. Nowhere in the text is the plural word “churches” used to specify independent assembly groups of the disciples in Jerusalem. All disciples in the city were

simply referred to as the church.

When Paul and Barnabas, with representatives from the church of Jerusalem, went forth from Jerusalem, they took the decrees that were “*decided upon by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem*” (16:4). Again, the emphasis in reference to elders is to all the elders at Jerusalem. They were the elders of the whole assembly of disciples in Jerusalem who were part of the one universal body of Christ.

The situation concerning the elders and church in Jerusalem remained the same for many years after the Acts 15 meeting. When Paul returned to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey, there was still one church in Jerusalem, and still elders of that one church. Luke recorded, “*And when we came to Jerusalem, the brethren gladly received us. Now the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present*” (21:17,18). These were all the elders of the one church of Jerusalem.

CHRISTIANS

REJECT JEWISH LEGALISM

15:1 Legalism is the teaching that one can maintain his relationship with God by keeping God’s law perfectly and meritoriously doing good works to atone for sin. If one sins, it is taught that one can atone for sin by doing good works. The Jews believed that one could justify himself by keeping ordinances of the Sinai law and atoning for transgressions by meritorious deeds. In the following events, the early disciples faced this theology which was coming into the church

through Jews who did not understand the grace of God, or considered the grace of God as a license to sin (See Jd 4). **Except you are circumcised ... you cannot be saved:** Certain Jewish brethren came to Antioch of Syria and were teaching the disciples that Gentile Christians must legally keep the Sinai law of circumcision in order to be saved (See Gl 3:1; 5:2; Ph 3:2; Cl 2:8,11,16; see intro. to Gl). **Circumcised:** See Gn 17:10; Lv 12:3.

15:2 The date of this meeting was in the early 50s. Those who sought to bind circumcision on the Gentiles had come to Antioch and caused division by pressing their legal beliefs on the church (See comments Gl 2:1-10). The division, therefore, was caused by some who enforced on the disciples that which God had not bound (See Rm 16:17,18; Gl 5:1,2). **Should go up to Jerusalem:** The Antioch church determined to send Paul, Barnabas, Titus and certain other brothers to Jerusalem in order to meet with the apostles, elders and the Jerusalem disciples concerning the problem of Jewish legalism. It had been fourteen years since Paul had been to Jerusalem (Gl 2:1). He went on this trip by direction of the Holy Spirit to meet formally with the apostles who were still there. He also went to meet with the elders of the church.

15:3 Sent ... by the church: The Antioch church financially made it possible for Paul to go because God had personally called him to go (Gl 2:1,2). **Describing the conversion of the Gentiles:** On the way to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas reported to the disciples in Phoenicia

and Samaria all that God had done in Asia Minor on their missionary journey (14:27; 15:12). As a result, there was great joy among the disciples over the new disciples among the Gentiles in Asia Minor. Disciples who are mission-minded will rejoice over the reports of the great things God does among the nations. These are the type of disciples who make up churches that invite evangelists to come and report concerning the things that are happening in mission areas throughout the world.

15:4 Received by the church: When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, they were greeted by the apostles, elders and the whole church. They again reported on God's work in Asia Minor, as is one of the works of evangelists (See 14:27).

15:5 Sect of the Pharisees who believed: Some of the Pharisees who had been baptized had not put off the burden of either their former institutional thinking or the Sinai law. Therefore, they sought to bind on the church that which God had not bound. In this situation, they sought to bind circumcision and ceremonies of the Sinai law. In doing such, they caused division in the church. They sought to intimidate Gentile believers to be circumcised in order to be saved. Titus, who was an evangelist with Paul, was a Gentile. Paul flatly refused the demand of the Jewish brothers that Titus be circumcised (See comments Gl 2:3). Paul would not allow the legalistic teachers to bind a legal religious command of the Sinai law on Titus or anyone else. Christians must stand firm not to allow

religious traditions to be bound on the church as law (Gl 5:1). It is not wrong to do things traditionally. However, it is wrong to allow the traditional way of doing things to become a law that is binding on the consciences of members of the church.

EXHORTATION OF PETER

15:6 The Christ-sent apostles and elders of the church, with the entire church, came together to discuss the problem of those who were seeking to bind Sinai laws and Jewish religious traditions on the church. This matter affected the entire church, and thus, everyone was involved in the matter (See Gl 2:14). In matters as this, leaders are not to make decisions behind closed doors, and then hand dictates to the church.

15:7 Much disagreement arose during the meeting. But Peter stood up and reminded all that it was through him that God by vision, about ten years previous to this meeting, had officially and miraculously said to go preach to the Gentile household of Cornelius (10; 11).

15:8 *Knows the hearts:* See 1:24; 1 Ch 28:9. *Giving them the Holy Spirit:* God poured out on Cornelius and his household the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit (10:44-48; 11:15-17). Through the speaking in languages, God signaled that these Gentiles be accepted into the kingdom (See Is 28:11,12; 1 Co 14:21).

15:9 In the case of Cornelius, God was showing that He does not favor Jews over Gentiles (10:34,35; Rm 2:11; 10:12; Ep 6:9; Cl 3:25). Though there are differences in culture or heritage, there is

no distinction of race with God. Therefore, there should be no racism among His children. *Purifying their hearts:* God purified the hearts of Cornelius and his household by their obedience to the faith, not by meritorious works of the Sinai law (22:16). When their personal faith in God's grace moved them to obey the gospel by immersion, God purified them by the blood of Jesus (2:38; see 10:15;28; 1 Co 1:2; 1 Pt 1:22). *By the faith:* The Greek article is present in the text here, and thus, the reading should be, "Purifying their hearts by the faith" (See Jn 17:17; Js 1:21; 1 Pt 1:22,23). The faith is that body of truth to which they gave themselves as opposed to the error of the religions that they had created after their own desires or traditions. It was their obedience to the faith, the truth of the gospel (Gl 1:6-9), that resulted in the purifying of their souls (See comments Js 1:21; 1 Pt 1:23).

15:10 *Why do you test God:* Peter reminded them that the Jewish forefathers could not bear the burden of religious traditions that were cast upon their consciences by their religious leaders (Mt 23:4; Gl 1:5). Therefore, in Christ all are made free from the law of works because by works of law no one can be saved (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). By again demanding works as a means of justification we would be testing the grace of God, for by grace we are saved (See comments Ep 2:1-9).

15:11 *Grace of the Lord Jesus:* Through the grace that was revealed in Jesus (Ti 2:11), Christians have been set free from the law of works (Gl 5:1). Both

Gentiles and Jews are now saved by grace, not works of law or merit (Rm 3:4,24; 5:15; 2 Co 13:14; Ep 1:7; 2:1-10; 3:2; Ti 2:11; 3:4-7).

TESTIMONY OF PAUL AND BARNABAS

15:12 *God had worked among the Gentiles:* The success of Paul and Barnabas' work among the nations was proof that God accepted Gentiles without circumcision and the works of the Sinai law. Their acceptance was evidenced by the signs and wonders that were done through their hands in their mission work to the Gentiles (14:27; 15:3,4; see Mk 16:14-20; Hb 2:3,4). The argument of Paul and Barnabas was that the Pharisaical brethren should not set themselves against God's approval of the Gentile Christians who had miracles worked among them by God. Since they had been saved by the grace of God without works of the Sinai law, then no man has any right to bind on them where God has not bound.

EXHORTATION OF JAMES

15:13,14 James, the Lord's brother (12:17; Js 1:1; see intro. to Js), then stood up and referred again to Peter's experience at Cornelius' house. God made an official statement to the church with this event. The statement was that the Gentiles were accepted into the church without their obedience to the Sinai law or Jewish religious tradition.

15:15,16 *The prophets agree:* The truth that God saved people without conforming to circumcision and the works

of the law was prophesied by Amos who foretold the building of the spiritual tabernacle, the church (Am 9:11,12; see Is 2:2-4; 49:6; Mc 4:1-4). In James' quotation of Amos 9:11,12, verse 11 emphasizes the fact that it is God who has built the fallen tabernacle. It was not the work of man by his self-righteousness. Since the work is of God, then it is God who makes the invitation to all men to come unto the tabernacle (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15).

15:17 Amos stated that the Gentiles would come into this spiritual tabernacle. It is the Lord, not man, who has made this possible. Therefore, the Pharisees have no right to bind conditions for salvation that have not been bound by God (See comments Mt 16:18,19).

15:18 *Makes them known:* James concluded that we should not work against God's prophecies and plans which have always been known by Him.

15:19 *Not trouble ... the Gentiles:* James affirmed that the Pharisaical brethren should not frustrate the new Gentile converts by requiring them to submit to religious burdens which even the Jews could not bear.

15:20 *Write to them:* James suggested that a special letter be written to the Gentile disciples in order to relieve their concerns over this matter and to instruct them concerning the influences of the unbelieving cultures in which they lived. The Gentiles should stay away from anything associated with idolaters who conducted ceremonies that included the drinking of blood (See Gn 35:2; Ex 20:3,23; Ez 20:30; 1 Co 8:1; 10:20,28;

Rv 2:14). They should keep themselves sexually pure and stay away from immoral sexual activity that was also associated with idolatrous worship (1 Co 6:9; Gl 5:19; Ep 5:3; Cl 2:20-23; 3:5; 1 Th 4:3; 1 Pt 4:3). They should not eat those animals which they knew had been strangled in reverence to an idol (Lv 2:17; 14:17; see 1 Co 10:23-33).

15:21 The Sinai law of Moses that was read in every Jewish synagogue (13:15,27) had instructed the Jews to abstain from these things. But such knowledge was not continually taught to the Gentiles as it was to the Jews.

LETTER TO GENTILE CHRISTIANS

15:22 The apostles, elders and entire church agreed upon the inspired proclamation that had come through the teaching of godly teachers. It is worthy to note here that the entire church participated in this activity. Decisions were not made behind closed doors and handed down to the church. Since the decision affected the church, the church had a part in making the decision to write the letter. Barsabas (1:23) and Silas, who were leaders in the church in Jerusalem, were chosen to take the letter to the Gentile churches with Paul and Barnabas.

15:23-29 *They wrote this letter:* Since the letter did not go into any theological discussions concerning why they should observe the points of the letter, we must assume that the letter came from the direction of the Spirit. It was inspired teaching, and thus the document was considered Scripture.

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

15:30 *They came to Antioch:* After the letter was written and the meeting adjourned, Paul, Barnabas, Barsabas and Silas left Jerusalem to take the letter to Antioch. When they arrived in Antioch they gathered the church together and read the letter. Again it must be emphasized that the matter affected the universal church, and thus, the universal church participated in the writing and reading of the letter.

15:31-33 *They rejoiced:* When the Gentiles of this church heard what was in the letter, they were greatly relieved and encouraged. They were encouraged because they did not have to submit to the intimidation of legalistic judaizing teachers or to the intimidation of the idolatrous neighbors among whom they lived. *Exhorted and strengthened the brethren:* As gifted teachers, Barsabas and Silas exhorted and encouraged the church with the teaching of God's word. The church was greatly strengthened by their teaching because the source of their teaching was from the Holy Spirit. At this time in the history of the church there were no written New Testaments as we have them today. God had to inspire men to speak forth His word by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17). After a period of time, Barsabas and some other brethren, were sent back to Jerusalem to report to the apostles how the Gentile brethren had received the letter. The apostles were still in Jerusalem at this time which was in the early 50s. Compare comments 2:47.

15:34,35 Silas chose to stay in Anti-

och. Paul and Barnabas also stayed in Antioch. They, with other teachers, continued to teach the brethren in all the area of Antioch.

THE SECOND MISSION JOURNEY

15:36 *Let us go again and visit our brethren:* Paul initiated plans to return to those disciples he and Barnabas had formerly converted on their first journey (chs 13,14). He wanted to return and see how they were spiritually growing. If the Galatian letter was written after the first mission journey, and before the one proposed here by Paul, then it would possibly be Paul's desire here to return to these churches and see what impact the Galatian letter had on the brethren (See intro. to Gl).

15:37-39 *Barnabas desired:* In determining who would go with them, Paul disagreed with Barnabas about taking John Mark, for Barnabas had made up his mind to take him (See 12:12,25; 18:5; see "Writer" in intro. to Mk). Paul insisted that John Mark not go with them. He knew that they were going again into difficult areas where only strong and mature men should go. In the face of such

danger, John Mark had previously manifested a lack of courage. Regardless of Paul's opinion, however, Barnabas saw something in John Mark that he believed would develop into a mighty soldier that Paul would later recognize (See Cl 4:10; 2 Tm 4:11). Therefore, Barnabas decided to take John Mark and revisit the churches in his homeland of Cyprus.

15:40-41 Paul took Silas to revisit the churches of Asia Minor. Paul's initial plan would thus be completed, that is, all the newly established churches in Cyprus and Asia Minor would be revisited and strengthened (16:5). The Antioch brethren again financially supported this mission work. The church thus sent out two mission teams for world evangelism. It is in matters as this that we understand that the Holy Spirit allowed the early evangelists to form opinions concerning their work. There were disagreements. However, by honoring one another's liberty in Christ, in unity of belief they carried out the mission of the Master to evangelize the world. Though brethren may decide to do things differently, and go to different areas, the unity of the faith must be maintained in a spirit of love among brethren (Cl 3:12-15).

CHAPTER 16

WORLDWIDE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

16:1-3 *A certain disciple:* When Paul and Silas came to Lystra they found a young man who had a good reputation among the churches of Iconium and Lystra. His name was Timothy (19:22; Rm 16:21; 1 Co 4:17; 16:10; Ph 1:1; 2:19;

1 Th 3:2; 2 Tm 1:2,5; 3:15). He was the son of a cross-cultural marriage between a Jewish woman and a Greek (Gentile) father. He had been taught the Old Testament Scriptures from childhood by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tm 1:5; 3:15). Timothy was a young man of great faith (See "Writer" intro. to 1

Tm). **Well spoken of:** One of Timothy's qualifications as a young man was that he had a good reputation among the churches as a faithful worker for the Lord (See 10:22; 22:12). Because of his great personal works among the disciples in Iconium and Lystra, he was asked by Paul to join their mission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. **Circumcised him:** In order to identify better with the Jews to whom they would preach in the synagogues, and to prevent unnecessary cultural opposition, Paul had Timothy circumcised (See 1 Co 9:20-22; Gl 2:3; 5:2). In submitting to such, Timothy manifested his commitment both to the work and to doing what was necessary to accomplish their evangelism among the Jews.

16:4,5 Went through the cities: Paul, Silas and Timothy continued on with their mission journey. They read the letter of the Jerusalem disciples to all the brethren (15:19-21,28,29). It was one of the works of these evangelists to edify the church. Traveling evangelists are to be involved in both edifying disciples, as well as preaching the gospel to the lost. As a result of their teaching, the disciples were greatly edified, and thus they grew both spiritually and numerically (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 15:41; compare 20:32; 1 Th 2:13). When disciples are edified with the word of God, they grow (See 20:32).

DETOUR TO MACEDONIA

16:6 When Paul, Silas and Timothy had passed through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia (Gl 1:1,2), they wanted to go personally to Asia. **Forbidden by the**

Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit would not allow them to go to Asia because this was not the time for Paul to go into Asia. Neither did the Spirit want them to go personally into the region. Asia would be evangelized by others. God wanted Paul to carry out his ministry in a specific region. For this reason, the Holy Spirit directly led Paul on occasions as this in order that he be led to areas of receptivity, which receptivity would give evidence to the acceptance of the gospel among all people. Therefore, this was the wrong time and method of work to reach Asia. We do not know this until we get to 19:8-10 where Paul stayed two years in Ephesus. During the two years in Ephesus he taught in the school of Tyrannus. As a result of this teaching for two years, all Asia heard the word. The time Paul spent in Asia in 19:8-10, therefore, was the right time. The method of his teaching faithful men to teach others was the right method (2 Tm 2:2).

16:7-10 Because they could not go into Asia, the evangelists went on to Mysia. They then planned to go into Bithynia that was a province of Asia. **The Spirit ... did not allow them:** The Spirit told them that it was not the time to go to the provinces of Asia, for there was a greater calling to go somewhere else. The Spirit did not reveal to Paul why he should not go to Asia. Paul would later learn that all Asia would be evangelized by his teaching in the school of Tyrannus (19:8-10). Because they could not go into Bithynia, Paul, Silas and Timothy went on to Troas, after passing by Mysia. In Troas, Paul saw a vision through which

God called him to go into Macedonia. God did not explain to him why he could not go into Bithynia or Asia. Paul simply obeyed the vision and went on to Macedonia. Before they went on to Macedonia (2 Co 2:13), Luke, the physician and the writer of Acts, joined the mission team. It is now “we,” not “they,” as Luke records that they knew that God wanted them to go to Macedonia. Throughout the remaining narrative of Acts where Luke changes from “them” to “us,” or “us” to “them,” we can determine when Luke joins and leaves the company of Paul.

THE PHILIPPIANS BELIEVE

16:11,12 After sailing from the seaport city of Troas, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke came directly to the island of Samothrace, and then to Neapolis the next day. They walked about 15 kilometers over the hills and eventually came to a plain where the city of Philippi was located (20:6; Ph 1:1; 1 Th 2:2). This city was a principal city of the province of Macedonia, of which Amphipolis was the capital. Philippi was named after Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. It was a Roman colony which meant that it was a Roman military outpost for veteran soldiers. This also meant that it had its own autonomous government. It was also a city that was free from taxation. Those who lived in the city had the same legal privileges as residents of Italy. Paul, Silas and Timothy stayed in this city only a few days. Luke stayed longer.

16:13-15 *Where prayer was customarily made:* Some religious women of

the city customarily met on the Sabbath for prayer. They had a place of meeting outside the city that was by the river. The four evangelists went there to meet with these religious people. Wherever religious people meet is where evangelists should go to teach the word of God. **Lydia ... heard us:** Luke explains that Lydia had a very open heart. She had traveled to Philippi from Thyatira (Rv 1:1; 2:18,24) and was selling cloth that had been dyed with an expensive purple dye that came from a shellfish of Thyatira. She was a business woman that was not from Philippi. It is worthy to note that in her travels with her work, she did not fail to meet with those who prayed and worshiped God. **The Lord opened her heart:** She was a worshiper of God. As Paul preached, his words touched her heart. The Lord thus opened her heart in that she was receptive to the preaching of the gospel. She was of a disposition to hear the word of God, and thus, her heart was opened to the preaching of God's word. **She and her household were baptized:** She and all her household, who were old enough to hear and believe on Jesus, chose to be immersed for the remission of sins (2:38). Those who were candidates to be baptized here were old enough to hear and give heed to the preaching of the gospel. After she was baptized, Lydia begged the evangelists to stay in her house while they were in the city (See 9:43; 10:6; 16:34; 17:5; 18:7; 21:16; Rm 12:13; 1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:8; 1 Pt 4:9). She desired Christian fellowship and encouragement for she knew that the evangelists would eventually

travel on to other areas in order to preach the good news of Jesus that she had heard. Those who assume their responsibility to teach others will thirst for the word of God. When one is filled with the word of God, there is a desire within his heart to tell what he knows.

UNJUSTLY BEATEN AND IMPRISONED

16:16-18 *Went to prayer:* The text indicates that the evangelists continued to go to the riverside to meet with the group that had prayer (vs 13). *A certain slave girl possessed:* It is stated that this slave girl had a spirit of divination. The Greek word here is that she had “a spirit of Python.” She was thus a false prophetess associated with the temple of Delphi. She was owned by certain wicked men who greedily used her supposed ability to speak falsely for their own profit (See Lv 19:31; 20:6,27; Dt 18:11; 1 Sm 28:3,17; 2 Kg 21:6, 1 Ch 10:13; Is 8:19). When the evangelists, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, were on their way to prayer, they were met by this slave girl. For some reason, the girl continued to follow the evangelists and was persistent in her proclamations about their work. She proclaimed to all that these men were the servants of the Most High God who proclaimed the way of salvation (Compare Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; 3:11; 5:7; Lk 4:41; 8:28). It seems that God was using the young girl to confirm that the evangelists were the servants of God. *The way of salvation:* See 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:22. *She did this for many days:* Though Paul was patient for some

time with the outcries of the woman, he became irritated with her nonsense. He thus commanded the spirit to come out of her, which it did that very moment (Mk 16:17).

16:19-21 Paul's exorcism of the possessed girl caused a great disturbance among the people, especially among those who were using her for their own profit. The girl's greedy owners saw that they had lost a source of great profit. They subsequently took hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace where the city officials customarily met for official judgments. Their source of great profit was lost, and thus, they turned on those who had destroyed their religious business. They falsely accused Paul and Silas before the magistrates. *Exceedingly trouble our city:* These greedy merchants accused that the evangelists were upsetting the city (17:8). However, the evangelists were not upsetting the city. It was the owners of the slave girl who were upset because they had lost a source of profit. Because they were upset, they were upsetting the city. *Teach customs that are not lawful:* The evangelists were accused of teaching new customs to Roman citizens that were contrary to Roman law. The evangelists were here actually being slandered. They were accused of teaching a religion that violated Roman law. But Luke wants Theophilus to understand that the Christianity that was taught by Paul was not contrary to Roman law. The slanderers of Christianity would only twist the teachings of the evangelists in order to make it appear that the evangelists were

teaching things that were contrary to the civil law of Rome.

16:22-24 Commanded them to be beaten: The whole Roman population in the city was put in an uproar because they thought that Roman law had been broken. The magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas. They commanded them, contrary to Roman law, to be beaten (2 Co 6:5; 11:23,25; 1 Th 2:2). Their beating was contrary to Roman law, for Paul, a Roman citizen, had not yet been tried in a court of law. The irony of the events here is that Paul was accused of teaching against Roman law, and subsequently, punished by misguided civil leaders who violated Roman law by beating him. When they had beaten them with many stripes (2 Co 11:25), they threw Paul and Silas into prison. **The inner prison:** The jailor was commanded to keep them securely in stocks in the most secure part of the prison in order that they not escape.

A JAILOR IS CONVERTED

16:25-30 Praying and singing hymns of praise to God: Though Paul and Silas had been beaten and thrown in jail, they were still in good spirits. They were singing praises to God as the jailor and other prisoners listened. In this case, they were singing praises to God in the presence of the unbelieving prisoners. **A great earthquake:** God caused this great earthquake in order to change the course of events (See 4:31). The earthquake shook the foundation of the entire jail. The cell doors were all opened and the shackles of all prisoners were miracu-

lously loosened (5:19; 12:7,10). **Was about to kill himself:** The jailor was suddenly awakened from his sleep by the earthquake. Evidently, it was so dark in the prison that he could see nothing. However, he at least realized that the prison cell doors were all open. He thus assumed that all the prisoners had escaped. Knowing that under Roman law he would be executed for allowing prisoners to escape, he drew his own sword and was about to kill himself and leave his family fatherless (12:19; 27:42). **Do yourself no harm:** Paul shouted to him out of the dark that he do himself no harm, for all the prisoners were still there. We are not told how many prisoners were there, but they were certainly different than prisoners who would have taken the opportunity to flee. They had obeyed the law of the land by not escaping. They had possibly fallen under the influence and teaching of Paul and Silas, and thus heeded their instructions not to escape. **He called for a light:** The jailor immediately called for a light to verify what Paul had said. It seems that he was so thankful that the prisoners had not escaped that he fell down before Paul and Silas. **What must I do to be saved:** The jailor had heard the evangelists teaching through the songs that they sang in prison. He thus wanted the faith that moved them to be so joyful in such dire circumstances (2:37; 9:6; 22:10). We must never underestimate the influence that Christians can have on those who experience the demeanor of their daily godly living. In this case, the behavior of Paul and Silas affected both the pris-

oners and the jailor.

16:31-34 Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ: Paul told the jailor that only in Jesus is there salvation (4:12). The jailor must believe in this Jesus who is both Lord and Christ (2:37; 13:38,39; Jn 3:16,36; 6:47; Rm 10:9-11; 1 Jn 5:10). Obedient response to this belief would lead to the salvation of both himself and his entire household. In the word "believe," therefore, was included all that was necessary in order to be saved. Though Paul did not mention that he must repent, we conclude that the jailor's belief would result in all that was necessary for him to do in order to be saved.

Spoke to him the word of the Lord: Paul and Silas thus told the jailor and all his family all the things they must do in order to be saved. It was the word of the Lord that motivated the jailor and his household to do that which was necessary to receive remission of sins (2:38; 22:16; Mk 16:16; 1 Pt 3:21). When the jailor thus heard the great news of the death of Jesus for his sins and the resurrection for his hope, he could not wait until morning in order to do what he had been told to do to be saved. In that same hour of the night all of them went to where he could wash and dress Paul and Silas' wounds from the beating. He and all his believing household made a choice to be baptized for the remission of their sins (2:38; see comments Rm 6:3-6). The jailor then took the evangelists to his house where he fed them. Because he and his family had believed in God, they greatly rejoiced over their salvation. With the conversion of the jailor and his

household, there were now two households that composed the members of the church in Philippi, Lydia's and the jailor's. The church was now a small group of dedicated individuals who through unusual circumstances had obeyed the gospel. There were two wage earners in the church, Lydia and the jailor. Lydia was an expatriate and the jailor had a government job. Though they were Christians for only a short time (vs 12), they sent support to Paul, Silas and Timothy when they went on to Thessalonica (See comments Ph 4:15-17).

PUBLIC APOLOGY

16:35-40 Let those men go: Paul and Silas evidently went back to the prison for the remainder of the night. When morning came, the magistrates, not knowing the events of the night, told the jailor to let them go. The jailor then told Paul and Silas the message of the magistrates that they were free to go and should go in silence and peace. It seems that the civil officials wanted the evangelists to leave the city without embarrassing themselves concerning their error of punishing a Roman who had not been officially tried. **Let them come themselves:** Paul knew that the magistrates had broken a Roman law that made them worthy of severe punishment. They had publicly beaten and imprisoned a Roman citizen (22:25-29) who had not been found guilty before an orderly trial. Therefore, Paul, as a Roman citizen, sought to teach the magistrates a most valuable lesson, as well as, let it be known to the whole city that they were innocent. The Philip-

pian disciples also had to be seen as a group of people who were not lawbreakers. Therefore, Paul demanded that the town rulers personally come to the prison and release them. **They feared:** The magistrates were very fearful of the situation. They knew that they were now the ones who had actually broken the law and were worthy of severe punishment. Luke records the details of this event in order to maintain the theme of the book. It was Paul's defense document before the Roman court. Christians abided by the laws of the land. They were not lawbreakers as some had accused them throughout the Roman Empire. **Pleaded with them:** The situation had now changed. The city officials came and pleaded with Paul and Silas to leave quietly lest their unjust punishment become known to higher government officials. They realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that they had unlawfully punished him. They also realized that Paul and Silas were the ones who were actu-

ally abiding by Roman law, and were thus, unjustly accused. Therefore, the magistrates brought Paul and Silas out of the city and asked them to leave quietly. Paul, Silas and Timothy then went to the house of Lydia and encouraged the brethren. They departed for Thessalonica, leaving Luke to work in building up the small group of disciples. The church in Philippi was now composed of two households, Luke and a few disciples. They were a poor group, having at one time contributed to others out of their deep poverty (See comments 2 Co 8:1-3). Nevertheless, when the evangelists left Philippi for Thessalonica, the households of the jailor and Lydia sent support to the evangelists in order to bear fruit by the preaching of the gospel to those who had not yet heard the gospel in other areas (See comments Ph 4:15-17). This small, poor and new group of disciples, therefore, was supporting evangelists from their very beginning as disciples of Jesus.

CHAPTER 17

COMMUNITY LEADERS BELIEVE IN JESUS

17:1,2 They: Notice that the pronoun of the narrative changes to "they," revealing that Luke remained in Philippi while the other evangelists continued on to Thessalonica. On their way to Thessalonica, Paul, Silas and Timothy walked the great Roman Egnatian road that passed through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia. Portions of the road still exists today. **Thessalonica:** They came to the city of Thessalonica that was

named after the sister of Alexander the Great (20:4; 27:2; Ph 4:16; 1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:1; 2 Tm 4:10). It was the capital city of Macedonia. **His custom was:** When they arrived in Thessalonica, Paul carried out one of his principal methods of evangelism. He preached to the Jews in the synagogue because he knew that in their frequent trips to Jerusalem they had already heard of Jesus (9:20; 13:5,14; 14:1; 16:13; 19:8; Lk 4:16). The dispersion of the Jews throughout the ancient world through the Assyrian and Babylo-

nian captivities laid the foundation for the preaching of the gospel. The early evangelists took advantage of this scattering of the Jews by going to the Jewish synagogues in order to proclaim the fulfillment of messianic prophecies in Jesus. Though the synagogues were not a part of the Sinai law, they were built by the Jews of the diaspora in the regions to which they had been scattered in order to maintain their identity. The synagogue was a community center of reference for Jewish faith. **Reasoned with them from the Scriptures:** In his preaching, Paul referred to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah (Ps 22; Is 53; 1 Th 2:1-16). As evangelists, they were skilled in teaching the prophecies of Jesus as a means to evangelize unbelievers.

17:3,4 The Christ had to suffer and rise again: Paul applied Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah to Jesus who suffered and died, but was raised from the dead (18:5,28; Lk 24:26,46; Gl 3:1). The Jews had thought that the Messiah would come in order to establish a physical kingdom on earth (1:6). In the application of the prophecies, therefore, Paul emphasized the fact that the Messiah would suffer and die. He explained that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth whom the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had rejected (Jn 1:11). Contrary to the teaching of the Jewish leaders, the Messiah was to suffer, die, be resurrected, and then ascend to heaven. He was not to reign on this earth. **Were persuaded:** Some of the Jews were convinced. Many of the devoted Greeks and some intellectual

women in the city joined Paul and Silas. Many of the Gentile believers turned from their idolatry to the living God (1 Th 1:9,10). On this occasion, we have no evidence that Paul worked any miraculous deeds in order to prove the authenticity of his message. He simply preached the gospel that fulfilled prophecy, which message had the power to change the thinking of those who heard (Rm 1:16).

17:5 But the Jews: The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica became envious of Paul and Silas. Their envy indicates that they lost their power of religious leadership over the Gentiles in the city. They thus recruited some trouble makers from the marketplace. Through these ungodly men they stirred up a mob against the evangelists. They attacked the house of Jason who was one of the disciples. They wanted to find Paul and Silas, but failed to do so at Jason's house (See Rm 16:21). The mob could not find Paul and Silas because they had been hidden by the brethren. Therefore, the mob violently dragged Jason and some of the other disciples before the rulers of the city and proclaimed that they had caused the confusion (See 16:20).

17:6 Turned the world upside down: The reputation of bold evangelists, and the tremendous impact of Christianity upon societies, had reached Thessalonica before the arrival of Paul and Silas. It was at this time that the impact of the gospel was making its way throughout the Roman Empire even before the coming of the early evangelists. Rather than being turned upside down as proclaimed by these unbelievers, the world was be-

ing spiritually turned right side up by the preaching of the gospel.

17:7 *Contrary to the decrees of Caesar:* These false accusers distorted the kingship of Jesus, saying that He was an earthly king as Caesar of Rome (See Lk 23:2; Jn 19:12; 1 Pt 2:13). Luke wanted Theophilus to know that as in Philippi, so here in Thessalonica, Paul did not violate any Roman law or teach anything that would be an insurrectionist theology against Rome (See 16:38,39). The teachings of Jesus were not meant to be a new civil government. They were meant to guide morally those in government (See Rm 13:1-7).

17:8,9 When the mob and rulers heard the accusations, they were greatly troubled. But they could not find Paul and Silas. Therefore, they made Jason and the other brethren pay bond in order to guarantee that they would not cause further disturbance in the city. One of the conditions for the return of this bond payment to the officials was probably that Paul and Silas had to leave town, which thing they did. However, the seed of the kingdom had already been planted in the hearts of those who would carry on with the preaching of the gospel (See comments 1 Th 1:6-10). Evangelists must not believe that the growth of the church depends on their abilities or their presence. It is God who gives the increase. The power of conversion is in the gospel (Rm 1:16), and the power of edification is in the word of God (20:32; Hb 4:12). Paul never stayed long in any city where he planted the church. He was able to impart the gospel and his life to the

people in only a few weeks, and then leave.

MANY THESSALONIANS BELIEVE

17:10,11 Because of the seriousness of the situation at Thessalonica, the disciples sent Paul and Silas off to Berea by night. Timothy may have stayed a brief time in Thessalonica in order to encourage the new disciples. Upon their arrival in Berea, as their custom was, Paul and Silas headed immediately for the synagogue (See vs 2). *Searched the Scriptures daily:* The Jews in Berea were more fair-minded than the Jews in Thessalonica. They willingly received the preaching of Paul and Silas. They daily investigated the Old Testament Scriptures to see if what Paul and Silas said was true (Is 34:16; Lk 16:29; Jn 5:39). From the example of the Bereans, and the testimony given here by the Holy Spirit through Luke, we understand that true nobility in the sight of God is that one allow God to speak to him through His inspired word. Those who do not allow God to speak to them through the Bible will be misled either by their emotions, traditions, or their teachings (See comments Lk 1:1-4; Ep 4:11-16). The emphasis on understanding and obeying the word of God, therefore, is on study of the word.

17:12 *Many of them believed:* As a result of the Bereans' study of the word of God, many discovered that the things that the evangelists said concerning Jesus as the Messiah were actually true. They believed in that they did everything that

was necessary in order to obey the gospel. The word “believed” includes both repentance and baptism. Many of the wealthy and influential Greeks and women believed and obeyed the gospel.

17:13,14 Stirred up the people:

When the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching in Berea, they went there also and stirred up the people against him. Evangelists must never underestimate the misguided zeal of those who would oppose the preaching of the gospel. **Sent Paul out:** The disciples in Berea sent Paul away by sea in order to protect him from the Jews. However, Silas and Timothy stayed behind in order to build up the body of Christ.

17:15 Conducted Paul... to Athens:

Paul was brought on his more than 300 kilometer journey from Berea to Athens by some of the Berean disciples who knew the way. Silas and Timothy evidently joined Paul later in Athens. However, a short time after Timothy arrived, Paul sent him back to Thessalonica in order to edify the new converts and to find out how they were fairing in the faith (1 Th 3:1-3). Silas may have been sent to either Philippi or Berea (18:5). After Paul reached Corinth, and stayed there for at least a year and a half, Silas and Timothy again rejoined him (18:5). When these two evangelists came, he was greatly encouraged.

PAUL MEETS

GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

17:16 At first, Paul was alone in Athens. Athens, Greece was a center of an-

cient philosophy. Three to four hundred years before, this city was the home of some of the greatest philosophers of the world. Well-known ancient philosophers as Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno once resided and taught in Athens. The culture, therefore, was based on the thinking of some of the greatest minds of the ancient world. **Paul waited:** While Paul was waiting for Timothy and Silas to rejoin him, he was provoked by the ignorance of the Athenians in their idol worship, for it was a city full of idols (See 2 Pt 2:8). The culture was permeated with Greek mythology and philosophy. It was the location of the great Parthenon which was a pagan temple that is still located there today. In their ignorance of any revelation from God, the Greeks had created an assortment of gods after their own imagination.

17:17 He reasoned in the synagogue: Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue who worshiped the true God (See vs 2). He affirmed that Jesus was the Messiah and fulfillment of all prophecies in reference to the Messiah. **And daily in the marketplace:** Paul also reasoned daily in the marketplace with anyone who happened to be there. In every situation and on every occasion Paul seems to find some place to preach Jesus (See 5:42).

17:18 Epicurean and Stoic philosophers: The Epicureans, after their founder, Epicurus (342-270 B.C.), believed that pleasure was the source of happiness in life. The Stoics, after their founder, Zeno (340-265 B.C.), believed that man was the center of all things and

that men should be self-controlled and self-sufficient. The Stoics denied the immortality of the soul of man. The philosophies of the Epicureans and Stoics exalted man in importance to the exclusion of all else. These philosophers, therefore, debated with Paul because their basic world view was contrary to the nature of what God would have men believe and do (See comments Mt 6:24; 22:37-40). Paul first preached to them the very foundation upon which Christianity is based, that is, Jesus and His resurrection (1 Co 15:1-4). These philosophers thought this to be a strange philosophy because the concepts of Paul's preaching contradicted the materialistic and naturalistic beliefs of both the Stoics and Epicureans. The concept of a resurrection was not a part of their thinking or their philosophy.

17:19-21 Brought him to the Areopagus: The Athenian philosophers brought Paul to the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, in order to have him officially present his thoughts at this common location for public debate. What Paul was speaking was something they had never before heard. They were certainly curious. The Areopagus was a large structure that overlooked the marketplace of Athens and served as a court and place for public discussion. **To hear some new thing:** It was a pastime of the Athenians to sit and listen to any new philosophy. When they perceived that Paul was speaking something that was entirely different from their past philosophers, they wanted to hear exactly what he believed.

SOME PHILOSOPHERS BELIEVE

17:22,23 You are very religious: Paul stood up and boldly addressed the Athenian philosophers. He stated that he perceived that in all things they were very religious, or at least very superstitious in their beliefs. They were people who considered religious matters as simply a philosophy of life. They were intellectual enough to reason that there was something beyond the existence of man and the material world. **To the Unknown God:** Paul had witnessed the objects that they had made to express their belief in gods that they had created after their own image. One inscription on an altar read, "To the Unknown God." Thus the Athenians yearned after the Deity they could not identify, but reasoned the He must exist (Compare Rm 1:20). They were not satisfied with any of the gods they had created in their own imagination. They at least realized that there must be a God greater than the imagination of man. This God must be greater than the gods they invented as a result of their superstitious beliefs and philosophical reasoning. They referred to this God as the "unknown God." It was this "unknown" God that Paul made known to them.

17:24 God who made the world: Paul said that this was the God who created the universe and everything in it (14:15; Gn 1:1,26,27; Dt 10:14; Ps 115:16; Mt 11:25; Hb 11:3). He is the controller of all things since all things came from Him. **Does not dwell in temples:** Since He created all things, then He is greater than all things. Things of

this world cannot contain the God who created all things of this world. Men cannot build temples with the things He created in order to make a dwelling place for Him (7:48-50; 1 Kg 8:27). The true and living God is not confined to the constructed sanctuaries of men.

17:25 This God cannot be worshiped through things that are made by the hands of men because He is the one who gives life and breath to all things (Is 42:5). He is the One who created the things that men seek to use to represent Him in idolatrous worship. The one true God was not created by man, but God created man (Compare Ps 50:9-12; see Gn 2:7; Nm 16:22; Jb 12:10; Zc 12:1).

17:26 *Of one man all nations:* From the first man Adam, God brought into existence all men who have lived on the earth (Gn 3:20; Dt 32:8; Jb 12:23; Dn 4:35). The brotherhood of the human race, therefore, depends on belief in this one true God as the One from whom all men of the earth have come. There can be no unity between cultures who create different gods after their own imagination. ***Determined ... times:*** God established the natural seasons of the year (See Ps 104:19). He established the order of heavenly bodies. The orderly occurrence of all things in the material world has been established by God. We conclude from the orderly design of all things, therefore, that there was a Designer above that which exists (See Ps 8). Order cannot come from chaos. God both created and set in order that which was created (Rm 1:20; see Cl 1:16). Therefore, rational men conclude that there is

an eternal Being behind the order that exists. ***Boundaries of their habitations:*** God made man a cultural and social being. Since all men are cultural and social, then all men naturally group themselves according to their cultural similarities in order to establish boundaries of society throughout the world.

17:27 *Grope after Him and find Him:* Men were created with a religious nature in order that they should seek after God (See Rm 1:20). This God is never far away (14:17; Dt 4:7; Ps 139:7,10; Jr 23:23,24). He is not a God who is found in some location. He is omnipresent, that is, He is present at all places at all times. God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and spirit is not confined to physical locations.

17:28 *In Him:* Metaphorically speaking, all humanity is in God since God is omnipresent (See Cl 1:17; Hb 1:3). We cannot escape His presence. We cannot live outside His domain. In Him all humanity dwells and is thus able to exist, for without the existence of God no man could continue existence. Therefore, we exist because of Him (Compare 2 Th 2:7-9). ***Poets:*** Reference here is either to Aratus of Tarsus, a Stoic philosopher (270 B.C.), or to Cleanthes of Assos (300-220 B.C.). Other Greek philosophers would have also come to this logical conclusion. The philosophers of Greece reasoned correctly that men had to have originated from a God who could have created all things (Gn 1:26).

17:29 *We are the offspring of God:* Since we originated from God, it is foolish to think that we can now originate God after the form of some idol we make

after our imagination (Is 40:18,19). God is greater than the imagination of man that is expressed through idols. God is far greater than man whom He created. It is impossible, therefore, for man to fully comprehend God. **The Divine Nature:** God is not physical as man. He does not have eyes, arms and legs. He is spirit and a spirit does not have a physical form (Jn 4:24). In our efforts to understand and relate to God, believers should be cautious about creating a god after their own physical being. Though we are created after the image of God, we must not conclude that the image of God is physical. The Divine Nature is spiritual, and thus, not after the physical form of man. The image of God after which we have been created is spiritual.

17:30,31 Times of ignorance: God has overlooked the times when men foolishly sought after Him through idols (14:16; Rm 3:25). Since the time of His revelation through the Son of God, He commands all men now to turn to Him (Ti 2:11,12). We must turn to God through Jesus (4:12). **Repent:** See 2:38; 26:20; Lk 13:3; 24:47; Ti 2:11,12; 1 Pt 1:14; 4:3. The reason for repentance is

that a time is coming when God will judge the world through Jesus (10:42; 5:22,27; Rm 2:16; 14:10; 2 Tm 4:1). God proved that He will do this by raising Jesus from the dead (2:24).

17:32-34 Some mocked: Some in the audience immediately reacted to the concept of the resurrection. They mocked. However, Paul stimulated the interest of those who were seeking truth. After he delivered his message on Mars Hill (the Areopagus), Paul left the wondering crowd of philosophers. With him went some who believed what he had said. Dionysius and a woman named Damaris, with some others, continued with Paul. Thus, a few converts were made in the city where some of the world's greatest philosophers originated. No matter what twisted philosophies may be taught in any society, there are always truth seekers present (18:10). Honest philosophers will reason themselves to the existence of the one true and living God. And once they reason themselves to the fact that God exists, then they will seek for the revelation that has come from Him.

CHAPTER 18

MANY CORINTHIANS BELIEVE

18:1-3 Came to Corinth: From Athens it was a short walk of about 90 kilometers over to Corinth. **He found ... Aquila ... Priscilla:** In A.D. 49 Claudius Caesar (11:28) had expelled all Jews from Rome. Among those who were expelled were two Jews by the name of

Aquila and Priscilla. Aquila, who was born in Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, came to live in Corinth where they set up their work of making tents (Rm 16:3; 1 Co 16:19; 2 Tm 4:19). They had arrived only a short time before Paul arrived. It is interesting to note in the text that both Aquila and Priscilla were

tentmakers. Priscilla was a partner in the work with her husband Aquila. **Of the same trade:** When Paul came to Corinth, he stayed with Aquila and Priscilla because he was also a tentmaker. Throughout his mission journeys, Paul worked in making tents to support himself while he preached the gospel (20:34; 1 Co 4:12; 9:14; 2 Co 11:7; 12:13; 1 Th 2:9; 4:11; 2 Th 3:8). What he lacked in supporting himself in the work in Athens and Corinth, the disciples in Macedonia supplied (2 Co 11:9).

18:4 Reasoned in the synagogue: While in Corinth, Paul continued one of his methods of evangelism, that is, preaching the gospel in the synagogues (9:20; 13:5,14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:2; 19:8). It was in the synagogues of the Jews where the Old Testament was continually read. It was a place where he could preach Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, since many of the Jews had already heard of Jesus on their annual Passover/Pentecost trips to Jerusalem.

18:5,6 When Timothy and Silas came from the newly established Macedonian churches (17:14,15), they brought good news of the disciples' spiritual growth and desire to see Paul again (See comments 1 Th 1:6-10; 3:6-10). **Compelled in the spirit:** As a result of the coming of his fellow evangelists, and the report concerning the Macedonian disciples, Paul was greatly encouraged in his spirit to preach (18:28; compare 2 Co 11:8,9; Ph 4:15). He thus testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah for whom they had been waiting. **Resisted:** As in most synagogues where he

preached, there were those Jews in Corinth who rejected what Paul had to say (13:45). **Blasphemed:** They said that what he was saying was not from God, and thus, must be from Satan (See comments Mt 9:3; 12:31). Therefore, since Paul had given these Jews a chance to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, he let it be known to them that he had relieved himself of his responsibility to preach to them (Lv 20:9,11,12; 2 Sm 1:16; 1 Kg 2:33; Ez 18:13; 33:4,6,8; see 13:51). He did the same with them that he had done with the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia (13:46-51; see Ne 5:13; Mt 10:14). He stopped preaching specifically to the unreceptive Jews in Corinth and began preaching to the receptive Gentiles in the area (13:46-48; 28:28).

18:7,8 One who worshiped God: Paul left the synagogue and went to meet in the house of Justus with those who were willing to listen. Justus was a devout man, and one who continually worshiped God. Since his house was connected to the synagogue, it became a natural place for the disciples to meet. Until the end of the 3rd century, Christians met almost exclusively in the homes of the members. Doing so presented a close fellowship wherein relationships could be established and individuals could be encouraged. The early Christian's house fellowships greatly aided in their efforts to bond with one another. **Crispus ... believed:** Though many Jews rejected the preaching of Paul in Corinth, Crispus, who was the ruler of the synagogue, also believed and obeyed

the gospel (See 1 Co 1:14). With his household, many of the other Corinthians believed and obeyed the gospel in Corinth. We must not assume that there were infants in this household because the text says nothing about infants. All who were baptized were those who could hear and believe.

18:9-11 There were many people seeking truth in Corinth who would believe if they had the chance to hear the gospel. Therefore, the Lord provided a special vision for Paul in order to encourage him to continue preaching in the strategic city of commerce of the ancient world. The Lord encouraged Paul by saying that no one would harm him in the city while he was there (See Mt 28:20; Jr 1:18,19). The Lord said that the sincere people in Corinth who sought to believe, must have the opportunity to hear the gospel. God would not send an angel or the Holy Spirit to preach to the truth-seekers in Corinth (See comments 8:26). They would be able to hear only if Paul continued to preach. Every evangelist must assume that in every city to which he goes, there are those who are seeking the truth. With great patience he must seek these people, for when they hear they will obey the gospel. As a result of the Lord's encouragement, Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half. **Teaching the word of God:** This is the work of the evangelist in reference to the church (See comments 6:2; Mt 23:8). The evangelist must preach Christ to the lost. He must also edify the saved by teaching the word of God (Mt 28:19,20).

18:12,13 Gallio: Archaeological

discoveries prove that this man ruled as governor of Achaia during this period. When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews determined to stop the effectiveness of Paul's evangelistic work in Corinth. They thus brought him before the place of judgment in the city. **Judgment seat:** In the Roman court system, when official judgments were made, they were made from the one who sat upon the judgment seat. On this occasion, Paul's accusers said that he was teaching things that were contrary to their law. They were right in the sense that Paul taught that one must worship God according to the law of God, and not according to their religious laws. But they were actually accusing him of worshiping God contrary to Roman law. They thus accused Paul of insurrection against the Roman government.

18:14-17 O Jews: When Paul was about to defend himself before Gallio at the judgment seat, Gallio rebuked the Jews for bringing Paul before him concerning a matter of their own law. Gallio was neither interested in their law nor in this case. He was impatient with the Jews, and thus told them to settle this matter among themselves, for he had no desire to make judgments concerning such religious matters (See 23:29; 25:19). Gallio subsequently drove the Jews out of the judgment hall. The Greeks then released their frustrations on Sosthenes who was now the new ruler of the synagogue, since Crispus became a disciple of Jesus. The uncontrollable mob of Jews thus beat Sosthenes before the judgment seat of Gallio, while Gallio, who cared

nothing for what happened, possibly looked on.

PAUL RETURNS TO ANTIOCH

18:18-21 *Took leave from the brethren:* After the events before the judgment seat of Gallio, Paul continued preaching in Corinth for a short time. With Aquila and Priscilla, he eventually sailed for Antioch of Syria (Rm 16:3,4; 1 Co 16:19). When they came to Cenchrea, he had cut his hair because of a vow that he had made to God (See 21:23,24; Nm 6:1-21). We are not told what vow he had made. However, in this case we do see Paul keeping one of the Sinai laws that he had freedom to do. When Paul, Aquila and Priscilla arrived in Ephesus, he entered the synagogue and preached Jesus as the Messiah (17:2). Though the brethren asked him to stay longer in Ephesus, Paul was hastening on to Jerusalem, and thus did not tarry in Ephesus. *Left them there:* Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, and then journeyed on to Jerusalem. The church was thus initially established in Ephesus by Paul, Aquila and Priscilla. Paul was there only a short time. However, the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla became the evangelistic force to preach the gospel in Ephesus. *He sailed from Ephesus:* Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast when many Jews would be there (See 2:1). If he was in Jerusalem at this time, he would be able to encounter thousands of Jews who annually came there from throughout the world. However, upon his departure, he encouraged the

brethren in Ephesus that if it were God's will, he would return to Ephesus (Js 4:13-15; see Rm 1:10; 15:32; 1 Co 4:19; 16:7; Hb 6:3).

18:22 Paul sailed from Ephesus and went on to Caesarea in Palestine where he greeted the church. Wherever he went, he sought the disciples in order to meet with them. *Gone up and greeted the church:* From Caesarea he went up in altitude to Jerusalem where he met the church and fulfilled his vow (vs 18). His desire was to be in Jerusalem for the coming feast that is mentioned in verse 21. We would correctly assume, therefore, that he went up to Jerusalem as explained in this verse, in order encounter Jews who came to the Passover/Pentecost feast. *Went down:* After the feast in Jerusalem, he returned to Antioch of Syria from where he had started his first and second mission journeys.

THE THIRD MISSION JOURNEY

18:23 This one verse in Acts mentions the initiation of the third mission journey. Paul stayed some time in Antioch, and then decided to go into Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen the disciples. This was one of the key works of an evangelist (14:22; 15:32,41). It was a work that was important at this particular time in the early development of the church because of the threat of Jewish legalism (See comments in ch 15 and in intro. to Gl). The early New Testament disciples had no New Testaments by which to be guided in belief and behavior. Therefore, one of the important works of the early evangelists was to con-

tinually visit and instruct the disciples. We would conclude that such a ministry is continually needed in view of the fact that teachers who have spent years in study of the word must move among the disciples in order to instruct and edify. Early evangelists continued to move among the early disciples in order that they ground them in the word of God (See comments Lk 4:42-44).

THE WORK OF APOLLOS

18:24 *A certain Jew named Apollos:*

While Paul was traveling through Galatia, Phrygia, Achaia and Macedonia, there was a young teacher who came to Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt (See 1 Co 1:12; 3:4-6,22; 4:6; 16:12; Ti 3:13). He was a Jew named Apollos who was born in and grew up in the city of Alexandria of Egypt, which city was named after Alexander the Great who founded the city in 332 B.C. **Eloquent man:** He was a well-educated man, possibly having graduated from one of the many educational institutions of Alexandria. **Mighty in the Scriptures:** Apollos had a good knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. Having lived in Alexandria as a Jew, he would have been able to speak Coptic (the language of the area), Greek (the language of commerce of the Roman Empire), Hebrew (the scholastic language of the Scriptures), and possibly Aramaic (the spoken language of the Jews of Palestine).

18:25 *Instructed in the way of the Lord:* Apollos had been instructed according to God's word, though his knowledge of the fulfillment of Messianic

prophecies was limited. **Knowing only the baptism of John:** He had heard only by word of mouth the preaching of John the Baptist concerning the Messiah. Nevertheless, what he knew he spoke forth accurately with great fervor (Rm 12:11). He spoke and taught accurately those things of the Lord that he had been taught by others. Nevertheless, he had heard only of the baptism of John that was unto repentance and for remission of sins (See 13:24; 19:3,4; Mt 3:3; Mk 1:4,5).

18:26 *Speak boldly in the synagogue:* Apollos knew enough to speak boldly in the synagogue concerning the Messiah about whom John had spoken. **They took him aside:** When the humble tentmakers, Aquila and Priscilla (18:2), heard his teaching, they determined that he needed to complete his knowledge of the Messiah by hearing of Jesus. Therefore, they privately took him aside and explained to him that the Messiah had come, and that men must now be baptized under the authority of His name in order to be saved. They did not make a public matter out of their teaching of Apollos. Though he had taught something in public that was not true, they still corrected him in private. They evidently allowed him to make any public corrections of what he had taught.

18:27 After being instructed by these two tentmakers, this great evangelist desired to go to Achaia, specifically Corinth. **The brethren ... wrote:** The brethren in Ephesus wrote a letter to encourage the disciples in Achaia to receive him (1 Co 16:3; 2 Co 3:1; Cl 4:10; see Ti

3:13). It was a practice of the brethren in the New Testament to make a statement of the faithfulness for a traveling evangelist. When Apollos later arrived in Achaia, he carried out one of the works of an evangelist. He encouraged and strengthened the church.

18:28 *Showing by the Scriptures:* Apollos was a powerful man both in public debate and in knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. He vigorously refuted the Jews in Achaia in public dis-

ussion. He proved from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Messiah (9:22; 17:3; 18:5; Lk 24:44). Since he had only the Old Testament Scriptures, he was able to use the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Bible students today should be able to do the same. Every disciple should know those prophecies by heart that prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

CHAPTER 19

THE ONE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

The historical background of the church in Ephesus establishes the foundation upon which chapters 19 & 20 can be understood. At one time, there was initially one assembly of the disciples in Ephesus in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Co 16:19). There was possibly another group of about twelve disciples who were later rebaptized by Paul (19:1-7). After the mass conversion in Acts 19, there were certainly other house assemblies that were established throughout the city of Ephesus, since the church grew beyond the meeting capacity of the house of Aquila and Priscilla and the house of the rebaptized twelve.

When considering the New Testament information concerning the Christians throughout the region of Ephesus, we learn through Luke that all the Christians were considered the one church of Ephesus. However, this one church assembled at different locations throughout the city. It was a church of several assemblies. By the time the book of Rev-

elation was written, John also addressed "*the church of Ephesus*" (Rv 2:1). Since Revelation was probably written the latter part of the 1st century or even before A.D. 70, we can assume that the Christians' meeting in the houses of Aquila and Priscilla, and the rebaptized twelve, had long outgrown the houses of these first Christians. The disciples were meeting in houses throughout the metropolitan area of Ephesus, a city of at least a quarter million people. But Luke and John still speak of the one church in Ephesus.

Our knowledge of the beginning of the work in Ephesus starts in Acts 18. Acts 18:24-28 mentions Aquila and Priscilla present in the synagogue of Ephesus on Saturday. We must keep in mind that the synagogue was not a place of worship. It was a cultural center of the Jews who came there on Saturdays for the reading and teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. The particular incident that is mentioned in Acts 18:26-28 took place on a Saturday, not at a meeting of the saints on Sunday. We say

this because of the nature of Apollos' arrival and delivery of his messages. He first "*spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord*" to the church when he first arrived in Ephesus (18:25). The conjunction "and" between verses 24 & 25, can be translated, "then." Regardless of the translation, there seems to be a time period between the two verses. Apollos first preached the things of the Lord to the church, and then began to address those in the synagogue. Acts 18:25 states that after his speaking and teaching diligently to the brethren, "*he began to speak boldly in the synagogue.*" What probably happened is that he first found the brethren and spoke to them. This could have been the rebaptized twelve that Paul later baptized in the name of Jesus (19:1-7). After speaking to at least one of the groups of disciples in the city, Apollos began speaking in the synagogue. Luke's reference to his speaking "boldly" was not in the context of his speaking to the brethren. His bold speaking was in reference to his speaking to unbelievers in the synagogue.

We do not know how long after meeting with the brethren that Apollos began to speak in the synagogue. It was possibly a week or so. The text just says he spoke initially the things of the Lord, and then began to speak boldly in the synagogue. Since he was confused on the subject of baptism, we assume that he never encountered the house group of Aquila and Priscilla before he went to the synagogue, which could be possible since Aquila and Priscilla did not know of the house group of the rebaptized twelve

before Paul encountered them. What we do know is that it was in the synagogue where Aquila and Priscilla came into contact with Apollos after his initial arrival. They encountered him in the synagogue since they went to the synagogue on Saturdays to hear the Old Testament Scriptures read and taught, as well as make contacts for possible conversion to Jesus.

Some commentators have assumed that Apollos started the house group of the twelve disciples that Paul later rebaptized (19:1-7). He could have started this group before he met Aquila and Priscilla while preaching in the synagogue. After being instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, he immediately went on to Achaia before rebaptizing these disciples in the name of Jesus. When Paul later revisited the city, he encountered the twelve and then rebaptized them. However, it is probable that the twelve had visited Jerusalem during the ministry of John the Baptist, but before the ministry of Jesus. They had simply been meeting since that visit which was probably about twenty-five to thirty years before Paul met them. They had been meeting faithfully in their homes for this number of years before they were encountered by the apostle Paul, a testimony to great faithfulness.

After Aquila and Priscilla were left in Ephesus on Paul's second mission journey, and after the incident concerning Apollos, the church continued to grow in the city. We can assume that many groups started assembling throughout the city. As stated before, we assume that the rebaptized twelve continued meeting in houses after they were rebap-

tized. Then in the context of Acts 19, there was a mass conversion that surely increased the number of disciples beyond the houses of Aquila and Priscilla and the house of the rebaptized twelve. Luke recorded that the word of God grew mightily in Ephesus (19:20). In Acts 19 Luke records that it grew mightily among the Gentiles. The church had grown in Ephesus so much that it even endangered the idol making industry of the city (See 19:24-27).

If one can envision the tremendous number of members meeting throughout the city of Ephesus, then it is easy to understand what Luke meant when he recorded Paul's revisit to the area on his way back to Jerusalem in Acts 20. He came to the island of Miletus south of Ephesus and "*sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church*" (20:17). This was the church of the entire region of Ephesus, which church consisted of a cluster of many groups meeting on Sundays at different locations throughout the metropolitan area of the city. There was no denominationalizing of the church as some have assumed the situation was in Ephesus. Luke simply stated that the elders of the church of Ephesus were called to meet with Paul. The elders, therefore, functioned throughout the city of Ephesus. There were no clusters of elders who functioned separate from all the elders as a whole. All the elders were elders of all the disciples throughout all the region of Ephesus.

During the Miletus meeting, Paul reminded the elders how he was with them from the first day when he came to Asia

(20:18). He was with the elders of the church of Ephesus, not the churches of Ephesus, nor the elderships of different independent churches throughout Ephesus. He had taught them "*publicly and from house to house*" (20:20). He exhorted them, "*Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God ...*" (20:28). "All the flock" refers to all the members of the church in Ephesus. The elders were "among" all the members of the church in Ephesus. Therefore, they were to shepherd the church of Ephesus which included all the saints of the city of Ephesus. The practice of denominating groups of disciples meeting in different locations throughout a city was foreign to the existence of the church in the 1st century.

EPHESIAN DISCIPLES BELIEVE

19:1 Apollos had left Ephesus and traveled on to Corinth by the time Paul traveled through Asia and had come to Ephesus. ***Finding certain disciples:*** In Ephesus he found about twelve men who were followers of Jesus, but they had been immersed with the immersion of John the Baptist (18:25; Mk 1:4,5; Lk 7:29; Jn 1:15,26,27). These may have been disciples that Apollos had taught or they may have been taught by some to which he had preached, but had not received instruction concerning baptism in the name of Jesus for remission of sins. However, it is more likely that they were disciples of John the Baptist. They could have either personally been immersed by

John on a visit to Judea or immersed by someone who was a disciple of John. If so, they would have been meeting together for several years before Paul found them on this trip. Luke refers to them as disciples in the sense that they had followed Jesus as the Messiah because of the teachings of John the Baptist. In the latter part of His ministry, John had taught concerning Jesus, which teaching was eagerly received and preached by men as Apollos from North Africa. It is also significant to see that the church had been established in Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla by the time Paul arrived on this journey.

19:2 When he first arrived in Ephesus, Paul did not know that the disciples had been baptized only unto John's baptism. ***Have you received:*** Since it was a part of his ministry as a Christ-sent apostle to freely impart the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to all believers (See Mt 10:8), Paul questioned them as to whether they had received any miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit since they were baptized. He asked this question because it was a work of the Christ-sent apostles to lay hands on disciples everywhere they went in order that all believers receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (See comments 8:16-18). These disciples responded that they had heard some things about Jesus through the preaching of Apollos. However, they answered Paul when he spoke of the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh that they had not heard of this great event of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles (2:1-4). They had not

heard that the Spirit was to be received by the laying on of the apostles' hands (8:18; Rm 1:11). We must also note that Paul asks for that which was a visible evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The "reception" of the Spirit was something that could be perceived. It could be assumed, therefore, that Paul is here talking about the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit that could be visually discerned, thus he speaks of the miraculous giving and receiving of the gifts of the Spirit. This case, as well as the one described in 8:14-17, could be a commentary on what the phrase "receive the Holy Spirit" means in 2:38. Acts 8:14-17 teaches that by the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was "given" and "received." Here Paul lays his hands on these disciples as Peter and John did in 8:17. As a result, these baptized believers received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. They thus partook of the promise of 2:38 (See comments 8:38,39; 8:14-18).

19:3 *Into what then were you baptized:* Since these disciples had not heard of the reception of the Spirit, Paul was then led to question them concerning their baptism, for he knew that they had been baptized. They responded by saying that they had been baptized only into John's baptism.

19:4 Since John's baptism was valid only until the official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, Paul knew that they had been baptized for the wrong reasons because they had been baptized into John's baptism after the day of Pentecost.

John had said that believers must be baptized in the name of Jesus who would come after him. John's baptism (1:5; 11:16; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:15,27,30) was only in preparation for the coming of Jesus in whose name all must now be baptized (8:12,16; 10:48; Mt 28:19).

19:5 When these disciples heard this, they willingly accepted the fact that they had been baptized for the wrong purpose. ***Baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus:*** This was not a statement to be said at the time of the baptism. It was something that was done (See comments Mt 28:19; compare Cl 3:17). They were baptized again under the authority of Jesus who was now reigning as King of all things (2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48). This is the only case in the New Testament where people were rebaptized. It is significant to notice that they were rebaptized when they realized that they were initially baptized for the wrong reasons. This also brings into question the baptism of the apostles and others who were baptized by John's baptism before Acts 2. They probably did not have to be rebaptized for remission of sins again since they were initially baptized when the baptism of John was valid, though they may have been rebaptized in the name of Jesus (See comments Mk 1:4).

19:6,7 *Laid hands on them:* After they were baptized, they received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of Paul's hands (8:17,18; Rm 1:11; see Mk 16:17-20). As a result of the laying on of the apostle's hands, these disciples spoke in different languages. They also taught the word of God by in-

spiration. This case again affirms the fact that all who were baptized in the 1st century had a right to the laying on of the Christ-sent apostles' hands in order to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the promise of Joel 2:28 (See comments 2:38,39). This is clearly affirmed in the case of 8:14-17 as well as here. As Jesus had instructed the apostles, freely they received such power and freely they were to give to others (Mt 10:8). If one fails to see the plenteous giving of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands in the 1st century, he will fail to fully understand the organic function of the early church. One purpose for the miraculous gifts was to build up the church. Christians had no Bibles to study. Therefore, it was the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit, specifically the gift of prophecy (teaching), to build up the church until the New Testament Scriptures were written and distributed among the churches (See comments 1 Co 12). Therefore, to assume that these gifts were sparsely given throughout the churches by the apostles would be assuming something that was contrary to the very purpose for which the gifts were given. We must remember that the promise of Joel 2:28 was for all flesh (2:16,17; see comments At 2:16,17,38,39; Mk 16:14-20). The promise of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit came only by the laying on of the apostles' hands, and thus, the miraculous gifts cannot be imparted today because all Christ-sent apostles have died. Christians today do not need the miraculous gifts simply because they have been given the full revelation of God

through the written word of God (2 Pt 1:3; Jd 3; Rv 22:18,19). God commends the church today to the power of the word of God in order that disciples be built up on the foundation of the knowledge of Jesus (20:32; Hb 4:12; 2 Pt 3:18).

CHRISTIANITY PREVAILS OVER RELIGION

19:8 Into the synagogue: When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he boldly debated with the Jews in the synagogue. He proved from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (17:1,2; 18:4; 28:23). **Things concerning the kingdom of God:** He persuaded many Jews that Jesus, who was upon the throne of David and at the right hand of the Father in heaven, was now reigning as King of all things (See comments Mt 16:18,19; Cl 1:13). The Jews thought that the Messiah would reign over an earthly kingdom (See comments 1:6). However, Paul argued from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Messiah would reign over a spiritual kingdom (Lk 17:20,21; Jn 18:36-38).

19:9 Some were hardened: Some were defiant (7:51; Rm 2:5). They were hardened in the sense that the occasion of Paul's preaching gave them the opportunity to reject his message. They thus blasphemed against the Way of Christianity (9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14) by saying that it was a false religion (2 Tm 1:15; 2 Pt 2:2; Jd 10). **He departed from them:** After the Jews had manifested their lack of receptivity, he took the disciples from the synagogue to meetings in homes. He changed his ministry to teaching in the hall or school of Tyrannus. It is possible

that during this time when Paul was in Ephesus that he wrote the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Co 16:5-9).

19:10 All those who dwell in Asia heard the word: Paul continued his teaching in this school for two years. As a result of his teaching others the truth, all those in Asia heard the word of God as members went out from the Ephesian church to all the region of Asia. This method of evangelism was quite successful since disciples were trained who were both of the Jewish and Greek cultures (See 2 Tm 2:2). The occasion of Paul's teaching in this school in order to evangelize all Asia explains why the Holy Spirit did not want him to personally go into either Asia or Bithynia in 16:6,7.

TRUE MIRACLES AND MAGICAL TRICKS

19:11-17 Special powers: At the same time Paul was teaching, God allowed special miracles to be worked through his hands (14:3; see comments 5:15; Mk 16:14-16; Hb 2:3,4). Even handkerchiefs and aprons which had been brought into contact with Paul's body were taken to the sick in order to heal them (See 2 Co 12:12). There was no power in the handkerchiefs and aprons. The power was from God through Paul. Evil spirits left those in whom they indwelt (Mt 4:24). A simple touch of a handkerchief or apron that had come into contact with Paul's body, was able to cast these evil spirits out. God allowed these special miracles in order to produce a confrontation between true supernatural powers and the deceptive works of sor-

cerers in the city of Ephesus. **Itinerant Jewish exorcists:** There were some traveling Jewish exorcists in Ephesus who claimed to be able to cast out demons. They saw that Paul was successful in doing such by the authority of Jesus. Therefore, they attempted to do the same. These exorcists counterfeited Paul's miraculous works because they had never before cast out any demons (Compare Mt 12:27; Lk 11:19). **Seven sons of Sceva:** There were in Ephesus seven sons of Sceva who was a Jewish chief priest. These false exorcists tried to cast out demons by the authority of Jesus' name. **Who are you:** The evil spirit said to the sons of Sceva that he knew Paul but he did not know these who pretended to have supernatural authority. He recognized the authority in Jesus, but stated that the sons of Sceva had no such authority. Therefore, the demon-possessed man from whom they were attempting to cast out a demon, leaped on these fake exorcists. He overcame them and tore off their clothes. The naked exorcists subsequently ran wounded out of the house. **This was known:** As a result of this most unusual event, fear came upon all in the city (2:43; 5:5,11; Lk 1:65; 7:16). They had never before seen a demon cast out (See comments Lk 8:34-37). The miraculous exorcism that Paul worked was visibly different than the magical tricks of the presumptuous exorcists of the city. The residents of Ephesus saw the authority of Paul and thus magnified the One whom he preached. They saw that Paul truly commanded the power of the supernatural as opposed to

those who claimed to have miraculous power, but actually, only worked magical tricks.

19:18,19 Disclosing their practices: Those who believed, came confessing that the things which they claimed to be supernatural were only magical tricks. They told everyone how they had worked illusions in order to deceive people into believing that they could command the supernatural. **Practiced magic:** Magic in religion is practiced for the purpose of deceiving men. Miracles are worked by the power of God in order to prove that men represent a Higher Power (See Jn 3:2). **Burned them in the sight of all:** Many of those in Ephesus who had practiced magical tricks brought the books of instruction of their magic and burned them before everyone. They wanted everyone to know that such things were useless and had no supernatural power or effect upon men. The cost of all these books at the time was approximately two million U.S. dollars.

19:20 As a result of all the events of Paul's miracles and the public burning of the books of magic, the number of disciples in Ephesus grew (6:7; 12:24). When men saw the conviction of those who committed themselves to the truth, they were convinced that Christianity was true because it originated from a true Christ (See 1 Th 1:9). **Grew mightily:** See 6:7; 12:24; 13:49; 19:20.

FALSE FAITHS FALL BEFORE CHRISTIANITY

19:21,22 Paul purposed ... to go to Jerusalem: By direction of the Holy

Spirit, Paul now planned to go to Rome (18:21; 23:11; Rm 1:13; 15:22-29). God was working in his ministry in order to get him to the highest court of the world. God wanted Christianity put on trial before the world. However, Paul first wanted to revisit the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia (20:1-3), and then go to Jerusalem (20:1-3). He wanted to stay in Ephesus for a short time longer in order to take advantage of some great evangelistic opportunities that opened up to him (1 Co 16:8,9). Therefore, he sent Timothy and Erastus (Rm 16:23; 2 Tm 4:20) before him into Macedonia and Achaia (See 1 Co 4:17; 16:10). They were to go before him in order to edify the disciples and prepare them for his coming.

19:23 *Great disturbance concerning the Way:* While in Ephesus, great opposition was led by Demetrius against the Way, the community of believers (9:2; see 1 Co 15:32). ***The Way:*** See 9:2; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14,22. The opposition in Ephesus came from those whose religious businesses were threatened by the preaching of the gospel in the community (See 16:19-24).

19:24 Demetrius was a silversmith in Ephesus who made silver shrines for the fertility goddess Diana, or Artemis. He and others made a great amount of money by making these idols that were sold to visitors who came to Ephesus to worship at the temple of Diana.

19:25 When this business was weakened by the great conversion of many Ephesians to the faith, he called together all those who were associated with the

business of making idols. When the financial security of religious leaders is threatened by the truth, one can always expect opposition.

19:26 *This Paul:* The effect of the preaching of Paul extended throughout all Asia, and thus, Paul was known for exposing the fallacy of idol worship and those who made money through the marketing of false religion. Demetrius reminded them that their business was endangered by the preaching of Paul. This was not only true in Ephesus, but also in all Asia. Many were turned away from idol worship. Demetrius was right by saying that many had been turned away from worshiping gods that had been created after the image of man and formed into idols by the hands of men (See 17:29; Dt 4:18; Ps 115:4; Is 44:10-20; Jr 10:3; 1 Co 8:4; 10:19; Rv 9:20).

19:27 *The temple of the great goddess Artemis:* The temple of Artemis (Diana) in Ephesus was truly a great structure. People throughout the Greek and Roman worlds passed through and marveled at its magnificent size and architecture. The Greek name for this god was Artemis and the Roman name was Diana. Scholars believe that the idol of Artemis (Diana) was a fallen meteorite that was set up for worship in this great temple. The temple was one of the most famous temples of the ancient world. It was known as one of the seven wonders of the world. It was the largest marble temple ever constructed and was the center of immoral idol worship. It served as a center of banking, schooling, religion and culture for those in Ephesus and

much of the western part of Asia Minor. It was here that the Ephesians and those of the area worshiped the false goddess Artemis (Diana). This great false religion was now under attack by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, those who made their money selling idols to the worshipers, were now in financial trouble. ***This our craft in danger:*** When the business owners and workers of the idol trade heard what Demetrius said, they were furious. They cried out with hysteria that the great goddess Artemis was the goddess of the Ephesians.

19:28-30 *The whole city was filled with confusion:* A hysterical mob of people soon developed and rushed into the theater of Ephesus which would seat over 25,000 people. They had seized Gaius (20:4; Rm 16:23; 1 Co 1:14; see 3 Jn) and Aristarchus (20:4; 27:2; Cl 4:10; Pl 24) who were two of Paul's traveling companions. ***Paul wanted to go into the assembly:*** In order to rescue his two friends and to address the mob with the gospel, Paul wanted to go in among the fanatical mob of people to preach. However, the local brethren knew the fanaticism of this cult because many of them had once been worshipers of Artemis. Therefore, they restrained Paul, knowing that the mob would beat him to death if he went into the theater.

19:31 Even some of the officials of Asia who were Paul's friends, sent word that he should not go into the theater and address the people.

19:32 *The assembly was confused:* The crowd of people was totally con-

fused. Most had only joined in the mob simply because of the excitement. They did not know why everyone had gathered together. Such assemblies are typical of some churches today who encourage their members to lose all sobriety in a fit of hysteria and confusion (See 1 Co 14:33-40). ***Assembly:*** The Greek word here is *ekklesia*. It is a word that means a called out participatory assembly. It is the word that was used by the Holy Spirit in most cases of the New Testament to refer to God's people. Where it is used in reference to the community of God it is translated in English translations with the word "church." Here it is used in its generic meaning.

19:33-35 There were Jews in the assembly who despised idolatry. They tried to put Alexander forward in order to explain that Paul, a Jew, was not associated with them, for they also opposed him. Alexander tried to calm the people in order to make a defense. When the crowd found out that Alexander was a Jew, the anti-Jew multitude defiantly cried out for two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." ***The town clerk:*** The secretary of Ephesus, who was an Ephesian executive officer, finally calmed the mob. He reminded the people that Ephesus was the official keeper of the image of Artemis. The image of Artemis which they worshiped had fallen down from the sky. The object was probably a meteorite that the people thought was sent from the gods.

19:36-41 The town secretary said that since these facts cannot be denied, they should be quiet and not do anything

rash. He reminded them that neither Gaius nor Aristarchus were temple robbers or blasphemers of the goddess Artemis. If Demetrius, and those in the idol trade had any complaint, the clerk said that they should settle such in an orderly court of law, not in an unlawful assembly as this mob. The clerk then

warned them that all were in danger of causing an unlawful uproar that would bring the Roman government down upon them. If they continued, they might cause a riot in the city that was against strict Roman law. After the clerk warned them of these things, the assembly willingly dispersed with his official dismissal.

CHAPTER 20

THE DISCIPLES PREACH IN GREECE

20:1 *Departed to go to Macedonia:*

When the uproar in the temple of Artemis (Diana) in Ephesus had ceased, Paul assembled the disciples together for a farewell meeting. From Ephesus he left for the province of Macedonia to visit the Christians in Philippi and Thessalonica. On the way, he passed through Troas, where he waited for Titus whom he had earlier sent to Achaia (2 Co 2:12,13). However, when Titus did not arrive, he went on to Macedonia (2 Co 7:5,6). During this time, Paul also visited Illyricum (Rm 15:19ff). We must also keep in mind that while Paul made this trip through the region to which he had formerly gone, he was collecting a contribution for the Jewish disciples in Judea who were suffering from a famine (1 Co 16:1,2).

20:2,3 *Exhortation:* It was the work of the evangelist to edify the brethren by teaching the word of God. After encouraging the Macedonian disciples, Paul went to Greece, or Achaia. He stayed in Achaia for three months, during which time he probably wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome. *The Jews plotted*

against him: He then intended to return by ship to Antioch of Syria. However, he again discovered a murder plot against him by the Jews (9:23; 23:12; 25:3; 2 Co 11:26). Because the plot was to kill him at sea, he decided to return by land through Macedonia.

20:4,5 Representative evangelists of the church went with him. These were men who were probably sent with Paul to take the famine relief contribution of the Gentile Christians to Judean Jewish Christians (See 1 Co 16:1-3). Because of the great amount of money, it was wise to have with him a great company of men. Sopater was from Berea. Aristarchus (19:29; 27:2; Cl 4:10) and Secundus were from Thessalonica. Gaius (19:29) was from Derbe. Timothy (16:1), Tychicus (Ep 6:21; Cl 4:7; 2 Tm 4:12; Ti 3:12) and Trophimus (21:29; 2 Tm 4:20) were from Asia. These men went before Paul into Asia. Luke rejoined Paul in Philippi where he had earlier stayed on Paul's previous visit there (16:40; 17:1).

20:6 After the Passover, or days of Unleavened Bread (Ex 12:14,15; 23:15), Paul and Luke went down to the Philippian seaport of Neapolis and sailed five days against headwinds to Troas (See

16:11). They met Sopater, Aristarchus and the other evangelists. **We stayed seven days:** Having arrived possibly late on Sunday after most Christians had returned from their assemblies in different homes, they waited for the following Sunday when the saints gathered again at their particular places for their love feast and Lord's supper.

THE DISCIPLES PREACH IN TROAS

20:7 First day of the week: Here, as in 1 Corinthians 16:1, reference is to Sunday which was the primary day on which disciples in the 1st century regularly assembled for mutual edification. In reference to Roman time, the first day of the week began at midnight. As was their common practice in Troas, the disciples came together to have a common meal, during which they partook of the fruit of the vine and bread in remembrance of Jesus (See comments 2:42; Mt 26:26-28; 1 Co 11:23-34). **Break bread:** The phrase "break bread" must be defined in the context of what Theophilus would have understood the term to mean. He had only the books of Luke and Acts, and thus we define the term in this context by how Luke uses it in reference to the understanding of Theophilus. It is first used in this book in Acts in 2:42 & 46 where it referred to the disciples' eating a full meal in fellowship with one another. Previous to this, Theophilus could understand what was meant in the breaking of bread by going to Luke 24:30-43 where Jesus ate food as a meal. When we come to this context, therefore,

we must first understand that the breaking of bread was the love feast of the disciples, at which time the Lord's supper was celebrated (See comments 1 Co 11:17-33). This love feast and Lord's supper continued with the disciples as one event for several centuries (See 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12). **Had discussions:** The Greek word here is from *dialegomai* which means to dialogue, to discuss, or to discourse. In other words, Paul had a discussion (dialogue) with the disciples. This was a time for questions and answers. Participatory study of the word of God was how the early assemblies were often conducted. They were interactive meetings that were open for discussion and fellowship. The participatory nature of the assemblies made it possible for the members to bond and edify one another with the word of God (See comments 1 Co 11-14). Open Bible study today makes it possible for Christians to build their participatory fellowship around the word of God.

20:8-10 The upper room where they were meeting was well lighted. However, a young man named Eutychus was sitting in an open window of the upper room. As discussions continued well into the night, Eutychus was overcome with deep sleep, and subsequently, fell from the window. He fell from the third story and was evidently killed instantly. However, after everyone was silenced and moved away from the body of the young man, Paul embraced him. He was restored to life by God's supernatural power which Paul commanded when he touched the young man's body (See com-

ments 1 Co 12:12). As would be expected, everyone was exceedingly amazed and overjoyed by the miracle. By raising of this young man from the dead, Paul was once again proved to be a Christ-sent apostle.

20:11,12 *Broken bread and eaten:* After the resurrection of the young man, everyone went back to the third floor room to enjoy their common fellowship meal that was eaten on the first day of the week. They met with one another until sunrise on Monday morning. Paul then left for Assos. ***They were not a little comforted:*** Paul's teaching certainly brought a great deal of encouragement to these disciples. Everyone was greatly comforted because of the raising of Eutychus from the dead. Not only were they overjoyed because the unfortunate event did not end in tragedy, but their faith in Jesus was also reconfirmed by the miracle of Paul.

PAUL TRAVELS FROM TROAS TO MILETUS

20:13-16 Luke and the company of evangelists (vs 4) went on board ship and left Troas for Assos before Paul. ***Intending himself to go on foot:*** Paul possibly wanted to walk the 25 kilometers from Troas to Assos in order to be alone and rest. After he arrived in Assos, Luke and the company of evangelists met him. Paul then boarded the ship with them, and together they continued on to Mitylene, the capital of Lesbos. They sailed another day to the mainland of Asia at a point opposite the island of Chios. The following day they went to the island of

Samos. They eventually came to Miletus. ***Hurrying to be in Jerusalem:*** Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem in order to be there for the Passover/Pentecost feast. He knew that many Jews from all over the world would also be visiting the city at this time of year. This would be his last chance to evangelize his own countrymen. Therefore, in order not to be delayed in Ephesus by the warm fellowship of the disciples, he decided to meet only with the elders of the Ephesus on the island of Miletus.

PAUL ENCOURAGES ELDERS

20:17 From Miletus Paul sent a message 40 kilometers away to Ephesus in order that the presbyters (elders) of the church in the region of Ephesus come to him at Miletus for their last meeting together. ***Presbyters:*** The Greek word here is *presbuterous*. The words "elders" and "presbyters" are often used to render this word into English. These were those designated spiritual shepherds of the disciples who had the responsibility of shepherding the flock of God through counseling and teaching (See comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:7ff; 1 Pt 5:1-6).

20:18,19 When the elders arrived, Paul poured out his heart to them, reminding them of his work and behavior in their midst in order to firmly establish the Ephesian disciples throughout the region (See ch 19). ***Humility:*** See 2 Co 10:1; 11:7; Ep 4:2; Ph 2:3. ***Serving the Lord with ... tears and trials:*** With many tears Paul had served the Lord in ministering to the needs of the disciples amidst many trials. Though greatly opposed by

the Jews, he faithfully worked in order to establish the disciples in the faith (9:23; 20:30,31; 2 Co 2:4; 11:26; Ph 3:18; 2 Tm 1:4).

20:20 *I kept nothing back:* He had taught all truth to them in order that they be obedient disciples of Jesus (vs 27). He ministered to them with both public preaching and private teaching. He counseled in their own homes where they met for assemblies. He had taught in the school of Tyrannas in order to evangelize all Asia (19:8-10). In all that he taught, he did not fail in his responsibility to deliver to them all that God had delivered to him through inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

20:21 *Repentance ... faith:* He was impartial, preaching and teaching to both Jews and Gentiles repentance in order to be reconciled to God and faith in Jesus for salvation (18:5; 19:10). In every way Paul had been a faithful evangelist working among the flock of God in order to establish the Ephesian disciples firmly in the faith.

20:22 *Bound in the spirit:* At this time, Paul was determined in His own mind to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost (19:21). He had no idea what would transpire on this last visit to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he sensed his destiny to be in Jerusalem for the purpose for which he was called. In view of the course of his ministry (9:15,16), it seems that Paul knew that he was now destined to give his witness to Jesus before kings.

20:23,24 *Bonds and afflictions await me:* Paul knew that persecutions awaited him wherever he went (9:16;

21:4,11-14). He reasoned that on this trip to Jerusalem there would also be persecution. ***I do not consider my life of any worth:*** He would not allow hardships to deter him from his work of preaching the gospel (See 2 Co 12:10ff; compare 21:13; Rm 8:35; 2 Co 4:16). Evangelists who understand their work must not allow Satan to use hardships to deter them from their destiny. ***That I might finish my ... ministry:*** Paul would not be deterred from his God-ordained destiny (9:15,16). Persecutions did not and would not stop him. He considered the accomplishment of his destiny more important than his own life (See 21:13,14; Rm 8:35; 2 Co 4:16). He had received his destiny from Jesus and he was determined to finish it (Gl 1:1; 2 Tm 4:7). He firmly believed that he must preach the marvelous grace of God to as many people as possible before the end of his life. Such should be the mission of every evangelist.

20:25 *See my face no more:* Paul assured the elders, whom he had known for many years, that they would not see him again. He had preached the kingdom reign of God among them, and thus, they would need to see him no more. They were now responsible to God for themselves. Paul knew that each one of them must accept the responsibility to remain faithful to the Lord.

20:26 He had completed his work with them and was free from being responsible for their salvation because he had taught them all truth that they needed to know in order to be faithful. He had thus accomplished his duty of teaching them (See 18:6; Ez 3:18-21; 2 Co 7:2).

20:27 All the counsel of God: Paul had taught them all that was necessary in order to be saved and to live a holy life before God (vs 20). Though at this time they did not have the written word of God, all truth that God had revealed for the disciples through the apostles had been verbally delivered to them (Jd 3; see Jn 14:26; 16:13).

20:28 Take heed to yourselves: Paul warned that the Ephesian elders must watch out for themselves. His first exhortation was to them personally, that they remain faithful to the Lord. They must then care for the spiritual well-being of the flock of God's disciples. They had been set forth as shepherds of God's flock (1 Pt 5:1-4), and therefore, they must care for the sheep, knowing that the sheep belong to God and not to them. Jesus, not any man, had purchased the flock with His own blood (Rm 3:25; 5:9; 1 Co 6:20; 11:25; 12:28; Ep 1:7,14; 2:13; Cl 1:14,20; Hb 9:12-14; 1 Jn 1:7; Rv 5:9). Since the flock belongs to the One who purchased it, church leaders should be cautious about stealing the sheep of God by being lords over the flock (1 Pt 5:1-4). Jesus has all authority over the flock of God (Mt 28:18). Therefore, no shepherd should exercise authority in order to lord over the flock (See comments Mk 10:35-45). **Overseers:** Emphasis here is not on authority or office, but on responsibility. They were to look out over the flock in order determine the needs of the sheep (See 1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:9; see comments 1 Tm 3:1ff; Ti 1:6).

20:29,30 Grievous wolves will enter in among you: Men with selfish

ambition and a thirst for authority would eventually enter in among the disciples. They would care more for themselves and their positions than service to the disciples. The elders must be cautious not to become lords over the flock (See 1 Pt 5:1-4). Paul knew that some elders would eventually start lording over God's flock. They would steal God's sheep in order to carry out their personal desires to lord over autonomous groups of sheep (See comments 3 Jn 9,10). **From your own selves will men rise up:** Those who would seek to lord with authority over the flock would come from the elders themselves (Compare Mt 7:15; Jn 10:21; 2 Pt 2:1). They would arise in order to lead men after their own beliefs and desires (Compare 1 Tm 1:19,20; 2 Tm 1:15). Lording elders would not be concerned for the flock because they would desire to have disciples following themselves and not Jesus (1 Tm 1:20; 4:1-6; 2 Tm 1:15; 3:1-13; 2 Jn 9,10; 3 Jn 9,10; See Rm 16:17-20). Dominant personalities often seek to use the church as the occasion to have people under them. They thus seek to lord over the disciples as they would in the business and political world in which all of us live.

20:31 Watch: The Ephesians had received the benefit of Paul's longest period of time in ministry. For a combined period of about three years he had earnestly and tearfully taught and counselled them (19:8-10,22; 24:17). In his instructions here he sees an apostasy from among the elders, some of whom would eventually assume authority over the disciples in order to maintain positions of

control of the sheep. Revelation 2:2-6 seems to indicate that these men took this warning seriously, though by the time Revelation 2:2-6 was written to the disciples in Ephesus, the church had already lost her first love.

20:32 *I commend you to God and to the word:* Paul entrusted the Ephesian elders to the guidance of the revealed word of God. It would spiritually build them up if they allowed God to work in their lives through His word (2 Tm 3:16,17; Hb 4:12). If they remained faithful to the word of God, they would receive the result of their faith which was the salvation of their souls in heaven (Hb 9:15). God's people must be entirely dependent on the word of God for direction. Neither subjective emotional experiences nor traditions should be allowed to be the foundation upon which disciples of Christ base their faith (See Rm 10:17). Both will lead men astray from the truth (See comments Lk 1:3,4). ***Word of His grace:*** It is the grace of God that motivates one into action and growth (See comments Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

20:33-35 *Coveted no man's silver:* Paul closed by reminding them that he had not preached to them for money (See 1 Sm 12:3; 1 Co 9:12; 2 Co 7:2; 11:9; 12:17; 3 Jn 7,8). The sincerity of his work was never determined by money. ***These hands have provided:*** He had worked making tents in order to support himself while he worked as an evangelist in Ephesus and other places (18:3; 1

Co 4:12; 9:11-15; 2 Co 11:7-12; 12:13-16; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:7-12). He provided support for himself and also for the fellow evangelists who were working with him. In fact, it seems that most of the time while on his mission journeys, Paul supported himself by making tents. ***By laboring as this:*** He had given them an example that one should work with his own hands in order to support himself, and also be able to help the poor (See 11:30; Lk 6:38; Rm 15:1; Gl 2:10; Ep 4:28; 1 Th 5:4; see comments 2 Th 3:6-12). They must remember that Jesus' principle of life was that it was better to give to others than to receive for one's self. One of the purposes for which one works, therefore, is to give to others. When one becomes a disciple of Jesus, his purpose for work changes. It changes from working for selfish reasons to serving the needs of other people. One's work to support himself is also for the purpose of supporting others.

20:36-38 When Paul completed his message to the Ephesian elders, he and the elders bowed to their knees and prayed (See 7:60; 21:5; 1 Tm 2:8). They hugged, kissed and wept with one another (21:13). The Ephesian brethren knew that they would see Paul no more. After meeting with the elders, Paul went on to Jerusalem where he was arrested and eventually taken to Rome for trial. There is no indication that he saw the Ephesian elders again, though later in A.D. 61,62 he wrote a letter from prison to the church in Ephesus.

CHAPTER 21

PAUL CONTINUES TOWARD JERUSALEM

21:1-3 Paul and Luke sailed directly to the island of Cos that was about 60 kilometers from Miletus. From there they went the next day to Rhodes, and then on to Patara. They boarded another ship in Patara in order to sail to Phoenicia. When they came in sight of Cyprus, they sailed southwest of it on to Syria. They made port at Tyre, the destination of the ship and cargo.

21:4 *Finding the disciples:* In Tyre Paul and Luke searched for the disciples. When they found them, they stayed with them for seven days. *By the Spirit:* During those days, inspired teachers among the disciples urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem for the Spirit had revealed to them that he would suffer persecution in Jerusalem (See 20:23; 21:12-14). This was at a time in the history of Israel that there was great tension in the political world between the Jews and the Romans. The Spirit knew that Paul would suffer great persecution in Jerusalem because of the national fanaticism that was building among the Jews.

21:5,6 After enjoying the warm fellowship of the disciples in Tyre, Paul and Luke were accompanied by all the brethren to the seashore. They all bowed together on the beach of Tyre and prayed for God's work in the lives of these two great evangelists. Though they all knew that Paul would suffer persecution in Jerusalem, they entrusted him to the Lord. *They brought us on our way:* The

Greek word here refers to the fact that they financially took part in helping the evangelists, Paul, Luke and the other companions (vs 8), on their way (See comments 3 Jn 1-8). After a great beach fellowship, Paul and Luke boarded a ship for Ptolemais and the brethren returned home.

21:7-9 After a half-day sail off the coast of Palestine, they came to Ptolemais where they again found disciples with whom they stayed and talked for one day. The following day, Paul, Luke and their traveling companions, came to Caesarea. *Philip:* Paul was here received by Philip who was the friend of Stephen who was stoned to death years before by a mob with whom Paul had given consent (6:5; 7:54-60; 8:1). Philip had long since forgiven Paul. They both now enjoyed one another's sweet forgiving fellowship in Jesus. *The evangelist:* Philip was an evangelist, which meant that his mission was to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers (ch 8; see Ep 4:11; 2 Tm 4:5). He was one of the original seven who had been selected to minister to widows in Jerusalem many years before (6:5). He transitioned in his ministry for the Lord from serving tables in Jerusalem to being an evangelist in Caesarea. *Who prophesied:* Philip had four unmarried daughters who were inspired teachers. We must not assume that these sisters were preachers since the gift of prophecy included either inspired preaching, teaching, singing or prayer (See 2:17; J1 2:28; compare Ex 15:20; Jg 4:4; 2 Kg 22:14; 2 Ch 34:22; Ne 6:14; Is 8:3; Lk

2:36-38; see comments 1 Co 14:15).

21:10,11 Agabus: After Paul and Luke had stayed in Caesarea for many days, Agabus, an inspired teacher, came from Judea (11:28). **Bind the man who owns this belt:** In the presence of the disciples, Agabus took Paul's belt in order to demonstrate a prophecy concerning his future in Jerusalem. Agabus bound his own hands and feet and said that the Jews in Jerusalem would so bind Paul and deliver him to the Romans (20:23; 21:33; 22:25). This was a prophecy by illustration. Agabus illustrated that Paul would suffer the persecution of being bound because of his efforts to preach the gospel to the Jews.

21:12-14 Pleaded with him: Agabus' prophecy was only a warning to Paul, not a prohibition that he not go to Jerusalem (Compare 16:9,10). Therefore, the church pleaded with Paul in order to discourage him from going to Jerusalem. **I am ready:** Paul stopped them from their efforts to discourage him from doing that which he knew he must do as God's evangelist. He was a man with a God-given destiny, knowing that the accomplishment of his mission was more important than his own life (9:16; 20:22-24; Rm 1:14; 2 Co 12:15). His great bravery is here manifested in his willingness to face death in order to preach the gospel to the lost. **The will of the Lord be done:** When the disciples realized that Paul would not be dissuaded from his mission for Jesus, they ceased discouraging him. They entrusted him to the care of the Lord (Mt 6:10; 26:42; Lk 11:2; 22:42).

Evangelism To Rome

(21:15 – 28:31)

Outline: (1) Paul arrives in Jerusalem (21:15-25), (2) Paul is unjustly arrested (21:26-40), (3) Paul's supernatural encounter (22:1-21), (4) The Jews incite riot (22:22-30), (5) Paul addresses the Sanhedrin (23:1-11), (6) The Jews plot to kill Paul (23:12-22), (7) Paul is sent to Felix (23:23-35), (8) Paul is accused by the Jews (24:1-9), (9) Paul makes his defense (24:10-21), (10) Felix fails to make judgment (24:22-27), (11) Christianity before Caesar (25:1-12), (12) Political games with Paul (25:13-27), (13) Paul testifies before Agrippa (26:1-11), (14) Paul's miraculous encounter (26:12-23), (15) Agrippa finds no fault in Paul (26:24-32), (16) Paul journeys toward Rome (27:1-8), (17) Paul warns of danger (27:9-12), (18) A storm at sea (27:13-38), (19) Shipwrecked on Malta (27:39-44), (20) Paul preaches on Malta (28:1-10), (21) Paul goes on to Rome (28:11-16), (22) Preaching in Rome (28:17-31)

PAUL ARRIVES IN JERUSALEM

21:15,16 After their stay in Caesarea, Paul and Luke packed their bags and went from the coastal city of Caesarea up to Jerusalem that was at a much higher altitude. This explains the phrase, "up to Jerusalem." On the journey, they were accompanied by brethren from Caesarea. They stayed with Mnason, an early disciple who lived in a village along the way. Since there were no hotels, it was a common custom for brethren to search out one another on their journeys. Hospitality was a principle of Christianity for the purpose of expediting evangelism.

21:17,18 The brethren in Jerusalem gave Paul and Luke a warm welcome. Paul and Luke met together with James,

the Lord's brother (12:17; 15:13-20; Gl 1:19; 2:9; Js 1:1), and the elders of the church throughout Jerusalem. They delivered to them the contribution for the famine that had been given by the Gentile churches (See 20:4; 1 Co 16:1-4; 2 Co 8:1-24; 9:1-5). **All the elders:** This would be all the elders of all the church that met in homes throughout the city of Jerusalem.

21:19,20 God had worked among the Gentiles: Paul reported all things that God had done in the mission areas where he had preached the gospel in fulfillment of his ministry to the Gentiles (14:27; 15:4,12; Rm 15:18,19). When the Jewish Christians heard of the receptivity of the Gentiles, they glorified the Lord. **Zealous for the law:** The brethren in Jerusalem cautioned Paul that there were still many Jewish Christians in Judea who were zealous in keeping some of the Sinai laws as a custom of Jewish life (See comments 15:1,2; Gl 2:1-5). These Jewish brethren were still entrenched in the legalistic system of Jewish religious tradition which divided them from Gentiles who were not subservient to their religious cultural practices. Even after the church debate in Jerusalem many years before concerning the binding of circumcision and ceremonies of the Sinai law (ch 15), the Jerusalem Jewish disciples still had a problem of binding either Jewish religious or cultural traditions on the church. The religious and cultural environment of the church in Jerusalem, therefore, was greatly affected by the Judaism of the area. Because of this Jewish influence in the Jerusalem church,

there was an apparent division between the Jewish and Gentile churches of the 1st century. However, in Luke's narrative he places no significance on this difference, and thus by the Holy Spirit, portrays the church as one body. The differences over cultural traditions were not worth recording. The lesson is that disciples may believe and apply different things that do not affect fundamental doctrine, and yet, be considered by God to be the one united body of Christ. Though the Jerusalem church applied some cultural and religious teachings of the Old Testament, God still considered them to be in fellowship with the Gentile churches who did not teach circumcision and the customs of the Jews.

21:21 Ought not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs: Paul taught that circumcision and Jewish customs were not necessary for salvation (See intro. to Gl). In order to avoid an occasion for open division in the church and trouble in Jerusalem at this very volatile time in the history of the Jewish nation, the elders advised Paul to conform to these Jewish Christians' opinions in order to avoid confrontations. They had been correctly informed that Paul had taught the Gentiles that they did not have to conform to circumcision of the Sinai law or Jewish religious traditions (28:17,18; see Gl 5:1-6). However, Paul's accusers were wrong in stating that he had taught Jews not to be circumcised or to honor Jewish customs. He only taught that circumcision and Jewish customs were not requirements for salvation and that Gentiles need not be subservi-

ent to such. When considering this incident one must keep in mind that the date here is around A.D. 58,59. This is about ten years before the Roman armies would bring an end to national Israel because of Jewish insurrection. Jewish nationalism was on the rise at this time and would eventually lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and national Israel in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24; Lk 21). Keep in mind also that these disciples had possibly sensed the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24. Thus in about ten years, they would all be driven from their homes when the Roman armies besieged Jerusalem. Over one million Jews would be killed during the destruction of Jerusalem.

21:22-24 Do this that we tell you:

The elders considered what they must do in this tense situation to promote unity and peace in these days of the existence of the church in Jerusalem when zealous Judaism was on the increase. The elders knew that the legalistic judaizers would eventually find out that Paul was in town, and then, cause open division in the church. The elders thus made a decision that Paul join with four other brethren who had also made a vow (18:18; see Nm 6:13-15). They suggested that Paul ceremonially purify himself with these four brothers. He should pay their expenses for their offerings and ceremonial charges for accomplishing their vows. They shaved their heads as an open manifestation that the vow they had made had been kept. Paul conformed to the advice of the elders in order to prove that the accusations against him were false (vs 21).

He had walked in harmony with Jewish customs when among the Jews (1 Co 9:19-23). We must keep in mind that he was not doing this because he had hypocritically forsaken all his teaching that the Sinai law should not be bound on the church (See comments Rm 7:1-4). He was doing such because of the unique historical situation of the church in Jerusalem in a time of great social and political tension. The city of Jerusalem at this time in history was very volatile. This tension had penetrated the church. Therefore, on this occasion Paul was obedient to the situation in order to make one last appeal to the Jews in Jerusalem that the end of national Israel was imminent. Destruction was looming over the nation and the prophecy of Jesus recorded in Matthew 24 was about to come to pass.

21:25 We have written: The elders here reminded Paul that they had written to Gentile disciples that they need not be subservient to either Jewish customs or the Sinai law as a means of salvation (See 15:19,20; 29). However, they had instructed that the Gentile disciples keep themselves from those things that pertained to idolatrous worship. By saying such, the elders wanted it to be known that they were in a unique situation in Jerusalem. These were tense years before the coming of the destruction of the Jewish state by Rome in A.D. 70. It was commendable of them that they maintained a correct understanding of the doctrinal implications of the matter by separating that which was fundamental and salvational from that which was Jewish traditional law. They had not succumbed

to the Jewish cultural tension to bind where God had not bound in reference to the Sinai law and the Jewish religious traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

PAUL IS UNJUSTLY ARRESTED

21:26,27 *Entered into the temple:* After the purification of himself and the four men, Paul separately went to the temple with each of them to accomplish their vow. **Seven days:** When the seven days of purification were almost ended, the Jews from Asia who recognized Paul, stirred up the Jerusalem residents against him (20:19; 24:18). These seven days could be the days of the keeping of the vows or they could be the seven days of the feast of Unleavened Bread. **The Jews who were from Asia:** These could possibly have been Hellenistic Jews who had heard Paul's preaching in Ephesus and other places in Asia (9:29). These Jews stirred up the local Jews of Jerusalem.

21:28,29 *This is the man:* They yelled out to the crowds and falsely accused Paul of turning people against the law and customs of the Jews. Because of his stand against the infiltration of Jewish legalism into the church, Paul had by this time become known throughout the areas to which he preached as one who stood against the Jewish influence of legal justification. His reputation had reached even to Jerusalem (See comments in intro. to Gl). **Brought Greeks into the temple:** They falsely accused Paul in order to generate a public outcry against him. Since the Jewish troublemakers had earlier seen Paul with Trophimus (20:4), an Ephesian Gentile,

they falsely assumed that Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple where Gentiles were restricted from entering.

21:30-32 *Took Paul:* All the city of Jerusalem was stirred up against Paul because they thought he had violated the temple by taking a Gentile into the temple courtyard. A mob formed. They dragged Paul out of the temple courtyard, beating him as they wrestled him through the enraged multitudes. The priests shut the gates of the temple courtyard behind the multitude that it not be desecrated by the infuriated mob. **The commander of the Roman cohort:** As the mob was seeking to beat Paul to death, news of the uproar came to Claudius Lysias (23:26). Claudius was the Roman commander who was stationed in Jerusalem over approximately 760 soldiers. Lysias immediately rushed to the temple courtyard with at least 200 soldiers. He went into the crowds to suppress what he believed to be a Jewish insurrection. This was the Passover/Pentecost feast in Jerusalem when the most fanatical Jews were visiting the city. Therefore, Lysias did not want to take any chances with a possible Jewish uprising. When the soldiers arrived on the scene, the riotous mob stopped beating Paul.

21:33-36 Assuming that Paul was some dangerous criminal, Lysias commanded that He be bound with chains. He then asked Paul who he was and what he had done. The crowd was evidently shouting so loud that Lysias could not clearly hear Paul's explanation. He then took Paul into the barracks. The mob was so violent that the soldiers had to physi-

cally carry Paul up the stairs. The enraged mob followed. They wanted the Romans to take Paul away in order that he not interfere with their religious ceremonies (Compare Lk 23:18; Jn 19:15).

21:37-40 *May I speak:* In the Greek language, Paul asked Lysias if he could address the people. Lysias was surprised that Paul could speak Greek for he had assumed that Paul was an Egyptian assassin who had recently led 4,000 insurrectionist Jews in a rebellion against Rome. ***I am a Jew from Tarsus ... a citizen:*** Paul identified himself as a Jew whose name was registered in Tarsus of Cilicia as a citizen of Rome. He was a native of one of the three major educa-

tional centers of the Roman Empire, Athens and Alexandria being the other two. Therefore, he wanted to speak to the people. ***No ordinary city:*** Tarsus was an important cultural and political city that had been granted autonomy by the Roman government. Paul here declared that he was a Roman citizen, and as such, could not be condemned without a trial. Lysias thus gave Paul permission to speak. After he had calmed the crowd with the backing of the Roman soldiers, Paul addressed the Jewish multitude in the Jews' dialect, which was probably Aramaic. His speaking to them in their own language captured their attention.

CHAPTER 22

PAUL'S SUPERNATURAL ENCOUNTER

22:1 *Brethren and fathers:* Paul beckoned to the assembled mob as fellow Jewish brothers and showed respect to his Jewish heritage. He wanted to make a verbal defense of his beliefs (See 24:10; 25:8,16; 26:1,2,24). ***My defense:*** The Greek word here (*apologia*) refers to a verbal justification of one's beliefs (See 1 Pt 3:15). Throughout the remainder of the document of Acts, Luke uses this word in reference to Paul's defense of his beliefs (See 24:10; 25:8,16; 26:1,2,24).

22:2 When the multitude heard Paul speak in the Aramaic language, they became very quiet. Many of the mob did not actually know why they were there. We would assume that many did not know what was happening. They were

simply following the crowd.

22:3-5 In his defense, Paul affirmed that he was also a Jew (21:39; 2 Co 11:22). He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia. He was brought up in Jerusalem and studied at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most respected educators of the Jews (5:34). He had also been educated in the exactness of the Jewish law, the law of the fathers (23:6; 26:5; Gl 1:13,14; Ph 3:5,6). Paul said that he was also zealous in keeping the traditions of the fathers (21:20; Rm 10:2; Gl 1:14). ***Zealous toward God:*** See 26:5; Rm 10:2; Ph 3:5. ***Way:*** See 8:3; 26:9-11; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13. Paul confessed that he had persecuted unto death both men and women Christians (8:3; 26:9-11; Gl 1:13,14; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13). He said that he had even received official letters from a former high priest named Ananias

(23:2), and the Sanhedrin (23:14; 24:1; 25:15), which gave him authority to arrest Christians in Palestine who would be brought to Jerusalem for trial and punishment (9:2).

22:6-11 *Now it came to pass:* The radical change in Paul's life could be explained only on the basis that something supernatural happened in his life. Therefore, Paul proceeds to offer the Damascus road encounter with Jesus as proof of the change of his life from a zealous persecutor to a zealous propagator of Christ (See comments 9:2ff; 26:10-12). Paul thus explained that on his way to Damascus of Syria, about midday a great light appeared to him. He fell stunned to the ground (9:3). The light was brighter than the sun of midday (26:12,13). **Who are You:** Paul beckoned to the One speaking to identify himself. Jesus replied by saying that since Paul was persecuting the body of Christ, he was persecuting Christ Himself. The soldiers with Paul also saw the light and could testify to its existence. They were also afraid. However, they did not understand the message of the sound that Paul heard. Paul then asked of Jesus what he should do. Jesus directed him to arise and go into Damascus. There it would be told him everything that had been appointed for him to do (See 9:15,16). Since Paul was blinded by the brilliance of the light that had shown on him, the soldiers led him by the hand to the city of Damascus.

22:12-15 While Paul was fasting and praying, the Lord had appeared to and directed Ananias (9:17), one who was obedient (10:22; 1 Tm 3:7), to go to Paul

who had been fasting and praying for three days. When Ananias arrived where Paul was staying, God through him healed Paul's blindness. He told Paul that the God of Israel (3:13; 5:30) had specifically chosen him (9:15; 26:16; Gl 1:15) to know God's will (3:14; 7:52), to see Jesus (9:17; 26:16; 1 Co 9:1; 15:8), and to hear the voice of Jesus (1 Co 11:23; Gl 1:12). **You will be His witness:** Because Jesus personally appeared to Paul, he was to be a special witness of Jesus as the original Christ-sent apostles (Lk 24:48). He was to proclaim the vision that he had seen and heard as a divine testimony to his apostolic mission (1:8; 4:20; 23:11; 26:16).

22:16 *Arise and be baptized:* Ananias commanded Paul to arise and be immersed in water for God had promised to cleanse anyone of sin who would submit to immersion in the name of Jesus (2:38; 1 Co 6:11; Ep 5:26). Paul had experienced God's grace. Now it was time to respond to that grace (1 Co 15:10). God's grace toward him would not profit if he did not obediently respond by obedience to the gospel in immersion for the remission of his sins (See comments Rm 6:3-6). The encounter with Jesus on the road shocked Paul concerning the reality of the risen Lord, but it did not save him. He had to be baptized for the remission of sins in order to wash away his sins. **Calling on the name of the Lord:** In obedience to the gospel, one must depend on the authority of Jesus for his salvation (9:14; Rm 10:13).

22:17-21 After his immersion, Paul went into Arabia and then returned to

Jerusalem where he went to the temple (See comments Gl 1:17-20). While he was in Jerusalem, and praying in the temple courtyard when God took him into a trance (See 10:10; 11:5). ***Get out of Jerusalem quickly:*** The purpose of the vision was to save Paul's life. God revealed that he was in imminent danger. He allowed Paul the responsibility of acting upon the knowledge that his life was in danger. The Lord told him that the people were unreceptive to the witness he had to give concerning his conversion. It is certain that Paul understood why people would not listen to him. After all, he had formerly imprisoned those who believed in Jesus and would not listen to their pleas (8:3; 22:4). He had severely beaten those who believed (See 26:11; Mt 10:17). He even consented to the murder of Stephen (7:54 - 8:1). Paul's sudden conversion, therefore, could not be understood if he had not had a miraculous encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road. ***Send you far away to the Gentiles:*** And so must an evangelist go. Jesus sent Paul far away from Jerusalem and Judea where he had greatly persecuted the church. He sent him to the Gentiles of Asia and beyond, even to Macedonia and Achaia (9:15; 13:2,46,47; 18:6; 26:17; Rm 1:5; 11:13; 15:16; Gl 1:15,16; 2:7,8; Ep 3:7,8; 1 Tm 2:7; 2 Tm 1:11).

THE JEWS INCITE RIOT

22:22 ***Not fit that he should live:*** When Paul mentioned his commanded mission to the Gentiles, the close-minded and prejudiced Jews became enraged.

They could not accept the fact that the commission to the Gentiles was direct from heaven. Their racism had blinded their eyes and distorted their understanding of God's work among all people. They thus viciously shouted out that Paul be killed. Such a radical environment was the situation in which the Jerusalem disciples lived. Since the Jerusalem church was primarily composed of converted Jews, one could easily assume that the church had a high level of Jewish cultural influence.

22:23,24 ***Threw dust into the air:*** The infuriated Jews went into a frenzy, crying out loud, tearing off their clothes and throwing dust into the air. So Lysias, the Roman commander, ordered Paul to be brought into the barracks lest he be torn apart by the hands of this uncontrolled and fanatical mob. He commanded that Paul be questioned under beating in order to get the truth from him as to why the Jews were so furiously irritated with him.

22:25-29 ***Bound him with thongs:*** The soldiers stretched Paul across a beam and ripped the clothes off his back. They were about to proceed ripping his flesh with a Roman scourge that was commonly used on slaves. However, Paul asked in his defense if they should scourge a Roman citizen who had not been properly tried in a Roman court (16:37). Severe punishment was inflicted on those who would bind and punish an uncondemned Roman citizen. So when the centurion heard that Paul was a Roman citizen, he went immediately to Lysias and told him. Lysias came and

personally asked if Paul were a citizen of Rome, which thing Paul affirmed. No one would falsely claim Roman citizenship, since doing so would result in severe punishment. **With a great sum:** Lysias greatly respected Roman citizenship because he had paid a great deal of money to become a citizen. **I was born a citizen:** Paul stated that he was born a citizen of Rome, which meant that his citizenship was registered in Tarsus of Cilicia. Any who questioned his claim could investigate the proof. Any who falsely claimed Roman citizenship would suffer the severe sentence of death. Therefore, the commander knew that no one would be so foolish as to falsely claim Roman citizenship without actually being a citizen. **Afraid:** Lysias was now afraid for himself since he had bound a Roman citizen who had not been tried and condemned. His own citizen-

ship and life were at stake. In this case, Paul could have taken his case before a Roman court that would have found Lysias and his men guilty of a crime that was deserving of great punishment. What is interesting in this case is that Paul allowed himself to be arrested. It seems that he knew that his destiny was to go to Rome and witness to Jesus as the Son of God before a Roman court (23:11). At least he seems to flow with the occasion of his arrest.

22:30 Lysias released Paul from his bonds but held him in custody for his own protection. The following day he ordered the Jews and Sanhedrin who accused Paul to bring their accusations to a special meeting. He wanted to discover if their accusations against Paul were actually true. If they were not true, then he would have judged Paul innocent.

CHAPTER 23

PAUL ADDRESSES THE SANHEDRIN

23:1-6 Paul here addressed the Romans who were present and his Jewish brethren who composed the Sanhedrin counsel. **Lived in all good conscience before God:** Before God, he affirmed that he had lived sincerely and conscientiously in doing what he believed God wanted him to do (24:16; 1 Co 4:4; 2 Co 1:12; 4:2; Ph 3:6,20; 1 Tm 1:15; 2 Tm 1:3; Hb 13:18). This did not mean that what he did was right. It simply meant that he did that which he thought was right before God, but in ignorance of God's will. When he heard the truth of

the gospel, he changed his beliefs and behavior. **Ananias:** This Ananias was one who had probably been appointed high priest by either Chalcis or Herod Agrippa I around A.D. 47. **Strike him:** Before Paul could begin his defense, Ananias, the high priest, who was evidently intimidated by Paul's confidence, commanded him to be struck. **God will smite you:** Paul used a customary Jewish pronouncement against Ananias by stating that God would strike him down because of his religious hypocrisy. Paul was right concerning Ananias' hypocritical behavior because he commanded something to be done that was contrary

to Sinai law (Lv 19:35; Dt 25:1,2; Jn 7:51). Paul's pronouncement came true because Ananias was eventually assassinated a few years later in A.D. 66. ***I did not know:*** The high priest was considered to be God's representative (Dt 17:8-13). Paul did not know that this one who had commanded him to be struck was actually the high priest. He thus apologized because it was contrary to the law to show disrespect to God's representative (Ex 22:28; Ec 10:20; 2 Pt 2:10).

23:6-8 Paul realized that part of the assembly was Sadducees who did not believe in the future resurrection of the body. Others in the assembly were the Pharisees who believed in the resurrection. Therefore, in the midst of the assembly, Paul, a former Pharisee (26:5; Ph 3:5), proclaimed his belief in the resurrection (24:15,21; 26:6; 28:20). ***There arose a dissension:*** Paul caused in the assembly that which he intended. When he stated his belief, an argument developed in the assembly between the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Not only did the Sadducees not believe in the bodily resurrection (Mt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Lk 20:27), they did not believe in angels or the spirit of man.

23:9,10 ***We find no evil in this man:*** As a result of the great division that developed in the assembly, the scribes, or lawyers of the law, who sided with the Pharisees in belief, protested that they found no fault in Paul who believed the same as they did on these teachings. They proclaimed the possibility that Paul may have had a spirit or an angel speak to him (See 22:6,7,17,18; Jn 12:29). The

focus of Paul's accusers, therefore, turned from him to a dispute among themselves. The Sanhedrin assembly was in an uproar and debate about their contradictory beliefs. Lysias again intervened to rescue Paul from the foolish arguments and mob mentality of the fanatical religionists. Paul was placed in the barracks of the soldiers for his own protection.

23:11 Paul could have possibly been distraught by the preceding events. Everything was against him. For this reason, the Lord came to him in a special revelation and stood by him in this time of trial in order to comfort him (See 18:9; 27:23,24). ***You must also bear witness at Rome:*** In this statement, Paul was promised that he would not die in Jerusalem. The Lord said that he would accomplish his goal to testify in Rome (19:11; 28:16,17,23; see Rm 1:11-13,15,23). It is here that we begin to understand the reason for God's call of Paul to apostleship. God was leading Paul to Rome in order to have Christianity put on trial before the highest court the world had to offer. At this time, Paul was informed of God's greater plan for his life. By the miraculous events that have occurred in his life, Paul had established the evidences for what he believed. Now it was time to take his life before the Roman court in order to prove that Christianity was based on the revelation of the one true and living God. For this reason, Luke writes this document.

THE JEWS PLOT TO KILL PAUL

23:12-15 Satan continued to work against Paul. A group of more than forty

radical Jews bound themselves together with an oath to murder Paul by an ambush (vss 21,30; 25:3; see 9:23,24; 26:21; 27:42; 1 Th 2:15; compare Jn 16:2). They vowed neither to eat nor drink until they had carried out their mission. They had formed this conspiracy on their own. However, they revealed the plan to the chief priest and elders who consented to it. They asked the religious leaders and Sanhedrin to join them in their plot by requesting the commander to have Paul brought down to the counsel the next day. They would lie in ambush and kill Paul during his transfer to them for a supposed meeting of inquiry. One should never underestimate the warped minds of those who profess a religion that they have created after their own desires.

23:16-22 What happened here in this ordeal with Paul's arrest is a very interesting event wherein God may have been providentially watching over Paul through the ears of a young boy. *Paul's sister's son heard:* Paul's nephew was concerned for his uncle's safety (See also Rm 16:7,11). He was close by and listening to the plans of the conspirators who sought to murder his uncle. He subsequently told the plot to Paul. Paul then asked the centurions who were guarding him to tell Lysias of the assassination plot. One of the centurions quickly took the young lad to Lysias. Lysias wisely took the young boy aside and inquired as to what he had to say. Paul's nephew told Lysias that more than forty devious Jews had schemed in a plot to murder Paul the next day. They had sworn with an oath that they would neither eat nor

drink until they had accomplished their murderous deed. Lysias then allowed the young man to go, but told him to tell no one of the plot. Lysias then took action to foil the plot of the conspirators.

PAUL IS SENT TO FELIX

23:23,24 Lysias immediately realized the seriousness of the plot against Paul. He commanded two centurions to gather 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen. With such a great guard, Lysias was taking no chances. If an assassination were attempted, he wanted to make sure that Roman authority thoroughly crushed the attempt. To secure his strategy, Paul's guards would leave for Caesarea at 9:00^{pm} and travel all night. The plan was to bring Paul safely to Felix who was the governor of the region. We would assume that all that happened to Paul in these early days of his travel to Rome was by the providential guidance of God.

23:25-30 Lysias then wrote a letter to Felix Marcus Antonius who was governor from A.D. 52 to 59. Felix was eventually succeeded by Festus in A.D. 59. The events that happened here took place about two years before Festus was made procurator. These events, therefore, took place in A.D. 57.

23:31-35 The soldiers took Paul by night to the city of Antipatris that was about 55 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. This place was rebuilt by Herod the Great and was named after his father, Antipater. The next day the foot-soldiers returned to Jerusalem, but the cavalry took Paul the remainder of the journey.

When they arrived in Caesarea, they delivered to Felix both Paul and the letter of Claudius Lysias. When Felix read the letter he asked Paul for the province where his citizenship was registered. Paul replied that he was from Cilicia (6:9; 21:39). Felix then scheduled a legal hear-

ing for Paul. However, they had to wait until Paul's accusers came from Jerusalem. ***Praetorium:*** Paul was confined in a palace guardroom that was formerly Herod the Great's Caesarian headquarters. He was allowed freedom to teach all with whom he had contact.

CHAPTER 24

PAUL IS ACCUSED BY THE JEWS

From this time in Paul's journey to Rome, until he was released from Roman imprisonment, he will have been in Roman custody for four years. He was two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome (24:27; 28:30). It was during his two years in Caesarea that Luke probably did much of his research concerning the life of Jesus. He thus wrote the documents of Luke and Acts for Paul's defense by the time Paul went before Caesar's court around A.D. 60 to 62.

24:1 Paul's legacy for the next four years began here in waiting for five days in Caesarea. He waited for the arrival of Ananias, who was the high priest, the Jewish elders and Tertullus, a lawyer for the accusers. The accusers had to come from Jerusalem in order to present their case against him. The trial took place somewhere between A.D. 56 and 58.

24:2-4 Tertullus began his case by first giving an eloquent and flattering speech to Felix about how the Jews had supposedly appreciated the great peace and prosperity of the Roman occupation of Palestine. Tertullus actually lied when he stated that the Jews had appreciated the governorship of Felix and the Ro-

mans. His statements of appreciation were simply not true. Felix had been a cruel and mean ruler of the Jews. After he and his mother were freed as slaves, Felix was eventually made procurator of Judea because Caesar Claudius of Rome was a good friend of his brother. He subsequently became an intolerant ruler of the Jews in Palestine. ***Not be further tedious to you:*** Tertullus did not want to take too much time, and thus, create an atmosphere of boredom with Felix. He thus asked to deliver a few words concerning Paul that all the Jews had surely agreed upon before their arrival at the assembly.

24:5-9 *Pestilent fellow:* Tertullus continued by falsely accusing Paul of being the one who caused the stir among the Jews in Jerusalem. In reality, Paul was a plague to the false religion of Judaism that was an apostasy from God's law as it was revealed to Israel in at Mount Sinai. The Jews' religion was the invention of the Jews because of their many traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9). However, the dissensions in Jerusalem were not caused by Paul but by the stiffnecked and intolerant Jews who antagonistically followed him from city to city with false accusations and incitement

of the multitudes against him (6:13; 16:20; 17:6; 21:38; 1 Pt 2:12,15). Nevertheless, Tertullus falsely accused Paul of being a ringleader of a supposed sect of Judaism. This sect was now being reproachfully referred to as the Nazarenes, after the hometown of Jesus. Paul was then accused of profaning the temple by bringing a Gentile into restricted areas of the temple (See 21:28). The Jews had thus seized him and attempted to judge him according to Jewish traditional law. Tertullus then accused Lysias of causing the great violence when he rescued Paul from the hands of the mob. Tertullus then affirmed that the Jews had now obediently appeared before Felix's court. However, the truth was that when Lysias did rescue Paul, he sent him to Felix in order that the riotous Jews not murder him. Fortunately, Lysias had forced the Jews to make their accusations in a Roman court of order and not in the streets of Jerusalem. All the Jews who were standing behind Tertullus nodded with approval to the slanderous accusations that he had made against Paul.

PAUL MAKES HIS DEFENSE

24:10,11 After Felix had given Paul permission to speak, Paul made his first defense before the Roman courts. At this time, Felix had been in Palestine between eight to nine years, and thus, he knew the customs of the Jews. Paul was more than eager to give a public defense of his beliefs before one who knew Jewish law. Because it had been only twelve days since he had gone to Jerusalem (21:15,18,26,27), Paul knew that Felix

could determine an accurate account of what actually took place since the events were fresh on everyone's mind.

24:12,13 Paul denied the false charges of the Jews. They had not found him in the temple courtyard disputing with anyone (25:8; 28:17; 21:27). He had not profaned or desecrated the temple in any way. Neither was he stirring up any crowd for insurrection in the synagogues or city. It was the antagonistic Jews who were stirring up the crowds. In conjunction with this, his accusers could not prove any of their charges that they made against him.

24:14 Paul confessed, however, that he was a disciple of the Way (vs 22; 9:2). He worshiped the same God as the Jewish fathers. He believed the prophecies and promises of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, as well as, the Old Testament prophets. He had stayed faithful to what he had believed was the law of God, though his former religion was composed of many traditions (Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9; Gl 1:13,14).

24:15,16 His hope was the same as Israel's. He hoped for the Messiah and resurrection. Jesus was that Messiah and He made the future resurrection possible by His own resurrection from the dead (23:6; 26:6,7; 28:20). As the Pharisees, he also believed that both the righteous and unrighteous would be bodily resurrected in the end (Dn 12:2; Jn 5:28,29; 11:24). As a result of this belief, he said he always conscientiously labored in order not to be in sin against God or offensive to his fellow man (23:1; See 1 Co 10:32; Ph 1:10).

24:17-21 In order to manifest harmony between Gentiles and Jews, Paul related that after many years he had returned to Jerusalem to bring a contribution from Gentile Christians to help Jewish Christians in Judea who were suffering from famine (11:29,30; 18:21,22; Rm 15:25-28; 1 Co 16:1-4; 2 Co 8:1-4; 9:1,2,12; Gl 2:10). However, while he was ceremonially clean in the temple (21:26,27; 26:21), some of the antagonistic Jews who had followed him from city to city, found him and falsely accused him of bringing a Gentile into the temple. There had been no disturbance until these antagonistic Jews, who had come from Asia (21:27; 26:21), started the dissension. These Jews should be present at this hearing, Paul affirmed, in order to state their case (See 23:30; 25:16). Thus the falsehood of their case was manifested by their fear of testifying before a Roman official. Paul then challenged those Jews who were present to publicly affirm before a Roman court their accusations against a Roman citizen. If he were guilty, even the Sanhedrin would have condemned him. But they did not. Paul said that the only offense he may have done was the manner by which he encouraged a debate between the Sadducees and the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin by proclaiming his belief in the resurrection (23:6; 24:15; 28:20). In this case, the Jews' only accusation against Paul was a theological one. And for such matters, Felix had no interest.

FELIX FAILS TO MAKE JUDGMENT

24:22,23 Luke here wants us to know that Felix was not ignorant concerning Christianity. However, he excused himself from making a judgment on the matter by saying that he would not make a decision until Lysias (23:26; 24:7) came to Caesarea in order to report his facts concerning the situation. Therefore, Paul was unjustly kept in house arrest. However, he was given liberty to receive his friends as Philip who lived in Caesarea at the time (21:8). Luke was also there.

24:24 After Paul had been in house arrest for a period of time, Felix decided to satisfy the curiosity of his young Jewish wife, Drusilla, who was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I who had murdered James (12:1). She was the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (25:13). Her uncle, Herod Antipas, had beheaded John the Baptist. ***Felix ... sent for Paul:*** Felix summoned Paul for a private interview with himself and his wife to discuss Paul's faith concerning Jesus as the Messiah (See Jn 3:15; 5:24; 11:25; 12:46; 20:31).

24:25 Upon his arrival at the private meeting, Paul reasoned with Felix about righteous behavior before God, exercising self-control in life, and the final judgment where all men would give account of their deeds before God (17:30,31; 1 Co 15:58; Hb 9:27). Such teachings terrified Felix for he knew he was guilty of much sin against God. He thus told Paul to leave. If he had another convenient opportunity he would call on Paul again. Such was his excuse to rid himself of this preacher.

24:26,27 Felix thought that Paul

might give him a bribe in order to release him. He kept bringing Paul before him, hoping to receive this bribe. Such manifested that Felix was unjustly and illegally retaining Paul in house arrest. Paul gave no bribes. He only gave sermons

to Felix for his unrighteous living. After two years, however, Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus as governor. In order to gain favor from the Jews, Festus retained Paul in house arrest. So Paul could not go about preaching in the synagogues.

CHAPTER 25

CHRISTIANITY BEFORE CAESAR

25:1,2 Festus took office as governor in Palestine around A.D. 59,60. After being in office three days he did not delay to go to Jerusalem. We must keep in mind that the Jewish religious leadership still had in their minds a plot to murder Paul (23:12,15). When Festus arrived in Jerusalem, the Jewish religious leaders approached him and again falsely accused Paul who was still held in custody in Caesarea.

25:3-5 *Summon him to Jerusalem:* The Jewish religious leaders pleaded with him to bring Paul to Jerusalem. But their intentions were evil. They wanted to murder Paul in ambush (23:12,15). Festus flatly refused their requests, telling them that he would soon return to Caesarea, for he wanted the trial of Paul to stay out of the city of Jerusalem. The political problem of the Jews in reference to Roman occupation of Palestine was at this time increasing in the country. Festus understood that Paul could be a political problem that would generate more strife in the city, for by this time he was known throughout the Jewish world. It would be only nine to ten years from this date that Rome would have to terminate the Jewish state by the destruction of Jerusa-

lem (See comments Mt 24). *Go down with me:* If anyone had any accusations against Paul, Festus said, they could go down to Caesarea and accuse Paul there. However, it would be determined in Caesarea if there were any just accusations against Paul (See vs 18; 18:14).

25:6 After a little more than ten days in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea. *Judgment seat:* Festus sat upon the official Roman judgment seat (18:12,16,17; Mt 27:19; Jn 19:13; see Rm 14:10; 2 Co 5:10) and called Paul before him. The judgment seat was the official Roman seat upon which the Roman judge would sit and before whom all accused were brought.

25:7 *Laid many serious charges:* Paul's accusers had also come from Jerusalem. They stood around Paul in the judgment hall and made slanderous accusations against him. However, they could not prove any of their accusations (Compare 24:5,13; Mk 15:3; Lk 23:2,10). Throughout this trial, Luke affirms in this document that Paul had broken no Roman law. No accusation against him could be proved.

25:8,9 On this occasion, Paul responded again in his own defense. He affirmed that he had not violated the law of the Jews. He had not violated the

temple. And he had broken no Roman laws. He stood innocent, and under Roman law, should have been released (See 6:13; 24:12; 28:17). ***Do the Jews a favor:*** We must keep in mind that Festus had just recently been appointed by Rome to this position. He thus sought to sacrifice Paul's rights for the sake of being politically correct in reference to the Jews. Therefore, Festus, as Felix, wanted to use Paul's destiny for his own political means. He therefore challenged Paul to stand before his accusers in Jerusalem.

25:10 *Caesar's judgment seat:* Festus underestimated the man standing before him (Mk 13:11). Paul had correctly defended himself and stood for his rights as a Roman citizen before Caesar's court, which is where he should be judged. He said that he had done nothing to the Jews that would place him before a Jewish court. He had done nothing to place him in Caesar's court. Festus knew this.

25:11,12 *I appeal to Caesar:* Paul affirmed that if he had committed any offense worthy of death, then he was not afraid to pay the ultimate penalty for such crimes. However, he had not committed any crimes worthy of death. Paul boldly looked Festus in the eye and said that even he could not deliver him over to the Jews. Therefore, knowing that he could not receive fair judgment in either Jerusalem or Caesarea, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed his case to be heard before Caesar (26:32; 28:19). Paul desired that he and Christianity be examined before the Emperor of Rome in order to proclaim Jesus before all men.

It is here that we understand that Paul knows that God was working behind the scenes in order to get him to Rome (See 19:21; 23:11; Rm 15:22-28). After Paul's appeal, Festus then briefly confided with his advisors, and then, he commissioned Paul to be tried before Caesar in Rome.

POLITICAL GAMES WITH PAUL

25:13 After some days had passed, Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I (12:1,21-23), and his wife Bernice, came to Caesarea. Herod Agrippa II was the grandson of Herod the Great (Mt 2:1) and the brother of Bernice (25:13), and Drusilla who had married Felix (24:24).

25:14-16 After King Agrippa and Festus had feasted for many days, Festus mentioned the case of Paul to Agrippa. He said that the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem had asked for an immediate judgment of condemnation against Paul (24:13; 25:2,3). It was Roman law that no man could be condemned until his accusers had first made charges against him to his face in a court of law. However, in this case against Paul, this had been done but no judgment had been made by either Felix or Festus. Felix wanted a bribe from Paul. Festus simply procrastinated because he wanted to use Paul for his own political means.

25:17-19 In order to further justify his procrastinated judgment, which procrastination for two years was against Roman law, Festus affirmed that he had immediately conducted a trial for Paul (vss 6,10). During the trial, he expected that the Jews would have a case against

Paul concerning some violation of Roman law. However, such was not the case. What the Jews did do was bring theological charges against Paul concerning their own religion (18:14,15; 23:29). The charges also concerned Jesus' death and resurrection, about which Festus evidently knew little.

25:20-22 Festus confessed that he was puzzled as to what he must do in this situation. He had challenged the prisoner Paul about a trial before the Jews in Jerusalem. But Festus said that Paul appealed to be tried before Caesar, that is, before "Augustus." This was a common title that the Roman Caesars adopted after the great Caesar Augustus of Rome. At this time, however, Nero was Caesar of Rome. He was Caesar from A.D. 54 to A.D. 68. Festus was at a loss as to what charges he must file against Paul in order to send him to Caesar, for he had found that he had broken no Roman law. Festus had kept Paul in custody until he could determine what to do with him. Thus in this meeting, he was asking Agrippa for advice. Agrippa subsequently asked if he could examine the prisoner. Festus eagerly granted his request, hoping that some fault might be found in Paul. On the following day, Agrippa and Bernice pompously entered the place of hearing with all their royal glamour. The five Roman tribunes who were stationed at Caesarea were also there. The prominent men of the city were there. And then there was Paul, the humble servant of God who knew that he was on his way to Rome. Paul stood alone and boldly in the midst of an as-

sembly of unbelievers who neither understood who he was nor cared for his convictions.

25:23,24 Festus introduced the prisoner Paul in a way that exalted the Romans but belittled the Jews. The Romans saw Paul only as a Jew. However, the whole Jewish leadership in Jerusalem and Caesarea was in an uproar about this one man who had tremendous impact on the Jewish religious world by the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, the Jews wanted him dead (vss 2,3,7; 21:36; 22:22).

25:25-27 *Committed nothing worthy of death:* Paul had committed no crime against Rome that would cause him to be executed under anyone's law (23:9,29; 26:31). However, Paul had appealed to Caesar (vss 11,12). As a result of Paul's appeal, Festus had to send him to Caesar, for every appeal to Caesar as a Roman citizen must be granted. *Nothing definite about him to write:* Festus was in a dilemma. Paul had appealed to be tried before "lord" Nero. However, Festus had no official or valid charges that justified any conviction. For this reason, Festus brought Paul before Agrippa for the King's opinion. If Festus sent a prisoner to Rome without charges, he would appear foolish before Caesar. He would also compound his legal dilemma. He had unjustly retained in custody a Roman citizen who had committed no crime against Rome. In writing this history of Paul's life in reference to previous trials before the Roman court, Luke wanted Theophilus to understand that Paul committed no crime against Rome.

CHAPTER 26

PAUL TESTIFIES BEFORE AGRIPPA

26:1-3 *You are permitted to speak:*

After being given permission to speak, Paul again, with an outstretched arm, politely gave his own defense concerning his belief. He calmly stated that he considered it a great opportunity to address King Agrippa on behalf of himself (1 Pt 3:15) concerning the false charges the Jews had made against him (21:28; 24:5,6). It was a great opportunity to testify concerning his experience that Jesus had actually appeared to him on the road to Damascus (See 9:15). Agrippa was familiar with the traditions of Judaism, though such traditions were not a part of his heart's conviction. Paul considered it an opportunity to speak before him because of Agrippa's knowledge of the Jews' religion.

26:4,5 *All the Jews know:* Paul began by stating that the Jewish leadership of Jerusalem knew of his behavior as a faithful Jew before he became a Christian. They had known of his strict religious behavior from his youth. Though they would not confess such before his hearing, they were familiar with Paul's strict legal practice as a Pharisee of the Jews' religion (Ph 3:5; 1 Tm 1:12). *The strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee:* The Pharisees were a very strict sect of legalistic religionists (See intro. to Gl; see comments Mt 23). Here Paul identifies the Jew's religion that he kept in its strictest sense before his Damascus road experience (See comments Gl

1:13,14). By the time Jesus came, it was no longer the revealed faith that was based on the law of God which was delivered to Israel on Mount Sinai. It was a religion the Jews had created after their own traditions (See comments Mk 7:1-9).

26:6,7 *Judged for the hope of the promise:* Paul affirmed that he was not being judged because of the false accusations that they had launched against him, but because as a Jew he had hoped for the Messiah (13:32,33) and the future resurrection from the dead (23:6). It was taught that the Messiah would bring the promise of God that salvation would go to all men (See comments Zc 14). *To this promise ... hope to attain:* All Israel waited for the Messiah who would bring redemption to all men. They thus looked for the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah (See Gn 3:15; 12:3; 22:18; 49:10; Dt 18:15; 2 Sm 7:12; Is 7:14; 53). The prophecies had been fulfilled in Jesus (Lk 24:44). Paul affirmed that he was now being judged for his hope of the resurrection that was made possible by the resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah. *Twelve tribes:* Some have erroneously believed that the ten northern tribes of Israel were lost when taken into the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C. But here Paul affirms their existence. Anna, for example, was of the tribe of Asher (Lk 2:36). Asher was one of the northern ten tribes. However, she, as well as the faithful remnant of all tribes that God brought

back into the land of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity (536 B.C.), were in Jerusalem when God fulfilled the promise that the Messiah would come.

26:8-11 *God raises the dead:* Paul asked Agrippa why he would think it unbelievable that the God who created all things could not also raise someone from the dead. ***I thought:*** Paul then explained his former life as a persecutor of the disciples of Jesus. He had done much harm to the disciples of Jesus because he thought that Jesus of Nazareth was a fraud (1 Tm 1:12,13). But Paul said he was wrong. ***I gave my vote against them:*** He had persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. The Jews knew this (8:1-3; 9:13; Gl 1:13). He had received authority from the chief priest to also persecute Christians in other cities (9:14,21; 22:5). In conjunction with this, he consented to the death of those who followed Jesus (8:3). The fact that the Jews were putting Christians to death for the simple fact that they were Christians explains the intensity of the hostility that the Jewish religious leaders launched against the church in the 1st century (8:4). ***Compelled them to blaspheme:*** The word “compel” is a strong word in Greek. Paul bound Christians who were at the time allowed to continue to listen to the reading of the Old Testament in the synagogues. He tried strongly to make them blaspheme by denying Jesus. However, he was not successful in this. Such only enraged his own fury to go even to other cities to hunt down the disciples (22:19).

PAUL'S MIRACULOUS ENCOUNTER

(See 9:3-9,19-22; 22:6-11)

26:12-15 Paul here gives testimony of that which explained the reason for the great change in his life. His argument was that such a change could not be explained without the miraculous event on the Damascus road (See comments 9:3-22; 22:6-11). ***As I went to Damascus:*** Paul testified that he was once on his way to Damascus with letters from the chief priest in Jerusalem that were written for the purpose of persecuting Christians in Syria (See 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:12-18). At about noon, however, a great light that was brighter than the sun, shined down upon him from heaven. The light appeared all around him and to those who were with him. ***All had fallen to the ground:*** A voice from heaven spoke to Paul in Aramaic and stated that it was hard for him to work against his own conscience. This indictment by Jesus convicted Paul. When Paul responded to the voice as his Lord, Jesus answered that by persecuting the disciples of Jesus that he was actually persecuting the Son of God. Jesus told Paul to stand up, for he was going to be made a servant and a witness to others of this great vision and of things that He would yet reveal to him (22:15).

26:16-18 Jesus' appearing to Paul on the Damascus road was meant to qualify Paul as a Christ-sent apostle in order that he witness to the world that Jesus was raised from the dead. In the

vision, Jesus promised Paul that no matter how much he would be persecuted, He would deliver him from the Jews and Gentiles to whom he was being sent (22:21). He would be sent to the Gentiles. **To open their eyes:** He was being sent to open the eyes of unbelievers by the preaching of the gospel (Is 35:5; 42:7,16). By preaching the gospel they would be turned from the darkness of sin (1 Pt 2:9). The gospel would take them from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom reign of Jesus (Cl 1:13). In obedience to the gospel, believing men and women would receive the remission of sins (2:38; 22:16). They would become a part of the people of God who were sanctified by the blood of Jesus (20:28,32; Cl 1:12-14; 1 Co 6:11).

26:19 *I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision:* The truth of Paul's experience concerning the vision was manifested in the hardships through which he had to go in order to be obedient to what Jesus commissioned him to do. The change in his life, and the hardships through which he went in his life to carry out the commission of the vision, proved that he had truly seen the vision. Paul's argument that Luke here records, is that the miraculous encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road is the only logical explanation for his radical change in life.

26:20 *Repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their works:* Immediately after the experience of the vision, Paul preached the gospel in Damascus, Jerusalem, all Judea, and then throughout the Gentile world

(9:19,20,22; 11:26; see comments Cl 1:15-24). He preached that men should turn to God in repentance and bring forth fruits that manifested their turn to a godly life (Mt 3:8).

26:21 *For these reasons:* It was because he was preaching repentance toward God that the Jews seized him in the temple and tried to kill him. It was not because he was the ringleader of an apostate sect of Judaism that was seeking to lead an insurrection against Rome. In making this statement, Paul wanted the Roman officials to know that he did not live contrary to Roman law.

26:22 By God's assistance Paul gave testimony to the resurrected Jesus and that He was the Messiah. It was only by God's help that he was able to survive unto the time of this testimony. ***The prophets and Moses said would come:*** To this hope in Jesus all the Old Testament prophets prophesied (24:14; 28:23; Lk 24:27,44; Jn 5:46; Rm 3:21; 1 Pt 1:10-12).

26:23 Moses and the prophets said that the Christ, or Messiah, would suffer and be put to death (Ps 22; Is 53; Lk 24:26; Cl 1:18; Rv 1:5). However, He would rise from the dead (1 Co 15:20-23). The Messiah would proclaim the light of the gospel to both the Jews and Gentiles (Is 42:6; 49:6; Lk 2:32; 2 Co 4:4). Jesus was not the first one to be raised from the dead (1 Kg 17:23; 2 Kg 4:32-37; 13:21; Jn 11:38-44; Hb 11:35). However, He was the first and only one to be raised from the dead never to die again (1 Co 15:20-23; Cl 1:18).

AGRIPPA FINDS NO FAULT IN PAUL

26:24,25 *Paul, you are beside yourself:* Some translations state that Festus pronounced Paul to be mad because of his much study (See 1 Co 1:23; 2:13,14; 4:10). The Greek word here is “lunacy” (See the same word in 12:15; Jn 10:20; 1 Co 14:23). ***I am not mad:*** Paul immediately responded with calm and dignity to the rude outbreak of Festus. He affirmed that he was speaking as a sober-minded person. He had been convinced by the vision he had experienced that what he had heard Christians preach was true. The vision was the foundation proof of his ministry.

26:26 *The king ... knows about these things:* Paul then turned to King Agrippa. He told the King that he knew about these things (vs 3). Agrippa had remained informed concerning the events of Jesus' life and work, for Jesus did not work in secret. He worked openly before all people. His miraculous confirmation was not in secret. He was proved to be the Son of God with miraculous power that was demonstrated before both believers and unbelievers (2:22; Jn 3:2; 20:30,31).

26:27-29 *Do you believe the prophets:* Paul boldly challenged Agrippa by asking him if he believed the prophecy of the Old Testament prophets. The King hesitated to reply. But Paul knew that he believed them. ***Almost persuade me to become a Christian:*** Paul's speech had touched Agrippa, for Agrippa knew the prophecies of the prophets, the hope of Israel, and the activities of the early

Christians. He could possibly have been persuaded to be a Christian if Paul's address had not been rudely interrupted by Festus' outburst and the circumstances that prevailed on this occasion. On the other hand, some Bible students believe that Agrippa made this statement in order to scoff at Paul's defense of Christianity and his wish that he become a Christian. ***Christian:*** It is evident by Agrippa's use of the term “Christian” in reference to the disciples that the term was widely used in society by this time to refer to those who were followers of Jesus (See 11:26; 1 Pt 4:16). ***I would to God:*** Paul responded to Agrippa that it was his desire that all who heard him would submit to God by obedience to the gospel. He wished that all present would become Christians as he was (See Rm 9:1-3; 10:1).

26:30-32 Immediately after Paul had made his statements, Agrippa, Festus, Bernice, and those who were with them, stood up and left the meeting hall. However, they continued to talk among themselves concerning Paul's case. They were Rome's final and greatest judges in Palestine, and yet, they could find no reason why Paul should suffer death, or even be in prison (23:9,29; 25:25). ***Might have been set free:*** Agrippa flatly told Festus that Paul, according to his judgment, would and should have been set free by him. However, since Paul, the accused, had already appealed to Caesar, he must now be sent to him (25:11). Behind the scenes, it was God who was working in order to get Paul to Rome. Paul did not appeal to Rome on his own

accord. He knew that God wanted him to testify before Caesar. And thus on this occasion, we would assume that Paul chose to continue to be in the custody of

the Roman government in order to have an opportunity to make a plea before Caesar that Christianity was from God.

CHAPTER 27

PAUL JOURNEYS TOWARD ROME

27:1 In this defense presentation for Paul, Luke has now completed two years in Palestine with Paul. During this time, he was possibly collecting material for his defense treatises for Paul that would be put in the letters that we now call "Luke" and "Acts." **Sail to Italy:** Luke and Aristarchus of Macedonia (19:29; 20:4; Cf 4:10; Pl 24) joined the sailing party that would go to Rome with Paul. Paul and other prisoners were entrusted to a centurion named Julius, a commander of the Augustan Regiment of the Roman army. Julius had the responsibility of getting Paul and the other prisoners to Rome alive.

27:2,3 The decision was made that they would board a ship from Adramyttium. They would set sail along the south coast of Asia Minor. Before they departed, however, Julius was very favorable to Paul, treating him with much kindness. He had allowed Paul to visit his friends before they set out on the journey. Therefore, after Paul had made preparations, they sailed for Rome. After one day of sailing from Caesarea, they arrived in Sidon.

27:4-8 After Sidon they sailed north of Cyprus between the island and the mainland of Asia Minor. They did so because the southerly winds were blow-

ing contrary to their course. After sailing westward for about fifteen days across the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, they came to Myra of Lycia. Julius then found a ship of Alexandria that was sailing for Italy. After again struggling against contrary winds for many days, with great difficulty they arrived off Cnidus. Because of the northwest headwinds, they sailed south under the shelter of the island of Crete. They were sailing off the coast from Salmone. They again sailed against headwinds along the south coast of Crete until they eventually came to the protected bay of Fair Havens that was near the city of Lasea.

PAUL WARNS OF DANGER

27:9 The Mediterranean Sea was particularly unsafe during this time of the year that was between the middle of September and the middle of March. Too much time had now been lost in the journey because of the unfavorable headwinds of this season. It was now around September or October and getting close to the winter months when sailing was not done on the Mediterranean Sea. Sailing was dangerous at this time of the year because of the storms. **Fast:** The fast of the Day of Atonement had just been completed (See Lv 16:29-31). Paul advised that it was too dangerous to sail on.

27:10-12 It was Paul's personal observation that the voyage would end in disaster for the ship, the cargo and the lives of men. Unfortunately, Julius was persuaded to listen to the pilot of the ship and its captain who argued that they must continue on. They were sailing on a commercial ship, and thus, they had to proceed with the wishes of the captain who had to get his cargo to its destination. They argued that Fair Havens was not a suitable place to spend the winter. Therefore, the majority decided to leave Fair Havens and sail the fifty kilometers to Phoenix that had a harbor which opened toward the southwest and northwest. It was reasoned that it would be easier to spend the winter there.

A STORM AT SEA

27:13-20 When the south wind began blowing favorably and safely, the ship's crew decided to take a chance and continue the journey. So they sailed close by the south coast of Crete. However, it was not long after they set sail that the tempestuous northeasterly wind called the Euroclydon, came upon them. The ship was seized by the fury of the wind, and thus, they were carried along out of control. Therefore, the crew let the ship be carried at will by the wind. They were blown under the shelter of the small island of Clauda. With great difficulty they brought on board the small safety boat that was in tow behind the ship. Once the small boat was on board, they ran large ropes underneath the hull of the ship and tightened them securely in order to strengthen the ship against the battering

waves of the sea. They then became fearful that the vessel would be blown aground on the Syrtis Sands off the coast of North Africa. Therefore, they lowered the sails and were driven by the wind. The ship and all on board were violently tossed by the waves of the sea. Because they were taking on water, the crew threw cargo overboard in order to make the ship lighter. After three days of enduring the storm, they even threw the ship's tacklings overboard. For many days they could not see the sun or stars, and thus, could not determine where they were. The storm was relentless. Because of their great fatigue and desperate situation, they gave up all hope of surviving the storm. One can only conclude that God was at work wearing down everyone in order that they be receptive to the advice of Paul.

27:21,22 They had not eaten for many days. Paul then stood up and reminded them of what he had told them at Fair Havens, that they should not have sailed. But now he encouraged them with good news. He assured them that no one would be lost. However, the ship would sink.

27:23-26 By this time everyone was ready to listen to Paul. To prove his claim, Paul affirmed that an angel of the God he served and to whom he belonged, stood by him in the night (See 18:9; 23:11; Dn 6:16; Rm 1:9; 2 Tm 1:3; 4:17). The angel had told him not to be afraid. The angel assured Paul that he would stand before Caesar. In fact, the angel said that God would allow all on board to be saved for the sake of saving Paul.

Paul exhorted everyone to be cheerful and encouraged. They must trust in his belief that God would do exactly what he had promised (See Lk 1:45; Rm 4:20,21; 2 Tm 1:12). However, Paul said that the ship must run aground on some unknown island. It seems that God would save everyone on board the ship for the sake of saving His own people.

27:27-29 They had been driven by the storm for fourteen days in the Adriatic Sea since they left Fair Havens. Around midnight on the fourteenth day, the crew began to surmise that they were drawing close to some land. They dropped a lead weight into the sea that was fastened to a cord. By such they determined that they were in water that was about 37 meters (120 feet) deep. Then it was about 27 meters (about 90 feet) deep. Then they began to fear lest they be smashed against the rocks of the beach by the waves. They then lowered all four anchors of the ship and prayed for daylight to come so they could see where they were.

27:30-32 The crew of the ship decided to abandon ship and leave the passengers and prisoners. They thus lowered the small safety boat of the ship to the water on the pretense that they were lowering anchors from the bow. But Paul sensed their scheme. He told Julius, the centurion, and the soldiers that unless everyone stayed on board the ship they could not be saved. Julius was now listening to Paul. Therefore, the soldiers pushed the crew aside and cut away the small boat, letting it drop into the sea.

27:33-36 The sun was now about to rise. Everyone on board had not eaten

for fourteen days. Paul had now become the central figure of encouragement and direction for the entire group. He therefore encouraged everyone to eat something. They would need strength for what was about to happen. He encouraged them by saying that all would be saved. Paul then took some bread, gave thanks to God before all of them, and ate. Everyone followed his example and also ate. They were all encouraged by Paul's strength and leadership in these times of extreme discouragement.

27:37,38 There were about 276 people on board the ship which included crew, soldiers and prisoners. When everyone had eaten, they threw the remainder of the wheat out of the ship in order to make it lighter and able to drift closer to the shore.

SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA

27:39,40 When the sun came up, they rejoiced over the land that they saw. They saw a small bay and decided to run the ship on the beach of the bay. Therefore, they let the anchors go. They loosed the ropes that had secured the rudder and hoisted up the sail in front of the ship. They headed for the shore.

27:41 The ship ran aground at a place on the island of Malta where the waves of the sea met a current that ran between the main island and a small island offshore (See 2 Co 11:25). The front of the ship struck the beach and lodged. The back of the ship was pounded by the waves of the sea. As a result, it started to break up.

27:42-44 If the prisoners escaped,

the soldiers knew that they would suffer severe punishment (12:19). Therefore, they planned to kill all the prisoners before swimming to the shore. But for Paul's sake, whom Julius wanted to spare, Julius would not allow them to do so. He commanded all those who could swim to jump overboard and swim to the shore. Those who could not swim were told to

grab a piece of the broken ship or a board. Everyone did as Julius commanded. As a result, everyone on board ended up on the shore. All were saved for the sake of Paul whom God had promised to protect in order to get him before Caesar (vs 24,31). This was only one of several times when Paul had been shipwrecked in his travels (2 Co 11:25).

CHAPTER 28

PAUL PREACHES ON MALTA

28:1,2 All of the passengers survived the shipwreck. They were now stranded on the island of Malta. However, after two weeks in a storm at sea, we would certainly assume that they were thankful to be on land again. The nationals of the island, who could not speak Greek, showed them great hospitality. However, they were very superstitious. Nevertheless, they were friendly toward their shipwrecked visitors. They immediately made a fire to warm and dry everyone's clothes because it was cold and rainy.

27:3-6 While Paul was doing his part in gathering wood for the fire, a snake came out of a bundle of wood that he threw onto the fire. It immediately bit him on his hand. The nationals of the island saw the snake hanging onto Paul's hand. They knew that it was a poisonous snake, and thus assumed that the snake had bitten him because Paul was a murderer. It was a common belief that such tragedies that happen to individuals were the result of some wrong the individual had committed. Paul had escaped the sea, they thought, but now received his just judgment by a poisonous

snake. They believed this because they worshiped a goddess named Dike they believed directly inflicted punishment on earth for evil deeds. But Paul shook the snake off into the fire. The bite of the snake did not affect him in any way (See Mk 16:18; Lk 10:19). The nationals expectantly waited for Paul to swell up and die. They waited, but nothing happened. After they had waited for some time, they changed their minds about who Paul was. They then thought he was a god who had come down to earth (See 12:22; 14:11).

28:7 *A leading citizen:* In the area where the shipwreck occurred, a government official named Publius had a large estate of land. He warmly welcomed everyone to stay with him, which they did for three days.

28:8-10 The father of Publius was very sick and suffering from fever and dysentery. In recognizing the opportunity to create an audience for preaching by administering his gift of healing, Paul went to the father, prayed and healed him of his sickness (See 9:40; Mt 9:18; Mk 5:23; 6:5; 1 Co 12:9; Js 5:14). When the people of the island heard of this, they also came to Paul. It was an occasion

where Paul was given the opportunity to be confirmed a messenger of God (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Subsequently, the residents of the entire island gave great heed to what Paul, Luke and Aristarchus preached. They listened to their teaching for the three months they were on the island. The residents of the island thus provided everything that was necessary to make them feel at home during their stay. They even gave provisions to everyone for the remainder of their journey to Rome. The entire crew of the ship was blessed because of the presence of three Christians.

PAUL GOES ON TO ROME

28:11-13 After spending the winter months of November through January in Malta, everyone boarded an Alexandrian ship for the trip to Rome. The ship had the figurehead of two Greek gods (Castor and Pollux) who were worshiped by sailors for protection at sea. They then sailed for Syracuse where they stayed three days. From there they tacked against the northwest wind until they reached Rhegium. After one day, the south wind began to blow, and thus, they went on to Puteoli.

28:14 In Puteoli there were brethren with whom Paul met. The church existed in Rome long before Paul arrived. Christianity came to the region of Rome as a result of Jews who were converted in Jerusalem during one of the Passover/Pentecost feasts (See 2:10). Converted Jews returned home to Rome to preach the gospel. Paul, Luke and Aristarchus were cared for by these brethren for the

next seven days. From there they sailed for the district of Rome.

28:15,16 In the area of Rome, brethren immediately heard that foreign evangelists had arrived, especially Paul who had earlier written them an inspired letter (See intro. to Rm). They thus came from as far away as the city of Rome, about 60 kilometers away, to meet with the evangelists in Appii Forum and Three Inns. Paul thanked God for this warm welcome from local Christians (Compare 18:5; Rm 1:11,12; 15:32; 2 Co 7:6,7). When Julius finally arrived in the city of Rome with his prisoners, he turned them over to the captain of the Roman Praetorian guard. Because of Julius' favor toward Paul, one soldier was assigned to him and he was also allowed to dwell in house arrest by himself in private quarters. God made it possible for Paul to continue his ministry of the word.

PREACHING IN ROME

28:17-20 Claudius Caesar had banished all Jews from Rome in A.D. 49. However, after his reign was eventually terminated, many Jews returned to the city (18:1,2). Paul called the leaders of these Jews together to explain to them his situation. He explained that he had done nothing in his ministry against fellow Jews or the customs of the Jewish fathers (21:21; 23:29; 24:12,13; 26:31). He had been unjustly arrested, tried and detained in Palestine by the Romans (21:33). When he stood before the Roman rulers of Felix and Festus, no cause for death was found in him (22:24; 24:10; 25:8; 26:32; 28:18). The Roman officials

wanted to let him go. When the Jewish religious leaders argued against Paul with false accusations, he appealed to be tried before Caesar. Paul said that he did such, not because he had done anything against the Jewish nation or Roman law, but to escape the unjust and prejudiced courts of Palestine. He said that he had called the Jewish leaders together to explain that he was bound because of his belief in the Messianic hope that was common to all Jews and his belief in the resurrection to come (23:6; 26:6,7). He then affirmed that the Messianic hope had been fulfilled in Jesus who was crucified and rose again from the dead.

28:21,22 The Jewish leaders responded to Paul that they had heard nothing from Judea about his case. Even Jewish brethren who had come from Judea did not say anything of his situation. The only thing they had heard were things about the so-called sect of Christianity that was spoken against by the Jews everywhere (24:5,14; Lk 2:34; 1 Pt 2:12; 3:16; 4:14-16). By this they understood that the impact of Christianity had reached throughout the Roman Empire (Cl 1:23).

28:23,24 A special day was set aside for a discussion concerning the things that would be taught by Paul. There were many present for this meeting. Therefore, beginning in the morning and extending to the evening, Paul explained to them from the Old Testament Scriptures how Jesus had fulfilled all prophecies concerning the Messiah (9:22; 13:4,14; 14:1; 17:1-3; 18:27,28; 19:8; 26:6,22; Lk 24:44). He explained the

present kingdom reign of Jesus over all things (2:24-35; 17:3; 19:8; Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22). As always, some were convinced and some disbelieved (14:4; 19:9). Paul did not work any miracles to prove his message. The Jews had to see for themselves that the Old Testament clearly prophesied of Jesus. These prophecies were clearly fulfilled, thus proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

28:25-27 The Jewish leaders who were present could not agree among themselves concerning the things Paul was saying. So they departed from the meeting after Paul quoted Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied of the negative reaction of those who would be hardened against the message of God (Is 6:9,10). ***Hearing you will hear, and will not understand:*** Isaiah prophesied that even though the Jews would hear of the word of God, they would not understand because of the hardness of their hearts. In Paul's application of Isaiah 6:9,10, they would actually see Jesus but would not accept Him as the Son of God (Jn 1:11). They had become hardened in heart and understanding because of their own traditions. As a result, Isaiah prophesied that they would not repent and turn to God (Is 6:9,10; Jr 5:21; Ez 12:2; Mt 13:14,15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10; Jn 12:40,41; Rm 11:8).

28:28,29 Paul said that the prophecy was fulfilled that stated that the light of the gospel had gone to the Gentiles (Is 42:1,6; 49:6; Mt 21:41; Lk 2:32; Rm 11:11; see 13:46; 18:6). Such happened in part because of the Jews' rejection of the gospel (13:46-48; 18:6; Rm 9-11).

28:30,31 For the next two years Paul

remained in his own rented house in Rome. Many came to him for teaching. He was able also to fulfill one of his desires, that is, to impart to the brethren in Rome the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rm 1:11). He preached the present kingdom reign of Jesus upon the throne of David (4:31; Rm 8:38; Hb 1:6; 1 Pt 3:22). He taught the life and teachings of Jesus. No one hindered his teaching, neither the Roman guards nor the Jews (See Ph 4:21,22). It was during this time that Paul was remembered and helped by the Philippian disciples. They sent aid to him through Epaphroditus while he was in Rome (See comments Ph 4:10-18). He also wrote his letter to the Philippians to thank them for their care for him. It was also during this first imprisonment that Paul wrote letters to the disciples in Ephesus and Colosse (See intro. to Ep and Cl). Paul was also visited by Tychicus. When Tychicus returned to Asia he carried the letters of Ephesians and Colossians to the Christians in these regions (20:4ff; Ep 6:20; Cl 4:7,8; 2 Tm 4:12; Ti 3:12). He also wrote his first letter to Timothy. Paul was also visited by a runaway slave named

Onesimus whom he converted in Rome. He sent Onesimus back to his owner, Philemon, with a letter directed specifically to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.

Luke's defense to or for Theophilus on behalf of Paul through the treatises of Luke and Acts was apparently successful. Paul had prayed and hoped for release from his first imprisonment in Rome (Ph 1:25; 2:23,24; Pl 22). After his release he evidently journeyed on to Crete where people turned to Jesus (Ti 1:5). He evidently went on Miletus (2 Tm 4:20), Troas (2 Tm 4:13), Dalmatia (2 Tm 4:10), Nicopolis (Ti 3:12), and Corinth (2 Tm 4:20). From Corinth he possibly went on to Spain (Rm 15:24,28).

It is believed that Paul was later arrested again by Nero in A.D. 67 and taken to Rome. It was then that he wrote to Titus and his final letter to Timothy, where he stated that he had completed his Christ-given destiny to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (2 Tm 4:6-8). Historians have affirmed that Paul was probably beheaded in Rome around A.D. 67,68, thus finishing the destiny that Jesus had given to him on a road outside Damascus.