

# ACTS

## Author :

Luke. See the introduction to Luke's Gospel and compare Acts 1:1 with Luke 1:1.

## Date :

Probably sometime between 60 and 63 AD.

## Themes :

The early history of Christ's Church, the spread of the Gospel of Christ in the first thirty years after His death and resurrection from the dead, Christ's continuing work on earth after His ascension into heaven. A key verse is 1:8. The name "Acts of the Apostles" was not given by Luke to this book. This name was given to it later on by others. A title that would have been more descriptive of the reality is "The Acts of God's Spirit through the Apostles" or "The Continuing Acts of Christ through His Apostles."

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**1** O Theophilus, I produced the former account about all that Jesus began both to do and teach, **2** until the day in which he was taken up, after he had given commandments through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. **3** To them also he showed himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them

forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

**4** And, having met with *them*, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise from the Father, which, *he said*, "You have heard from me. **5** For John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

**1:1** "Theophilus" – Luke 1:3. The acts and teaching of Jesus recorded in the Gospels were only the beginning of His ministry. After His death, resurrection and ascension He continued His work through His servants. We have a record of some of these things in Acts – 2:33; 3:6,16,26; 4:10,30; 5:31; 7:56; 9:3-16; 18:9,10; 26:15-18. Compare Matt 28:20; Mark 16:20.

**1:2** Verses 9-11; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51. Notes on the Holy Spirit at Matt 3:16; John 7:39; 14:16,17,26; 20:22. Also see the references at Gen 1:2. The word "apostles" means "those who are sent forth with orders."

"Whom he had chosen" – Matt 10:2; Mark 3:13-19; 6:12-16.

**1:3** "Showed himself alive" – see note at Matt 28:6.

"His suffering" – His crucifixion and death. Compare 2:24; 17:3; 26:23.

"Many infallible proofs" – Jesus not only said in advance that He would rise from the dead (Matt 16:21; 17:23; John 10:17,18; etc), He actually rose from the dead and proved many times over that He had done so (Matt 28:16-18; Mark 16:12-14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-29; 21:1; 1 Cor 15:5-8). And this proof was so convincing that the apostles were happy to suffer and die preaching this truth. It became one of the central themes of all their teaching. They proclaimed this truth everywhere (2:24,32; 3:15; 5:30-32; 10:40; 13:30,31; 17:31), and large numbers of people in Jerusalem, where these events took place, who knew what had happened, believed them.

"Forty days" – this verse is the only place in the Bible that gives us the length of time between Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven. In Luke 24:44-47 we have some of the things Jesus taught during this time.

"The kingdom of God" – Matt 4:17. See also Acts 1:6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31.

**1:4,5** The apostles of Christ would not be qualified for Christ's service until they received the power of the Holy Spirit. Their knowledge of the facts about Christ and their understanding of the Old Testament alone would not make them ready for the task before them.

"The promise from the Father" – see Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 14:16,17,26. The promise is that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. See Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16. According to the apostle Paul believers receive this promise of the Father by faith in Christ and by no other way. See

Gal 3:2,14.

"Baptized with the Holy Spirit" – four different expressions are used to describe what the disciples received on the day of Pentecost:

here it is "baptized with the Holy Spirit";  
in v 8 "when the Holy Spirit comes on you";

in 2:4 "filled with the Holy Spirit";  
in 10:47 "received the Holy Spirit."

All four references speak of the same event described in 2:1-4.

On that day Christ gave them God's Spirit in a new way. This was like immersing them in the Spirit, or pouring the Spirit on them (2:33; 10:45), and the result was that their whole inner being was filled with the Spirit, and they received power to live the Christian life and to witness and serve God as they ought. They began to live and move in God's Spirit, to be inspired, motivated, and controlled by God's Spirit. From that time to this, individuals receive God's Spirit when they believe in the Lord Jesus (see John 7:37-39; Gal 3:2; Eph 1:13). If they have not received Christ's Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, they do not belong to Christ; that is, they have not really believed in Him or been born from above (see Rom 8:9).

According to 1 Cor 12:12,13 every believer has been baptized with God's Spirit into the Body of Christ (or baptized "by" or "in" God's Spirit – the Greek word can mean any of these, and the same word is used there that is used here in Acts). This too happens when they receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They no longer have to wait for this as the original apostles had to wait for God's appointed time for the coming of the Spirit. God had chosen that day of Pentecost to begin this era of the Spirit, this age of grace, this new work in the earth. Now, since it has begun and has been going on for these many centuries waiting is no longer necessary.

After receiving the Holy Spirit by receiving Christ, and, at that same time, being baptized by the Spirit into Christ's Body, every believer should earnestly seek to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). There is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit, but believers may be filled again and again. And recognizing that we have the Spirit living in us, that we have been baptized with the Spirit, if we have reason to think that we are not filled with Him, we should seek the fullness of the Spirit with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

There are only a few references in the

6 So when they met together they questioned him, saying, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 And he said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the dates which the Father has put under his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be witnesses for me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth."

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they were looking, he was taken up and a cloud received him from their sight.

10 And while they looked steadily toward heaven as he went up, suddenly two men stood by them in white clothing. 11 And they said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same manner as you have seen him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is a Sabbath day's walk from Jerusalem. 13 And when they arrived, they ascended to the upper room where they were staying. Peter, James, John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James

Bible which use the words "baptism with [or in, or by] the Holy Spirit." The words of John the Baptist are recorded in the four gospels (see Matt 3:11). Then we have Jesus' words here. Peter quotes these words in Acts 11:16. Then we have Paul's words in 1 Cor 12:13. That is all.

**1:6** The Lord Jesus had been teaching them for forty days about God's kingdom (v 3), and He had opened their minds to understand the Old Testament (Luke 24:45). They asked this question on the day Christ ascended into heaven - v 9). So they did not ask this question in ignorance, but understanding what God's plan for the nation of Israel is. They knew that God had taken the kingdom from them (Matt 21:43). But from what Jesus had taught they did not doubt that God would some day turn the nation back to Himself and exalt it to a place of prominence and power in the world. (See 3:19-21; Isa 2:2-4; 14:1-2; Zech 14:16-21.) But the disciples did not know when God would do this. Observe that they did not ask "will you restore the kingdom to Israel?" but "are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

**1:7** The Lord did not correct their view that He would restore the kingdom to Israel. Since He had been teaching them for forty days about the kingdom, it is evident that He wanted them to understand all the facts thoroughly. They were going to be His representatives on earth, the teachers of His Church. If they had been wrong in their belief that He would restore the kingdom to Israel, can we doubt that He would have told them so? Can we think He was willing to leave them with a mistaken opinion about a basic matter? But all He did was to inform them that it was not their business to know times and dates. In this way did He not sanction their view about Israel and God's kingdom?

**1:8** Verse 5. Power here means supernatural energy and ability. To be God's witnesses in a hostile world, to live and speak and serve as they ought, they needed more power than they possessed by nature, and more than they had received as a result of the new birth (John 1:12,13; 3:3,5,8). The same is true today.

"Witnesses" see Luke 24:48; John

15:27; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39; 13:31; 22:15; etc. A witness is someone who tells others what he has seen or heard or knows by experience. Apostles proclaimed the facts of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension - facts they themselves had seen with their own eyes. And they taught what they themselves had heard Him teach. Taking this verse we can divide the book of Acts into three parts - witness in Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), witness in Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12), witness to other parts of the world (chapters 13-28). This witness to the truth still continues.

Now God's servants everywhere in the world proclaim the truth they have learned from the testimony of the original apostles who saw and heard the Lord Jesus. They can testify also to a personal experience with Christ.

**1:9** See 2:33; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Phil 2:9-11. Only here is a cloud mentioned in connection with Jesus' ascension. In the Bible a cloud sometimes symbolizes the presence and glory of God (Ex 13:21; 16:10; 19:9,16; 24:15; 34:5; 40:34,35; Lev 16:2; 1 Kings 8:10,11; Isa 4:5; 19:1; Matt 17:5; Rev 10:1; 14:14). The Lord Jesus had vanished. From now on His disciples had to live by faith, not by sight. Where did Jesus go? Into heaven to the right hand of God (2:33; 3:21). How far away is heaven? Probably very near (see 7:55,56). It is a spiritual realm unseen by the eyes of human beings on earth, but it may exist alongside this material world.

**1:10** Compare Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12.

**1:11** These words seem to mean something like this: Jesus was going into heaven and would remain there for a time. He would not immediately come back so there was no reason for them to stand there looking for Him. In the meantime there were things they should be doing. On Christ's second coming see Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; John 14:3; etc.

**1:12** The Mount of Olives is about one kilometer east of Jerusalem. Jewish teachers had determined the limits of how far Jews could walk on their rest day.

**1:13** This was probably the same room we see in John 20:19,26.

the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the brother of James, 14 these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

15 And in those days Peter stood up among the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 "Men and brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke in the past through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was the guide for those who took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and was allotted a part in this ministry."

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of his wickedness, and there, falling headlong, the middle of his body burst open and all his entrails spilled out. 19 And this became known to all who lived in Jerusalem, so that field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.

20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms,

Let his dwelling be deserted,  
and let no one live in it.

And,

Let another take his position of overseer.

21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us, one must be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabas whose surname was Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed, and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which of these two you have chosen 25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell by his transgression to go to his own place." 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

2 And when the day of Pentecost had fully come they were all with one accord in one place.

**1:14** Doubtless they were praying for what Jesus had promised them – vs 4,5,8; Luke 11:13; 24:49. A number of women had also believed in Christ – Luke 23:49,55; 24:1,10. Mary the mother of Jesus was now staying with John (John 19:26,27). This is the last mention of her in the Bible. She completely fades from view, and her Son fills the vision of the Church. Jesus' brothers (Matt 13:55) at first did not believe Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel (John 7:5). After His resurrection, they believed and joined His disciples. These all waited ten days for the coming of God's Spirit. Now that His Spirit has come there is no need to wait for Him to come. But now, too, waiting on God and seeking His face prepare the heart for the Spirit's fullness.

**1:15** "Disciples" – see notes at Matt 10:1. Though Jesus had taught wonderful things in Jerusalem, and performed amazing miracles, only 120 people joined themselves to the apostles to form the first group of believers there. There were doubtless other believers who for one reason or another did not yet join this group. Five hundred believers are mentioned in 1 Cor 15:6, but probably most of them were in Galilee. In contrast to this, 3000 repented and believed the gospel on the day of Pentecost (2:41. Compare John 14:12; 16:7,8).

**1:16** Peter had the same high view of the Old Testament that the Lord Jesus had. He believed it was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God and had to be fulfilled. Compare 4:25,26; Matt 4:4; 5:17,18; 15:3,6; Luke 24:44-46; John 10:35.

**1:17** Matt 10:1-4.

**1:18,19** Matt 27:3-8. The chief priests bought the field, but evidently did so in the name of Judas. Judas "purchased" it in the sense that it was the money he received for

betraying Christ that was used for the purchase. He hanged himself but, it would seem, either the rope or the limb of the tree broke, and he fell to the ground with the result described here.

**1:20** Ps 69:25; 109:8.

**1:21,22** See the emphasis on their actually seeing what Jesus did and hearing what He taught. Compare John 15:27.

**1:23-26** Did they behave wisely in all this or did they make a mistake? Matthias appears no more in the New Testament. Observe that "they" proposed two men. The drawing of lots had to indicate one of them, whether the Lord chose him or not. It is not written that they prayed before they proposed the two names, only afterwards. And would not their choice between only two men limit the Lord in His choice? It seems to the author of these notes that the Lord later appointed Paul as one of the twelve apostles (Rom 1:1,5; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8-10; 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 1:1), and he cannot imagine that the name of Matthias will appear on the foundations of God's city (Rev 21:14) and Paul's name be absent. On casting of lots see Lev 16:8; Josh 18:6,8,10; 1 Sam 14:42; Neh 10:34.

**1:26** "Apostles" – note at Matt 10:2.

**2:1** "Pentecost" means "fiftieth." It was one of the festivals of Israel and was called also the Feast of Weeks (see notes on Lev 23:15-21). It came fifty days after the feast of the Passover. It was a harvest festival. It was very fitting that the Holy Spirit should come on that day and begin the great harvest of bringing people to repentance and faith in Christ (v 41).

This particular day of Pentecost when the Spirit of God came upon the waiting disciples was one of the greatest days in the whole of human history. It was a new beginning

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them divided tongues like fire, and sat on each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them *ability* to speak.

5 And there were living at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this sound was heard, a crowd came together, and was bewildered because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they

were all amazed and marvelled and said to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 Then how does each of us hear in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and strangers from Rome, Jews and converts to Judaism, 11 Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." 12 And they were all amazed and perplexed, and said to one another,

on earth in God's work among men. A new age – the age of grace, the age of God's Spirit – was inaugurated. The time when Christ's gospel should go to the ends of the earth began that day. It is not surprising that God granted very striking signs indicating that that time had begun. Compare the beginning of the age of Law in Exodus 19:16-19.

**2:2** In Greek, as in Hebrew, the same word means both wind (or breath) and Spirit. So it was natural for wind to become a symbol of God's Spirit (John 3:8; Ezek 37:9-14), and fitting that the coming of the Spirit was announced by the sound of a powerful wind.

**2:3** The Jews for centuries had recognized fire as a symbol of God's presence (notes at Ex 3:2). The fire was a sign to each disciple that God's Spirit was present with all the others. "Tongues" of fire was an indication of what their principal work was to be. They were God's spokesmen (1:8, etc), and their power for speaking was God's Spirit. The coming of the Spirit was a fulfillment of the word of the Lord Jesus (1:4,5; Luke 24:49; John 14:16,17,26; 16:6).

**2:4** "Filled with the Holy Spirit" – the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which Jesus had promised them in 1:5, and which they now received, produced this result. See notes at 1:5; see also Eph 5:18. Being filled with God's Spirit is of great importance for believers. The signs which accompanied the filling on the day of Pentecost are not the important things. God may give signs or withhold them as He pleases, but He will infallibly give the Holy Spirit and His fullness to those who seek Him in faith (v 39; Luke 11:13). God nowhere in the Bible instructs us to seek for the signs that appeared then (compare Matt 12:38,39), and nowhere in the Bible does He command us to be baptized with the Spirit or to seek for that, but He does command us to be filled with His Spirit.

Can a person know he is filled with the Holy Spirit if there are no accompanying signs? Certainly. He can know by faith (1 John 5:14,15), faith based on God's promises. And his experience afterwards will confirm that he is filled with the Spirit – he will have power for holy living and for witness and service (see also Eph 5:19-21).

See v 11 on the meaning of "to speak in

other tongues" as the disciples did that day. The Greek word here translated "tongues" means both physical tongues and languages. The phrase could be translated "began to speak with other languages."

**2:5-13** These God-fearing Jews were natives of Judea (v 9), or had lived abroad and had returned to Jerusalem – some to live there and others on a visit probably for the feasts of Passover and Pentecost. Fifteen different lands are mentioned, from what is now called Iran on the east to Rome on the west. There were two different sorts of people gathered there that day. Some were "bewildered" (v 6), "amazed" (v 7), and "perplexed" (v 12). They knew something strange and wonderful was occurring and could offer no explanation for it. Others were sure they knew all about it (v 13). They were the sort of people who reject or laugh at anything that is new or strange and think they have the answer to everything. One of the greatest days of human history had dawned, but all they could do was mock. In any generation those who are filled with God's Spirit will meet both kinds of people.

**2:7** The Jews of Galilee spoke with an accent which identified them to other Jews (Mark 14:70).

**2:11** This is thrice repeated (vs 6,8). God gave those disciples the instant ability to speak foreign languages which they had never learned. Their words were clearly understood by those who heard them (whether the disciples themselves understood what they were saying is not revealed). Some people teach that speaking in tongues is the essential sign that always accompanies the baptism of God's Spirit. We see here that when the apostles spoke in "tongues" they were speaking known languages which people there understood.

If this is the sign that always accompanies Spirit baptism, then we would have to say that this experience must be extremely rare indeed in our day and very uncommon in the whole history of the Church. But we know that a great many people have been baptized with the Holy Spirit and filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in "tongues" (languages unknown to them). On "signs" see notes on v 4.

For other references to "tongues" see 10:46; 1 Cor 12:10,28,30; 13:1,8;

"What does this mean?"

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

14 But Peter, standing up with the Eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "You men of Judea, and all *you* who are staying in Jerusalem, let this be known to you: listen to my words, 15 for these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* nine in the morning. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 And it will happen in the last days,  
 God says,  
 I will pour out of my Spirit on  
 all flesh,  
 and your sons and your daughters will  
 prophesy,  
 and your young men will see visions,  
 and your old men will dream dreams.  
 18 And in those days I will pour out of

my Spirit on my servants and my  
 maidservants,  
 and they will prophesy.

19 And I will show wonders in heaven  
 above,  
 and signs in the earth below,  
 blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke.  
 20 The sun will be turned into darkness,  
 and the moon into blood,  
 before that great and renowned  
 day of the Lord comes.  
 21 And it will be *that* whoever calls on  
 the name of the Lord will be saved.

22 "You men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth *was* a man proved true by God to you through miracles and wonders and signs which God did through him among you, as you yourselves also know. 23 He was delivered up by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, *and* you took

14:5,6,18,21,22,23,39.

**2:13** This accusation that the disciples were drunk is very meaningful. To be drunk means to be under the influence or control of alcohol. The disciples were under the influence and control of God's Spirit. The crowd could see that their behavior was not what people regarded as normal and usual. Compare Eph 5:18. The filling with God's Spirit lifts people far above what men regard as ordinary.

**2:14** As he often was when Jesus was on earth Peter here is the spokesman for the twelve apostles. And here begins the first sermon of this new era. Its themes are the Holy Spirit, and the death, resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2:15** God-fearing Jews did not drink wine in the morning. They drank wine only with meat and ate meat only in the evenings.

**2:16** Verses 17-21 are taken from Joel 2:28-32 (the last part of v 32 is omitted). "This is what was spoken" means that on that day of Pentecost God fulfilled His promise to send His Spirit.

**2:17** The phrase "in the last days, God says" is not in the Hebrew of Joel 2:28, which has only the words meaning "And afterward." Sometimes in the New Testament the expression "the last days" or "last times" refers to a time beginning with Christ's first coming and extending to His second coming - Heb 1:3; James 5:2; 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 John 2:18 ("the last hour"); Jude 18. God promised to pour out His Spirit on "all people." Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of this, for only Jews and Jewish converts received the Spirit then. We see a further fulfillment at Acts 8:17; 10:44,45; 19:6. As the gospel of Christ spread around the world people from more and more countries received God's Spirit, and this process will go on until the end of this age (v 20). "Sons" and "daughters", "young" and "old" without distinction will receive God's Spirit.

Notes on prophesy at Num 11:25. On

visions and dreams see 18:9,10; Gen 15:1; Num 12:6.

**2:18** "My servants" - God does not give His Spirit to the world in general, but to those who trust Him and so become His servants. See John 14:17.

**2:19,20** The day of the Lord begins at the end of this age and includes Christ's second coming. See notes at Isa 13:6-13; Joel 1:15; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10. The signs in the sun and moon are associated with that day in other places (Isa 13:9,10; Matt 24:29,30; Rev 6:12-17). The signs mentioned in v 19 can be seen in Rev 8:7,8,10; 9:2,17,18; 16:3,4,8. From the context here in Acts we may judge that the work of God's Spirit described in vs 17,18 will continue until the day of the Lord begins.

**2:21** See Isa 55:6,7; Rom 10:12,13; 1 Cor 1:2. To call on the name of the Lord means here to ask Him for salvation, to turn to Him in repentance and faith. Peter soon reveals who he means by Lord. In Joel the word in Hebrew is Jehovah. Peter means the Lord Jesus (v 38). This is just one indication among many in the New Testament that Jesus is the incarnation of Jehovah. See other references at Luke 2:11.

**2:22** Verses 14-21 was a word of explanation about the questions raised in vs 12,13. Here Peter comes to the heart of His message. Christ appointed him as a witness (1:8) and the Holy Spirit empowered him for this work (2:4). Now he testifies, and his words are full of Christ. He begins with Him and ends with Him. Jesus of Nazareth was "approved" by God the Father (see John 5:36; 10:37,38. Notes on signs and miracles at John 2:11; Matt 8:1).

**2:23** God sent the Lord Jesus into the world with the very purpose that He should die on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of men (Matt 20:28; 26:27,28; John 1:29; 3:14-16; 6:51; 10:11). But wicked men did the

*him* and by wicked hands crucified and killed *him*.  
24 God raised him up, setting *him* free from the anguish of death, because it was not possible that he would be held by it. 25 For David speaks concerning him,

I kept seeing the Lord always before  
my face,  
for he is at my right hand,  
so that I might not be shaken.  
26 Therefore my heart rejoiced and my  
tongue was glad.  
Moreover, my flesh will rest in hope,  
27 Because you will not leave my soul  
in the realm of the dead,  
nor will you allow your Holy One to see  
corruption.  
28 You have made known to me the ways  
of life.  
You will fill me with joy by your  
countenance.'

29 "Men, brethren, let me speak freely to you about the patriarch David. He is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had

sworn with an oath to him, that of his descendants according to the flesh, he would raise Christ up to sit on his throne, 31 he, seeing this in advance, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in the realm of the dead, nor did his flesh see corruption.

32 "This Jesus God has raised up, and we are all witnesses of this. 33 Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself said,

The Lord said to my Lord,  
Sit at my right hand,  
35 Until I make your enemies your  
footstool.

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made that same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

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

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus

crucifying and were guilty because of it.  
**2:24** Matt 28:6. It was impossible that death should hold the Lord Jesus because it was God's plan that it should not. God had given Him authority over death (John 10:17,18).  
**2:25-29** Now Peter shows that Christ's resurrection was in fulfillment of Ps 16:8-11 (see notes there). If Christ had not risen, the Scriptures would have been broken, and this too is impossible (John 10:35; Matt 5:17,18).  
**2:27** "The realm of the dead" - in Greek "Hades," in Hebrew "Sheol" - see note at Gen 37:35.  
**2:29** Peter shows that Ps 16:8-11 was not fulfilled in David's case (1 Kings 2:10-12). David did not rise from the dead.  
**2:30** 2 Sam 7:8-16; Ps 89:3,4,20-37. David was a very great prophet and in his psalms by the inspiration of God's Spirit foretold many things concerning Christ (Luke 24:44). Notes on "prophet" at Gen 20:7.  
**2:31** "Christ" - Matt 1:1. "Realm of the dead" - in Greek "Hades."  
**2:32** "Witnesses" - 1:8.  
**2:33** Eph 1:19-21; Phil 2:9-11. The "right hand" is the place of honor.  
"Holy Spirit" - John 14:16,17,26. The Lord Jesus still "pours out" the Holy Spirit where and when He wills (Matt 28:18; John 17:2).  
**2:34,35** This is a quotation from another great psalm concerning Christ - Ps 110:1. This is the third quotation in Peter's brief message. Christ had opened His disciples' understanding and taught them the Scriptures (Luke 24:44,45).  
**2:36** The Old Testament Scriptures Peter

quoted show that Jesus is Christ, the Messiah of Israel, the "Lord" in the sense of "master" or "owner" (this is the meaning in Ps 110:1). God appointed His own Son who shares His very nature (John 1:1) to be Messiah and Lord. This was the startling news Peter brought to the nation who had rejected and crucified Christ (John 1:11; 19:6).

**2:37** See 16:29,30. The Holy Spirit working in the minds and consciences of these Jews produced this result. He still works in a similar way today, and only He can do so. Compare John 16:7-11. Their words indicate repentance.

**2:38** Notes on repentance and baptism at Matt 3:2,6; Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3. Unlike John's baptism Christian baptism is associated with the name of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. See also 19:5. Peter is not teaching that baptism is essential for the forgiveness of sins. He well knew that forgiveness was not dependent on any work or ceremony that men can do. It comes by God's grace and is received through faith. See notes on forgiveness at Matt 16:12; 9:5-7; 12:31; 18:23-35; Eph 1:7; 1 John 1:9; Isa 55:7.

"For the forgiveness of sins" - the translation of this phrase made by some - "so that your sins may be forgiven" (NIV, 1978 edition) - is far from being the best possible translation. It seems to suggest that baptism comes before the forgiveness of sins and that those repenting Jews could not receive forgiveness without it. But this is not according to the teaching of the New Testament.



Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are far off, *to* as many as the Lord our God will call."

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted, saying, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly

received his word were baptized. And the same day there were added *to them* about three thousand souls.

42 And they persevered in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came on every soul. And many wonders and *miraculous* signs were done by

The Greek word translated "for" is "eis." It has a wide range of meaning - "for", "in", "into", "unto", "concerning", "about", etc (but "so that" seems a strange translation of this word). Here it should be translated in accordance with the general teaching of the New Testament on the subjects of forgiveness of sins, baptism, and salvation. So a good translation would be "concerning the forgiveness of sins." In 2:25 the same Greek word (eis) is translated "concerning" ("about" in the NIV). Forgiveness and baptism are related to each other, but baptism is not needed to bring the forgiveness of sins.

Peter's meaning here seems very clear - "Change your mind about who Jesus is, turn from your wicked rejection of Him as the Lord from heaven, the Messiah of Israel and Son of God. In accordance with His nature, office, and authority ("name") be baptized as an open declaration of your faith in Him, and as a sign of the forgiveness of sins which He freely gives to those who believe in Him."

Baptized for the forgiveness of sins does not mean to be baptized in order to obtain forgiveness of sins. Compare this verse with Matt 3:11. There the same Greek word is used (eis) and is translated "for." It is very clear that John did not baptize people so that they would repent, but because they had already repented (v 6). Now also baptism should be given only to those who have already repented and received the forgiveness of sins. See Acts 10:44-48 - Cornelius and those with him received the Holy Spirit (and so, of course, forgiveness of their sins) before they received baptism.

Baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" means on His authority as Lord and Christ (v 36). Peter was not giving a formula that has to be spoken as people receive baptism. Compare Matt 28:19.

Observe that God gives the Holy Spirit as a "gift." Compare John 7:37-39; 14:16,17; Gal 3:2. Notice also in this verse that Peter does not present Jesus as Saviour but as Lord and Christ (v 36), and demands that they repent of their rejection of Him as such. See the note at 22:10.

**2:39** The promise of God's Spirit was made first to the Jews, but is for all people everywhere. On God's call see Matt 9:13; Rom 1:6; 8:28-30; 1 Cor 1:9,24,26; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:1,4; Col 3:15; 2 Thess 2:14; 1 Tim 6:12; Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 2:9,21; 2 Pet 1:38.

**2:40** Observe here the work of a faithful, Spirit-filled minister of God's Word. Peter was not content to lay out the facts con-

cerning Christ. He warned people about the dangers of rejecting Him and pleaded with them to receive Him. Every generation is a "perverse generation" (though that one was probably worse than many - Matt 23:33-36; Phil 2:15), and the need to warn and plead with people is always there.

**2:41** Accepting Peter's message means they believed in the Lord Jesus and received Him as Lord and Christ, and Saviour from sin (vs 36,38). Having believed and so received forgiveness and eternal life (John 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47) they were baptized as a sign and public declaration that they had believed. The 3000 who did so were in Jerusalem among leaders who had rejected and crucified Christ. The evidence for Christ's resurrection was so complete, the witness of the apostles in the Holy Spirit was so powerful, that they believed in spite of all dangers and possible future troubles.

**2:42** "Persevered" - the Greek word means "to be strong towards," and so to "steadfastly continue." This was the evidence that their faith was genuine. See notes at Matt 7:17-27; John 15:1-8; 1 Cor 15:1,2; Col 1:23; Heb 3:6,14.

Observe the four things these believers devoted themselves to. They were not content to merely hear the gospel, say they believed it, and go their own ways. And the apostles were not content to have them do so. Jesus told them to make disciples and to teach them (Matt 28:18-20). Here we see them doing that. They were forming these believers into a local church and giving them every opportunity to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2 Pet 3:18). The "apostles' teaching" is what Christ had told them to teach. The whole New Testament is a record of it. Fellowship is also very important for Christian growth and service - fellowship with Christ and His people (1 Cor 1:9; Phil 2:1; 3:10; 1 John 1:3,6,7). It means opening the heart and mind to others and sharing in service, struggles, troubles, joys (Rom 12:15,16). It means loving one another as Christ loved (John 13:34). It means to speak to one another of the things of Christ (Eph 5:19).

"Breaking of bread" probably refers to the Lord's Supper when believers also ate together (v 46; 1 Cor 11:17-26). Hardly anything is more important than prayer for maintaining a spiritual life (Luke 18:1; Eph 6:18; Phil 4:6,7; 1 Thess 5:17,18; Jude 20).

**2:43** "Every soul" may include those outside this new fellowship of believers. God was present with His people in a wonderful

the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together, and had everything in common. 45 And *they* sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to everyone, as each one had need.

46 And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and broke bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved.

**3** Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, three in the afternoon. 2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was being carried to beg from those entering the temple (daily they laid him at the temple gate which is called Beautiful). 3 He saw Peter and John about to go into the temple and asked for money. 4 And Peter, together with John, fixed his eyes on him and said, "Look at us." 5 And he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

manner, and this often brings a sense of fear and awe to people. God gave the wonders and signs to confirm the truth the apostles had been preaching (Heb 2:3,4). They signified that the same Lord Jesus who had done such things in His time on earth was still present and active with His apostles (1:1,2). See notes on miracles and signs at Matt 8:1; John 2:11.

**2:44,45** This was a voluntary expression of love (4:32-35). No one commanded it. Compare 5:1-4. Of course, it has nothing to do with political communism (which has been something imposed on the masses of people by a few leaders, often without the desire or consent of the people). These believers in Christ were showing their oneness which had been created by God's Spirit (John 17:20-23; 1 Cor 12:12,13).

**2:46** They had no church building and met where they could. A meeting once a week was not enough for these fervent believers. They loved to hear more of God's Word, to pray, and have fellowship together. All that came out of an inner state of heart – glad and sincere.

**2:47** Because of the condition of their hearts, praising God was as natural as breathing. Note on praise at Ps 33:1-3. People outside the Church could see their sincerity and love, and viewed them with favor, though the religious leaders of Israel did not (4:1-3). Is it any wonder that every day some believed in the Lord Jesus and joined them in the fellowship? Would not the same thing happen in our day if we were like these early Christians?

**3:1** Three in the afternoon was the time when the Jewish priests in the temple began their evening prayers and offerings.

**3:4** They were trying to prepare the man for something exceptional.

6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 And he leaped up and stood, and walked, and went with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 10 And they knew that it was he who sat begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

11 And while the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico that is called Solomon's, greatly astonished. 12 And when Peter saw *this* he responded to the people, "You men of Israel, why are you surprised at this? Or why do you look so intently at us, as though by our own power or holiness we caused this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our

**3:6** We see here the material poverty of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Compare Matt 4:18-22; 19:27; Luke 6:20. In this they were like their Master – Matt 8:20. But they were rich in spiritual power. Often, it seems, that as the possessions and wealth of believers increase their spiritual power decreases. The Lord gave perfect instructions in Matt 6:19-21. "In the name of" means by Christ's authority and power. Peter was acting as Christ's representative – John 14:13,14; 20:21.

**3:7** Peter's action worked together with his words to produce faith and healing in this man.

**3:8** The early disciples healed many people (5:15,16; 8:7; 14:8-10; 19:11,12; 28:8,9). But we nowhere read that they had special meetings for healing. They sometimes healed those they met in their work, or those who came to them while they were engaged in their ministry of preaching and teaching. Notice here that this lame man did not praise Peter, but God. He knew it was God who had done the healing, not Peter.

**3:10** See 2:7,12; 10:45; 12:16; 13:12; Matt 8:27; 9:8,33; 12:23. Are people ever amazed at anything we do or say, seeing the power of God's Spirit at work in us?

**3:11** Solomon's portico or colonnade was on the east side of the outer court of the temple.

**3:12** Peter seized this opportunity to preach the truth of God. He did not point men to himself or try to increase his fame by this event. He knew that God had enabled him to perform the miracle and wanted only God to be honored. See also 14:8-15.

**3:13** The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was a common name in Israel for the one true God (Ex 3:6). The reason can be seen in Genesis chapters 12-50. God glorified Jesus in His resurrection and ascension.

fathers, has glorified his Son Jesus whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. 14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be given to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead. Of this we are witnesses. 16 And his name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong, *this man* whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which *is granted* through him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as your rulers also *did*. 18 But those things which God foretold through the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ would suffer, he has fulfilled in this way. 19 Repent, therefore, and be converted, so that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that he might send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you previously. 21 Him heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things, which God has spoken

through the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brethren. You must listen to him in everything he says to you. 23 And it will be *that* every soul who will not listen to that prophet will be destroyed from among the people.'

24 "Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who followed *him*, all who spoke, likewise foretold these days. 25 You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed.' 26 God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him first to you to bless you, by turning each one of you away from his iniquities."

**4** And as they were speaking to the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them. 2 *They* were upset that they taught the people and preached

"You delivered up and denied" – Peter is only reminding them of something they well knew, with the purpose of bringing them to repentance.

**3:14** "The Holy One and the Just" – a title of the Messiah (7:52; 22:14; 4:27,30; Mark 1:24; Jam 5:6; 1 John 2:20). It also indicates Christ's deity (Rev 15:3,4. Only God is innately holy). Jesus was both the servant of God and God incarnate (references at Phil 2:6; Luke 2:11). See whom the Jews preferred to Him (Mark 15:6-15).

**3:15** "Prince" – the Greek word here signifies an originator, a founder, an author, as well as prince or leader. Jesus is the "author of life." This also indicates Christ's deity. See John 5:19-27.

"Witnesses" – observe again what the apostles called themselves and what they testified about (1:8; 2:32).

**3:16** All their emphasis was on Jesus – His name and His power. Let us follow their example.

**3:17** John 15:21; 1 Cor 2:7,8; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 4:18.

**3:18** Luke 24:25-27,44-47.

**3:19** "Repent" – 2:38; Matt 3:2; Luke 13:3-5; Acts 17:30. This is essential for anyone who would have his sins "blotted out" – erased from the record.

**3:20** This verse with the preceding one states that God has appointed Christ as the Messiah of Israel (2:36), and seems to indicate that Christ will not return to be their king until Israel is willing to repent and receive Him.

**3:21** God has set a time for everything, and nothing will take place until His time comes (1:7).

"Restoration of all things" – 1:6; Matt 19:28; Rom 8:18-23; Isa 11:1-16; Ezek

37:1-28; etc.

**3:22,23** Deut 18:15,18,19. Peter means that this promised prophet is the Lord Jesus. Come to pass (KJV) is not in Greek.

**3:24** Peter (as Christ Himself did) emphasized that Christ's coming was according to God's promises in the Old Testament (Matt 5:17; Luke 24:25-27,44-47; John 5:39).

**3:25** By "you" Peter meant the Jews. Compare Rom 9:4,5. They were the physical descendants of Abraham to whom God gave the promises of blessing (Gen 12:3).

**3:26** "His Son Jesus" – Peter affirms that the blessing promised through Abraham has been brought to men by the Lord Jesus. See also Gal 3:6-9,14. God demonstrated this by raising Him from the dead. Then He sent Him first to Israel His chosen people (13:46; Rom 1:16). The way He sent Him was by sending His Spirit to speak through His apostles.

"To bless you" – this is what God loves to do and why He sent His Son into the world. Observe here what is meant by God's blessing – being turned from all sin and evil. Compare Matt 1:21; Gal 1:3,4; Titus 2:13,14; 1 Pet 2:24. This is the greatest of all God's blessings and without it there is no permanent blessing at all. Notes on blessing and blessed at Gen 12:1-3; Num 6:22-27; Deut 28:3-14; Ps 1:1; 119:1; Matt 5:3-12; Luke 11:28; Gal 3:9,14; Eph 1:3.

**4:1** When Jesus was on earth the priests of the temple were among His worst enemies (Matt 16:21; 20:18; 21:15,23,59; 27:1,12,41,62). The apostles also had to face their enmity.

"Sadducees" – Matt 3:7.

**4:2** The Sadducees did not believe there was such a thing as a resurrection from the

through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they seized them and put *them* in custody to the next day; for it was now evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand.

5 And it happened on the next day that their rulers, elders and scribes, 6 and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all the relatives of the high priest, gathered together in Jerusalem. 7 And when they had placed *Peter and John* among them, they asked, "By what power, or by what name, have you done this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "You rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9 if we this day are being examined about the good deed done to a helpless man, and how he was healed, 10 be it known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead, by him this man stands here before you whole.

11 "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is no salvation through any other *person*, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were dead (23:8).

**4:3** This speaks of the kind of nation Israel was then – men were jailed and faced death for delivering the best news the world ever had (5:17,18; 12:1-4). It is still happening today in some nations of the world.

**4:4** See 2:41.

**4:6** Matt 26:3,57; Luke 3:2; John 18:13,24.

**4:7** They doubtless knew the answer to their question, but were looking for ways to accuse them.

**4:8** Peter took this question as an opportunity to preach Christ. Compare Matt 10:16-20.

**4:9** See how he points out their character to them – they were the sort who would accuse people for showing kindness to cripples!

**4:10** See 3:6,12. These leaders had hoped they were rid of Jesus once and for all (Matt 27:65-67; 27:22,23,62-64).

**4:11** Ps 118:22; Matt 21:42-44.

**4:12** The apostles taught this to others because Jesus had taught it to them. See John 14:6; 10:7,8; 3:16-19,36. Salvation is one of the great words of the New Testament. It includes the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47), the new birth (John 1:12,13; 3:3-8), liberation from the bondage of sin (John 8:32-36), being counted righteous by God (Rom 1:16; 3:21-28; 4:7,8), and eternal life (John 3:16) in the presence of God forever (John 14:3; etc).

**4:13** Their courage was a result of the knowledge of Christ's resurrection and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Nothing else is a

uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and understood that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go out of the council *meeting*, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them *is* evident to everyone living in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*. 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us strictly warn them not to speak from now on to anyone in this name."

18 And they called them and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

21 So when they had threatened them some more, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people. For everyone glorified God for what was done. 22 For the man on whom this miracle of healing was performed was over forty years old.

23 And being let go, they went to their own *group*, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard

sufficient explanation. Just after Christ's death they were far from courageous (John 20:19). Once Peter could not face up to a servant girl (Matt 26:69,70). Now he can face with great boldness the wrath of Israel's wicked leaders and death itself (v 29; 5:29-33,41,42). This is what Christ can do and does do with ordinary people. And these leaders recognized the source of their teaching and boldness – the Lord Jesus.

**4:16** See the hardness of heart of these men. They knew the miracle had taken place, but refused to believe in Christ who had performed it through the disciples. Compare John 15:24.

**4:17** "This name" – they meant Jesus, but they did not want to utter His name.

**4:18** How futile this command to Spirit-filled disciples! Can the wind be stopped by holding up a hand?

**4:19** See 5:29. Christians should obey their rulers in all things except when their commands are contrary to God's Word (Rom 13:1,2). In such case they must obey God and take the consequences.

**4:20** A Spirit-filled disciple of the Lord Jesus can no more refrain from speaking for Him than breathing. Compare 2 Cor 5:14; Jer 20:9.

**4:21,22** The same event caused some to make threats, others to praise God.

**4:23** "Their own group" was the group of believers in Christ.

**4:24** Their prayer was to the Creator of the universe (Genesis chapter 1; John 1:1-3;

that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, "Lord, you *are* God who has made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who through the mouth of your servant David has said,

Why did the nations rage,  
and the people plot vain things?  
26 The kings of the earth stood up,  
and the rulers were gathered together  
against the Lord,  
and against his Christ.

27 "For truly against your holy son Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, gathered together, 28 to do whatever your hand and your purpose determined beforehand should be done. 29 And now, Lord, see their threatenings, and grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word, 30 by stretching forth your hand to heal, and *giving power* that *miraculous* signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy son Jesus."

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

Heb 1:1,2), the only God there is.

**4:25,26** Observe their conviction that it was God's Spirit who spoke through David. They had this teaching from the Lord Jesus (Matt 15:3,6; 22:43; John 10:35; Luke 24:45). The quotation is from Ps 2:1,2. See notes there.

**4:27** Luke 23:6-13.

**4:28** See 2:23. "Determined beforehand" in Greek is the same word translated "pre-destinated" in Rom 8:29,30 and Eph 1:5,11, and "ordained" in 1 Cor 2:7 – the only other times in Greek the word is found in the New Testament.

**4:29** Verse 13.

**4:30** Though it meant much trouble for them, they prayed that God would continue to do through them what He had been doing. All this is strong evidence that they knew Jesus had risen from the dead, and that they themselves had nothing to do with the removal of His body from the tomb (Matt 27:64; 28:6; etc).

**4:31** See 2:2-4. They were filled again. The filling of God's Spirit is not a once for all thing that cannot be repeated.

**4:32-35** See 2:44,45. They did this, notice, because they were "of one heart and one soul." They had the same thoughts and purposes about Christ and His work and loved fellow believers as themselves.

**4:33** So much for the threats of Israel's religious leaders. Observe again that the preaching of Christ's resurrection was at the heart of their message – 1:22; 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:2,10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30;

32 And the large number of those who believed were all of one heart and one soul. None *of them* said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there any among them who was in need, for all who had lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds from the things that were sold, 35 and laid *them* at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each one as he had need.

36 And Joses, whom the apostles named Barnabas (that is, being translated, Son of Encouragement), a Levite from the country of Cyprus, 37 had land *but* sold *it* and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

**5** But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 and kept back *part* of the money, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *part* of the money for the land? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold,

17:18,31; 23:6.

**4:36** See 9:27; 11:22-25,30; 12:25; 13:1,2.

"Levite" means of the tribe of Levi, a tribe of Israel set apart by God for the service of the temple (Num 3:5-10). Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean Sea west of Lebanon.

**5:1,2** God's church was holy in conduct, filled with His Spirit and witnessing. Nothing could stop its work, its increase – nothing but sin. Here was an attempt by Satan to introduce sinful ways into the church. Evidently, Ananias and his wife told the apostles that they were giving the full amount they had received (v 8). They wanted the reputation for being generous without actually being generous. They wanted others to think they were more spiritual than they actually were. This is hypocrisy. Compare Matt 6:2-4; 23:5-7.

**5:3,4** There was no requirement for them to sell their property and give any of the amount to the Church (2:44,45). Observe that the lie Ananias told came from Satan. See John 8:44. Satan suggested it and Ananias gave in to the suggestion. Notice too that to lie to God's people is the same as lying to God. In fact, all we do to them is as if we did it to Him. See 9:4,5; Matt 25:34-46; Mark 9:37. On lying see notes and references at Ex 20:16; Ps 5:6; 15:2; 51:6; Prov 6:16-19; 12:22; Eph 4:15,25; Col 3:9; Rev 21:8,27; 22:15. Let everyone who is tempted to lie take into account the above facts. Lying is a very foolish and wicked and dangerous thing.

was *the money* not in your control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and breathed his last. And great fear came on all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wrapped him up, carried *him* outside, and buried *him*.

7 And it was about three hours later that his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?"

And she said, "Yes, for so much."

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

10 Then she fell down immediately at his feet, and breathed her last. And the young men came in, found her dead, and carried *her* out and buried *her* beside her husband. 11 And great fear came on the whole church, and on

everyone who heard these things.

12 And many *miraculous* signs and wonders were performed at the hands of the apostles among the people. And they were all together with one accord in Solomon's Portico. 13 And among the rest no *man* dared to join them, but the people regarded them highly. 14 And more *and more* believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. 15 So then they brought the sick out into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the very least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also crowds came from the cities around Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits. And every one of them was healed.

17 Then the high priest and all those who were with him (who were of the sect of the Sadducees) rose up, filled with indignation, 18 and seized the apostles, and put them in the public prison. 19 But at night the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak

**5:5** The death of Ananias was God's judgment on him, not a result of anything Peter did. Lying and hypocrisy are like a deadly poison. Ananias's sin was a serious threat to the life of the church, and the situation demanded a severe remedy.

"Fear" – fear of offending God and of the punishment hypocrisy and lying deserve, is a very healthy thing. See notes on the fear of God at Gen 20:11; Job 28:28; Ps 34:11-14; 111:10; Prov 1:7.

**5:9** God revealed to Peter that His judgment was going to fall on her also. Peter gave her an opportunity to change her story and repent, but she lied to his face. Observe that their sin was testing the Spirit of God. See Deut 6:16; Matt 4:7; Ex 17:7; Ps 95:7-11.

**5:11** When Christians are afraid to sin the church will be holy and surge forward in its work. In the very beginning of this era of grace and the Holy Spirit, God was revealing that grace does not mean that sin is something that should be overlooked and go unpunished. He has given here once for all an example indicating what He thinks of hypocrisy, deceit and lying in the church – in God's eyes they are worthy of death. This does not mean that God put to death every person in the church who was guilty of these. One example was enough to put fear into the whole group of believers. It should be enough for us also. What else should be required for us to learn that God hates all lying and deceitfulness, and that anyone who practices such things is in grave danger?

At the beginning of the old dispensation of law also God set forth an example of what He thought of disobedience to it. See Num 15:32-36. At the beginning of the conquest of Canaan also God set forth an example.

See Joshua chapter 7. Sin tolerated in a local church is the greatest danger to that church. It is like cancer which can eventually kill the whole body.

The word "church" in this verse means the group of believers called out from the surrounding people to be the people of Christ. Note at Matt 16:18.

**5:12** See 2:43; 3:11.

**5:13** Verse 11.

**5:14** A holy, witnessing church will see sinners converted to Christ. After the judgment on Ananias and his wife the church moved forward again to new victories. Compare Joshua chapter 8.

**5:15** Neither Peter nor his shadow had any power to heal (3:12). God chose this way to honor the apostles in the eyes of the people and to establish the truth of their teaching. Now their teaching has long since been established and the New Testament given to us. There is no longer any need to establish the truth again through someone else, or to give signs and wonders and miracles to do it.

**5:16** Here the gospel of Christ begins to spread beyond Jerusalem.

"Unclean spirits" – note at Matt 4:24.

**5:17** "Sadducees" – Matt 3:7. Note on jealousy and envy at Matt 27:18; Prov 27:4; Gal 5:26.

**5:18** See 4:3.

**5:19** "Angel of the Lord" – notes at Matt 1:20; Gen 16:7. God sends angels to minister to His people (Heb 1:14). Here is just one example of what they can do. But they do not always deliver believers from trouble (12:1,2; 24:27; 2 Cor 11:23-27).

**5:20** They were not delivered so that they could retreat in fear to their homes and keep

to the people all the words of this life.”

21 And when they heard *that*, they went into the temple early in the morning and taught.

But the high priest, and those who were with him, came and called together the Council and all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 23 saying, “Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the keepers *were* standing outside at the doors, but when we opened *them*, we did not find anyone inside.” 24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple *guard*, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered where this would lead.

25 Then someone came and told them: “Look, the men you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” 26 Then the captain with the officers went and brought them without *using* force; for they were afraid of the people, that they might throw stones at them.

27 And when they had brought them, they placed *them* before the council, and the high priest asked them, 28 saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And, look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man’s blood on us.”

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered

and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed by hanging *him* on a tree. 31 God exalted him to his right hand as Prince and Saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things, and *so is* the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

33 When they heard *that*, they were enraged and plotted to kill them. 34 Then a man stood up in the council *meeting*, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, respected by all the people, and gave an order that the apostles be put outside for a little while. 35 Then *he* said to them, “You men of Israel, take care to yourselves what you intend to do about these men. 36 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all those who followed him were scattered, and *it* came to nothing. 37 After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all those who obeyed him were scattered. 38 And now I say to you, withdraw from these men, and let them alone. For if their purpose or work is of men, it will come to nothing. 39 But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it, and perhaps you will be found even to fight against God.”

quiet. Here the gospel is called “This life” – it brings new life to people (John 3:16; 5:24), and causes them to live in a new way (2 Cor 5:17).

**5:21** Obedience was the mark of their faith – obedience at any cost.

“Council” – the Sanhedrin – Matt 5:22.

**5:26** Matt 21:46; Luke 22:2. These religious leaders still cared nothing for justice. They tried to rule but were ruled themselves by envy, hatred and fear.

**5:28** “This name”, “this man” – Jesus. Note at 4:17. How foolishly and unreasonably they accused the apostles. They themselves were already fully guilty. See Matt 27:24,25.

**5:29** See 4:19. Here is a principle that should govern every believer in Christ when there is a conflict between God’s commands and men’s. Obedience meant for them persecution, imprisonment and, at last, death, but they held firm to this principle.

**5:30** See 2:23; 4:10. Peter uses “tree” for the cross (see also 10:39; Gal 3:13; 3:29; 1 Pet 2:24). Compare Deut 21:22.

**5:31** See 2:33-36. “Prince” here means “Leader” or “Head.” Observe again that repentance and forgiveness go together, and both are a gift Christ gives (2:38; Luke 24:47; 2 Tim 2:25).

**5:32** See 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33. The Holy Spirit witnessed by doing miracles through the apostles, by giving the apostles authority and power in their witness, and by speaking to the hearts of those who heard it.

Observe the connection between obedience and receiving God’s Spirit. In other places we are told the Spirit comes by asking (Luke 11:13), and by faith (Gal 3:14). Peter is speaking of the obedience of faith in the Lord Jesus. See John 6:29; Rom 1:5. To believe in Christ is to obey God’s will. Faith is not possible except when there is a decision to submit to Christ and a willingness to obey Him. Faith does not arise in a rebellious heart that will not yield to God. God gives His Spirit to those who are willing to obey Him, and in order that they might obey Him. See also Matt 7:21; Rom 10:9,10.

**5:33** This is the unreasonable reaction of men who loved darkness rather than light (John 3:19,20; 10:31; 12:10,11; 15:18-20).

**5:34** “Pharisee” – Matt 3:7. Gamaliel was the guru of Saul of Tarsus before Saul became Paul the apostle (22:3).

**5:36,37** These are events not recorded in the Bible.

**5:38,39** God used this advice to cool the anger of the Jewish leaders and to free the apostles from death at that time. But actually Gamaliel was not right in his first statement. Many systems of human thought and religion, and many works of Satan go on for centuries, and seem to succeed and increase. But Gamaliel was right from the standpoint of eternity. Everything that has its source in mere man will eventually come to nothing (compare Isa 2:10-22).

40 And they agreed with him. And when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded them not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus the Christ.

**6** And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a complaint among the Grecian *Jews* against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve called the whole group of the disciples *together*, and said, "It is not *agreeable* to reason that we leave the word of God, and serve *at* tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, look among yourselves for seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom,

whom we may appoint to this duty. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

5 And these words pleased the whole group, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas a convert from Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles. And when *the apostles* had prayed, they laid hands on them.

7 And the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly, and a large group of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain men belonging to the synagogue that is called *the Synagogue* of the Freedmen, and Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those of Cilicia and Asia, and disputed with Stephen.

Gamaliel's words in v 39 are always true, and he aptly described what many did then (and still do) – "fighting against God."

**5:40** This was a severe punishment. They gave them 39 lashes with a whip on their backs (Matt 27:26; 2 Cor 11:24).

**5:41** What a difference it makes to be right with God and to love the Lord Jesus Christ! Such people can count shame and disgrace as joy (John 16:33; Matt 5:11,12; Jam 1:2; 1 Peter 4:12-16). Here these apostles were beyond humiliation and the pride that brings the feeling of humiliation.

**5:42** Threats of death, severe punishment, imprisonment – none of these can stop the Spirit-filled servant of the Lord Jesus Christ (4:20; 8:1,4; 14:19,20; 16:22-31).

**6:1** Observe that those in the early church were called disciples. See notes at Matt 10:1; 28:19. We should not imagine that they were perfect people. Here we see them divided into two camps. The Grecian Jews here were Christians who spoke Greek instead of Aramaic (or Hebrew) and who had probably been born, or lived at one time, in other countries. Aramaic was the common spoken language in Jerusalem. It was similar to Hebrew. Those Christians who spoke it were discriminating against those of Grecian background. Some believers were forgetting the unity once enjoyed (2:44-47), and following their fallen nature (compare 1 Cor 3:1-4).

Discrimination against other Christians because of language, color, race, nation, social or financial position, or any other thing is wrong. It comes out of the sinful nature of man. In Christ none of those things has any importance (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). If they cause us to discriminate against fellow believers and form little cliques with those of our own background, we are sinning against Christ who abolished these distinctions and commanded love and unity to us all (John 13:34; Eph 4:3).

**6:2** "Twelve" – the eleven original apostles and Matthias (1:26). They knew that if they distributed the food themselves they would be just and fair to all, but God had given them a different ministry and they dared not leave it (compare Rom 12:3-8).

**6:3** Observe that those in the church were to choose these men; the apostles did not appoint them on their own. But is it necessary to be "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" to "serve at tables"? Yes, if it is to be done as God wants it done. To do any service for God as it ought to be done requires wisdom and His Spirit's fullness. No one can live an hour as God wants him to live without these. So Eph 5:18; Jam 1:5.

**6:4** Prayer and the Word of God are the two chief things for all whom God has called to preach. Either one without the other will result in a maimed ministry.

**6:5** "Convert" – this means that he was first a convert to Judaism then to Christianity.

**6:6** The apostles showed their approval of the choice of the people in this way and set them apart for the work.

**6:7** If Jewish priests wanted to become followers of Christ they had to renounce their former views of Him and forsake the views of the high priest who still opposed Him. That they did so indicates how powerful the evidence was for the resurrection of Christ and for the coming of God's Spirit.

**6:8** The man chosen to "serve at tables" soon discovered other gifts in himself. God may use a person in marvelous ways who is faithful in some ordinary task, and there is no telling what may eventually be the ministry of a man filled with God's Spirit.

**6:9** These were Jews who had once lived in those foreign parts.

"Freedmen" – this is a better translation for today than "Libertines" (KJV). The Greek word means people set free from slavery. The usual meaning of the word "libertine" today is someone who is sexually immoral and promiscuous, who acts without restraint.



10 But they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.

11 Then they privately instigated men to say: "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God."

12 And they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the Law, and *they* came up and seized him, and brought *him* to the Council. 13 Then *they* produced false witnesses who said, "This man never stops speaking blasphemous words against this holy place, and the Law. 14 For we heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

15 And everyone who sat in the council, looking steadily at him, saw his face as *if* it were the face of an angel.

**7** Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?" 2 And he said, "Men, brethren, and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Go away from your country, and from your people, and come to the land that I will show you.'

4 "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. From there, when his father died, *God* caused him to move to this land where you now live. 5 And he gave him no inheritance in it, no, not *enough* to set his foot on. But he promised that he would give it as a possession to him and to his descendants after him, when *Abraham still* had no child. 6 And God spoke in this way, that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land, and that they would enslave them

and mistreat *them* for four hundred years. 7 And I will judge the nation to which they are enslaved, God said, 'and afterwards they will come out and serve me in this place.' 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so *Abraham* became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day. And Isaac *became the father of* Jacob, and Jacob *became the father of* the twelve patriarchs.

9 "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him, 10 and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favour and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his house.

11 "Now a famine came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great trouble. And our fathers found no food. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers the first *time*. 13 And during the second *time* Joseph became known to his brothers and Joseph's people became known to Pharaoh. 14 Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his family to *Egypt*, seventy-five people. 15 So Jacob went down to Egypt and *there* died, he and our fathers, 16 and were carried over to Shechem, and placed in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor *the father of* Shechem.

17 "But when the time drew near to *fulfil* the promise that God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and increased in number in Egypt, 18 until another king arose who did not know Joseph. 19 He dealt treacherously with our people and mistreated our fathers, making them throw

**6:11** Being defeated in argument they used the tricks evil men often use (Matt 26:59; John 8:48,59; etc).

**6:12** "Council" – the Sanhedrin – Matt 5:22.

**6:14** Compare Matt 26:61.

**6:15** It was plain to them all that Stephen was innocent, sincere and powerful. But these haters of truth were concerned only in getting rid of him. Note on angels at Gen 16:7.

**7:1** In the speech which follows Stephen does not refer directly to their accusations. Instead he gives a brief account of Israel's history beginning with the father of the nation, Abraham, and gives special emphasis to Moses through whom God gave His law. In this way he answers the charges that he had spoken against God, Moses, the law and the temple (6:11,13,14) – he shows that his teaching was in accordance with the Old Testament. All along he has one end in view – to show that the nation was always rebellious against its God-appointed leaders, and that this rebellious spirit was displayed to the full in their murder of the Lord Jesus. Stephen showed very great courage in speaking like this before the religious court

of the Jews which had condemned Jesus to death. The explanation of his boldness is found in 6:5.

**7:2** "God of glory" – a name found in Ps 29:3. The story of Abraham is found in Genesis chapters 11-25.

**7:5** Gen 12:7; 15:2-6; 17:8.

**7:6,7** Gen 15:13-16.

**7:8** Gen 17:9-14; 21:1-5; 25:26; 35:23-26.

"Patriarchs" – the sons of Jacob, the forefathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

**7:9** Gen 37:4,11,28.

**7:10** Gen 41:39-43.

**7:11,12** Gen 41:53 – 42:3.

**7:13** Gen 43:15; 45:1,2,16.

**7:14** Compare Gen 46:26. There the number in Jacob's family in Canaan is given as sixty-six, apart from his son's wives. Counting the nine wives of Jacob's sons still living in Canaan the figure comes to seventy-five. (Judah's wife was dead – Gen 38:12, and, according to tradition, Simeon's wife also).

**7:15** Gen 46:5-7.

**7:16** Gen 23:14-18.

**7:17-19** Ex 1:6-14.

out their infants so they would not live.

20 "At that time Moses was born. *He* was a very fine *child*, and nurtured in his father's house for three months. 21 And when he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. 22 And Moses was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was powerful in words and in deeds.

23 "And when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one *of them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. 25 For he supposed his brethren would understand that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to make peace between them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you harm one another?'

27 "But the one who was harming his neighbour shoved him away and said, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Will you kill me, as you did the Egyptian yesterday?' 29 At this word Moses fled, and was a foreigner in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

30 "And when forty years had passed, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw *it*, he was amazed at the sight. And as he drew near to look *at it*, the voice of the Lord came to him, 32 *saying*, 'I *am* the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then Moses trembled, and did not dare to look.

33 "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have seen, yes, I have seen the oppression of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

**7:20-22** Ex 2:1-10.

**7:23-29** Ex 2:11-15,21,22; 18:3.

**7:25** This is a theme Stephen now begins to emphasize – the people of Israel revealed in their history that they were often ignorant of God's plans and rejected the leaders God appointed for them.

**7:30-34** Ex 3:1-10.

**7:35** Notes on this angel at Gen 16:7; Ex 3:2.

**7:36** This verse covers Exodus chapters 7 to 17 and parts of Numbers chapters 14 to 21.

**7:37** Deut 18:15 – this prophet was the Lord Jesus.

**7:38** Far from speaking against Moses (6:11), Stephen honored him. And he calls the law "living oracles" – compare John 6:63; Lev 18:5.

35 "This *is that* Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' He *is the one* God sent *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He brought them out, after showing wonders and *miraculous* signs in the land of Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brethren. You must listen to him.' 38 This is he who was in the church in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us.

39 "Him our fathers would not obey, but rejected, and in their hearts turned back again to Egypt, 40 saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us. For *as for* this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice to the idol, and were happy with the works of their own hands. 42 Then God turned away and gave them up to worship the *starry* host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the Prophets,

O house of Israel,  
did you offer to me slain beasts and  
sacrifices *during* forty years in the  
wilderness?

43 You even took the tabernacle of  
Moloch,  
and the star of your god Remphan,  
images which you made to worship.  
So I will carry you away beyond  
Babylon.

44 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, as *God* had appointed, telling Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen. 45 Having received it in turn, our fathers brought it with Joshua to the land of

**7:39** See notes on vs 1,25. Stephen will show that as Israel dealt with the prophet Moses so also they dealt with the great prophet Moses foretold (v 37). Though the people of Israel left Egypt their thoughts and desires were still there (Ex 16:1-3; Num 14:1-4).

**7:40,41** Ex 32:1-6.

**7:42,43** Stephen is referring to the Greek translation of the Hebrew of Amos 5:25-27, but does not give an exact quotation. His purpose was simply to show that God gave up Israel to false worship because of their disobedience and rebelliousness. See notes on the worship of stars at Deut 4:19; 17:3-5; Ezek 8:16-18; Gen 1:14-18.

**7:44** Ex 25:1-9.

**7:45** Joshua chapter 3; 18:1; I Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 6:17.

the Gentiles, whom God drove out from the presence of our fathers until the days of David. 46 He found favour with God, and wanted to see *to the building of* a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. 47 But *it was* Solomon *who* built him a house.

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

49 "Heaven *is* my throne,  
and the earth is my footstool.  
What house will you build me?  
says the Lord,  
Or what *is* the place of my rest?  
50 Has not my hand made all these things?"

51 "You stiffnecked *people*, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. You *are* just like your fathers. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they

killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered. 53 You have received the Law administered by angels, and have not kept *it*."

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed *their* teeth at him. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, "Look, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed at him all together, 58 and dragged *him* out of the city, and pelted *him* with stones. And the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen *as he* was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And he knelt down and cried out with a loud

**7:46** 2 Sam 7:1-5. Note on "God of Jacob" at Ps 146:5.

**7:47** 1 Kings chapter 6.

**7:48-50** The Jews attached great importance to the temple in Jerusalem. One of the charges they made against Stephen was that he spoke against it (6:13,14). Evidently, he had been speaking in a way that indicated his conviction that the temple itself was not the important thing but the God whose name was there, and that lives of holiness and obedience were greater than ritual and ceremonies (compare Isa 1:12-20). He here quotes from Isa 66:1,2 to show that his views were in accordance with the Old Testament. Those verses conclude with the words "But to this man I will look: to him who is lowly and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word." Stephen does not quote these words but they may well have been in his mind. Did he not see the huge contrast between the kind of person described in those words and the Jewish leaders before Him? It seems that this (and the inspiration of God's Spirit in his heart) accounts for the sudden outburst against them beginning in the next verse.

**7:51** Stephen resolved to speak the truth as the Lord Jesus had done, regardless of the consequences. Stiffnecked means stubborn and rebellious.

"Uncircumcised in heart and ears" - see Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4. Their hearts were not made new, so they were unable to hear the Word of God and obey it (Jer 6:10; Matt 13:14,15). To say they were like their fathers (ancestors) was to condemn them utterly (vs 39-43; Matt 23:32). Charging them with resisting God's Spirit brings to mind Ps 106:33. This was always the great sin of Israel and these Jewish leaders knew that - but they did not want to apply this truth to themselves.

**7:52** Matt 23:33-39. The Just One is Christ (3:14).

**7:53** They accused him of speaking against

the law (6:13), but they, professing to honor the law, had broken it repeatedly and, as it were, trampled it under their feet (Matt 23:1-3; 15:3-9; Rom 2:17-24).

**7:54** He may have had more to say but they didn't wait to hear it. Compare 5:33; Ps 35:16; John 3:20. Those who gnash their teeth at God's messengers will one day gnash them for another reason (Matt 8:12; 13:42).

**7:55** The fullness of God's Spirit is what made Stephen the fearless man of God he was and caused him to speak as he did (6:5,8,10). God gave him a special vision at the time of his persecution and death.

**7:56** "Look" - did he think others could see what he did (it being real to him)? It would seem that heaven is so near that men could look right into it if God gave them the ability (1:9).

"Son of man" - Matt 8:20. Compare these words of Stephen with Jesus' own words before the same Council (Matt 26:64).

**7:57** Learned, religious men when faced with unwanted truth can behave as violently, recklessly and unjustly as anyone else. These men could not stand to hear words that honored the Lord Jesus whom they hated (John 15:18-25). So they refused to hear the very thing they needed to hear and believe.

**7:58** They had no right under Roman rule to put anyone to death (John 18:31), but in their rage they ignored this. They thought (or professed to think) that Stephen was a blasphemer and that it was their duty to put him to death (John 16:2; Lev 24:13-16). The "witnesses" were those who had heard and accused him. Here we see Saul in their camp, but soon he would be proclaiming the truth that then he wanted to overthrow.

**7:59** Luke 23:46. He evidently believed in the deity of the Lord Jesus. Who but God could receive his spirit (Ps 31:5; Eccl 12:7).

**7:60** Luke 23:34. The fullness of God's Spirit

voice, "Lord, do not put this sin to their account." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

**8** And Saul consented to his death. And at that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem, and except for the apostles, they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. **2** And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial* and made great lamentation over him. **3** As for Saul, he raised havoc in the church. Going into every house and dragging off men and women, he committed *them* to prison.

**4** Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. **5** Then Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them. **6** And the people with one mind gave attention to the things Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. **7** For unclean spirits,

made him like the Lord Jesus in this also. He fulfilled the law of love Jesus taught in Matt 5:43-48. It should be an encouragement to all of us that Stephen in a very short time became like the Lord Jesus in so many ways. He is a striking example of the truth of 2 Cor 3:18. "Sleep" is sometimes used for death in the Bible - the body sleeps, the spirit goes to God (John 11:11,14; 1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 4:14).

**8:1** Evidently the Jewish leaders turned against the advice of Gamaliel (5:38,39), and decided that force was the only way to stop the spread of Christ's Gospel. And Saul, who had been a student of Gamaliel (22:3), was one of the chief instruments of the persecution which followed (v 3; 9:1,2). Saul's "consent" to the murder of Stephen does not mean necessarily that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council. It may mean nothing more than the fact that in his heart he was in full agreement with it. It is interesting that the apostles remained in Jerusalem. Perhaps Christ's enemies, though eager to destroy Christ's lambs, were afraid to fall on the shepherds He had appointed for them.

**8:3** "Into every house" - compare 20:20,21.

**8:4** Did the leaders think that the wind of trouble would blow out the fire in the church? Instead, it scattered the fire, and flames began to leap up in many parts of the land. The history of the church reveals that persecution does not stop Christ's witnesses but actually can aid in the spread of the gospel. Persecution endured joyfully reveals the sincerity of believers, the reality of their faith and life in Christ (5:40-42).

**8:5** This Philip was one of those chosen with Stephen to "serve at tables" (6:1-6), not the apostle Philip. The note on Stephen at 6:8 applies also to him. Notes on Samaria at Matt 10:5; John 4:4; 2 Kings 17:24. The Samaritans had been prepared for this by the visit there of the Lord Jesus Himself (John 4:4-42). This was a big step in the spread of the gospel - for the first time (as

crying with loud voices, came out of many that had been possessed *by them*, and many were healed who had been paralyzed, and was lame. **8** And there was great joy in that city.

**9** But there was a certain man named Simon who had been practicing sorcery in that city, amazing the people of Samaria, and claiming that he was someone great. **10** They all, from the least to the greatest, gave him *their* attention, saying, "This man is the great power of God." **11** And they held him in high regard, because for a long time he had amazed them with magic arts. **12** But when they believed Philip as *he* preached the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. **13** Then Simon himself also believed. And when he was baptized, he stayed close to Philip, and was astonished, seeing the miracles and signs which

far as we know) Christ's disciples preached outside the Jewish community. Thus they began to fulfill Acts 1:8.

**8:6** Note on "signs" at John 2:11. They had the result in Samaria that God intended - they made people eager to hear the preaching of the gospel.

**8:7** Note on unclean spirits at Matt 4:24.

**8:9-11** Simon was a person, it seems, very like some of the so-called godmen of India. Consider the following. He practiced magical arts and did (or pretended to do) wonders and miracles (compare Matt 24:24; Ex 7:22; 8:7). He put himself forward as some great one. He accepted honors that should be given only to God. And he was able to impress and amaze everyone including men in high positions.

There were great differences between him and Philip. He proclaimed himself, Philip proclaimed Christ (vs 3,12). He preached his own thoughts, Philip preached the Word of God (v 14). He wanted to be "great." Philip sought no greatness for himself but only for Christ (see Matt 20:25-28; Jer 45:5). Another difference was that the things Simon performed were not real miracles but only magician's tricks, and were doubtless for the purpose of amazing others. Philip performed real miracles which displayed the power of God, and he had the purpose of helping others in their illness and misery (v 7). Simon himself could see this difference (v 13).

**8:12** Observe that this says "they believed Philip," not "they believed in Christ." They believed that Philip was a man of God and that he was teaching the truth, and they were willing to join the followers of Christ. But whether they came to a living faith in the Lord Jesus at that time is not clearly revealed. But we know they did not yet receive the Holy Spirit (v 16).

**8:13** It is not said of Simon either that he believed "in Christ." It seems clear from vs 20-23 that he did not. He was only greatly impressed by the power of God that Philip

were done.

14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who, when they arrived, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit 16 (for as yet he had not come down on any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me also this power, so that everyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 You have neither part nor share in this matter, for your heart is

not right in the sight of God. 22 Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to God. Perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness, and the bondage of iniquity."

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

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

26 And the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise, and go southward to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is *in the* desert." 27 And he arose and went, and *then* saw a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure, and *who* had come to

displayed. Not everyone who takes baptism is a true believer in Jesus. Being baptized by a man of God does not make a person a man of God or even a believer.

**8:14** The apostles, of course, wanted to know what the real state of things was in Samaria and put their stamp of approval on any work truly of God.

**8:15-17** It seems that here is an instance of Peter using the "keys" of the kingdom of heaven and once and for all opening the door to the Samaritans as he did to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles in chapter 10. See note on Matt 16:19. It was very important to establish the authority of the original apostles of Christ as the bearers of the true Gospel. This is one way God chose to do this – by giving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands (the giving of signs, miracles and wonders was another way – Heb 2:4).

Now the authority of the apostles has long been established, the gospel has been fully revealed and written down for everyone in all eras, and the kingdom of God is opened once and for all to every kind of people. The apostles exercised their authority, founded the New Testament Church and gave us God's Word for the Church. They alone were God's chosen instruments for this, and God worked with them in special ways to demonstrate this. They had their work and they finished it. It does not need to be done again, and it cannot be done again. See also notes at 2 Cor 12:12.

There are now no authoritative and inspired apostles, and there is no need for one to lay hands on anyone to receive God's Spirit. God's Spirit is now received directly from God when a person receives the Lord Jesus by faith (1 Cor 12:12,13; Eph 1:13; Gal 3:14). If anyone is afraid he does not have God's Spirit he should go directly to God about this matter (Luke 11:13). All believers have full access to God even as the apostles had then (Rom 5:1,2).

**8:18,19** Since Simon offered money it is likely that he thought he could make money if he had this ability. At least he would gain more power over people and more fame. There is a word now in English that comes from this man and his request. The word is "simony" and means the buying or selling of high positions in the church, the object being to gain influence or power or to make money. It is similar to what now goes on in some Christian circles – men giving bribes to others to vote them into places of leadership in the church. This is a totally corrupt practice which can never have the blessing of God.

**8:20-23** These harsh words indicate how terrible Simon's sinful desire was. They also show that he had not yet repented, trusted in Christ and been made right with God. True believers will not perish with their money (John 10:28), and new believers are not like Simon in the other ways Peter describes him.

**8:24** This does not say Simon repented. He was fearful of punishment, but this is not the same thing as repentance (Matt 3:2,8).

**8:25** Compare Matt 10:5. A new day had dawned.

**8:26** "Angel" – 5:19; Matt 10:20; Luke 1:11,26. Gaza is on the Mediterranean coast southwest of Jerusalem.

**8:27** Notice that Philip was willing to leave a flourishing work of God in Samaria and go anywhere else God told him to go. The people called Ethiopians then occupied an area somewhat north of the present one. It included a part of southern Egypt and northern Sudan. In those days nations used eunuchs as court officials. This one knew of the true God and His temple in Jerusalem and had come a long way to worship Him (compare Matt 2:1,2). Though he was a Gentile by race, it is very likely that he was a convert to the Jews' religion. There were such people in many parts of the world who had abandoned their gods and idols, turned to the God of Israel, and had become con-

Jerusalem to worship, 28 was returning, sitting in his chariot and reading Isaiah the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and meet this chariot."

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

31 And he said, "How can I, unless some man guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;  
and like a lamb silent before his  
shearer,  
so he did not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation his justice was  
taken away.

And who will declare his generation?  
For his life was taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch responded to Philip, and said, "I ask you, who is the prophet speaking this about? About Himself, or about some other man?"

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

36 And as they went down the road, they came

verts to Judaism (compare 2:11). If this eunuch had not been such a person why would he have wanted to make that long journey to Jerusalem? There is another reason for thinking he was a Jewish convert – the "keys" to open the kingdom of God to the Gentiles were not given to Philip but to Peter who used them as recorded in chapter 10.

**8:28** Worship alone did not satisfy the desires of this man for truth.

**8:29** The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit. His speaking is an indication of His personality. See notes at John 14:16,17. See how clearly he can direct those who are yielded and obedient to Him.

**8:31** The man was a foreigner with little knowledge of the teaching of the Old Testament and of the coming of Christ. Men still need someone to explain the word of God to them.

**8:32,33** Notes at Isa 53:7,8. Surely we see the hand of God in this too. The man was reading in the very place in all the Old Testament which most clearly states the reason for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

**8:34,35** Philip, being full of the Holy Spirit (6:3-5), and taught by the apostles (2:42), well knew whom Isaiah spoke of. Compare Luke 24:26,27,45,46.

**8:36-38** Notes on baptism at 2:38; Matt 3:6; 28:19; Mark 16:16.

**8:39** Compare this action of God's Spirit with 1 Kings 18:21; 2 Kings 2:16; Ezek 3:14; 8:3. Observe in this whole account of Philip and the Ethiopian how different God's ways

to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, *here is* water. What prevents me from being baptized?"

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

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 And when they had come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so the eunuch did not see him again. And he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip appeared at Azotus, and passing through *that area* he preached in all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

9 And Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 And as he traveled he came near Damascus. And suddenly there shone around him a light from heaven. 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?"

are from man's (Isa 55:8-9). The Ethiopian had just come from Jerusalem where some of the apostles and many believers lived. Yet God directed none of them to teach him. Instead he brought Philip all the way from Samaria to do so, and then took him away again very suddenly. But whether here or there, whether by using a Philip or another, God will surely see to it that any person who wants the truth will have it.

**9:1** See 8:1,3; 22:9-11; Phil 3:6.

**9:2** "Way" – the way of Christ (John 14:6). Damascus, the capital of Syria, was an ancient city about 200 kilometers northeast of Jerusalem. Evidently the gospel of Christ had already spread there (compare 2:5). Saul determined to destroy Christ's church wherever it was found.

**9:3** The hour had come for God to change the greatest enemy of the church into the greatest teacher of the church. This was a marvelous display of God's grace, mercy and love. See 1 Tim 1:12-16; 2 Tim 1:9. Paul's whole life was changed in a single incandescent moment.

**9:4** To persecute Christ's believers is to persecute Him. In fact, whatever we do either against them or for them we do against Him or for Him. They are the body of which He is the Head (1 Cor 12:12,13; Eph 1:22,23; Col 1:18). It is not possible to persecute the "body" or any member of it without persecuting the "Head" at the same time. Compare Matt 10:40; 18:5; 25:34-46; Luke 9:48; John 17:20-23.

**9:5** "Who are you, Lord?" – Paul is aware

And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. *It is* hard for you to kick against the goads."

6 And he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what will you have me to do?" And the Lord *said* to him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

7 And the men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no one. 8 And Saul rose up from the ground. And when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* to Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank *anything*.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias."

And he said, "Here I *am*, Lord."

11 And the Lord *said* to him, "Arise and go to the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *a person* called Saul of Tarsus. For see, he is praying, 12 and has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his

sight."

13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to put in chains everyone who calls on your name."

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel for me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

17 And Ananias went and entered the house, and, putting his hands on him, said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, *that is*, Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming, has sent me that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received *his* sight at once, and got up, and was baptized. 19 And when he had taken food, he was strengthened. Then Saul stayed some days with the disciples who were at Damascus.

20 And immediately he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21 But all

that whoever it is speaking with him has authority to tell him what to do. See the note at 22:10. How the answer to his question must have struck Paul – Jesus! How it must have turned all his thoughts upside down in a single moment!

**9:6** Paul had just asked a question which he tells us about in 22:10 (see note there). The question indicated Paul's submission to the Lord, and willingness to obey. In 26:16-18 Paul reveals that the Lord told him something of what he would do.

**9:7** See 22:9.

**9:8** The brilliant light blinded him physically; a greater light had shined into his heart and given him spiritual sight – 2 Cor 4:6.

**9:10** Ananias means "Jehovah is gracious" (in Hebrew, "Hananiah"). He was a Jew who had believed in Christ – 22:12. Note on visions at Gen 15:1.

**9:11** Tarsus was a town in the area that is now called Turkey. It was Saul's home town (9:30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3). We see in this verse what Saul had been doing since the Lord appeared to him – praying. What he began then he continued for the rest of his life and became an example to all of us in how to pray and what to pray for (16:25; 20:36; 22:17; Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil 1:3-11; Col 1:9-12).

**9:12** It is interesting that the Lord Jesus chose to appear to Saul near Damascus rather than near Jerusalem where the apostles were, and that He used an unknown believer rather than one of them. See Isa 55:8,9.

**9:13** "Saints" – as used here this means "holy ones", those whom God has separated for Himself from the rest of mankind. It is another name for believers – Rom 1:7; etc.

**9:15,16** In these two verses the Lord gives the essence of Paul's life and work described in chapters 13-28. He was a "chosen vessel." See 26:16-18; Gal 1:15; Eph 3:2,7,8; Col 1:25; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 1:11. Suffering for Christ was an integral part of all his ministry and he learned to rejoice in it – 2 Tim 1:12; 1 Thess 3:3,4; Col 1:24; 2 Cor 7:4; 4:16-18; Rom 5:3. He realized that in God's present kingdom on earth being permitted to suffer for the King's sake is a mark of His great favor – Matt 5:10-12; Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29.

**9:17** It seems from this that Saul received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of Ananias's hands (though the language does not make this absolutely certain). Acts records different ways in which men received the fullness of God's Spirit – directly from God (2:1-4; 10:44,45), by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (8:17; 19:6), and, in this one case here, probably by the laying on of hands of an ordinary disciple. Sometimes this happened before water baptism, sometimes after. God's Spirit worked as He pleased, and no one could predict His manner of working.

We should observe that the Lord clearly and specifically commanded Ananias to do as he did. No one without such direct instructions from the Lord should presume to do such a thing. Notice he called Saul "brother", thus accepting him into the fellowship of believers.

**9:18** "Baptized" – see 2:38; Matt 3:6; Mark 16:16.

**9:20-22** Because of the vision he saw of the Lord, because of the filling of the Holy Spirit, Paul came into an understanding of the Old Testament which he had never

who heard *him* were amazed, and said, "Is not this the one who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that same purpose, that he might take them in chains to the chief priests?" 22 But Saul increased all the more in power, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

23 And after many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him at night and let *him* down through *an opening in* the wall in a basket.

26 And when Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles, and told them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them in Jerusalem, coming in and going out. 29 And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and debated with the Grecian *Jews*, but they tried to kill him. 30 When the brethren *came to* know *this*, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him away to Tarsus.

31 Then the churches throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit increased in number.

32 And it came about as Peter passed through

all *areas of the country*, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. 33 And there he saw a certain man named Aeneas who had kept to his bed for eight years and was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up, and make your bed." And immediately he got up. 35 And all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and deeds of charity which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. 38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, asking *him* to come to them without delay.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood next to him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed, and, turning toward the body, said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her *to them* alive. 42 And this became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And it came about that he stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon.

gained by all his studies with Gamaliel (22:3; Gal 1:14).

"This name" – see 4:17; 5:28.

**9:23-25** See 2 Cor 11:33. This was only the first of many attempts the Jews made to stop Saul (v 29; 13:45; 14:5,19; 17:5,13; 18:6; 21:27-31). The sufferings which were to be a part of his life (v 16) had begun.

**9:26** Gal 1:15-19. They had not seen Saul for about three years, and had only heard rumors of him. Their fear was natural.

**9:27** Barnabas lived up to the meaning of his name (4:36. See also 11:22-24). At the time, it seems, in Jerusalem there were only two who were called apostles (Gal 1:18,19 – but it is possible Paul was speaking of a different time in Galatians).

**9:28** Boldness is a mark of those filled with God's Spirit (4:13,31).

**9:29** Verse 23.

**9:30** Verse 11.

**9:31** The Jewish leaders had discovered that persecution would not destroy the church or stop its witness, and they must have been astonished when the chief persecutor himself became a disciple of Jesus. Notes on the fear of the Lord at Gen 20:11; Job 28:28; Ps 34:11-14; 111:10; Prov 1:7.

**9:32** Lydda was a town about 40 kilometers

northwest of Jerusalem near Joppa.

**9:34** He did not say "Simon Peter heals you." See 3:6,12.

**9:35** Miracles alone cannot produce faith (Luke 16:31), but God may use them to convince people that He is near and active. Notes on miracles at Matt 8:1; John 2:11.

**9:36** Joppa was a port on the Mediterranean Sea about 55 kilometers from Jerusalem. Tabitha is Aramaic, Dorcas is Greek. They both mean "gazelle." She was an example of what every Christian should be in service to the poor. Unfortunately few follow her example. On helping the poor see Gal 2:10; Matt 19:21; 2 Cor 9:9.

**9:38** It seems they had hope that Peter could restore Dorcas to life.

**9:40,41** Compare Mark 5:21-24; 35-43; John 14:12,13. This is one of only two cases in the book of Acts of the raising of the dead. For the other see 20:7-12. Though the Lord rarely performed this miracle it was no more difficult for Him than any other.

**9:42** They recognized that it was the Lord Jesus who had raised the dead, not Peter. See 3:12.

**9:43** Jewish teachers considered tanning an unclean trade, but this did not bother Peter in the least.



**10** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian *Regiment*. **2** He was a devout man, and one who feared God together with all his household. He gave charitably to *poor* people, and prayed to God constantly. **3** About three in the afternoon, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in to him, and saying to him, "Cornelius."

**4** And when he looked at him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your charitable deeds have come up as a memorial in God's presence. **5** And now send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, who is called Peter. **6** He is a guest of Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you should do."

**7** And when the angel who spoke to Cornelius had left, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier from among those who were in constant attendance on him. **8** And when he had told them all *these* things, he sent them to Joppa.

**9** The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near to the city, about twelve noon, Peter went up on the housetop to pray. **10** And he became very hungry and wanted to eat, but while

they were preparing *the food*, he fell into a trance, **11** and saw heaven opened, and an object like a large sheet bound by its four corners being let down to the earth and descending toward him. **12** In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the air. **13** And a voice came to him: "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

**14** But Peter said, "Not so, Lord. For I have never eaten anything that is unholy or unclean."

**15** And the voice *spoke* to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, do not call unholy." **16** This was done three times, and the object was taken up again into heaven.

**17** Now while Peter was wondering what the meaning was of this vision he had seen, the men who were sent by Cornelius asked for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, **18** and called, and asked if Simon who was called Peter was staying there.

**19** While Peter was thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are looking for you. **20** Therefore get up and go down. Go with them without doubting at all, for I have sent them."

**10:1** Luke records the raising of Dorcas in seven verses. He gives far more space to the story of Cornelius and his family – 10:1 - 11:18 (sixty-six verses). This shows its importance. This is the first time any of the apostles had taken the gospel to the Gentiles (v 45. Samaritans were considered half-breeds and a different class of people). And it was Peter who used the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" for the third time (Matt 16:19). Caesarea was a port on the Mediterranean Sea, a little more than 100 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. It was named after Augustus Caesar, emperor of Rome (Luke 2:1). Cornelius was a Roman non-commissioned officer in the army in charge of one hundred soldiers.

**10:2** Evidently he did not worship the many gods of Rome. From some source or other he had learned of the one true God and sought Him. He was a deeply religious man who demonstrated his sincerity by good works. But he had not yet received salvation (11:13,14). In this story God would teach us again that salvation is not by religion, or sincerity, or good works, or prayers, but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (16:31; John 1:12; 3:16,36; Eph 2:8,9; Titus 3:4-7).

**10:3** Notes on visions and angels at Gen 15:1; 16:7.

**10:4-6** God had been at work in Cornelius, preparing him to hear and believe the gospel. His prayers and deeds were a "remembrance" to God of his sincerity, but also of his need of more truth. So God gives specific instructions so that he might receive the truth he lacked. When people follow the

light God gives them God observes it and gives them more light until they receive the full truth of Christ. Those who refuse the light will go into deeper darkness – John 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:39.

**10:9-16** God had prepared Cornelius to hear the truth. Now He prepares His messenger to deliver the truth to him. These two things have a central place in God's unceasing work in the world. Happy are those who have a part in it.

**10:13,14** Peter as a Jew had always followed the instructions of the Old Testament about "clean" and "unclean." See Leviticus chapter 11. He could not understand or accept immediately a command to disobey those instructions. He was now an experienced apostle who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, but see how he still says "no" to the Lord. Compare Matt 16:22; John 13:8.

**10:15** See Matt 15:11; Mark 7:18,19 and notes; Rom 6:14; 7:4; 1 Tim 4:3-5. For this New Testament era God lifted the ban on certain foods that were "unclean" in Old Testament days.

**10:16** "Three times" – compare John 13:38; 21:15-17.

**10:17,18** God's timing of events is always perfect.

**10:19** On God's Spirit speaking see 8:29.

**10:20** The Spirit knew how reluctant Peter would be to go with them because they were Gentiles, so he specifically instructed Peter not to hesitate to go. The Jews regarded Gentiles as "unclean" just as they regarded certain foods as "unclean" (Lev 11:1). The spiritual meaning of the vision Peter saw was that this attitude too must pass away

21 Then Peter went down to the men who were sent to him by Cornelius, and said, "See, I am the one you are looking for. For what reason have you come?"

22 And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a righteous man who fears God, and *who has a* good reputation among all the Jewish people, was instructed by God through a holy angel to send for you to his house, and to hear your words." 23 Then he invited them in, and showed *them* hospitality. And the next day Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the next day after that they entered Caesarea. And Cornelius was waiting for them, and *he* had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in Cornelius met him, and prostrated himself at his feet, showing reverence. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up! I too am just a man."

27 And talking with him, he went in, and found that many had gathered together. 28 And he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to associate with someone of another race or to visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone unholy or unclean. 29 Therefore I came without objecting, as soon as I was sent for. So my question is, what is your reason for sending for me?"

30 And Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour. And at three o'clock I was praying in my house, and, *lo and* behold, a man

stood before me in shining clothes, 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer is heard, and your charitable deeds are remembered in the presence of God. 32 Send, therefore, to Joppa and call Simon, who is called Peter. He is a guest in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak with you.' 33 So immediately I sent for you. And it was good of you to come.

Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear everything that God has commanded you *to say*."

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, "In truth I see that God shows no favoritism, 35 but in every nation he accepts those who fear him and practice righteousness. 36 The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, 37 that message, *I say*, you know. It was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism that John preached: 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, *and how* he went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

39 "And we are witnesses of everything he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging *him* on a tree. 40 God raised him up on the third day, and showed him openly, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *that is*, to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

(v 28). God's Spirit in the Church does not tolerate prejudice against people because of their race or country of origin (see note at 6:1).

**10:23** This shows that Peter had learned the lesson God was teaching him. The Jews considered that they became unclean by contact with Gentiles (v 28; 11:2,3). But the men needed to rest from the fifty kilometers journey from Caesarea, and Peter received them.

**10:24** He realized Peter would speak matters of great importance and wanted all those he loved to hear his message (v 33).

**10:25,26** "Peter raised him up" – Cornelius did not know that showing such reverence to a man was not right, but Peter did know, and emphatically refused it – as all God's servants should. None of us should ever prostrate ourselves at the feet of another human being, no matter how famous and exalted he may be. And none of us should ever let another human being prostrate themselves to us. Only God is worthy of such reverence. Compare Rev 22:8,9.

**10:28,29** Verses 15,20. The old order of things was passing away. The Jews who had become followers of Christ must no longer think they should have nothing to do with those of other races.

**10:34,35** "God shows no favoritism" – see

Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; Jam 2:1; 1 Pet 1:17.

"Practice righteousness" – Peter was not teaching salvation by works. He well knew as all the apostles did that God saves men by grace through faith (see what he says in 15:11). He also knew that God accepts anyone anywhere who responds to the truth given to them and tries to follow it, and that He will lead them on to more truth (vs 4-6). When a person takes one step toward God, he will find that God also steps nearer (compare Luke 15:17-20; Jam 4:8. He will also find out later that it was God who enabled him to take that one step toward Himself). **10:36** "Peace" – see Luke 1:79; 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33; 2 Cor 5:18-21.

"Lord of all" – the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over every human being – though few recognize this and receive Him as such (2:36; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11).

**10:37** Matt 3:1-6.

**10:38** Matt 3:16,17; 4:23,24; 9:35; Luke 4:16-21.

**10:39** Acts 1:8. Peter uses "tree" for the cross (5:30).

**10:40** See 2:32; 3:15.

**10:41** John 15:27; 20:19,20; 21:9-14; 1 Cor 15:5-8.

"Ate" – Luke 24:42,43.

42 And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one who was ordained by God *to be* the Judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that through his name whoever believes in him will receive the forgiveness of sins."

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all those who heard the word. 45 And all those believers who came with Peter, who were circumcised, were astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak in tongues and praise God.

Then Peter responded, 47 "Can anyone forbid water to prevent baptism to these who have received the Holy Spirit just as *we have*?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they begged him to stay for some days.

**11** And the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those *believers* who were circumcised opposed him, 3 Saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

4 But Peter started from the beginning and explained *the matter* to them in an orderly way,

**10:42** Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15.

"Judge" - 17:31; John 5:22,23,27; Matt 25:31-33.

**10:43** Luke 24:26,27,45-48. "Forgiveness of sins" - Matt 6:12; 9:5-7; 12:31; 18:23-25; Eph 1:7; 1 John 1:9; Isa 55:7.

**10:44** This is an ideal way to have one's sermons interrupted. Compare the words "came on all" with 1:5,8; 2:4.

**10:45** "Circumcised believers" - here means Jews who had become Christians.

"Gift of the Holy Spirit" - 2:38; 5:32; 15:8.

**10:46** "Speak in tongues" - or "languages." Because of this the Jewish believers recognized that the Holy Spirit had been given to these Gentiles. This immediate outward evidence was necessary to convince them that God had indeed poured out His Spirit on people other than Jews - a thing that had never happened before. The circumstances were very unusual, and so God gave them an immediate sign that it had happened, for God wanted these Gentile believers to be accepted by the Jewish believers.

Speaking in tongues here must mean the same as it did in 2:4-11 - that is, speaking in foreign languages they had not learned. There is no indication whatever that this in any way differed from what the apostles did on the day of Pentecost. Cornelius and his relatives were Romans and their native tongue was Latin. They may have known a few words of Aramaic, Hebrew, or Greek, but

saying, 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. A certain object like a large sheet descended, let down from heaven *by its* four corners, and it came to me. 6 As I looked intently into it, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.'

8 "But I said, 'Not so, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

9 "But the voice from heaven responded to me again, 'What God has cleansed, do not call unholy.' 10 And this was done three times, and everything was taken up again to heaven.

11 "And see, at that moment three men arrived at the house where I was, sent to me from Caesarea. 12 And the Spirit told me to go with them, without doubting at all. Also these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 And he told us how he had seen an angel in his house, who stood and said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, who is called Peter. 14 He will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as *he had* on us at the beginning. 16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you

suppose that with great fluency they suddenly began to speak one of these languages, or perhaps some other language the Jewish believers were familiar with - this would have been the kind of convincing evidence they needed. They must have spoken in a language that the Jewish believers could recognize as a real language, or these believers would not have identified this speaking in tongues with the same ability exercised by the apostles (see note on 2:11). Some rush of sounds from their mouths which could not be recognized as a human language would not have been the kind of evidence they needed.

**10:47** Observe carefully that these people received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized and without anyone laying hands on them. See note at 9:17.

**10:48** Notes on baptism in Christ's name at 2:38; 19:5.

**11:2** Circumcised believers were Jews who had become Christians.

**11:3** See 10:23,28. Instead of rejoicing in the coming of Gentiles to Christ, these men criticized God's instrument in the Gentiles' conversion. Complaining about God's servants instead of rejoicing in their ministry is too often the way of many Christians. Compare Paul's attitude in Phil 1:15-18.

**11:14** Note at 10:2. In spite of their piety and prayerfulness they needed salvation - Rom 3:23.

**11:15** See 10:44; 2:4.

**11:16** See 1:5.

will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 Since, then, God gave them the same gift as *he did* to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

18 When they heard these things, they fell silent, and *then* glorified God, saying "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life."

19 Now those who were scattered by the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to no one except the Jews. 20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.

22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem. And they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad

and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should stay close to the Lord. 24 For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and many people were added to the Lord.

25 Then Barnabas departed to Tarsus to seek for Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for a whole year they met together with the church, and taught many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

27 And in those days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that there would be a great famine throughout the whole world. This came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each one according to his ability, decided to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea. 30 Which they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

**11:17** See 10:45; 2:38,39.

**11:18** Understanding the reasons for the behavior of others of God's servants sometimes brings the proper attitude of mind and heart. It did in this case.

"Life" – here means spiritual life, eternal life – John 3:16. Notice it is God who gives repentance – 5:31; 2 Tim 2:25.

**11:19** See 8:1,4. Phoenicia was the land north of Israel along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea containing the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Cyprus is a large island in the Mediterranean northwest of Tyre and Sidon. Antioch was a large city in Syria nearly 25 kilometers from the coast (actually it was the third largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria). It became a very important center of Christianity in the first century. The reason these believers told the message only to Jews is because they did not yet understand that God had opened the door of salvation to other people also.

**11:20** It does not say when this happened or why these men decided to preach to the Greeks. It seems very likely that it was after they heard of the events of chapter 10.

**11:21** This is what preachers need – the hand of the Lord with them, working in their behalf.

**11:22** "Barnabas" – 4:36; 9:27.

**11:23** What does it mean "saw the grace of God"? He saw what the grace of God had produced, spiritual fruit. See John 15:1-6. Barnabas had the gift of being able to encourage others (compare Rom 12:6-8). See what Barnabas encouraged them to do. If we are not close to the Lord in our hearts we are not close to Him at all.

**11:24** Here is a description of what every preacher and teacher of God's Word (and every believer) should be. Barnabas is one of only two men the New Testament calls

"good" (the other is in Luke 23:50). This does not mean that no one else was good. See Matt 5:45; 7:17,18; 12:35; Luke 8:15; Rom 15:14; 1 Pet 2:18. The goodness of God's people is not theirs by nature (see Matt 7:11; Rom 7:18). God alone is innately good (Matt 19:17), and He alone can make them good (Gal 5:22; Eph 5:9). On the fullness of God's Spirit see 1:5; 2:4; Eph 5:18. The fullness of God's Spirit will lead to fullness of faith, and the results of that will be spiritual success and victory in God's work.

**11:25** 9:30.

**11:26** Notes on the "Church" at 5:11; Matt 16:18. It was outsiders who first called the followers of Christ "Christians." It was natural for them to do so. They thought "Christ" was a proper name (instead of the title it is – see Matt 1:1), and added the Latin suffix to it making it "Christianous," meaning those who were connected in some way to Christ. In Acts Christ's people are called "disciples" (6:1), or "saints" (note at 9:13), or "brothers" (9:30), or "believers" (10:45). In fact, in the whole Bible except for this one place, only Agrippa (26:28) and Peter use the word "Christian" (1 Pet 4:16. Perhaps Peter used the word because others called them that and not because it was his custom).

**11:27** Notes and references on prophets at Gen 20:7; etc.

**11:28** God's Spirit revealed the future to Agabus. See also 21:10,11. Claudius was the Roman emperor 41-54 AD.

**11:29** It is a great thing when Christians are "disciples" and not Christians in name only. Compare their good work with 2 Cor 8:1-5.

**11:30** They did more than pass a resolution. They acted on it. Compare 2 Cor 8:10,11; Jam 2:15; 1 John 3:17,18; Matt 25:34-46.

**12** Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hands to trouble some in the church. 2 And he had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. That was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. 4 And when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison and handed *him* over to four groups of four soldiers each to guard him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but prayer to God for him was made without ceasing by the church. 6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that same night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains. And the guards at the door were watching the prison. 7 And suddenly the angel of the Lord stood over *him*, and a light shone in the prison. And he tapped Peter on the side, and got him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off *his* hands.

8 And the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt, and tie on your sandals." And so he did. And he said to him, "Put your cloak around you and follow me."

9 And he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city. It opened to them by itself, and they went out and on down one street, and suddenly the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter came to himself he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent his

angel and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people."

12 And when he had considered *the matter*, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, who was called Mark. There many were gathered together praying. 13 And when Peter knocked at the door of the entryway, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 And when she recognized Peter's voice, for joy she ran in without opening the gate, and reported that Peter was standing at the gate.

15 And they said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept on stating that it was so. Then they said, "It is his angel."

16 But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were astonished. 17 But he, gesturing to them with *his* hand to keep quiet, told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

18 Now as soon as it was daylight, there was no small stir among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. 19 And when Herod had a search made for him and did not find him, he examined the guards, and gave orders that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there*.

20 And Herod was greatly displeased with *the people* of Tyre and Sidon, but they all came to him with one accord, and having made a friend of Blastus, a personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's *country*.

**12:1** This Herod was the grandson of the one in Matt 2:1. He was godless, as all the Herods were.

**12:2,3** James was one of the original apostles (Matt 10:2). No reason is given for the difference in Herod's treatment of these two apostles. The meaning of it all is hidden in the secret counsels of God who rules over all. Herod was an Edomite (a descendent of Esau - Gen 25:29,30). He tried to please the Jews because he wanted a successful reign over them. In general the Jewish people disliked all the Herods. Note on Feast of Unleavened Bread at Lev 23:4-8.

**12:4** Probably he planned to try Peter on some invented charge of blasphemy.

**12:5** As appears from vs 15,16 their prayers were more earnest than believing. Still, weak as their faith seems to have been, God answered. This should be an encouragement to all who pray to the true God. Prayers with little faith are far better than no prayers at all.

**12:6** Herod was determined that Peter should not escape.

**12:7-11** Compare 5:18-24. An angel could just as easily have saved James from the

sword as Peter from prison.

**12:12** Verse 5. Mark became the author of the Gospel which bears his name. Other references to him are v 25; 13:5-13; 15:37-39; Col 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13.

**12:13,14** She, at least, believed God had answered their prayers.

**12:15,16** Their thinking that the girl was out of her mind for believing God had answered their prayer, and their subsequent astonishment are indications of their unbelief or weak faith.

"His angel" - compare Matt 18:10. Evidently they thought an angel could represent a person, take on his appearance, and be mistaken for him. There is no basis in the Bible for this belief.

**12:17** The James in this verse was a half-brother of the Lord Jesus (1:14; Matt 13:55). He had become the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

**12:19** According to Roman law if a person escaped, his guards had to suffer the punishment that would have come to him.

**12:20** Tyre and Sidon were cities on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel.

21 And on a set day Herod, dressed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave a speech to them. 22 And the people shouted out: "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!" 23 And immediately the angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give God the glory. And he was eaten by worms, and breathed his last.

24 But the word of God grew and increased.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had finished *their* ministry, and took with them John who was called Mark.

**13** Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they were engaged in ministry for the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work I have called them to *do*." 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.

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

**12:22,23** Herod knew very well the Old Testament teaching about the one true God, and was aware that no man has the right to accept divine honors (Ex 20:1-6). He paid the penalty for his pride. Compare his behavior with that of Paul and Barnabas in 14:11-18, and Peter in 3:12-16 and 10:26. We must have right views of God and of ourselves. Otherwise we may fall into the error of Herod and be judged as he was.

**12:24** The Herods of this world, and all opponents of the truth, come and go. The Word of God goes on doing its work and will stand forever - Matt 5:18; 24:35; Ps 37:35,36; Isa 40:6-8.

**12:25** Verse 12; 11:29,30. They returned to Antioch.

**13:1** The gifts of prophesying and teaching were two of the greatest gifts God gave the church - Rom 12:6,7; 1 Cor 12:28; 14:1; Eph 4:11-13.

"Herod the tetrarch" - Matt 14:1.

**13:2** Notes on fasting at Matt 9:14,15; etc. Observe here again the personality of the Holy Spirit. See 8:29; 10:19; John 14:16,17. He calls men for specific work in God's kingdom. In Antioch those He called for missionary service were the two most qualified men in the whole church for preaching and teaching. Happy are those who know what the Holy Spirit has appointed them to do. Notice that the church was to cooperate with the Spirit by recognizing His choice of individuals and setting them apart for the work.

**13:3** Laying on of hands here indicated their recognition and approval of the call that came to these two, and their identification with them.

**13:4** For the church to send men for service

5 And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. And they had John as *their* assistant.

6 And when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they met a certain sorcerer and false prophet who was a Jew named Bar-Jesus. 7 He was with the proconsul of the country, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man who called for Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for this is his name by translation) opposed them, trying to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul (who *is* also *called* Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on him. 10 and said, "O *you are* full of all kinds of deceit and trickery, *you* child of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness! Will you not stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? 11 And now, look, the hand of the Lord *is* against you, and you will be blind, not seeing sunlight for a time." And immediately a mist and darkness fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

12 When the proconsul saw what had been done, *he* believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

is useless if the Holy Spirit does not send them.

"Cyprus" - 11:19.

**13:5** Salamis was the chief city of the island. They went first to the Jews as was their custom - v 46; Rom 1:16. John was Mark's other name - 12:12.

"Synagogues" - Matt 4:23.

**13:6** Paphos was the capital city of the island. The name Bar-Jesus means "son of Joshua" (Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua). This Bar-Jesus was an apostate Jew - he had turned away from the teachings of the true God. God forbade the Jews to have anything to do with sorcery. See notes at Deut 18:10-13.

**13:7** "Proconsul" here means the Roman governor on the island. All intelligent men should want to hear the Word of God as he did.

**13:8** Trying to keep others from believing in the Lord Jesus is one of the worst of sins. See Matt 23:13. "Elymas" was another name for "Bar-Jesus."

**13:9** Here is the first use of Saul's other name, Paul, the name by which he was always known thereafter.

"Filled with the Holy Spirit" - 2:4; 4:31; 6:3,5; 11:24.

**13:10** Sometimes God's Spirit will enable His servants to see clearly a person's character and to speak harsh truth in a bold way.

"Child of the devil" - see Matt 13:38; John 8:44. Elymas had long been perverting the Lord's ways by his practice of sorcery.

**13:11** If God is against us who can be for us? See the reverse of this at Rom 8:31.

**13:12** See 2:43; 5:12-14; 8:6,13; 9:34,35, 41,42.

13 Now when Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos they went on to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem. 14 And when they left Perga they came to Antioch in Pisidia. There they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. 15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent word to them which said: "Men, brethren, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, speak."

16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen. 17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm brought them out of it. 18 And for about forty years he endured their behaviour in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he distributed their land to them through the casting of lots.

20 "And after that he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterwards they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin. He ruled for forty years. 22 And when he removed him, he raised up for them David as their king. He also gave testimony about him, saying, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will do all I want.'

23 "From this man's descendants God,

according to his promise, has raised up for Israel a Saviour, Jesus. 24 Before his coming, John first preached the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And when John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not the one. But, see, someone is coming after me and I am not worthy to take the sandals off his feet.'

26 "Men, brethren, children of the family of Abraham, and whoever fears God among you, to you this message of salvation has been sent. 27 For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not recognize him or even the voices of the prophets who are read every Sabbath day, have fulfilled them by condemning him. 28 And though they found in him no cause for death, still they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead. 31 And he was seen for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are his witnesses to the people.

32 "And we declare to you the glad tidings that the promise which was made to the fathers, 33 God has fulfilled for us their children by raising up Jesus. As it is also written in the second psalm,

You are my Son,  
this day I have begotten you.

34 And concerning the fact that he raised him

**13:13** Perga was about 20 kilometers inland from the southern coast of what is now called Turkey. No reason is given why John Mark left them, but Paul did not think he had any good reason at all (15:38,39). By deserting them Mark missed some great things on this first of Paul's missionary journeys, and was rejected for his next journey. **13:14** This Antioch was an important city about 160 kms north of Perga.

"Synagogue" – Matt 4:23. This indicates there was a colony of Jews in Antioch.

**13:15** See Luke 4:16,17; 14:1. It was not unusual for Jews who were strangers to be asked to give messages in the synagogues.

**13:16** "You who fear God" – probably means Gentile converts.

**13:17-19** In three verses Paul covers 450 years of Jewish history recorded in six Old Testament books (Genesis – Joshua).

**13:20** Samuel was the last of the judges and the first man after Moses called a prophet.

"Judges" – see the introduction to the book of Judges.

**13:21** See 1 Sam 8:5; 9:1,2; 10:1.

**13:22** See 1 Sam 16:1,13; 2 Sam 2:4; 5:1-5. Note on "according to my own heart" at 1 Sam 13:14.

**13:23** Paul's purpose in referring to Israel's history was to show his orthodox belief in

the revelation God had given, and to bring his hearers to consider the Lord Jesus. Here he states in so many words that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. God's promises concerning Him begin at Genesis 3:15 and go on to Malachi 3:1.

**13:24,25** Matt 3:1-6; John 1:19-27.

**13:26** Abraham was the forefather of the nation and all Jews were descended from him.

**13:27** See 2:23; 3:17,18. Most Jews in that day did not understand what they read in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. But God used even the sinful ignorance of the Jewish leaders to fulfill His Word. Compare Gen 50:20.

**13:28** Matt 27:1,2,11-26.

**13:29** Luke 23:53; 24:26,27,46.

**13:30** Matt 28:6.

**13:31** See 1:3-8; 1 Cor 15:3-8.

**13:32-35** Paul presented Jesus as the fulfiller of Old Testament promises (compare Matt 5:17). He refers to three OT verses – see these verses and the notes on them: Ps 2:7; Isa 55:3; Ps 16:10.

"Sure mercies of David" – mercies God promised to David, one of which was that a descendant of his whom God calls his son would inherit his throne, and that this throne would last forever (see 2 Sam 7:14). Paul's argument is that if Israel's Messiah (Christ)

from the dead, never to return to corruption, he spoke like this:

I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Therefore he said also in another *psalm*,  
You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption.

36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried near his fathers, and saw corruption. 37 But he whom God raised up, saw no corruption.

38 "Therefore, be it known to you, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, 39 and in him all who believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware, therefore, that this which is spoken about in the Prophets does not come on you:

41 Look, you despisers, and wonder,  
and perish,  
for I do a work in your days,  
a work that you will not at all believe,  
though a man declares it to you."

42 And when the Jews had gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these things might be preached to them the next Sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout converts *to Judaism* followed Paul and Barnabas who spoke with them

had not risen from the dead, He could not have received these blessings promised to David.

**13:36,37** See 2:25-32. "Fell asleep" – John 11:11-13.

**13:38** See 2:38; 26:18; Luke 24:47. "Forgiveness of sins" – see references at 10:43.

**13:39** Being justified is the other side of being forgiven. It means that God counts people righteous and innocent of all sin. This is one of the wonderful truths Paul later developed in Romans and Galatians (Rom 3:20,24,28; 5:1,9; 8:30; Gal 2:16; 3:11,24). Everywhere he insists that justification comes only by faith in the Lord Jesus. The law of Moses cannot justify but only condemn – Ex 19:21-25; Rom 3:19,20; Gal 3:10.

**13:40,41** The gospel is "good news" only for those who believe it. So Paul gives a severe warning. Compare 2:40. Paul warns them to be careful that their attitude be not the same as in the days of Hab 1:5.

**13:43** "The grace of God" – grace is another word Paul much emphasized – 20:24,32; Rom 1:7; 3:24; 5:1,2,15,20,21; 6:14; Eph 3:1; Titus 2:11-15; 3:7.

**13:44** This means the Gentiles were the large majority of the crowd.

**13:45** Compare 5:17; 7:9; Matt 27:18; Prov

and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next Sabbath day almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with envy and, contradicting and blaspheming, opposed the things Paul was saying.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas became bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. But seeing that you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, see, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For thus the Lord commanded us:

I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,  
that you would be the source of  
salvation to the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord spread throughout all that region. 50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their borders. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

**14** And in Iconium it happened that they went together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the unbelieving

27:4. None of them had ever been able to draw such a crowd, or to capture the interest of people so powerfully, so they envied Paul and Barnabas – a thing not unknown in our day.

**13:46** See 3:26; Rom 1:16. Note on "everlasting life" at John 3:16.

**13:47** Isa 49:6. "You" refers to Christ.

**13:48** God's appointment to eternal life is through faith. These Gentiles showed by their believing in Christ that God had chosen them. Compare John 6:37,44; 17:2; Eph 1:4.

**13:50** "Devout" – religious or pious people who do not know the Lord Jesus can be stirred up by evil and unscrupulous men to persecute God's true servants. See John 16:2,3.

**13:51** Compare Matt 10:14. The important town of Iconium was about 130 kilometres to the southeast.

**13:52** The gospel of Christ when truly believed always results in joy (8:8; 16:34; Luke 2:10; 24:52; Rom 14:17; 15:13; 1 Pet 1:8), and opens the way to experience the fullness of God's Spirit (2:4; Eph 5:18).

**14:1** See 13:14,15.

**14:2** Rom 8:7; 1 Thess 2:14-16.

"Brethren" – in the New Testament this is



Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and poisoned their minds against the brethren. 3 Therefore, for a long time they stayed *there*, speaking boldly in the Lord, who gave testimony to the word of his grace by granting *miraculous* signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided and part *of them* sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when there was a violent attempt made by both *some* of the Gentiles and *some* of the Jews with their rulers, to treat *them* outrageously and stone them, 6 they were aware of *it*, and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the region that lies around *them*. 7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And at Lystra there sat a certain man disabled in his feet, who was a cripple from his mother's womb, and had never walked. 9 This *man* heard Paul speak. *Paul* looked intently at him and, perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up on your feet." And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men." 12 And they called Barnabas, Zeus; and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief

speaker. 13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and with the people wanted to offer a sacrifice *to them*.

14 When the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of this*, they tore their clothes, and rushed in among the people, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We too are men, with the same nature as you, and we proclaim to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea, and everything that is in them. 16 In times past he let all nations walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless, he did not leave himself without testimony, for he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." 18 And with these words they could hardly restrain the people from offering a sacrifice to them.

19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there and won over the people, and they stoned Paul and dragged *him* out of the city, supposing that he was dead. 20 However, as the disciples stood around him, he rose up and came into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

a common term for those who had become Christians. It suggests the close relationship that exists in the family of God. Believers in Christ are all members of one family and have the same Father.

**14:3** They stayed no doubt to strengthen the believers for the persecution they knew would come.

"Signs and wonders" - 2:43; 5:12; 8:6; John 2:11; Heb 2:4.

**14:4** Matt 10:34-46; John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19.

**14:5-7** They stayed as long as they could and left when it was wise. Their death would not have benefited anyone -- though they did not fear death (Phil 1:21-24; Heb 2:14,15). Lystra was a Greek town about 30 kilometers south and slightly west of Iconium.

**14:9,10** Sometimes the Holy Spirit enables His servants to recognize faith at work in others.

**14:11,12** These people believed in many gods, as Greeks in general did. Zeus was the name Greeks gave to the one considered the chief god. Hermes they considered the messenger of the gods. The KJV here (but not the Greek) has Jupiter and Mercury. These were the names the Romans gave those gods.

**14:13,14** Compare 12:21-23. They saw that an awful thing (the worship of men) was about to be done and did all they could to stop it. Tearing of their clothes was to show their dismay to the crowd (2 Sam 13:31; Job 1:20; Matt 26:65). How different were these true servants of God from those in

every era who like to think they are gods or even God Himself.

**14:15** See 3:12; Rev 22:8,9; Matt 4:10. Here are important words. They made a clear distinction between God and gods. God is "living"; He is the Creator of the universe. The gods and sacrifices to them are "useless things" that men should turn from (compare Ps 115:2-8; Isa 40:18-26; 44:9-20). And this was a part of the gospel they brought to people.

**14:16** See 17:30. "In times past" God was working with the nation of Israel and was giving to them the revelation of His will. For that time He permitted other nations to go their own way, not because that way was good (compare Rom 1:18-32), but because the time had not then come to send His servants to preach to them (though there were exceptions like Jonah).

**14:17** Even when the nations were without God's revelation in the Bible, they had the revelation of God's goodness in nature. See Ps 19:1-4; Rom 1:19,20.

**14:18,19** See the fickleness, the changeableness, the ignorance of people. Whom they would worship one day they stone the next! See Jer 17:5,9. But there were permanent results from this visit to Lystra - 16:1.

**14:20** See the courage and determination of those filled with God's Spirit. Paul went right back to the place where men tried to kill him in a very painful way (also v 21). Compare 4:13; Prov 28:1. Derbe was a town nearly 80 kilometers southeast of Iconium.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, *and* encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *teaching* that : "We must enter the kingdom of God through much trouble." 23 And when they had ordained elders for them in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed. 24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

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

26 And from there *they* sailed to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had *now* finished. 27 And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And there they stayed a long time with the disciples.

**15** And certain men who came down from Judea taught the brethren, *and said*, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 Therefore, after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they decided that Paul and

**14:22** Both the Lord Jesus and His apostles taught that believers would face troubles in this world (John 16:33; 1 Thess 3:3,4; 1 Pet 4:12), and revealed the attitude they should have toward them (Matt 5:10-12; 1 Pet 4:13). When we face troubles or persecutions or tribulation we as believers should not ask "why"? Rather if such things do not come we should ask "why not"? Paul speaks here as if God's kingdom were in the future – he means the kingdom when it comes openly and in glory. Notes at Matt 4:17; etc.

**14:23** See 13:2,3. "Elders" here means those who would have the leadership and oversight of the church (1 Pet 5:1-3). Surely their appointment was in consultation with the group of believers, as in 6:5,6.

**14:24,25** See 13:13. Attalia was the chief port of the province of Pamphylia.

**14:26** See 13:1-3.

**14:27** They emphasized that it was God who moved on the hearts of the Gentile peoples and brought them to faith – it was not their own doing.

**15:1** These men were Jews who professed to be followers of Christ but were in error about a very basic and important matter. They thought that the Church was to be confined to the Jewish community, and that to receive Christ's salvation other peoples had to become Jews by conversion – that is, they had to be both Christians and Jews. This meant to them circumcision and keeping the law of Moses (v 5). See note

Barnabas and some others among them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. 3 And *so*, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, telling of the conversion of the Gentiles, and *thus* they produced great joy in all the brethren. 4 And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church and *by* the apostles and elders, and they reported everything that God had done with them.

5 But some *belonging* to the sect of the Pharisees who believed got up and said this: "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."

6 And the apostles and elders met together to consider this matter. 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Men, brethren, you know that some time ago God made a choice among us that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, gave testimony to them by giving to them the Holy Spirit, just as *he did* to us, 9 and made no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now then, why do you test God by trying to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the

on circumcision at Gen 17:9-14.

**15:2** Paul and Barnabas saw a great danger in this teaching and strongly opposed it. They well knew that salvation was by God's grace through faith in Christ, and was not based on ceremonies and law keeping. Paul dealt with this matter very thoroughly in the letters to the Romans and Galatians (see Rom 3:27-4:25; Gal 1:6-9; 2:1 – 6:15).

**15:4** See 14:27.

**15:5** Verse 1. These Pharisees professed to be Christ's followers and were in the church.

"Pharisees" – note at Matt 3:7.

**15:7** Chapter 10.

**15:8** See 10:44-47. Compare Gal 3:2-5.

**15:9** In other words, God did not say to the Gentiles, "I will not save you, and will not give you my Spirit unless you get circumcised and keep the law of Moses."

"Purifying their hearts by faith" – God gave them faith and used that faith as an instrument to make their hearts pure. They had needed nothing more to make them acceptable to God. See note on purity of heart at Matt 5:8.

**15:10** Peter means that when God had revealed His will by His clear leading, resisting His will and complaining about His ways of doing things is to test Him. See also Matt 4:7; Ex 17:7. In Gal 5:1 Paul called the law a "yoke of bondage." Both of these apostles knew that Christ's "yoke" was enough (Matt 11:29,30), and that His yoke is the opposite of bondage.

**15:11** Peter was in full agreement with Paul

Lord Jesus Christ we will be saved, just as they.”

12 Then the whole assembly kept silent, and gave *their* attention to Barnabas and Paul, who told what miracles and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. 13 And after they became silent, James responded *by* saying, “Men, brethren, listen to me. 14 Simon has declared how God for the first *time* visited the Gentiles to take out from *among* them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written,

16 After this I will return,  
and rebuild the tabernacle of David,  
which has fallen down.  
And I will rebuild its ruins and I will  
set it up,  
17 So that the remainder of men may  
seek the Lord,  
and all the Gentiles, who are called by  
my name,  
says the Lord, who does all these things.

18 “From the beginning of the world all of God’s works are known to him.

19 “Therefore, in my judgment, we should not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they should abstain from *food* polluted by idols, *from* sexual immorality, *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. 21 For Moses for a long time has had

those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.”

22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, *along* with the whole church, to send men chosen from among themselves to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. 23 And they wrote these things by them:

“The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greetings to the Gentile brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. 24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with *their* words, disturbing your souls, saying, ‘Be circumcised and keep the Law’ (we gave no *such* instruction to them), 25 it seemed good to us meeting together with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our dear *brothers* Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who will also tell *you* the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay no greater burden on you than these necessary things: 29 That you abstain from foods offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. You will do well if you keep yourselves away from these *things*. Farewell.”

30 So when they were sent away, they came to Antioch. And when they had gathered the large number *of believers* together, they handed over

in this most vital matter (11:43; 13:38,39; Rom 3:21-24; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8,9).

**15:12** Their aim was to convince all these Jewish Christians that God was at work among the Gentiles just as He was among them, and quite apart from the law of Moses.

**15:13** See 12:17; 21:18; Gal 1:19. This James was the half-brother of Jesus and a leader of the Jerusalem church.

**15:14** “Simon” was Peter’s other name.

“To take out from among them a people for his name” – this is a work God is still doing. See the meaning of “Church” at Matt 16:18.

**15:15-18** James said that the prophets of the Old Testament also spoke of the conversion of the Gentiles. He then refers to Amos 9:11,12 (see notes there). It does not seem that his purpose in this was to state that that Scripture was completely fulfilled in the conversion of some Gentiles in his day, but simply to show that the conversion of Gentiles was no strange thing, was not contrary to God’s Word.

**15:19** He agreed with Peter (v 10). There was no point in loading the whole law onto Gentile believers.

**15:20,21** The things James mentions were very common practices among the Greeks and Romans, but forbidden in the Old Testament. There were synagogues here and there in the lands of the Gentiles where

the gospel had gone (13:14; 14:1). James and all Jews would know of the prohibitions of the Old Testament. His meaning seems to be that Gentile Christians should not needlessly offend Jews by doing things they hated.

This is a principle for all times for all Christians to follow in relation to the various kinds of people they live among. Compare 1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:32; 2 Cor 6:3. The prohibition against eating flesh with blood in it goes back before the law of Moses (Gen 9:4). Sexual immorality is condemned everywhere in the Bible, and certainly should never have any place in any believer’s life (Ex 20:14; Matt 5:27,28; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3). On foods offered to idols see 1 Cor 8:1,4,10; 10:19,28; Rev 2:14,20.

**15:22** Other references to Silas – v 40; 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thess 1:1,2; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Pet 5:12.

**15:23** Antioch was the chief city of the provinces of Syria and Cilicia, and the place where this dispute about the law began (v 1).

**15:24** They assured the Gentile believers that the apostles had not been behind the false teaching they had heard.

**15:28** They were sure that the Holy Spirit had led them in their united decision.

**15:29** Observe that there is nothing here about the Gentile churches keeping the Sabbath. Even these Jewish believers did

the letter. 31 When they read *it*, they rejoiced for the encouragement *in it*. 32 And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with many words. 33 And after they had stayed *there* a while, they were sent back by the brethren in peace to the apostles. 34 However, it pleased Silas to remain there. 35 Paul and Barnabas also stayed on in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 And some days afterwards Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing." 37 And Barnabas was determined to take John, who was called Mark, with them. 38 But Paul did not think it was good to take him with them, *the one* who left them at Pamphylia, and did not go with them to the work. 39 And the dispute was so sharp between them, that they parted from one another. So Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, 40 and

not consider this was important for Gentile believers.

**15:31** It was encouraging that the teaching that had troubled them (vs 1,5) was not true. **15:32** Note on prophets at Gen 20:7.

**15:35** For the moment at least, in that place false teaching had been defeated. But the same teaching infected the churches in Galatia and something similar has troubled some Christians from time to time ever since then.

**15:36** It was not enough for Paul to preach the gospel, win men to Christ and then leave them forever. He had a shepherd's heart (2 Cor 11:28,29), and is an example to every servant of Christ.

**15:37,38** See 13:13. Mark was a relative of Barnabas (Col 4:10). This may have influenced him in his insistence that they take him along with them. Sometimes even among the people of God family relationships are given too much importance, and those who have failed in the work are kept on, often to the detriment of the work. Paul stood on the principle that an unreliable person should not be taken for so important a task.

For all we know Paul's decision here was one of the factors that caused Mark to determine to be more faithful in God's work, and made him a very useful servant of God later in his life (Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11). Surely rejection by a man of God like Paul would have had a strong impact on Mark and may have stirred him up to search his own heart and ways.

**15:39** Even godly men may have sharp disagreements. This is not to say that such disagreements are good. A man like Paul once he saw the right course to take was not to be turned from it. This is the last mention of Barnabas in Acts.

**15:40** It seems from this that the church in Antioch agreed with Paul in the dispute with

Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

**16** Then he came to Derbe and Lystra, and saw a disciple *who* was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman *who* believed. But his father *was* a Greek. 2 *Timothy* was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted him to go with him, and took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those regions, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered *to* them the regulations to keep that had been decided on by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem. 5 And so the churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and had been forbidden

Barnabas. They commended Paul and Silas, but there is nothing here about commending Barnabas and Mark, and surely this omission is significant. Also we should keep in mind that God set forth Paul, not Barnabas, as an example of what a Christian worker should be - Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 2 Thess 3:8,9.

**15:41** Plain and relevant teaching of the Word of God strengthens churches as nothing else can.

**16:1** See 14:6. It was not usual for Jews and Greeks to intermarry. Timothy's mother was a believer in Christ (2 Tim 1:5). Timothy became a very important person in Paul's ministry - 17:14,15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom 16:21; 2 Cor 1:1; 4:17; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2. Paul found him in the town where he had been stoned and almost killed - 14:19.

**16:3** Timothy had not been circumcised possibly because of his Greek father's objection. But he had been taught the Old Testament (2 Tim 3:15), and was counted a Jew because of his mother. By circumcising him Paul was not following the error seen in 15:1,5. His aim was to make Timothy more acceptable to the Jews as he went about serving Christ. Compare 1 Cor 9:19-22. See Paul's desire for the conversion of Jews in Rom 9:1-4. He always made his views on circumcision very clear - Gal 6:15.

**16:4** See 15:23-29.

**16:5** The agreement in Jerusalem (chapter 15) resulted in much good to the churches.

**16:6** Asia was the name of the province of which Ephesus was the capital city. Asia was in the much larger area called Asia Minor (now called Turkey) which is a small part of the continent of Asia. Paul later had a very fruitful ministry there (19:1-22). But now God's Spirit prevented him from entering it. God has a specific time for any of His works

by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word *in the province of Asia*, 7 after they had come to Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them *to do so*. 8 And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: A man of Macedonia standing and asking him, "Come over to Macedonia, and help us."

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we tried to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next *day* to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is the principal city of that part of Macedonia, *and a Roman colony*. And we stayed in that city *for some days*.

13 And on the Sabbath we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was usually made, and we sat down and spoke to the women who assembled *there*. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira,

and He knows where every servant of His should be at any given time. They should simply find his leading and obey it.

**16:7** Bithynia was to the northeast of the province of Asia. The fact that Paul tried to go there, but could not, can teach us some important truths. Paul was on the move, obedient to his calling to preach the gospel everywhere. He did not always know where God wanted him to go, but he did not for that reason sit at home. God guided him as he went forward in his work and made known His will as Paul practiced obedience to God's calling for him. Notice that He who is called the Holy Spirit in v 6 is here called the Spirit of Jesus. Compare John 14:16,26; 16:7; Rom 8:9.

**16:8** Troas was an important port city on the Aegean Sea facing Greece and Macedonia.

**16:9,10** "Vision" – references at 18:9,10. They had been waiting for God's guidance, and God chose this way of giving it. Their obedience was immediate – the only sort of obedience God can fully approve. For the first time (as far as we know) one of Christ's apostles was taking the gospel to Europe. Christianity began in the continent of Asia and the first churches were in western Asia. Notice the word "we" in v 10 – Luke is now including himself in the group. Evidently Luke joined Paul at Troas.

**16:11** Samothrace was an island in the Aegean. Neapolis was the port of the city of Philippi in Macedonia. Philippi was a Roman city – the Romans ruled Macedonia at that time.

**16:13** They knew there was no synagogue in the city, so they looked for a likely meeting place for Jews (and those influenced by the Jews) to worship the one true God.

**16:14** Thyatira was in the province of Asia which

who was a worshipper of God, heard *us*. The Lord opened her heart so that she seized on what was spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she made a request *to us*, saying, "If you consider me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house, and stay *there*." And she persuaded us.

16 And it came about as we were going to prayer *that* we were met by a certain slave girl possessed by a spirit of fortune-telling, who brought her masters much profit by predicting the future.

17 This *girl* followed Paul and us and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, who make known to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very moment.

19 And when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged *them* to the marketplace to the

God had kept Paul from entering – v 6.

"Worshipped God" – this means that she was a worshiper of the God of the Bible, the one true God. She probably learned about Him through the Jews of Thyatira. Now the Lord opened her heart to receive the message about Christ (compare Luke 24:45). The Lord does this for everyone who comes to faith in Himself. If He does not do this, it will not be done. And His opening of people's hearts is as great a miracle as opening prison doors (v 26; 5:19). But this does not relieve people of the responsibility of opening the door to Him – Rev 3:20.

**16:15** Notes on baptism at 2:38; Matt 3:6; Mark 16:16. She showed her faith by her works (Jam 2:14-19).

**16:16** The "spirit" was an evil spirit, a demon (note at Matt 4:24). Good spirits do not engage in the work this one did. See Deut 18:9-13. How accurate the predictions of this slave girl were we cannot say. She must have been right enough times to keep people believing in her.

**16:17,18** See the shouts of other demons – Matt 8:29; Mark 1:24; 3:11,12; 5:7; Luke 4:33,41; 8:28. Neither Jesus nor His disciples needed or wanted the testimony of demons on their behalf. It was not a good thing for people to think that this demon-possessed girl was on the side of the gospel of Christ. If Satan seems to cooperate with Christ's servants, his ultimate purpose is to destroy the truth. Paul was not looking for trouble, but he could endure the situation no longer. On casting out demons see Matt 4:24; 10:1; etc.

**16:19-21** Money was their god, and they (like all whose god is money) cared nothing for the health of a poor girl, or for truth and justice. Compare John 12:6. These men were appealing to anti-Jewish prejudice in a Roman city. Satan could not defeat Christ's

authorities, 20 and brought them to the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews *and* are greatly troubling our city, 21 teaching customs which are not lawful for us Romans to receive or observe."

22 And the crowd all together rose up against them, and the magistrates tore off their clothes and gave a command to beat *them*. 23 And when they had given them many lashes, they threw them into prison, and commanded the jailer to keep them safely. 24 Having received such a command, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors opened, and everyone's chains became loose. 27 And the jailer, awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had run away. 28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice and said, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

servants by seeming to agree with them, so he tried a different method through these men.

**16:23** 5:40; Matt 27:26; 2 Cor 11: 23-25.

**16:24** "Stocks" – wooden frames with holes for legs, or for both legs and arms, to keep prisoners immobile.

**16:25** See how true Christians can face their troubles and persecutions – prayer instead of curses, songs instead of resentment and complaining, divine comfort instead of confusion and depression, joy instead of thirst for revenge. Compare 5:41; Matt 5:10-12; Rom 5:3; 2 Cor 1:5; 1 Pet 4:13. They knew God had led them there (v 10), that they were in their Shepherd's care and that the Lord of the universe had a good purpose in it all.

**16:26** So much for Satan's attempt to crush Paul and Silas. God chose this way to vindicate His servants and to cause His gospel to spread in that place. He does not always use such methods (7:57,58; 12:1-7), but whatever methods He uses we may be sure that they are wise and good.

**16:27** See 12:19.

**16:28** Paul desired the good of the jailer who had treated him cruelly (v 24). See Matt 5:44; Rom 12:19-21.

**16:29,30** He realized that Paul and Silas were true messengers of God who taught the way of salvation. The Holy Spirit had convicted him of his spiritual need, and he asked the most important question any person can ask. If more people sincerely asked it of God's servants, more people would come into a knowledge of the truth. Not asking it, and not wanting to know the answer, keeps people in darkness and ignorance.

29 Then *the jailer* called for a light and ran in, and trembling, fell down before Paul and Silas. 30 And *he* brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, *you* and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* wounds, and immediately was baptized, he and all his *family*. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his household.

35 And when it was daylight, the magistrates sent officers to say, "Let those men go." 36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul: "The magistrates have sent *orders* to let you go. So now leave, and go in peace."

37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly without trial, Roman citizens *that* we are, and have thrown *us* into prison. And now will they send us off secretly? Absolutely not! Let them come themselves and lead us out."

38 And the officers reported these words to

**16:31** Here is the answer to anyone anywhere who wants to know the way of salvation. It is the answer the Lord Jesus Himself and all His messengers gave again and again – 13:39; John 1:12; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Rom 5:1; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8,9; etc. Repentance is where true faith begins. Paul does not mention repentance here because it was clear that the man was already repenting. When people needed to repent, God's servants did not fail to tell them so – 2:38; 17:30; Matt 3:2; etc. To those who are repenting the word is "believe"; to those not yet repentant the word is "repent." Paul speaks of the man's family as well. God delights to save whole households when there is faith – 11:14; Gen 7:1; Josh 2: 11-13; 6:22,23; Heb 11:7.

**16:32** They did more than give the man a verse or two of Scripture – they explained the gospel.

**16:33,34** He was producing fruit worthy of repentance (Matt 3:8), and showing his faith and the change in his heart by what he did (Jam 2:14-19). Observe the relationship between faith and joy, and the difference between v 34 and vs 27-29. This is what Christ can and does do in the lives of individuals – 2 Cor 5:17.

**16:35** It seems they thought the punishment given to Paul and Silas sufficient for what they considered disturbing the peace of the city.

**16:37** Paul was not seeking revenge, or standing on his rights. But the magistrates had committed a public act of injustice, and Paul insisted that they should admit it in public. It was not his good he was thinking of, but theirs and the gospel's.

**16:38** It was against the law to beat Roman

the magistrates, and when they heard that they were Roman *citizens* they were afraid. 39 And they came and pled with them, and led *them* out and asked *them* to leave the city. 40 And they went out of the prison and entered *the house of* Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and left.

**17** Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where *there* was a Jewish synagogue. 2 And Paul, as his habit was, went in to them and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that Christ had to suffer, and rise from the dead and *saying*, "This Jesus, whom I preach to you, is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas, and *with them* a large number of devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, moved with envy, took some wicked idlers from the marketplace, collected a crowd, and set all the city in an uproar, and rushed to the house of Jason and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some *of the* brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These *men* who have turned the world

upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has shown them hospitality. And all of them are acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one called* Jesus." 8 And they stirred up the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken bail from Jason, and from the others, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away at night to Berea, who, on their arrival, went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 These *Jews* were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily *to see* if those things *Paul taught* were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, *and* also some prominent Greek women and not a few of the men.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God was being preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the people. 14 And so immediately the brethren sent Paul away to go as far as the sea coast, but Silas and Timothy still remained there. 15 And those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens, and receiving instructions *from Paul* for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they left.

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens,

citizens – 22:25-29. They had not known that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, but they could have inquired and found this out before they ordered the beating, if they had cared for the law.

**17:1** Thessalonica was an important town about 150 kilometers west of Philippi.

"Synagogue" – Matt 4:23.

**17:2** See 13:5,14; 14:1.

**17:3** Luke 24:25-27,45-47.

**17:4** See 10:2; 13:50.

**17:5** See 5:17; 13:45.

**17:6,7** See 16:20,21; John 19:12-16. Those who preach the truth are often regarded as troublemakers. Actually they are peacemakers – preaching peace between God and men (Matt 5:9; 10:34-36; 2 Cor 5:18-20). The world does not want what it needs most and hates those who would give it.

**17:10** Berea was nearly 100 kilometers west of Thessalonica.

**17:11,12** The Greek word translated "noble" originally meant of exalted birth, birth into an aristocratic family. Later it came to mean those of excellent qualities – generous in outlook toward others, free from base prejudices, open to truth and reason. These people in Berea showed their noble qualities in these ways: by eagerly hearing Christ's servants, by searching the Bible to see if what they said was true, and by believing the truth when it became clear. Let all of us abandon prejudice, narrowness of

mind, fear of others and fear of the truth, and follow the example of these Bereans. It will open up a great future for us.

**17:13** See 14:19; Matt 23:13. What evil deeds men do because of jealousy and prejudice.

**17:14** Paul was the leader of the group and the chief spokesman, and so was in the greatest danger. He did not leave because of fear (14:6,19,20), but because he saw it was wise.

**17:15** Athens was about 300 kilometers south of Thessalonica. It was one of the most famous cities on earth, the birthplace of democracy, the home of art, language, literature, science and philosophy. It had been the native place of Socrates and Plato and the adopted city of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno. In Paul's day it was ruled by Rome and its glories were in the past, but it was still a cultural and intellectual center.

**17:16** Paul saw among the human glories of Athens a sinful people, abandoned to false religion. It was the sight of idols which so greatly "agitated" him (this Greek word could also be translated "was greatly provoked" or "stirred to anger" or "distressed." It indicates strong emotion). This was because he knew God's revelation concerning idolatry and because he loved Christ and the glory of God and the people who were so bound by their idols (Ex 20:1-6; Ps 115:2-8; Isa 40:18-26; 44:6-11; 2 Cor 5:13,14).

his spirit within him was greatly agitated, when he saw that the city was full of idolatry. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout *Greeks*, and also in the market-place daily with those who came near him.

18 Then some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some *of them* said, "What does this babbling want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be proclaiming foreign gods." *This was* because he was preaching to them the good news of Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching *is* that you are talking about? 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears, *and so* we want to know what these things mean." 21 (For all the Athenians, and the foreigners who were there, spent their time in nothing else but telling or hearing some new thing.)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the

Areopagus, and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed by and looked at the objects of your worship, I found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

"Therefore, I am going to make known to you the one whom you worship without knowing. 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since he is *the* Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, 25 nor is *he* served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, since he gives to everyone life, and breath, and everything *else*. 26 And *he* has made from one blood every nation of man to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times set for *them*, and the boundaries of the regions where they live, 27 *so* that they would seek the Lord, and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each of us; 28 for in him

In Rom 1:18-25 Paul revealed the dark truth which lies behind many shining forms of glory and beauty. In Athens he was greatly agitated at the evidence of the mixture of so much spiritual blindness with so much brains and ability -- a thing we see today on every hand.

**17:17** What he saw was a compelling motive for speaking out the truth wherever he had the opportunity. Compare 4:20; Jer 20:9.

**17:18** The philosophy of Epicurus (who lived 341-270 BC) emphasized pleasure as the chief end of life. In his view the best pleasure was not bodily pleasure, but the pleasure of the mind, a serene life free from pain, disturbing desires, fears, and anxiety about death. He believed there were many gods but that they took no interest in the lives of men. In Paul's day the Epicureans had to some extent perverted the teachings of Epicurus and pursued bodily pleasure and actually glorified lust.

The Stoic philosophy was founded by Zeno (who lived 340-265 BC). He taught that men should live in harmony with nature, and that reason or design was the highest thing in nature. In theology he was a pantheist (thinking that God and the universe were joined, neither existing without the other). He thought of God as the soul of the world. He emphasized man's ability to reason and his self-sufficiency.

Some of the followers of these two philosophers looked on Paul with arrogance and cynicism, calling him a "babbling." Little did they know the difference between philosophy and what Paul preached. Philosophy is the speculation of men about the nature of reality, but Christ's gospel is God's revelation of reality and what men should do in the light of it (see notes on 1 Cor 1:17-25; Col 2:8).

**17:19** The Areopagus was the highest court of Athens and had jurisdiction over all

religious matters. It had power either to forbid Paul to teach in the city or to give him liberty to do so.

**17:21** Most of them were not seeking the truth but only novelties.

**17:22** This was quite true, but their religion was not according to reality and truth.

"Religious" - the Greek word literally means "having fear or reverence for the gods."

**17:23** People erected such altars in other places in the Roman world. They did not want to leave out some god or God who might have power either to help or hurt them. The philosophers suggested Paul was advocating "foreign gods" (v 18). "No", Paul says, "I proclaim the God whose altar is in this city - the God unknown to you but the only true and living God."

**17:24** Paul says the true God is the Creator of the universe, and not some sort of pantheistic deity or soul of the world. He bases this assertion on God's revelation of Himself in the Bible - Gen 1:1; Ex 20:11; Ps 8:3; 19:1; Isa 40:28; 42:5; 45:12,18. And the true God does not live in temples men have made - 1 Kings 8:27; Isa 66:1,2.

**17:25** Paul emphasized the difference between the true God and idols. Idols must be taken care of by men. God has no needs (Ps 50:9-15) - He supplies to all people what they have (14:15-17; 1 Tim 6:17).

**17:26** The one man was Adam (Gen 1:26-28). God has already determined the rise and fall of nations, the times of their opportunities to find Him, and the boundaries wherein they should live.

**17:27** God had this good purpose in all His dealings with the nations of earth. "Reach out" could be translated "grope" as in darkness (Isa 60:2; John 12:46). But God gave men enough light that they could seek Him if they wanted to (John 1:9; Rom 1:19,20; Ps 19:1-4).

**17:28** Paul here quotes from two poets of



we live, and move, and have our being. As some of your own poets also have said, we are also his offspring.

29 "Since then we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that God's nature is like gold or silver or stone, *a thing* carved by man's art and design. 30 The times of such ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained. He has given proof to all by raising him from the dead."

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, "We want to hear you again about this *matter*." 33 So Paul went away from them. 34 However some men joined him and believed, among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite, and *also* a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

former times whose writings should have been familiar to his hearers. Paul certainly would not have endorsed all those poets wrote, but he extracted truth from their writings and used it to appeal to his hearers. Truth is truth wherever it may be found. God is not far from any person but surrounds us all. We need go on no pilgrimages to find Him. The Creator of the universe will always be found when men lift up their thoughts to Him and seek Him sincerely with their whole hearts. Compare Jer 29:13.

**17:29** Gen 1:27; Ex 20:4; Isa 40:19,25.

**17:30** Observe that he calls idolatry "ignorance." Compare Rom 1:21-23; Isa 44:9,18,20. Athens had temples magnificent in architecture, and images highly prized as works of art. To Paul and to Paul's Lord it was all evidence of the lack of wisdom in the Athenians. And all their philosophy, failing as it did to come to the knowledge of God, was nothing but brilliant ignorance (compare 1 Cor 1:19-25). Such words could not have pleased his hearers, but now Paul has reached the point he has aimed at from the beginning – their repentance. Notes on repentance at Matt 3:2,8; Luke 13:1-5.

God commands all people to repent – all philosophers, all religionists, all idolaters, all men of learning and science, all in positions of authority, all ordinary people, everyone, everywhere. He does so because all are sinners (Rom 3:23), all need to be saved from sin, and He wants to save all (John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4,5; 2 Pet 3:9).

**17:31** On God's judgment see Matt 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36; Rom 2:2; 14:10; 2 Pet 2:9; Rev 14:7; 20:11-15. On Christ's resurrection see v 18; 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 13:30; Matt 28:6. Observe that Christ's resurrection is proof that God will judge the world.

**17:32** Those who sneered only revealed their ignorance and lack of desire for the truth.

**17:34** The gospel did not bear as much fruit in Athens as in some other places. There

**18** After these things Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And *there he* found a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus *and* lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all Jews to leave Rome. And *he* went to them, 3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked. For by occupation they were tent makers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

5 And when Silas and Timothy had come down from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *is* the Christ. 6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook out *his* clothes and said to them, "Your blood *be* on your own heads. I *am* pure *from* *guilt*. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

7 And he left there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus, who was a worshipper

was little mind for serious enquiry there, and too much pride of intellect (vs 18,21,32). But Paul was able to win over a member of the highest court in the city.

**18:1** Corinth was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. It was situated about 75 kilometers west of Athens. It was the capital and commercial center of Achaia (Greece), and notorious for immorality. 1 Cor 2:1-5 reveals Paul's state of mind when he arrived in Corinth. Perhaps he felt he had failed in Athens and feared that the Corinthians, too, for the most part, might reject the gospel. It seems he changed his manner of preaching from what it was in Athens. Paul was able to adjust his style of speaking to meet any situation, yet without compromising the truth.

**18:2** Aquila means "eagle." Pontus was in the northern part of Asia Minor (now called Turkey). Italy was the land to the west with Rome as its capital.

"Claudius" – 11:28.

**18:3** Though he was a great apostle Paul did not think it was humiliating or demeaning to work with his hands and earn a living. And in this he was an example to us all – see 20:34; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7,8; 1 Cor 9:1-15.

**18:4** See 13:14; 14:1; 17:2.

**18:5** Perhaps Silas and Timothy brought supplies from Macedonia so that Paul could stop his physical labor for a time. Note on "the Christ" at Matt 1:1; Acts 2:36. Here "Messiah" may be a better translation.

**18:6** See 13:45,46; 14:19; 17:5; 28:28; Matt 8:11; 21:43; Rom 1:16. Paul well knew his responsibility – 20:26,27. If he had not proclaimed the gospel to them he would have considered himself guilty of their "blood" (of not giving them a chance to receive God's salvation). Compare Ezek 33:1-9. Shaking out his clothes was similar to shaking dust off the feet (13:51; Matt 10:14).

of God. His house was right next to the synagogue. 8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with all his household, and many of the Corinthians, hearing *the message*, believed and were baptized.

9 Then the Lord spoke to Paul at night through a vision: "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent. 10 For I am with you, and no man will attack you to do you harm, for I have many people in this city." 11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 And when Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the place of judgment, 13 saying, "This *fellow* persuades men to worship God *in a manner* contrary to the Law."

14 And now when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked reckless deeds, O Jews, there would be reason for me to bear with you. 15 But if it is a question of words and names and your law, you see *to it*, for I will not be a judge of such *matters*." 16 And he ejected them from the place of judgment. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* in front of the place of judgment. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

18 *After this* Paul remained *there* for a good while, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, along with Priscilla and Aquila,

having had *his* hair cut off in Cenchrea because he had taken a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there, but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem. But I will return to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus. 22 And after he had landed at Caesarea and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he left and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. 24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born in Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* powerful in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord and was fervent in spirit, so he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, *but* knew only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more precisely.

27 And when he wanted to cross over to Achaia, the brethren wrote, urging the disciples to receive him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed. 28 For he forcefully refuted the Jews, *and did it* publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

**18:8** No opposition can keep those whom God has chosen from coming to Christ (13:48; John 6:37,44).

**18:9,10** "Vision" - 9:10; 10:3; 16:9; Gen 15:1; Num 12:6; Ps 89:19; Jer 14:14; 23:16; Dan 2:19; Luke 1:22. It was natural for Paul to dread physical suffering. The memory of what he had already endured was no doubt fresh in his mind (14:19; 16:22-24). But God knows how to comfort and encourage His servants (2 Cor 1:3-7).

**18:11** For Paul this was a comparatively long time to stay in one place.

**18:12** They attacked Paul but did not harm him. We know from history that Gallio was an educated and witty man, a brother of the philosopher Seneca. But apparently he had little interest either in Judaism or Christianity or in the true and living God.

**18:13** See 16:20,21; 17:6,7.

**18:15** Some of those who do not understand the gospel of Christ may think that in the matter of religion one word or one name is as good as another. Gallio with all his education and wit was ignorant of the truth of 4:12.

**18:18** "Vow" - 21:23,24. See Num 6:1-21. Cutting off all the hair came at the end of the vow. Evidently Paul as a Jewish Christian (23:6; 2 Cor 11:22) thought it proper to make an Old Testament vow. He may have done so with fellow Jews in mind

(1 Cor 9:19-23).

**18:19-21** Ephesus was the capital city of the province of Asia and the largest city in Asia Minor. Once God had kept Paul from going there (16:6). Now the time had come for him to go.

**18:23** See 15:36,41; 2 Cor 11:28.

**18:24** See 19:1; 1 Cor 3:4-6,22; 4:6; 16:12; Titus 3:13. The city of Alexandria was in Egypt. It was founded by Alexander the Great and became a great center of learning. Apollos had been a member of the large Jewish community there.

**18:25** "Baptism of John" - Matt 3:1-6. Probably it was followers of John the Baptist who had instructed Apollos about Christ.

**18:26** Apollos, great as he was in learning and oratory, was humble enough to learn from two members of the congregation. And those two performed a very valuable ministry to the church and are an example for all time.

**18:27** Corinth was the capital of Achaia (v 1). "Brethren" and "disciples" were both names for the followers of Christ. Notice the phrase "who by grace had believed." Compare 13:48; John 6:37,44; Eph 2:8,9; Phil 1:29. No one apart from God's gracious working in his heart would come to experience a true and living faith in Christ.

**18:28** Verse 5; 9:22; 17:2,3.

**19** And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having traveled through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples, **2** he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

**3** And he said to them, "Then into what were you baptized?"

And they said, "Into John's baptism."

**4** Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe on him who was to come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." **5** When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **6** And when Paul laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. **7** Altogether there were about twelve men.

**8** And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and speaking persuasively about the kingdom of God. **9** But when some became hardened and refused to believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the crowds, he left them, and separated the disciples, *and* spoke daily in the school of Tyrannus. **10** And this continued for two years, so that everyone who lived in

*the province of Asia*, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord Jesus.

**11** And God performed special miracles by the hands of Paul, **12** so that from his body handkerchiefs or aprons were taken to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

**13** Then some traveling Jews, exorcists, undertook to call out the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We command you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

**14** And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, who did so. **15** And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" **16** And the man who had the evil spirit leaped on them and overpowered them and showed *his* strength against them, so that they ran out of that house naked and wounded.

**17** And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. **18** And many who believed came, and confessed and made known their *evil* deeds. **19** Also many of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together, and burned them before everyone. And they counted up the value of them and found *it was*

**19:1** See 18:19. Priscilla and Aquila had not been able to instruct all the disciples in Ephesus as they had Apollos (18:26). These men, twelve in number (v 7), had either been baptized by John the Baptist in Judea, or by a disciple of John who had baptized them somewhere else (v 3). If they had been to Judea they must have left there before the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They had not got beyond the teaching of John.

**19:2** Evidently their manner of living and their conversation made Paul wonder about their spiritual condition and knowledge of the things of Christ. His question indicates his conviction that if they had really believed in Christ they would have received the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; Gal 3:14; Rom 8:9). Their reply revealed how little they knew of events after John's death.

**19:4** Matt 3:6; John 3:27-36.

**19:5** See 2:38; Matt 28:19. This is the only case of re-baptism mentioned in the Bible.

"In the name" – could also be translated "into the name." The Greek word (eis) means both. It was used by Greeks in business dealings – some property or money was put "into" the account of someone. So it became his. A person receiving baptism in or into Christ's name is declaring that he now belongs to Him.

**19:6** "Laid hands" – notes at 8:15-17; 9:17; 10:47.

"Tongues" – or "languages." See notes at 2:4,11 and 10:46. There is no good

reason to think "tongues" means one thing in 2:4-11 and another thing here. The author of Acts (Luke) has given no indication whatever that this was different from that. On prophesying see notes at Gen 20:7; Num 11:25; 1 Cor 12:10.

**19:8** See 13:14; 14:1; 17:2.

**19:9** See 13:45,46; 14:19; 17:5,13; 18:5,6. In those days sometimes the way of Christ was called simply "the Way."

**19:10** In all his journeys Paul never stayed so long in any other city (20:31). And this was in a place which God had once kept him from entering (16:6; 18:19).

**19:11,12** God used this way to convince everyone that Paul was His apostle (2 Cor 12:11,12). See notes at 5:15; 8:15,17 also. Paul did not attempt to do these miracles himself and he made no gain from them.

**19:13-16** Notes on demons and driving out demons at Matt 4:24; 10:1. Here we see that merely using the name of Jesus is not sufficient to drive them out. Christ's authority, and God's Spirit are required for that.

**19:17** The failure of the sons of Sceva to drive out demons had a good result. It was in sharp contrast with the power of God displayed through Paul (vs 11,12). God can use all such things, if He wills, for the advancement of the gospel.

**19:18** Matt 3:5,6.

**19:19** They had seen the power of the true God at work and realized the evil of sorcery and how little power it had in comparison with God's power. On sorcery see Deut 18:9-11. This is the third mention of it in Acts

fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. 20 So mightily the Word of God grew and showed its power.

21 After these things were over, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, when he had traveled through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must see Rome also." 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

23 And at that same time there arose no small disturbance about the Way.

24 For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana, was bringing in no small profit to the craftsmen. 25 He called them together, *along* with the workmen of similar occupations, and said, "Men, you know that we have our income from this work. 26 Moreover you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but almost throughout all *of* Asia, this Paul has persuaded and taken away many people, saying that *gods* which are made with hands are not gods *at all*. 27 So that not only is this craft of ours in danger of falling into contempt, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised, and her magnificence may be destroyed, *she* whom all Asia and the world worships."

28 And when they heard *this*, they were filled with anger and cried out, saying, "Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!" 29 And the whole city was filled with confusion, and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's traveling companions, they rushed into the theatre with one accord. 30 And when Paul wanted to go inside

to the people, the disciples would not let him. 31 And some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent *word* to him begging *him* not to venture into the theatre.

32 So some cried out one thing, and some another, for the assembly was confused, and the majority did not know why they had come together. 33 And they drew Alexander out of the crowd, the Jews having pushed him forward. And Alexander gestured *with* his hand, and wanted to make his defense before the people. 34 But when they found out that he was a Jew, all cried out with one voice for about two hours: "Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians."

35 And when the town clerk had quieted the people, he said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana and of the *image* which fell down from heaven? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples, nor blasphemers of your goddess. 38 Therefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen who are with him, have a matter against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you enquire about any other matter, it must be decided in a lawful assembly. 40 For we are in danger of being called to answer for this day's uproar, there being no reason we may give to account for this riot." 41 And when he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

(8:9-11; 13:8-10). Their "books" were writings containing magical spells. Fifty thousand pieces of silver was a huge sum. One piece of silver was a day's wage for a laborer. 50,000 was enough for one's wages for 140 years! Notice they did not sell these books and use the money. They saw the evil of sorcery and wanted the books utterly destroyed. See their great zeal for God's truth once they learned it.

**19:21** One reason for the visit to Jerusalem was to take a contribution from the churches to the poor believers there (see 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15). He had long had a desire to visit Rome (Rom 1:15; 15:23-28). Here he says he "must" do so. Does this not indicate that he was conscious of God's will in this (20:22)?

**19:24** Verse 9. "Diana" – in Greek here "Artemis." Diana was the Roman name for the same goddess. The people of Ephesus and of Asia Minor in general regarded Artemis as the mother goddess. They believed her image at Ephesus had fallen from the sky. Her temple there was called one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and was four times as large as the famous Parthenon in Athens. Much of the income

of the city was related to her worship. The reason for the great disturbance (v 23) was mainly financial. So many people were turning to Christ and renouncing idolatry that a part of the economy of Ephesus was beginning to suffer (vs 25,26). Since Demetrius and his friends loved money instead of truth, there was certain to be trouble.

**19:26** See 17:29,30; 1 Cor 8:4-6.

**19:28** Love of money and fanaticism for false religion are a dangerous combination.

**19:34** They knew that the views of the Jews on idolatry were the same as that of the Christians (Ex 20:1-5; Ps 115:2-8). They shouted for two hours about the greatness of Diana but does anyone worship her today? Her huge temple at Ephesus is now buried in a swamp.

**19:35-44** "Heaven: – Jupiter (KJV) is not in Greek here.

Ephesus was ruled by Rome. "Proconsuls" (v 38) were Roman governors. The people had no right to take the law into their own hands and they could have been in trouble with the authorities if they had tried to do so. Therefore the city clerk coolly quietened the crowd and sent them away.

**20** And after the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *him*, embraced *them* and left to go to Macedonia. 2 And when he had gone over those areas and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece, 3 and stayed *there* three months. And when the Jews made a plot against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia, also the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus, Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5 These *men*, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them in Troas, where we stayed *for* seven days.

7 And on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, *being* ready to leave the next day, preached to them and continued his talk until midnight. 8 And there were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. 9 And in a window there sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was falling into a deep sleep. And as Paul continued to speak for a long time, he collapsed with sleep and fell down from the third story and was lifted up dead. 10 And Paul went down, prostrated *himself* on him, and put his arms around *him* and said, "Don't trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." 11 So when he had come up again and broken bread and eaten, and had talked a long time, even until daybreak, he departed.

12 And they led the young man *away* alive, and were not a little comforted. 13 And we went

ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul *aboard*. This is what he had arranged, planning to go on foot himself. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him *aboard* and came to Mitylene. 15 And we sailed from there and came the next *day* opposite Chios, and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and stayed at Trogyllium, and the *day* after *that* we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, because he did not want to spend time in Asia, for he was hurrying on to be in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost, if possible.

17 And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You know the manner *of my life* the whole time I was with you from the first day I came to Asia, 19 *how I* served the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and trials which came to me because of the plotting of the Jews, 20 *and* how I kept back nothing that was helpful *to you*, but made it known to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly declaring both to the Jews and to the Greeks *the need of* repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 "And, see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and sufferings await me. 24 But none of these things moves me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

**20:1,2** The churches started by Paul's ministry described in 16:10 - 18:18 were all in Macedonia and Greece.

**20:3** See 13:45; 14:2,5,19.

**20:4** "Derbe" - 16:20,21.

**20:5** "Us" - 16:10.

**20:6** "Days of Unleavened Bread" - Ex 12:17-20; Lev 23:4-8.

**20:7** They met together on Sunday to observe the Lord's Supper, instead of on the old Jewish Sabbath (see also 1 Cor 16:2). This was fitting because it was the day the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, and brought the dawn of a new age.

**20:10** See 9:40,41; Luke 6:11-15; 8:49-55; John 11:43,44; 1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34,35.

**20:15** Miletus was a port about 50 kilometers south of Ephesus.

**20:16** "Pentecost" - 2:1-4; Lev 23:15-21.

**20:17** "Elders" - 14:23.

**20:18-36** Paul was an example of what a servant of Christ should be, and was set forth by God Himself for our instruction (Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 2 Thess 3:8,9; 1 Tim 1:16). He did not speak these words to the elders to show his own greatness,

but to try to show what they as elders should be. He well knew what he was, and that he had nothing to boast about in himself (Rom 7:18; 1 Cor 3:7; 2 Cor 2:5,6; 1 Tim 1:15). **20:19** Is it possible for a humble man to know that he is humble? Evidently. At least he may know that he has behaved in a humble way.

"With many tears" - v 31; 2 Cor 2:4; 11:28,29; Ps 126:5,6; Luke 19:41.

**20:20,21** At whatever cost to himself he was determined that every person would have a chance to hear Christ's gospel. If they did not come to public meetings he went to them. He preached always the two essentials for salvation - repentance and faith in Christ (which is really but one essential - true faith is linked inseparably with repentance). On repentance see 2:38; 17:30; Matt 3:2; 4:17; Luke 13:1-5; 24:47.

**20:22,23** See 21:1,10,11.

**20:24** Here we see one of the secrets of the great success of this man of God. He practiced Matt 10:38; Luke 9:23; 14:26,27. And he had one great goal in life - to finish what God had given him to do and to win the prize at the end - 1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 3:12-

25 "And now, look, I know that all of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I call you as witnesses this day, that I *am* innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not hesitated to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Therefore take care about yourselves, and about all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will arise and speak distorted things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and

day with tears.

32 "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or clothing. 34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 I showed you in every way how that by labouring like this you ought to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

36 And when he had said this, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept many *tears*, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he

14; 2 Tim 4:7,8. His work was to proclaim and explain the grace of God to everyone he could reach (Eph 3:2,7; 2 Tim 1:9-11). Comforts, conveniences, ease, pleasures, the things that people in general hold dear, even life itself, were as nothing to him as he pursued his goal. His power for all this is seen in Col 1:29.

**20:25** He felt his work in that part of the world was completed, and he planned to go elsewhere (19:21; Rom 15:23,24). Observe that "preaching the kingdom" is the same ministry as "testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (v 24).

**20:26,27** See 18:6; Ezek 33:7-9. Paul was a great evangelist, but he was not satisfied to preach the bare facts of the gospel and move on. And he did not hold back any truth because of the fear of men or desire for their approval (v 20; Gal 1:10).

**20:28** The leaders of the church there (Greek "episkopous") were made such by the Holy Spirit. These are the only leaders in any church who deserve the name, and only such can successfully fill the office - which is to be true shepherds of Christ's sheep (John 21:16; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 5:2-4). If churches choose their own leaders without the guidance of the Holy Spirit they will have to suffer the consequences - and the consequences will not be good.

"Church" - notes at Matt 16:18. In this verse Jesus is called God - God bought the Church with "His own blood" - the blood of Jesus (1 Cor 6:19,20; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18,19). Other references to Christ's deity are at Phil 2:6; Luke 2:11.

**20:29** "Wolves" - Matt 7:15; John 10:12. Paul means false teachers who will try to tear the church to pieces (Rom 16:17,18; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Pet 2:1).

**20:30** It is not enough for church leaders to watch for false teachers coming from outside. Inside churches, too, there will be men who want followers for themselves, not for Christ. To get followers they are willing to pervert the truth of God, because their own ego is more important to them than truth.

**20:31** Verse 19. Faithful servants of Christ

love the truth, and must warn God's people about teachers who would distort it. Jesus and His apostles did this repeatedly (Matt 7:15; 24:4,5; 2 Cor 11:13-15; 1 John 2:18,19; Jude 3,4).

**20:32** The "word of grace" is what we have in the gospel of Christ.

"Build you up" - Eph 4:11-13,16,29; 2 Tim 3:16,17; 1 Pet 2:1,2; 2 Pet 2:18; Jude 20.

"Inheritance" - 26:18; Rom 8:16,17; 1 Cor 6:9; Eph 1:11,14; 5:5; Col 1:12; 3:24; Heb 1:14; 1 Pet 1:4; Rev 21:7.

"Sanctified" - John 17:17-19; Rom 8:15,16; 1 Cor 1:2,30; 6:11; Eph 5:26.

**20:33** He well knew the dangers he wrote of in 1 Tim 6:6-10. Compare Phil 4:10-13.

**20:34** See 18:3.

**20:35** These words of Jesus are not in any of the Gospels, but He always showed this principle in His life and ministry (Jesus did many things and said many things that are not written down - John 21:25). See His attitude toward the poor and helpless in Matt 9:36; 11:5; 19:21; Luke 4:18; 6:20; 11:41; 14:13; John 5:6-8 (most of His miracles were performed on the poor). He gave all that He was and all that He had with no desire to receive anything from those He helped. Compare Matt 20:28; John 10:11.

Paul followed His example - 1 Cor 9:12-17; 2 Cor 12:15. He was not like many today who think "godliness" is a means to financial gain (1 Tim 6:5), and only want what they think is the blessing of piling up money or possessions for themselves (compare John 12:6). Such people have never understood that Christianity in action is not seeing how much we can get for ourselves, but how much we can give to others. Have we learned even this most basic principle given by the Lord Jesus Himself? See notes and references on giving at 2 Cor 9:15.

**20:37** They knew that there was no exaggeration in his words, that he had given his time, his strength, his money, his talents, and himself for them. Their tears now testify to their love.

spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

**21** And it came about after we had left them and sailed away, *that* we came on a straight course to Coos, and the following *day* to Rhodes, and from there to Patara, 2 and finding a ship sailing across to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set out. 3 Now when we saw Cyprus, we left it on the left hand and sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload her freight. 4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They said to Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. 5 And when we had completed those days, we departed and went on our way. And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, until *we were* out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. 6 And when we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished *our* voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and greeted the brethren and stayed with them one day. 8 And the next *day* we who were accompanying Paul left and came to in Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 And this man had four daughters, virgins, who prophesied.

10 And as we stayed on *there* many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And when he had come to us, he took

**21:4** God's Spirit gave them great concern for Paul and probably revealed to them the persecution he would face there. But Paul was compelled by the same Spirit to go to Jerusalem (20:22).

**21:5** See 20:36.

**21:8** "Philip", "seven" - 6:5; 8:5-40. He is called the "evangelist" to distinguish him from Philip the apostle (1:13).

**21:9** Other women in the Bible experienced the gift of prophecy - Ex 15:20; Jud 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Neh 6:14; Isa 8:3; Luke 2:36. Four in one family was surely an unusual thing, and testified to the good influence Philip (and no doubt his wife) had on them.

**21:10** See 11:27.

**21:11** He did not tell Paul that the Holy Spirit was commanding him not to go to Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself (20:22). The Spirit through Agabus told Paul exactly what was going to happen, so that Paul might be prepared for it.

**21:12** Verse 4.

**21:13** See 20:24.

**21:16** "Cyprus" - 13:4-12.

**21:17** At this time they brought the gifts of money from other churches (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4).

**21:18** Jam 15:13.

**21:19** See 15:4. Jews called all other people

Paul's belt, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit: 'So the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

12 And when we heard these things, both we and those from that place, begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we kept quiet, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

15 And after those days we took our baggage and went up to Jerusalem. 16 *Some* of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, whose guests we would be.

17 And when we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the following *day* Paul went with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had greeted them, he declared in detail what things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it* they glorified the Lord, and said to Paul, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe. And they are all zealous for the Law. 21 And they have been told about you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling *them* that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, or walk according to the customs. 22 What

(except Samaritans) "Gentiles."

**21:20** These were Jews who had received Christ as the Messiah of Israel, been baptized into His name, and had become Christians. But they still loved the law of Moses revealed in the Old Testament and tried to follow it even in the observances of rituals, "clean" and "unclean" foods, feast days, etc. They had not yet understood that these things were mere shadows, types and pictures of spiritual realities in Christ - Matt 5:17; Col 2:17; Heb 10:1. (One purpose of the letter to the Hebrews was to show this and to teach that the whole old covenant was no longer in force. But this letter had not been written at this time.)

**21:21** This accusation was false. Paul did not forbid Jewish Christians to circumcise their children or to follow the law. He did tell them and everyone else that salvation cannot come by the law (13:39; Rom 3:28; Gal 2:15,16). And he did teach Gentile Christians that they did not need to follow the customs and rituals of the Jews (Gal 5:1; 5:15; Col 2:16,17). But the most important aspects of the law - its ethics, morality, and righteousness - he taught should be fulfilled in every believer whether Jew or Gentile (Rom 8:4).

**21:22-24** They suggested a way in which Paul could show that he was not in opposi-

will be *the consequences*? The crowds will certainly come together, for they will hear that you have come. 23 Therefore do what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow. 24 Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads. And everyone will know that those things which they were told about you are nothing, but *that* you yourself walk in an orderly way and keep the Law. 25 Concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written, *and* decided, that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled *animals*, and from sexual immorality."

26 Then Paul took the men and, the next day, purified himself with them and entered the temple to make known the completion of the days of purification, when an offering would be made for each of them. 27 And when the seven days were almost over, the Jews from *the province of Asia* saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people and took hold of him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere against the people, and the Law, and this place. And furthermore *he has* also brought Greeks into the temple and polluted this holy place." 29 For previously they had seen with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed Paul had brought into the temple.

30 And the whole city was agitated, and the people ran together. And they took Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. 31 And as they set about to kill him, news came to the commander of the *Roman* troops that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

tion to these Jewish believers. The "vow" was probably the same that Paul himself had previously made – the Nazirite vow. See 18:18.

**21:25** See 15:20,29. They were not informing Paul of something he did not know; they were assuring him that they would not demand that Gentile believers keep the law of Moses.

**21:26** This purification would involve reporting to the priests at the temple and having holy water sprinkled on him. The offering for each of the four men is given in Num 6:14,15. Paul himself was not now making a vow. All the offerings and sacrifices of the Old Testament spoke of Christ. He was the reality of which they were the pictures (see note at Lev 1:2). Since these four men were Christians they must have known that it was by the sacrifice of Christ alone that their sins were taken away. If they did not, can we doubt that Paul told them so very clearly? In all this affair Paul was acting according to his own words in 1 Cor 9:19-23. He was

32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

33 Then the commander approached and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains, and asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some in the crowd cried out one thing, some another, and when he could not find out the truth because of the uproar, he commanded him to be carried into the barracks. 35 And when he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the people. 36 For the crowds of people kept following, crying out, "Away with him!"

37 And as Paul was about to be taken into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?"

He said, "Can you speak Greek? 38 Are you not that Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led four thousand cutthroats out into the wilderness?"

39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city. And I ask you to let me speak to the people."

40 And when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs, and gestured with *his* hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

**22** "Men, brethren and fathers, hear my defense *which I* now *make* to you."

2 And when they heard him speaking to them in the Hebrew tongue, they kept even more silent. And he said, 3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the exact

showing love and humility to those he hoped to win to higher and better truth.

**21:27** "Asia" – 18:19; 19:1,8,9; 20:19.

**21:29** Of course Paul had not brought the Gentile Trophimus into the temple. He would not thus offend the Jews he was trying to win.

**21:31** Jerusalem was then ruled by the Romans.

**21:36** See 22:22; Luke 23:18; John 15:18-21.

**21:39** "No insignificant city" – Tarsus was the capital city of the province of Cilicia in southern Asia Minor. It was a commercial center with an enthusiasm for education and philosophy which surpassed that of Athens (according to a historian in ancient times).

**21:40** "Hebrew dialect" – possibly Aramaic, a language similar to Biblical Hebrew and spoken by the Jews in Palestine in those days. Sometimes it was called "Hebrew" because the Hebrews spoke it.

**22:1** See 7:2.

**22:3** "Gamaliel" – 5:34-40. "Zealous" –



manner of the Law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as all of you are this day. 4 And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering up to prisons both men and women; 5 as also the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify for me. From them I received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring those who were there bound to Jerusalem, to be punished.

6 "And it came about that as I travelled, and had come near to Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light around me. 7 And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying

Phil 3:4-6.

**22:4,5** See 8:1,3; 9:1,2.

**22:6-13** 9:3-18.

**22:10** "What shall I do, Lord?" – this question is not recorded in chapter 9. It speaks of Paul's submission to the Lordship of Jesus, something that began on the day of his conversion and was seen in him throughout his life. He never tried to receive Christ as Saviour and not as Lord. Today it seems that there are many who are trying to do this, but the author of these notes believes that such a thought would have been far from Paul's mind or the minds of the original apostles and disciples.

Jesus is one magnificent person – the Christ, the son of man, the Son of God, the incarnation of Jehovah God, Saviour, and Lord. When a repenting sinner comes to Him, he (or she) may have had only a little instruction about any of these facts about Him, and one or another of them may be uppermost in his mind (to be saved it is not necessary to know much theology), but he cannot deliberately reject any of them and hope to have a true faith in Christ. To receive this wonderful person surely means to receive Him as He is, and all that He is – though we may know little enough who He is when we receive Him, and will spend the rest of our lives trying to understand all that He is and what it means to fully obey and follow Him.

In this verse we see that Paul recognized Jesus as Lord, and so he recognized also that Jesus had the right to tell him what to do, and he waited for orders. This is the only way to a true Christian life. Consider the following references:

*Matt 4:17.* One of the things that every sinner needs to repent of is his or her rebellion against the Lordship of Christ. And how can anyone enter His kingdom without submitting to the King? Likewise He is the Head and Lord of the Church which is His body. How can anyone be baptized by the Holy Spirit into this body – 1 Cor 12:12,13 – while rejecting the Lordship of Christ in his heart?

*Matt 7:21.* The will of the Father surely involves our submitting to Jesus as Lord – Phil 2:9-11.

*Matt 16:24-26.* Surely denying oneself and

to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

8 "And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

9 "And those who were with me certainly saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of him who spoke to me. 10 And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise, and go into Damascus. There it will be told you about all the things which you are appointed to do.'

11 And when I could not see because of the glory of that light, I came into Damascus, led by the hand by those who were with me.

taking up the cross to follow Jesus involves denying one's lordship over self and submitting to Him as Lord.

*Mark 10:17-27.* To the young man who came to Him asking about eternal life Jesus indicated that he had to submit to His authority and set out to obey Him, that real faith would not let anything stand in the way of his following Christ. And Jesus was speaking about entering the kingdom of God – v 23, and being saved – v 26,27.

*Luke 6:46* and *Matt 7:24.* Can we think they are saved people who are foolish enough to ignore or reject Jesus' teachings and build on sand – *Matt 7:26?*

*Luke 14:26,27,33.* If we are not His disciples, can we dare to think we know Him as Saviour?

*John 1:10-12.* Verses 10,11 present Jesus as the Creator and Lord of the world, and v 12 speaks of receiving Him as such. This fact is often neglected when using v 12.

*John 8:24.* Jesus is saying He is the incarnation of Jehovah, the Lord of the universe, and that to be saved the Jews had to receive Him as such.

*John 10:4,14,27.* Jesus says that His sheep recognize Him as their shepherd – that is, their Lord and Owner – and they follow Him. If they do not they are not His sheep.

*John 14:15.* If we do not love Jesus, can we vainly imagine that we are saved people – 1 Cor 16:22? And if we do love Him we will obey Him – that is, submit to His Lordship over us.

*Acts 2:36-38.* Peter tells the Jews that they must repent of their rejection of Jesus as Lord and Christ and receive Him as such. Baptism was – and surely still is – an indication of this. It indicates death to the old life and being raised to a new life under the Lordship of Christ. People should not be baptized without understanding this.

*Acts 5:32.* Can we think we will be saved without the Holy Spirit, or that we can receive the Holy Spirit without submitting to God's Son – Rom 8:9?

*Acts 16:31.* The jailer was not told to believe in the Saviour Jesus Christ but in the Lord Jesus Christ, and can we think that real faith in Him can be born in the heart that will not submit to Him? And is not

12 "And a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, having a good testimony among all the Jews who lived *there*, 13 came to me, and

believing in Him and receiving Him the same thing, so that they who believe in the Lord receive the Lord – John 1:12?

*Rom 1:5.* Observe that once again obedience and faith are linked together. Indeed we cannot have one without the other. Compare 2 Thess 1:8; Rom 6:17. The Holy Spirit gives an obedient heart to those He gives faith to. We are not saved by obedience, we are saved by faith – the kind of faith that begins to make us obedient. Any other kind of faith is dead. Compare James 2:14-26.

*Rom 6:16-23.* Paul is saying that every person is a slave to what he obeys. If we submit to sin we are sin's servants; if we submit to God we are His servants. The one way leads to death; the other way leads to righteousness and life. Does not obeying the teaching the apostles gave plainly involve the Lordship of Jesus Christ over us? How can we be slaves of God and not recognize Christ as our Lord?

*Rom 8:14.* Does not God's Spirit always lead us to submit to the Lordship of Christ? To ask the question is to answer it. And is Paul not saying that only those who are led by God's Spirit are saved people?

*Rom 10:9.* Can we think of confessing Jesus as Lord and rejecting in our hearts His Lordship over us? Can we imagine that this is the way of salvation? Is it not an act of hypocrisy instead? And observe that Paul is speaking of the basic matter of salvation.

*Rom 14:9.* Will He not begin to fulfill this purpose in everyone who comes to Him in faith?

*Eph 2:10* and *Phil 1:6.* Surely a part of the good work God has started in believers is to give them a heart to submit to the Lordship of Christ and to do the good works He has appointed to us.

*Phil 2:10,11.* Surely God causes this to happen in all those whom He calls to Himself to be His people.

*Col 2:6.* The Colossians received Jesus as Lord. This is the faith that was taught them and which they received. Surely all true believers follow their steps.

*1 Thess 1:9,10.* Here is an example showing what real conversion is. And can we think that any kind of true service to God is possible without receiving Jesus as Lord?

*Heb 5:9.* Here we are plainly told that eternal salvation comes to those who obey Christ; by which it may be judged that saving faith and obedience to Christ go together. When God grants faith to anyone He gives at the same time an obedient heart. See Heb 8:10; Ezek 36:26,27; etc.

*1 Peter 1:2.* Observe that the purpose in God's choice of people, and the purpose of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing them to Christ, is that they might obey Jesus Christ. Notice too that here obedience is

stood *there*, and said to me, Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And that same moment I saw him.

14 "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has

put before "sprinkling by His blood."

*1 Peter 4:17* – Peter points out that the "gospel of God" is something to be obeyed and that there is a fearful judgment coming on those who do not obey it.

*1 John 2:4-6.* In the light of this, can we think that true and saving knowledge of Jesus is possible without having a heart to obey Him?

*Rev 3:20.* Observe in v 14 that He does not present Himself to this church as the Saviour, but as the "Ruler of God's creation" – v 14. This fact too is often neglected when using v 20. It is as Lord and King that He stands outside the door and knocks. And it is as such that He must be received. When He comes in all that He is – Lord, Saviour, King, etc – comes in at the same time. We cannot consciously receive Him as Saviour and reject Him as Lord and King. And the more conscious we are of receiving the whole wonderful person and all that He is, the better it will be for our spiritual life.

Are any other Scriptures necessary to show that repenting and coming in faith to Jesus Christ involves receiving Him as both Saviour and Lord?

I am not saying that everyone who comes to Him is well instructed in this or is fully conscious of it. Nor am I saying that after believing we all obey Him perfectly in everything, or that we never rebel against Him. We all fail in many ways, including this way (James 3:2). But I am saying that when individuals really turn in faith to Him, God does a wonderful work in their minds and hearts (the new birth), immediately He gives the Holy Spirit – the very Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ – to live in them, and this enables them to see who Jesus is and to receive Him as Saviour and submit to Him as Lord.

The person who wants to do the one without doing the other is on very dangerous ground. It is the enemies of Jesus, not His friends, who say "We don't want this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14).

Those who are spiritually the children of Abraham (Rom 4:16) will do as Abraham did – By faith Abraham. . . obeyed" (Hebrews 11:8. See also James 2:14,17,20-24).

The New Testament everywhere teaches that salvation is by grace through faith alone. It also teaches that God saves us to make us the sheep of His pasture and obedient to Him, and that any so-called faith which refuses to submit to Jesus as Lord is not true faith at all. It is presumption. True faith, the faith that is a gift of God, is not a passive thing that merely receives; it is a powerful force that always produces action, the action of obedience to Christ. I believe that the weakness of preaching about this matter is partly responsible for the weakness and superficiality we see in many churches.

**22:14-16** These words are not recorded in

chosen you, that you might know his will, and see that Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

17 "And it came about that when I had come again to Jerusalem, as I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance, 18 and saw him saying to me, 'Hurry, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning me.'

19 "And I said, 'Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue those who believed in you. 20 And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, consenting to his death, and watched the clothing of those who killed him.'

21 "And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'"

22 And they listened *to him* until this word, and *then* raised their voices and said, "Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for it is not right that he should live."

23 And as they cried out and threw off *their* clothes, and flung dust into the air, 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he must be investigated by whipping that he might know why they cried out so against him. 25 And as they bound him with *leather*

straps, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to whip a man who is a Roman *citizen*, and not condemned?"

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman *citizen*."

27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman *citizen*?" He said, "Yes." 28 And the commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this freedom."

And Paul said, "But I was born *free*."

29 Then immediately those who were going to investigate him left him, and the commander also was afraid, after he found out that he was a Roman *citizen*, and because he had bound him.

30 On the next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and placed him before them.

**23** And Paul, looking intently at the council, said, "Men, brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall, for do you sit to judge me according to the Law, and command me to be struck contrary to the Law?"

chapter 9. The "Righteous One" is a very fitting name for Jesus - 3:14.

**22:15** See 1:8.

**22:16** Notes on baptism at 2:38; Matt 3:2; Mark 16:16. In Ananias' words we can see that it is the visible symbol of inner cleansing from sin. This inner cleansing is by the blood of Christ - Heb 9:14.

**22:17-21** This event is not recorded in chapter 9. It probably occurred sometime during his visit there shortly after his conversion (9:26-30).

**22:20** See 7:57 - 8:1. In the Christian meaning of the word a martyr is a person who is put to death because of his (or her) witness for the truth.

**22:21** Gal 2:7,8.

**22:22** See 19:36. Here is another example of the Jewish prejudice against other peoples which was common in those times. They considered themselves superior to other peoples and did not want the "Gentiles" to be considered on an equality with themselves. Injustice, violence, threats and even murder were tools to maintain their prejudice.

**22:24** See 5:40; 16:22,23; Matt 27:26.

**22:25-28** See 16:37,38. Paul saw no reason why he should endure another unjust beating.

**22:28** At this time in Rome's history there was this strange custom of selling citizenship (with all its advantages) to those who could afford it.

**22:30** "Council" - the Sanhedrin - Matt 5:22.

**23:1** "Conscience" - this is a word Paul used altogether 23 times in his speeches and letters recorded in the New Testament. It is used only nine times in other parts of the New Testament. Some important references are Rom 2:15; 1 Tim 1:5,19; 3:9; 4:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Titus 1:15; Heb 9:9,14; 10:22; 1 Pet 3:16.

Conscience is an inner faculty which judges what is right and wrong. It is an inner voice which can speak in alarm when an individual does something contrary to its judgments, or be calm and clear when it judges behavior to be correct. Paul insisted on the importance of having a "good" conscience (1 Tim 1:19). In 24:16 and 2 Cor 1:12 he gives one of the principles he always followed. Even when he was persecuting the church he maintained a good conscience (26:9; Phil 3:6). He thought that what he was doing was right (26:9. Compare John 16:2).

This shows that conscience is not infallible and can make serious errors. It needs to be instructed by the Word of God. See also the note at Heb 9:14.

**23:2** This Ananias, an evil and greedy man, became the Jewish high priest about 48 AD. Paul's denial of any wrong doing enraged him.

**23:3** "Whitewashed wall" - compare Matt 23:27; Ezek 13:10-12. Ananias was murdered some year after this. Striking Paul

4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest. For it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.'"

6 But when Paul perceived that some were Sadducees, and the others Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men, brethren! I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I am being judged concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead." 7 And when he had said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, *and* no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge both.

9 And there arose a loud outcry, and the scribes *who were* on the Pharisees' side got up and disputed, saying, "We find no evil in this man. And if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." 10 And when a great dissension arose, the commander, fearing that Paul might be pulled in pieces by them, ordered the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the barracks.

11 And the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, Paul. For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must be a witness at Rome also."

12 And when daylight came, some of the Jews formed a gang and bound themselves by an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. 13 And those who made this conspiracy were more than forty *in number*. 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves by a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. 15 So now you, *together* with the council, indicate to the commander that he should bring him down to you tomorrow, as though you would

enquire more accurately concerning him. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near *here*."

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him*, and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him."

18 So he took him and brought *him* to the commander, and said, "Paul, the prisoner, called me and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you."

19 Then the commander took him by the hand, withdrew *with him* privately, and asked *him*, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they would enquire more accurately about him. 21 But do not be persuaded by them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have bound themselves by an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink until they have killed him. And they are now ready, looking for a message from you."

22 So the commander let the young man leave, and ordered him, "Do not tell anyone that you have told me these things."

23 And he called two centurions and said, "Get ready two hundred soldiers and seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea tonight at nine o'clock. 24 And provide animals to set Paul on, and take him safely to Felix the governor."

25 And he wrote a letter like this:

26 Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

27 This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them. Then I came with a troop and rescued him, since I understood that he

was contrary to the law of God because the law did not permit punishment before guilt was proved.

**23:5** It would seem from this either that Paul's eyes were bad, or that Ananias was not wearing his robes of office, or that he was not presiding over the meeting in the usual place (the meeting had been hastily called - 22:30). Paul quotes Ex 22:28.

**23:6** Here Paul used the wisdom God gave him to cause a division in the ranks of his enemies. He had been raised a Pharisee (Phil 3:5. Note at Matt 3:7), and the high priest and some other members of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees.

**23:7** Sometimes religious disputes are the most violent of all.

**23:11** "The Lord stood by him" - any trouble is a blessing in disguise if it brings the Lord Jesus near.

"Take courage" - 18:9,10.

"Rome" - 19:21.

**23:12-35** From the time of his conversion the Jews had been plotting to kill Paul (9:23-25,28-30; 14:19; 17:5). They never did succeed in doing so. God knows how to protect His servants until it is time for them to go to be with Himself. No enemy can take the life of any of them as long as God has something for them to do on earth. For Paul's safety God used his nephew (v 16. This is the only reference in the New Testament to him or to Paul's sister). God used also the Roman centurion (v 17), the Roman commander (v 18), 200 ordinary soldiers, 70 horsemen, 200 other soldiers with spears (v 23), and the Roman governor of Judea (v 34). If there had been need He would have sent an army of angels from heaven. **23:26** Felix became the Roman governor of Judea in 52 AD. He was a wicked, cruel and lustful man.

is a Roman *citizen*. 28 And when I wanted to find out the reason why they accused him, I brought him to their council. 29 I saw that he was accused concerning questions about their law, but there was no charge against him deserving of death or bonds. 30 And when I was told that the Jews were waiting in ambush for the man, immediately I sent *him* to you, and also ordered his accusers to tell in your presence what *they have* against him. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul at night and brought *him* to Antipatris. 32 On the next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. 33 When *the horsemen* arrived in Caesarea they delivered the letter to the governor and also placed Paul before him. 34 And when the governor read *the letter*, he asked what province he was from. And when he found out that *he was* from Cilicia, 35 he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded that he be kept in Herod's government quarters.

**24** And five days later Ananias the high priest came down with the elders, and *with* a certain advocate *named* Tertullus. They informed the governor *of the charges* against Paul. 2 And when *Paul* was called in, Tertullus began the accusation, saying, "seeing that because of you we enjoy much peace, and under your providential care very worthy deeds are done for this nation, 3 we everywhere and always receive *this* with complete gratitude, most noble Felix. 4 But so that I might not be more tedious to you, I request you in your kindness to listen to a few words from us.

5 "For we have found this man a plague, and one who stirs up rebellion among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 Also he has gone about to desecrate the temple. We seized him, and would have judged him according to our law, 7 but the commander Lysias came and very forcibly took *him* out of our hands, 8 commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you can understand all these things of which we

**24:1** See 23:2. "Advocate" – or "orator"

**24:5** "Plague" – 16:20; 17:6. Once again a peacemaker is accused of being a source of trouble. In fact it was Paul's opponents who caused the trouble.

"Sect of the Nazarenes" – 2:22; Matt 2:23. He meant that Paul and people of like mind had rejected the truth of the Jews' religion to follow Jesus, whom they considered a blasphemer and a heretic.

**24:14** "The Way" – 9:2; 22:4. The Law and the Prophets meant the whole Old Testament (Matt 5:17; Luke 24:27). Observe that Paul says he believed *all of it*. This is a very

accuse him."

9 And the Jews also gave assent, saying that these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after the governor had gestured to him to speak, answered, "Because I know that you have been a judge to this nation for many years, I answer for myself the more cheerfully, 11 because you can find out that no more than twelve days have *passed* since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 And they did not find me in the temple disputing with anyone, or stirring up the people, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 15 And *I* have the hope toward God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the righteous and unrighteous. 16 And I take pains in this: Always to have a clear conscience toward God and men.

17 "Now, after many years, I came to my nation to bring a donation for the poor, and offerings. 18 At which *time* some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, with neither a mob, nor an uproar. 19 They ought to have been here before you to object, if they had anything against me. 20 Or else let these who *are here* say if they have found any wrongdoing in me when I stood before the council, 21 unless it was for this one statement that I cried out, standing among them: 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'"

22 And when Felix heard these things, having a very accurate knowledge of *the* Way, he postponed *things*, and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will determine your case more exactly." 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul *under guard*, and to let *him* have *some* freedom, and that he should not prevent any of his friends from performing service *for him* or visiting him.

24 And after some days, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, *and* he sent for

significant statement. If we are wise we will do likewise. "Sect" – or "heresy".

**24:15** "Resurrection" – Dan 12:2; John 5:28,29. Some of the men (vs 1,9) must have been Pharisees if they believed in the resurrection of the dead (23:8).

**24:16** Note at 23:1.

**24:17** Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4.

**24:18,19** See 21:26-29.

**24:20,21** See 22:30 – 23:10.

**24:22** Verse 14; 21:31; 23:23-26.

**24:24** Drusilla was a Jewess and the third wife of Felix. Though Felix was the most powerful man in the country and was going

Paul, and listened to him *speaking* about faith in Christ. 25 And as *Paul* reasoned concerning righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come, Felix trembled and answered, "Go your way for now. When I have a convenient time, I will call for you." 26 He hoped also that Paul would give him money to release him. Therefore he sent for him the more often, and talked with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came in the place of Felix, and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favour, left Paul imprisoned.

**25** Now three days after Festus came to the province, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the leaders of the Jews informed him against Paul, and pleaded with him, 3 asking the favour against *Paul*, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, *while they* waited in ambush along the way to kill him. 4 But Festus replied that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would go *there* soon. 5 "Therefore," he said, "Let those among you who are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there is any wickedness in him."

6 And when he had stayed among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, *he* commanded Paul to be brought. 7 And when he had come, the Jews who came down from Jerusalem stood around, and brought many serious charges against Paul, which they could not prove.

8 And he answered for himself, "I have not in any way offended against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar."

9 But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favour,

to decide Paul's case, Paul did not hesitate to tell him about the Lord Jesus Christ. Compare 20:24; Matt 10:18.

**24:25** Felix completely lacked righteousness and self-control (23:26. Notes on righteousness at Matt 5:6,20), and he was facing God's judgment (17:31). Paul the prisoner dared to go right to the heart of this ruler's sin and need. Felix was like so many in every era – he wanted to put off the day of decision. Does a "convenient" time ever come for such people who remain in rebellion against God?

**24:26** Treasure in heaven was offered to him, but he, like so many in authority, was only after what he could get on earth. On bribes see Ex 23:8; 1 Sam 8:3; 12:3; Ps 15:5; 26:10; Isa 33:15. How often in this way people throw away something of eternal value for passing trifles.

**24:27** Does it not seem strange that God permitted the greatest of the apostles to be confined for two years? Compare 12:2-7. We may be sure Paul's stay in prison was not wasted. He had much time for prayer, for witnessing to fellow prison-

ers, and for writing letters. answered Paul and said, "Will you go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged about these things before me?"

10 Then said Paul, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you very well know. 11 For if I am doing wrong, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not ask to avoid death. But if there is nothing to any of these accusations they bring against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "Have you appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you will go."

13 And after some days king Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. 14 And after they had been there many days, Festus set Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a certain man left imprisoned by Felix, 15 about whom the chief priests and the Jewish elders informed me when I was in Jerusalem, asking *me to make* a judgment against him.

16 "I replied to them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand anyone over to death before the one accused has *seen his* accusers face to face, and had opportunity to answer for himself concerning the crime charged against him. 17 Therefore, when they had come here, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. 18 When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him about such things as I had supposed, 19 but had some questions against him about their own religion, and about a certain Jesus, who had died, who, Paul declares, is alive. 20 And because

ers, and for writing letters.

**25:1** We know little about Festus apart from what is here in Acts. He became governor sometime about 60 AD and died less than two years later.

**25:3** See 23:12,21.

**25:7** See 24:13.

**25:10** Caesar was the Roman emperor. Rome ruled Judea and the Roman governor was the judge in criminal cases.

**25:11** At any stage in the trial of a Roman citizen he had the right to demand that his case be heard before the emperor in Rome, and that the emperor himself should give the verdict (v 21). Paul now did this because he saw that there was little chance of a just decision. Felix wanted to please the Jews. Also Paul knew that the Lord was sending him to Rome (23:11).

**25:13** This Agrippa was the son of the Herod Agrippa of 12:1. He was king over some areas to the north of Judea. Berenice was his younger sister.

**25:19** Festus had no understanding of the gospel, was ignorant of the most important issues facing mankind.

I was in doubt about such questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem and be judged there about these matters. 21 But when Paul appealed to be kept for the decision of Augustus, I ordered him to be kept *here* until I could send him to Caesar."

22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would also like to hear the man myself."

"Tomorrow", Festus said, "You will hear him."

23 And the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp and entered the place for hearing *the case, along* with the commanders and leading men of the city, Paul was brought in at the order of Festus. 24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa, and everyone here present with us, you see this man about whom all the Jewish people have entreated me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he himself had done nothing worthy of death, and that he had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him *there*. 26 *But* I have nothing certain about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after *this* investigation takes place I might have something to write. 27 For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner, and not indicate the charges against him."

**26** Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out a hand and answered for himself: 2 "I count myself happy, King Agrippa, because I will answer for myself this day before you concerning everything I am accused of by the Jews, 3 especially *because I know* you are an expert in all the customs and questions existing among the Jews. Therefore I ask you to hear me patiently.

4 "All the Jews know my manner of life from my youth, which in the beginning was *spent* in my own nation at Jerusalem. 5 They knew me from the

**25:24** See 21:36; 22:22.

**26:4-6** See 22:2,3; 23:6.

**26:7** The hope he refers to is the hope of the resurrection of the righteous - Dan 12:2; John 5:28,29.

**26:8** God who made the worlds and put man on the earth can experience no difficulty in raising the dead. Observe again how the teaching of the resurrection was always at the heart of the gospel of Christ as His apostles preached it (1:3).

**26:9** See 22:3-5; 1 Tim 1:13. When he was persecuting the church Paul actually thought he was doing the right thing and defending the true faith. Compare John 16:2.

**26:10** See 8:1-3; 9:1,2; 22:4.

**26:11** Note on blasphemy at Matt 9:3. This is the only place where Paul is said to have tried to make Christians blaspheme. He does

beginning, if they were willing to testify, that according to the most strict sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand and am being judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. 7 To this *promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly worshipping day and night, hope to come. For the sake of this hope, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

8 "Why should you think it an incredible thing that God would raise the dead?"

9 "I indeed thought myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, 10 which I also did in Jerusalem. And I imprisoned many of the saints, having received authority from the chief priests. And when they were put to death, I gave my vote against *them*. 11 And often I punished them in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities. 12 On this *work*, while I travelled to Damascus with authority and a commission from the chief priests, 13 at midday, O king, *while* on the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who were travelling with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? *It is* hard for you to kick against the goads.'

15 "And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"And he said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for the purpose of making you a servant and a witness both of these things which you have seen and of those things I will yet reveal to you, 17 delivering you from the people, and *from* the Gentiles to whom I now send you, 18 to open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified

not say he was successful.

**26:12-15** See 9:3-5; 22:5-8.

**26:14** In the three brief accounts of Paul's conversion to Christ here (and here only) is there the mention of kicking "against the goads." In his persecution of the Christians Paul had been like a strong rebellious ox which feels the sharp point of its master's goad trying to control it. In other words, there must have been some unease in Paul's mind, some pain in his heart, at what he was doing to good men.

**26:16-18** See 9:6,15; 22:14,15,21. Here Paul gives more fully the words with which the Lord appointed him as His servant.

**26:18** Paul's work as an evangelist is clearly seen here. He was Christ's instrument to bring true enlightenment to people; to bring them out of bondage to Satan (compare

by faith in me.'

19 "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the area of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds appropriate to repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews seized me in the temple, and attempted to kill *me*. 22 Therefore, having obtained help from God, I continue to this day, witnessing to both small and great, saying nothing but the things that the prophets and Moses said would come, 23 that Christ would suffer, and that he would be the first who would rise from the dead, and would give light to the people, and to the Gentiles."

24 And as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind. Much learning is driving you insane!"

25 But he said, "I am not insane, most noble Festus, but speak words of truth and sanity. 26 For the king knows of these things, before whom I also speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him, because this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost you

John 8:33-35,44; Eph 2:1,2; 2 Tim 2:26. Note on Satan at 1 Chron 21:1); and to bring forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28; Luke 24:47) and an inheritance among God's people (20:32; Eph 1:11; Col 1:12; 1 Pet 1:4). This is the work also of every true evangelist. Notice that sanctification comes by faith in Christ – that is, God sets believers in Christ apart from all others to be His own people.

**26:19** Paul is emphasizing (as he always did) the fact that his conversion was not due to a process of reasoning or by the persuasive teaching of men, but because of a revelation from heaven (Gal 1:11,12). His whole Christian life was in obedience to that revelation.

**26:20** See 9:20-22,28. See again the emphasis on repentance, the kind of repentance that was proved by a change in life-style. See notes at Matt 3:2,8; 4:17; Luke 13:2-5. Any preacher who neglects the subject of repentance is not preaching the true gospel of Christ, and there is no lack of such preachers. And are there not many professing Christians in the churches who have never repented and who live lives little different from the people of the world?

**26:22** "Small" or "great" made no difference to Paul. He didn't cut the demands of the gospel when speaking to any kind of person.

**26:23** Luke 24:25-27,46,47. "Light" – Luke 1:78,79; 2:32; John 8:12.

**26:24** Festus was a Roman, and the

persuade me to become a Christian."

29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who are listening to me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these bonds."

30 And when he had said this, the king and the governor and Bernice and those who were seated with them, got up, 31 and when they had gone aside, *they* talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing worthy of death or imprisonment." 32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar."

**27** And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they handed Paul and some other prisoners over to a *man* named Julius, a centurion of the Regiment of Augustus. 2 And entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put out to sea, intending to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

3 And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul courteously, and permitted *him* to go to his friends to refresh himself. 4 And when we had put out to sea from there, we sailed close by Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when we had sailed across the sea of Cilicia

Romans in general believed in many gods and strange superstitions. Yet Festus thought Paul was crazy for believing in the sober truth of the resurrection of Christ (compare Mark 3:20,21). But he recognized that Paul was a very learned man. Compare 4:13. **26:25** What seems crazy to those in spiritual darkness is both true and reasonable to those whom God has brought into the light. The really crazy ones are those who go their own way in this world and do not seek for the true God, or carefully consider God's revelation of truth in Christ. See Eccl 9:3.

**26:26** Paul, seeing that Festus had no desire to believe, turned to king Agrippa in hope of winning him for Christ.

**26:28** We do not know how sincere Agrippa was. In any case, saying "almost" was not enough for him (or for anyone) to enter God's kingdom. Almost persuaded is to be still lost in sin.

**26:29** See the heart of this prisoner before the authorities and all others present – he wants them all to become believers in Christ as he was. The truth of 2 Cor 5:13-15 was powerfully at work in him.

**27:1** Italy was the country where Rome, the capital city of the Roman Empire, was located.

"We" – Luke is with Paul.

"Centurion" – a Roman military man in charge of one hundred soldiers.

**27:2** "Aristarchus" – 19:29; 20:4; Col 4:10; Philemon 24.



and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing to Italy, and he put us in it. 7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and had hardly come opposite Cnidus, the wind not allowing us to go quickly, we sailed close by Crete, opposite Salmone, 8 and, hardly getting by it, came to a place called The Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

9 Now when much time had been spent and sailing had become dangerous (because the Fast was already over), Paul advised them, 10 and said to them, "Men, I perceive that this voyage is going to result in disaster and great damage, not only to the cargo and ship, but also to our lives." 11 Nevertheless the centurion was persuaded more by the sailing master, and the owner of the ship, than by those things Paul said. 12 And because the harbour was not suitable to stay during winter, the majority advised departure from there also, if by any means they might get to Phoenix, and spend the winter there. This is a harbour of Crete, and faces toward the southwest and northwest.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had achieved their purpose, raising anchor, they sailed close by Crete. 14 But not long afterwards a violent wind, called Euroclydon, arose against the ship. 15 And when the ship was caught and could not face into the wind, we let it be driven. 16 And running close to an island called Claua, we had much work to control the lifeboat. 17 When they had taken it up, they used help and bound the ship together. And being afraid that they might fall onto the sandbanks, they lowered the sail, and so were driven by the wind. 18 And since we were violently tossed by the tempest, the next day they lightened the ship, 19 and the third day we threw out with our own hands the equipment of the ship. 20 And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay over us, all hope that we would be saved was then taken away.

21 But after a long abstinence from food Paul

**27:9** The "Fast" here refers to the Day of Atonement. See notes at Leviticus chapter 16; 23:16-32. It came between the last part of September and the first part of October. Sailors in the Mediterranean Sea considered that a dangerous time of the year for sailing, because of the possibility of bad weather. After the middle of November they considered sailing practically impossible.

**27:10** Paul was a prophet and God had revealed this to him.

**27:22-24** In other moments of crisis God encouraged Paul by some revelation or other (18:9,10; 22:17,18; 23:11).

**27:25** Paul could say this not only about that particular revelation but about all that

stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not set sail from Crete and incurred this harm and loss. 22 But now I urge you to take courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For tonight there stood by me an angel of God, to whom I belong and whom I serve, 24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must be brought before Caesar. And see, God has given you all those who are sailing with you.' 25 Therefore, men, have courage, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. 26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."

27 And when the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the sailors thought that they were drawing near some land. 28 And they took soundings and found the depth was twenty fathoms. And when they had gone a little further, they again took soundings, and found the depth fifteen fathoms. 29 Then fearing that we might fall on rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and wished for daylight. 30 And as the sailors were about to escape from the ship, having let down the lifeboat into the sea, pretending that they were dropping anchors from the prow of the ship, 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless they stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let it fall.

33 And while day was dawning, Paul urged them all to take food, saying, "This is the fourteenth day that you have waited and continued to fast and have taken nothing. 34 So I beg you to take some food for the sake of your health, for not a hair from the head of any of you will fall." 35 And when he had said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all. And when he had broken it, he began to eat. 36 Then all of them gained courage and they also took some food. 37 And altogether in the ship we were two hundred and seventy-six persons. 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw

God had revealed in the Bible. This is how he was able to endure triumphantly all the storms that came into his life. Compare 24:14; Rom 4:20,21; 2 Cor 4:13,14; 2 Tim 1:12; 4:18.

**27:27** "Adria" - the Adriatic Sea, which was between Italy, Malta, Crete, and Greece.

**27:28** "Fathoms" - a word used by sailors in measuring the depth of the sea. One fathom is slightly less than two meters.

**27:35** Blessed are those believers who can show the same trust and confidence in all the experiences of life and so be an example to others.

"Gave thanks" - Matt 14:19; Eph 5:20; 1 Thess 5:18; Lev 7:12,13; Ps 7:17;

the grain out into the sea.

39 And when daylight had come, they did not recognize the land, but observed a cove with a beach, into which they resolved, if possible, to drive the ship. 40 And when they had removed the anchors, letting *them* go into the sea, they loosened the fastenings of the rudder, raised the mainsail to the wind, and made for *the* beach. 41 And happening onto a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground. And the front part stuck fast and remained firm, but the stern was broken up by the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners so that none of them would swim out and escape. 43 But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and ordered that those who could swim should first throw *themselves into the sea* and get to land, 44 and the rest *should follow*, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And it came about that they all escaped safely to the land.

**28** And when they had escaped, they then learned that the island was called Melita. 2 And those non-Grecian people showed us no little kindness. For they kindled a fire, and gave a welcome to all of us, because of the rain that was *falling* and the cold. 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid *them* on the fire, a viper, escaping from the heat, fastened on his hand. 4 And when those people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Even though he has escaped the sea, justice does not permit *him* to live."

5 And he shook the creature off into the fire, and experienced no harm. 6 And they expected

50:14,15; 56:12.

**27:42** The soldiers were afraid they would have to endure the punishment due to any prisoners who escaped (12:19; 16:27).

**27:43** Once again God had His way of preserving the life of His servant (note at 23:12-35).

**27:44** Verses 22-25.

**28:1** "Melita" – the small island now called Malta. It lies nearly 100 kilometers south of the much larger island of Sicily.

"non-Grecian people" – see note at Rom 1:14. The inhabitants of Melita were not barbarians.

**28:4** Compare Rom 2:14,15. God has placed the idea of justice in the hearts of people everywhere. These islanders believed in exact divine retribution.

"People" – literally, "barbarians" a name the Greeks called other people even though those people might have been civilized in every way.

**28:5** Mark 16:18. This is the only case of

that he would swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after they had watched for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

7 In the same area there were fields belonging to the leading man of the island, whose name was Publius. He received us and kindly welcomed us as guests for three days. 8 And it *so* happened that the father of Publius lay sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, laid his hands on him, and healed him. 9 So when this happened, others in the island also who had diseases came and were healed. 10 *And* they showed us much respect, and when we left they loaded us down with things that were needed.

11 And after three months we sailed in a ship of Alexandria which had spent the winter at the island. Its emblem was Castor and Pollux. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed *there* for three days. 13 And from there we circled around and came to Rhegium, and a day later the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli. 14 There we found *some* brethren and were asked to stay with them for seven days. And so we proceeded toward Rome. 15 And when the brethren heard about us, from there they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and The Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the commander of the guard, but Paul was allowed to live by himself with a soldier who kept him *under guard*.

17 And three days later it came about that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. And when they had assembled, he said to them, "Men and brethren, even though I have done nothing against the people, or *the* customs of our fathers, from

this kind recorded in the New Testament.

**28:6** To them Paul seemed to have some supernatural power and in their ignorance and superstition they thought only the "gods" could exercise such powers. Compare 14:11-18.

**28:8** Mark 16:18.

**28:12** Syracuse was the chief port of the island of Sicily.

**28:13** Rhegium was on the southernmost coast of Italy. Puteoli was the chief port of southern Italy. It was near present-day Naples.

**28:14,15** "Brethren" is one of the names used in the New Testament for believers in Christ. The welcome Paul received from them near Rome cheered his heart after a long, weary and dangerous journey.

**28:16** Paul was given considerable liberty (v 30) because there were no charges against him (25:25-27; 26:31,32) and he was a Roman citizen.

**28:17** Paul wasted no time but right away

Jerusalem I was given over as a prisoner into the hands of the Romans. 18 When they examined me, they would have let *me* go, because there was no reason *found* in me for the death *penalty*. 19 But when the Jews spoke against *it*, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar; not that I had any accusation to bring against my nation. 20 Therefore, for this reason I have sent for you to see *you* and to speak with *you*, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

21 And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brethren who have come reported or said anything bad about you. 22 But we want to hear from you what you think, for as for this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

23 And when they had fixed a day for him, many came to him in *his* lodging. He explained, and testified about, the kingdom of God, speaking convincingly to them about Jesus, both from the Law of Moses and *from* the Prophets, from morning to evening. 24 And some assented to the things that were said, and some would not believe. 25 And when they disagreed among themselves, they left, after Paul had spoken one word: "Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

tried to reach the Jewish community in Rome with the gospel. See Rom 9:1-3.

**28:19** See 25:11.

**28:20** "Hope" - 23:6; 24:15; 26:6.

**28:22** "Sect" - they considered Christianity a rather disreputable sect of Judaism.

**28:23** "Kingdom of God" - 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; Matt 4:17.

"The Law. . .the Prophets" was their way of saying the whole Old Testament. See Paul's method of proclaiming the truth. He explained God's revelation, and he reasoned with them from the Scriptures. He knew that his message was both true and reasonable (27:35), and solidly based in God's Word.

**28:24** Compare Matt 10:34; John 7:12,13; 10:19-21.

**28:25-27** Isa 6:9,10; Matt 13:13-15; Rom 11:8. Notice the words "spoke the Holy Spirit." Paul believed in the full divine inspiration of the Old Testament (2 Tim 3:16). In this also he was a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 5:17,18; John 10:35). The Jews rejection of the gospel was in accordance with a prophecy in their own

26 saying,

Go to this people, and say,  
Hearing you will hear, and will not understand,  
and seeing you will see, and not perceive.

27 For the heart of this people has become fat,  
and their ears are dull of hearing,  
and they have closed their eyes  
so that they might not see with *their* eyes,  
and hear with *their* ears,  
and understand with *their* heart,  
and be converted, and be healed by me.

28 "So be it known to you that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it." 29 And when he had spoken these words, the Jews left and had a great argument among themselves.

30 And Paul lived two whole years in his own rented house, receiving all who came to him, 31 and preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with complete confidence, no one hindering him.

Scriptures.

**28:28** See 14:46-48; 18:6; 22:18,21; Rom 1:16.

**28:31** Verse 23. Again we see that with the apostles the preaching of God's kingdom and the teaching about Christ were intimately connected. Note on God's kingdom at Matt 4:17. Luke closed this brief history of the early Church with Paul in Rome. One of his aims was to show how the words of Christ in 1:8 were fulfilled. He had done what he set out to do, and his work was completed. He wrote, no doubt, before Paul stood before the Emperor to be judged.

We do not know with certainty what happened to Paul at the end of this time in Rome, and we do not need to know. Tradition says that eventually he was beheaded there. However that may be, before long Paul and all the apostles passed away and went to be with Christ. But the work of Christ, not being dependent on any one man, or group of men, goes on to this day. What Christ "began" (1:1) He still continues to do and He will complete it in due time. Happy are those who have a part in it all.