

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Acts, Part II. It is good that you have the desire to continue the study of Luke's book, Acts.

As with Part I, the lessons were selected and the intent briefly stated for each. You are quite welcome, though, to use the material to your best advantage. The text is outlined according to Don DeWelts's outline in *Acts Made Actual*. Questions are with each lesson. Some of them are answered in the comments, some from the text itself, and some you will need to work on from other sources. This book is designed to help teach you to ask your own questions. The background material from lesson one is not repeated.

The section of Acts that you are now beginning to study, chapters 13-28, records the spread of Christianity in the major parts of the Roman World. It was mostly revealed through the "adventures" of one Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the apostle. The "Church in the Uttermost Part of the Earth" is the way DeWelt described this section, surely a most excellent description of the text before you.

LESSON ONE

The Church in the Uttermost Part of the Earth (13:1- 28:31)

The First Missionary Journey
(13:1 - 14:28)

At Antioch, 13: 1-3

13 *Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

13:1 - We begin our study of this section of Acts with our "base of operations" switching from Jewish Jerusalem to Gentile Antioch, from Peter to Paul, from an ethnic religion and theology to a religion worldwide in scope and international in its theology. God had made two into one (Eph. 2), and men were slowly but inexorably coming to this understanding with the effects seen in their preaching and personal work.

We know nothing of the men Luke named except Saul and Barnabas/Joseph. We know not whether these men were all possessors of a special gift (a prophet plus a teacher), some had one gift, or even if "the teacher" was just a designation of a position that some were filling (even as we do today) with nothing of a special gift meant.

V. 2 - Two things characterized these men that seemed important to Luke: they served God, and they fasted. The word for worshipping is translated ministering (serving) in other versions (KJV, ASV, NASV, etc.). It does not mean to serve as a slave, but refers to any voluntary service to men or religious service to God.

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Fasting had been practiced for centuries, and is yet today. The O.T. day of fasting, appointed by God, was the 10th day of the 7th month, called the day of atonement. On this day, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins of the people. Five days later, an eight-day feast began, called the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a feast of celebration and fellowship.

Some Christians in the early church fasted, though no command to do so was given. Fasting seems of more value when it is voluntary, deriving its worth from the attitude of the one doing it rather than being a prescribed ritual that is (perfunctorily) observed.

The announcement of the Holy Spirit, however it was made, indicated a special assignment for Joseph/Barnabas and Saul/Paul. The men were serving, but were to do so in a special manner. They were “to be separated” in the same sense that a person marks off an object from their objects (as Paul to the apostleship, Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15). The word is also used in the Greek O.T., Lev. 20:26; Num. 8:11.

They were called to do the work of evangelization, especially to Gentiles, wherever they were, although they did not exclude the Jews. Saul will now begin to do largely what he was selected to do (9:15).

V. 3 - Just how binding the action of the Antioch church is regarding Saul and Barnabas is not clear, and thus a matter of some dispute. Since we do not know if the actions were commanded, or were just done by common consent, etc., it is difficult to decide how much or how little this example is to be followed today. It is surely doubtful that we can do everything the church did during the day of the apostles. The major thing we may be able to “restore” is the use of the apostle’s doctrine as the touchstone of our teaching. We may or may not consider their methods, etc. as anything more than “a” way to do God’s work.

We assume that the whole church sent the two out, as it is to the whole church they report when they return (14:26ff). However, it is possible that only some actually took part in the “laying-on” of hands. It should also be observed that Saul was an apostle, quite apart from this act (Gal. 1), though Barnabas was called an apostle (14:4, 14) while on this journey. The word used for “sent-off” is also used of divorce - hence, the men “split” from the church.

At Seleucia, 13:4

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

V. 4 - We assume that at least the general direction for their work was given the two men by the Holy Spirit, though it is not explicitly stated. Cyprus had already been the place of preaching, 11:19, 20.

At Salamis, 13:5

5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

V. 5 - Salamis was the major city of the island, and a sizable group of Jews lived there. Jewish synagogues were readily available to Saul, and he used them well. We remember that Barnabas was from Cyprus, and that John Mark was a relative to him.

At Paphos, 13:6-12

6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus. 7 He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas, the magician, (for that is the meaning of his name) withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith. 9 But Saul, who is also called Paul,

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filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? 11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind and unable to see for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

V. 6 - Paphos was the capital, and on the west half of the island (Salamis on the western half). An old city by the same name was eight miles south and east of this city, and famous for the worship of Venus (Aphrodite).

Bar-Jesus - Son of Jesus. His name was like that of Barnabas. He was also called Elymas, and was like many other religious men of his day (cf. Simon in Ch. 8) who made their living "advising" others.

V. 7 - **Sergius Paulus** = a proconsul, under the Roman senate. The island had formerly been (prior to 25 B.C.) under the Roman emperor, and thus a procurator served there, (as was Pontius Pilate, Felix and Festus). Gallio (ch. 18) was a proconsul. Such accuracy as this shows Luke to be a good historian. An inscription has been found with the title "proconsul" and this man's name.

We do not know whether to think Sergius Paulus was wise or not, when, though he summoned Paul and Barnabas, yet kept company with Elymas? Maybe he was "wising up"? Perhaps the influence of others in the Christian faith helped prepare the way for Barnabas and Paul. Certain it is that Luke's intention is to help us see that the gospel was being spread to everyone, more and more.

V. 8 - The term applied to Elymas is a rather broad one, including the likes of him as well as the men in Matthew 2, and Acts 8. It did not indicate, necessarily, something or someone bad, though this man was so.

Faith - Here the term was used to describe a body of truth or doctrine rather than a person's individual faith.

V. 9 - We note that Paul was described as being filled with the Holy Spirit. Since this term occurs in reference to many people, it seemingly denoted: 1) a given period of life at which time said people were used in a special way by God, or 2) it was a characterization of a life used of God (as of John the Immerser). Even the apostles, who were immersed by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, were later said to be filled (Acts 4). So it was a generic term, covering a broad spectrum of ideas. Some would hold that Paul was specially aided on this occasion, and Luke was simply describing the matter for us.

V. 10 - It was a bit unusual for an apostle to treat anyone thusly, but certainly is not too unusual for men of God, as one views the whole gamut of Bible history. Many times men of God, even as Jesus, opposed those whose lives were given over to the devil, though they rarely treated them so badly. However, see II Kings 1; 2; 6; Peter in Acts 5; etc.

As we listen to Paul addressing Elymas, we cannot but suppose that Elymas, as a Jew, knew better than to be and do as he was doing. It is possible however, to be tricked by Satan (see II Timothy 2:24-26) until the "straight paths of the Lord" become perverted (turned away, aside). May we strive daily to know the truth and so teach it as it is, not in a perverted way. Note that Elymas was designated as a "son of Jesus" but had that changed to "son of the devil". See John 8:44, Matt. 23:15, 31-33.

Elymas was full of guile, (Matt. 26:4; Mark 7:22; John 1:47, II Cor. 12:16) and villainy - one who does things 'slickly' or 'easily' as a rascal or trickster.

Straight paths of the Lord - another way to describe truth is by "straight". Note Luke 3:4,5.

V. 11 - Elymas would recover his sight, although we are not told when. As is clear in v. 12,

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the action of God through Paul resulted in the conversion of Sergius Paulus.

V. 12 - The blinding of Elymas provided a means of sight for the proconsul. Faith comes by “hearing” God’s word. Paul displayed God’s righteousness in exposing what Elymas was. Sergius Paulus could “see” the truth of which Paul had been speaking. Hence, he rejected his past life and accepted the truth in Christ.

At Perga, 13:13

13 Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem;

V. 13 - Leaving the island, “Paul and company” sailed some 180 miles to the city of Perga (the seaport was Attalia, 14:25) in Pamphylia. Here, for reasons unknown to us, John Mark left and returned to his home. It later would cause Paul and Barnabas to become angry and separate, though each would continue to work, 15:36ff. It may well be that Paul later found Mark useful, if Col. 4:10 and II Tim. 4:11 are speaking of the same person. There is no point in talking about Mark’s leaving. Luke doesn’t say why and anything is a “guess”.

QUESTIONS

1. This second major section of Acts is characterized by what points?

2. What term would best describe the church at Antioch (i.e., were they mostly Jews, Gentiles, etc.)?

3. What had Paul and Barnabas been doing there? For how long?

4. What part do you think the local assembly had in the new work of Paul and Barnabas?

5. What previous Christian work had been done on Cyprus or by people from there?

6. Did political leaders in that time have men around who claimed to “speak divinely”?

7. Do you think Paul was out of order to speak to Elymas in such an (unloving??) way? Did Jesus or John the Immerser ever use such terms?

8. What did the proconsul do when he saw the Gospel in deed as well as in word?

At Antioch of Pisidia, 13:14-52

14 But they passed on from Perga and came to Antioch of Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the

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reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." 16 So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen. 17 The god of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18 And for about forty years he bore with them in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years. 20 And after that He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21 Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king; of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' 23 Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. 24 Before his coming, John had preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

26 "Brethren, sons of family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. 27 For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning him. 28 Though they could charge him with nothing deserving death, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead; 31 and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee.' 34 And as for the fact that he raised him from

the dead, no more to return to corruption, he spoke in this way, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' 35 Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption'. 36 For David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. 38 Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 40 Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets:

41 'Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you'."

42 As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. 43 And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted what was spoken by Paul, and reviled him. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us saying 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'"

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region. 50 But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. 51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

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V. 14 - We should not overlook the matter of travel, even if Luke doesn't bother to record the rigors of the journeys (note here II Cor. 11:26,27). Many ancient historians write about the various tribesmen who lived in the area between Perga and Antioch, and around the area. One of the greatest problems Alexander the Great had was taking his army through this area. From Perga to Antioch is some 90 miles; to Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, another 100 miles - and all through mountainous terrain (the Taurus mountains lay along the coast, with another mountain range to the north). However, Antioch was a great commercial center on a major trade route that ran eastward through Iconium, and past the adjacent cities of Lystra and Derbe. Antioch was situated on a plateau, surrounded by three lakes; and was used as a fortress city by the Seleucids against the Pisidian tribesmen in the years prior to the New Testament times. It became a Roman colony under Augustus, and thus boasted of many improvements, such as a great aqueduct. We should remember that this general area was the center of the Hittite empire (1850-1200 B.C.), which figured in several episodes of Bible times (remember Uriah the Hittite?, See also Gen. 15:20; Deut. 7:1; Josh. 1:4; I Kings 10:29, II Kings 7:6; Ezra 9:1). As is evident, many Jewish people inhabited the area, and had some friends among the local populace.

V. 15 - The text describes the basic content of a synagogue service. Luke 4 seems to indicate that the reading was done in a standing position, while the teaching sitting down. This may not have been universal but local, since Paul stood (assuming he did more than just stand up where he was and then sit down).

V. 16 - Paul's opening words may indicate what seems to be true: that those present were both Jews and Gentiles (perhaps of such as Cornelius and Lydia). Whether the term "God-fearers" was inclusive of Gentile proselytes as well as those who feared God (like Cornelius) is not definite.

His address was intended both to build on and amplify their understanding of Jewish history. He tried to show that the Jesus he proclaimed was the same person to whom their prophets bore witness; that he had come as a direct fulfillment of the law rather than a destroyer of such; and that his advent was heralded by John the promised forerunner; and finally, that the great stumbling block (the crucifixion) was naught but what God had determined would take place; hence he should not be viewed in an adverse light but instead as a stepping stone to faith in the true nature of the Messiah, such acceptance resulting in redemption for anyone.

V. 17 - Israel was God's chosen, and, as such he did great things for them, lifting them up as a people in adverse circumstances and despite their ignorance and rebellion (see Exodus 6:6, Deut. 5:15, Psalms 136:10-12). What was not clear to them, but was becoming clear, was that they were not automatically saved because they were Jews, and that the law was simply a forerunner for the Gospel.

V. 18 - He could have amplified this text, as in Heb. 3:7 - 4:13, but didn't. Moses remarked in Deut. 9:24 that the Israelites were constantly rebellious. Num. 14:22 records that Israel had tested God ten times before the wanderings even began.

V. 19 - God was closely and powerfully involved with Israel, Paul shows, building up the idea of what God did for them as a people, which included the realization of the land promised to them. They did not actually inhabit all the land God had promised, but they did control it all at times, and thus received the promise. See Joshua 21: 43-45; 23:14; I Kings 4:21.

V. 21 - This is the actual source for the length of Saul's reign, as the Hebrew text of I Sam. 13:1 is lacking and LXX omits the entire verse.

V. 22 - The big name in Hebrew history as relating to the Messiah was David, since God had made David the promise of a son to sit upon his

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throne, who was obviously to be the Messiah (see Matt. 22:41-42). David, God could see, would do all of God's desires/wishes, even to believing that God would keep his promises. David was not perfect in life, but he was faithful, which is what God asks and requires.

V. 23 - David's son was not only the Messiah, but also Israel's Savior, who was named Jesus, Paul stated. It is doubtful if his hearers had perceived where Paul was taking them in the discussion, especially since he equated Messiah/Savior/Jesus, which they probably did not do, mostly from ignorance of Jesus. Of course, the argument was not about the O.T. prophecies, so much as it was about what and who fulfilled them. Thus the presentation of Jesus of Nazareth as being the Messiah of God (cf Matt. 16:16).

V. 24 - The text of Malachi 3:1 was fulfilled in John and the specific preparation John made was the acts of immersion of people who were characterized by repentance. Of course, all knew about John's work, in general at least.

V. 25 - Many people mistook John for the Messiah, as Luke 3:15ff and John 1:19ff indicates.

V. 26 - Paul continued to build his case that in their own lifetime God's Messiah had appeared; thus there was no need to keep looking toward the future. Notice again he stated (if only subtly) the universality of the salvation in Christ (i.e., sons of Abraham, God-fearers - us).

V. 27 - Those in Jerusalem, Paul stated were ignorant of the message in the prophets, and thus condemned to death their promised Messiah. Peter stated the same point, Acts 3:17. See also I Cor. 2:8, I Tim. 1:13. The ignorance was willed in some, doubtless, but related to understanding, not outright rejection.

V. 28 - Several points needed emphasis, and one was that Jesus was innocent of any wrong doing. Another was, v. 29 that God had planned it just as it happened. Both items would be important

to those listening, since they needed to realize Jesus died, for sin, according to God's plan. That was much different than believing Jesus died for some wrong he had done.

V. 29 - Each fact is skillfully brought out: death, burial and resurrection (v. 30), and all as God ordained. We notice in Luke 24:13-43 that when the two men put all the facts together in proper relationship, they were changed men. The same thing was needed for all Jews whose ideas about the Messiah were mixed up.

V. 31 - To encourage trust in the facts, God had men bear witness to the resurrected Christ who had known him well, thus were not easily fooled, especially as the appearances were over a period of many (forty) days.

V. 32 - If the anticipation of the people in Antioch was comparable to that generally, these words would strike a most responsive chord within them: the long hoped-for advent of the Messiah had happened in their time.

V. 33 - Just how Paul meant "raised" to be understood is not so clear; it could be he had the idea of making him to be the Messiah rather than the physical resurrection. See Acts 2:36 again, and note 13:22.

The text of Psalm 2:7 is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 also, and applied there to Jesus. The expression was heard at Jesus' immersion and transfiguration. Evidently, it had to do with Jesus' whole life, as God's son, which included the resurrection; God not allowing his Son to remain in the grave, even though permitting him to die.

V. 34 - An important point: Jesus is alive, never to die again, as Peter asserted in 2:27ff.

The holy and sure (trustworthy) blessings of David were to be realized only in the Messiah, who could only bring such into being by the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:15-17; 25-28). The quote is

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from Isaiah 55:3; then from II Sam. 7:12-16. Gabriel quoted this to Mary, Luke 1.

This text and the one in v. 33 illustrate how prophetic statements are to be understood. The only sure interpretation is from the New Testament; all else is but guesswork.

V. 35 - Psalms 16:10, which, as v. 36 shows, could not be said of David, but only of David's son, the Messiah. "Corruption" is to be understood in the sense of "remain in the grave" versus "being raised from the grave."

V. 36 - **Corruption - death's decay and rottenness.** The same word is in I Cor. 15:52 in contrast to imperishable. Note that David "fell asleep" David died (a common euphemism in the Scripture, as in I Cor. 11:30; John 11; etc.). Christ brought to light life and corruption, putting death into "idle" II Tim. 1:10.

V. 38 - **Forgiveness of sins** - the Greek is like Acts 2:38. this (i.e., forgiveness of sins - justification/salvation, etc.) is what could not be obtained under the Mosaic law, though the law was, in itself, holy, righteous and good (Rom. 7:12). Only in Christ, by faith, could a person be justified (Rom. 5:1) and thus be uncondemned (Rom. 8:1). Since the law was weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3), God did in his Son what the law could not do (see also Gal. 2:21; 3:19-22). As Paul would show in Rom. 1:17 (a fact that had also been true in the O.T. dispensation, Hab. 2:4) the "just live by faith" (not by law). The message of a Savior who could and would accept sinners was the great theme of the preaching in Acts (note 5:31; 10:43; 22:16; 26:18).

V. 39 - No reason existed now to continually offer sacrifices and observe the law, etc. However, a major struggle is evident all through Acts: To be unshackled from the law system, and trust in Christ for justification. The same struggle is still evident today, and in everyone's life, at times. For the Jews, then it was a great upheaval to leave the law behind and accept an entirely new system of serving God, and of being justified.

V. 40 - The text quoted is from Habakkuk 1:5; and not directly applied to this specific situation by the prophet. The sentiment in the prophet was about Israel in 600 B.C., in regard to their unbelief then. It was appropriately quoted by Paul and applied to his own time, since the same basic point was at issue: whether God's word will be accepted or not. Jews were punished for unbelief in Habakkuk's day; so it would be yet if they, as individuals, refused to believe what God had said.

V. 41 - The "one believing" in v. 39 is now in contrast to the "one not believing".

V. 43 - Since many were evidently very interested, the two men gave them encouragement "to continue" in the grace of God (i.e., the message of God, which would bring them salvation if they accepted it). Thus we see now a person is viewed from God's standpoint: one might not have complied with all that God has ordained, but if the willingness is present, one could "continue" in God's grace. Sure it is that a person can "grow" in grace, II Peter 3:18.

V. 44 - The interest was city-wide, even if many were not Jewish in descent.

V. 45 - The Jews who were unwilling to accept the grace of God as found in Jesus reviled/blasphemed (opposed) the apostles. Note Acts 26:11. they were unwilling to accept the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God (with the resultant voiding of all Mosaic law).

V. 46 - Paul was never one to run from an encounter, and the boldness was quite characteristic.

As is evident in other texts (Acts 1:8, Rom. 1:16, etc.), the Jews were the privileged recipients of the Good News - but it was never meant to be only for them - it was also to the Gentiles, as v. 47 (a quote from the Jews' own revelation!) will show.

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This text is one of the most interesting in the whole Bible in that it shows that one's worthiness (or lack of it) to receive redemption in Christ is directly related to what one does with Christ. One can "thrust" (push away; hence: reject/refuse) the message away (as some did conscience, I Tim. 1:19 or as the Jews did to Moses, Acts 7:27, 39). Such action places one in the "not believing" class, and brings condemnation and loss of eternal life.

V. 47 - The text in Isaiah 49:6 is concerned with the redeemer whom God was sending to Israel. Note Rom. 15:9-12 in this light. Now Paul applies the idea in relationship to himself and Barnabas, who were to carry the message of Israel's redeemer to the Gentiles. See Luke 2:32 as Simeon speaks to Mary.

V. 48 - The news as stated by Paul was good news to those listening who were Gentiles, and thus far had little hope of life eternal except through becoming a Jewish proselyte. Now they could avoid all such. They continued to rejoice in that fact and to glory in the word of the Lord.

We then have two classes of people: the Jews and others who refused the message, and the Gentiles and Jews who accepted the message. The difference was the decision of the mind; some were disposed to be worthy, others not so disposed.

From this perspective, we can view the expression: "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The verb is a Greek verb and is often seen as a military term; with the idea of to arrange, or set in order. See the verb in Matt. 28:16, Luke 7:8; Acts 15:2, 22:10; 28:23; I Cor. 16:15. In each case, the individual set of the mind was the determining factor. God had ordained that salvation was in Christ; and the acceptance of Christ was totally based upon the free-will of the individual.

V. 49 - The converts carried the message to various places throughout the region over a period of time. Hence, some time elapsed before the events in v. 50.

V. 50 - The Jews in opposition stirred up people in "high places" and the former "heroes" were forcibly caused to leave the city. See here II Tim. 3:11.

V. 51 - As Jesus had instructed the disciples in Matt. 10:14 and Luke 10:11. A similar gesture is that of Paul in Acts 18:6.

V. 52 - The effect of such persecution only increased the joy of the disciples in Antioch, a normal reaction throughout the history of the church.

As we contemplate the message of Paul in Antioch, we can but get the distinct notion that Gentiles are on equal footing with Jews in respect to the most important matter of all: salvation in Christ. Perhaps this is not any surprise to you, but it surely was to countless people in the early days, despite all that had been said and written to the contrary. From the New Testament writings, however, it is evident from the following scriptures that God's purpose was to include the Gentiles in the plan of salvation which was brought through Christ, and in whom He made both Jews and Gentiles one, creating one new man in place of the two, Eph. 2:14-16. Notice:

- 1) Hosea 2:23 quoted in Rom. 9:25
- 2) Hosea 1:10 quoted in Rom. 9:26
- 3) Genesis 13:15; 15:5 as explained in Galatians 3:16-18, 29; 4:21-31; Rom. 9:6-9, John 8:39, 44
- 4) Isaiah 42:1-4 as explained in Matthew 12:15-21
- 5) Isaiah 40:3-4 by John in Luke 3:4-6
- 6) Amos 9:11-12 as explained by James in Acts 15:12-21
- 7) Psalm 18:49 quoted in Romans 15:9
- 8) Deuteronomy 32:43 as quoted in Romans 15:10
- 9) Psalms 117:1 as quoted in Romans 15:11.
- 10) Isaiah 11:10 as quoted in Romans 15:12

We thus conclude that the redemptive community (the church) does not equal Israel according to flesh, but the redemptive community equals Israel according to the spirit (or promise).

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Consider following passages carefully with their import about Jews and/or Gentiles:

- 1) Simeon's remark about Gentiles in Luke 2:30-35, plus the fall and rising of Israel.
- 2) Jesus implied in Luke 4:16-30 about God and Jewish/Gentile relations that God honored faith wherever he found it; that faith (like sin) made men equal.
- 3) Jesus taught that Israel by and large, was like wicked tenants in Matt. 21:33-45 (Mark 12; Luke 20; Titus 2:14).
- 4) The implication of the rejected invitations in Luke 14 and Matt. 22:1-14 was that the people who "made the feast" were those who willed to come, expressed by their obedience, regardless of who or what they were. Jesus used the expression, "So the last shall be first, and the first last" in Matt. 19:30, and explained it in 20:1-16, that God would honor his promises, not cease to be God; and that all would be treated fairly, whoever they were.
- 5) The implications of the various commissions given to the disciples just prior to the ascension of Jesus are that the whole creation (red, yellow, black, & white) is to share in the redemption. As others did, Peter had to learn some lessons, as expressed in Acts 2:39; 10:1-11; 11:18; 15: 6-11; Gal. 2:11-21, about the import of those commissions. Paul expressed it well in Acts 13:16b-41, 47; and in Acts 28:28. (Rom. 11:13b; Gal. 1:15-16; Acts 9:10-16 with 22:21 and 26:12-17, shows the major lesson about God's plan for Paul, and for Jewish/Gentile relationships in Christ.)
- 6) Eph. 2:11-18 contains important lessons about Jews/Gentiles: they are one in Christ.
- 7) I Cor. 10:11 says something is true about Christians (including Paul, the writer, a Jew) that is likewise mentioned in Heb. 1:1-2 (note Rom. 3:27ff here). Consider the personal possessive pronoun in I Cor. 10:1 ("our" fathers).

8) The "people of God" in Heb. 4:9 denotes a faithful people, who are exhorted, beginning with ch. 3:7, to not be unbelieving. God's people were promised a land in the O.T. times which typified heaven. The people who first received that promise of an *earthly* habitation were characterized by faith. So it will be with those who inherit the real heaven, regardless of whether they be Jews or Gentiles by physical birth. If either sort of person will become "reborn" into God's family "Israel" and thus a son of God and a joint-heir with Christ, Rom. 8:16ff; Gal. 3:25ff. Note the passage in Heb. 8:8-13 and connect that with I Peter 2:4-10.

QUESTIONS

9. Outline Paul's sermon, attempting to briefly set before your mind the main points of what he said.
10. Are God's promises always kept, or are some conditional?
11. Did Paul make some of the same points and use some of the same scriptures as Peter in Acts 2?
12. Would you say that v. 38,39 sum up the basic gospel message?
13. Does v. 40,41 indicate God could foresee the unbelief of some?

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14. Describe the exact spiritual status of those who were urged to continue in God's grace.

15. Have you ever opposed the truth because of jealous envy?

16. How does one judge oneself "unworthy of eternal life"?

17. What must one do to "glorify the word of God"?

At Iconium, 14:1-7

14 *Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and so spoke that a great company believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. 3 So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. 5 When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to molest them and to stone them, 6 they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; 7 and there they preached the gospel.*

V. 1 - Iconium (modern Koniah) was also a Roman colony like Antioch, and thus enjoyed privileges many other cities did not. Any person born there was a Roman citizen, for instance.

Luke's term to describe the company of believers is like our "great multitude". As at Antioch, many of those who listened were persuaded/obedient. The procedure was the same as elsewhere: to the Jewish synagogue first, where access was yet readily available.

V. 2 - As at Antioch also, some were not persuaded/obedient. This really sets forth the crux of the whole Christian system: to so speak as to persuade people to trust in the gospel rather than in the system then held as trustworthy. If we fail to persuade them, then the result is disobedience. (Note John 3:36 and the contrast there; also Acts 14:19; 19:9; 29:24). The Jews made some Gentiles feel hostile toward the apostles. This did not result in cessation of the preaching, at least immediately.

V. 3 - Despite opposition, the apostles continued - at least until the authorities got into the act (v. 5). The Greek text indicates that signs and wonders were constant rather than just occasional. Doubtless it was such "helps" from God that gave pause to those opposing the gospel.

V. 5 - However, with the backing of the authorities, violence was in store for the men. There is a Greek term that means to "treat shamefully" (see Matt. 22:6; Luke 18:32). This and the plan to stone them, caused the men to leave.

V. 6 - The two cities and the surrounding areas were evangelized. God blessed both his messengers and those who believed them.

At Lystra, 14:8-20a

8 Now at Lystra there was a man sitting, who could not use his feet; he was a cripple from birth, who had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, 10 said in

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a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet". And he sprang up and walked. 11 And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, because he was the chief speaker, they called Hermes. 13 And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifices with the people. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out among the multitude, crying 15 "Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; 17 yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." 18 With these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium; and having persuaded the people, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. 20 But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city.

V. 8 - The physical condition of the cripple is specified, so that we might perceive the great news of the miracle which God did through Paul.

V. 9 - The hope in the man's eyes was there, because he evidently believed that God was with Paul and Barnabas.

V. 10 - At Paul's command, the man was healed, and proved it by springing up and walking around. Needless to say, the miracle was evident to all.

V. 11 - The crowd was correct in one sense. Only God's power could have performed the healing. The people were like Nicodemus in John

3, who knew that no mortal man apart from divine power, could do miracles. What was not known to Paul and Barnabas was what was being said by the crowd who saw the miracle.

V. 12 - Of course, Zeus (Jupiter) and Hermes (Mercury) were well known Greek gods in mythology, and clearly important in the religious life of these people.

V. 13 - Evidently the people communicated to their priests their conclusions in their native language which was unknown to Paul and Barnabas. The priests began the preparation for sacrifices to the "gods". The crowds certainly did not understand the nature of Christianity! Yet Cornelius tried to bow before Peter, and John attempted to do so before an angel, Revelation 22:8-9. All have much to learn about relationships, and whoever they are, wherever they live, no system compares with Christianity in the matter of personal relationships, either of God to men, or man to man.

V. 15 - Reacting in an arresting fashion (v. 14) and not like gods, the apostles made clear the distinctive of Christianity: God has made the only sacrifice necessary - all that needs to be done is accept it. Men are all alike: sinners, and are not to be made objects of worship. Only the God who made all is worthy of worship. We do well to meditate upon our views of people, and in what respect we see them. We may be guilty of doing "vain things" like those in Iconium.

V. 16 - Paul made it plain that the God whose handiwork was seen in the universe was the God who also had provided for their basic needs, and who had sent them to declare what else he had done for them in a greater and more important area than the material realm (see ch. 17 and Rom. 1:18ff).

V. 20 - Some think that one result of this stoning was the conversion of a young man named Timothy to the preaching ministry. See II Tim. 3:10-17. Some were not disobedient to the gospel message, but rather accepted the message of the

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revelation from God. Timothy was among those believers evidently.

At Derbe, 14:20b-21a

and the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples,

V. 21 - The men, going on to Derbe, preached much. Many were made disciples in Derbe. Thus the men fulfilled the commands of Matthew 28:19.

In Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, 14:21b-23

they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. 23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to Lord in whom they believed.

V. 22 - In view of the great opposition in these three cities, Paul apparently felt it necessary to make the disciples as stable in the faith as possible. Certainly his life should have been an inspiration to them. The disciples (their souls) were strengthened (as in 15:32, 18:23; Luke 22:32; Rom. 1:11; 16:25; I Peter 5:10) by Paul and he continually encouraged them to abide in the (their?) faith (note v. 23). See II Tim. 3:12; Rom. 8:17 for persecution, and the account in Hebrews 10:32ff; 12:1-17.

V. 23 - **appointed** - This word brings a question to mind which is not easily settled. The Greek word in question originally was used of voting through show of hands ; then to mean someone chosen by such a manner of selection, than to a simple act of appointment aside from any action by an assembly, etc. Acts 10:41 has the word used referring to God's appointed witnesses. We have had elders mentioned in the Jerusalem congregation (11:30), so such persons are not new.

It is evident that some oversight was necessary in each of the congregations, and this was God's answer to that need. We may wonder if or how these men measured up to such texts as I Tim. 3 and Titus 1, but some evidently did so. Perhaps some were given special gifts to aid them in their work. What is not so evident is the matter of how they were appointed to the eldership. No question but that Paul had the right to appoint men. What is the question is if the congregation(s) had any part in the matter. However, we are not told that what was done in these places was to be a pattern which all subsequent churches were to follow. So we must leave it at that. Every congregation had a plurality of elders, but it is not stated that such a fact was to be "the" pattern for all time; rather men were to be chosen who were qualified, as the individual congregation(s) desired. We do not know if these churches received any letters from Paul, but he later visited them all.

Through the Provinces of Pisidia and Pamphylia 14:24

24 Then they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia.

V. 24 - The return journey was over the same route, basically because it was one of the better ways to travel the country. Attalia was actually the seaport city, while Perga was inland.

At Perga and Attalia, 14:25 in Antioch, 14:26

25 And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, 26 and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. 27 And when they arrived, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they remained no little time with the disciples.

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V. 26 - **grace of God** - It is ever intriguing to notice how the expression “grace” is used in the Scriptures. This is one of the many varied uses of the term. See such texts as John 1:16, Gal. 1:15; Eph. 3:7; Philippians 4:23; II Thess. 1:12, 2:16; II Peter 3:18.

V. 27 - This is a good example of how relationships should be between congregations and those who are responsible to the congregation. The Church should do the sending, and those sent should be expected to be responsible to the congregation that sent them.

The apostles reported “many great things” that God had done through them, summed up in the idea that the door of faith had been opened to Gentiles, many of whom had stepped through it. Hence, the universal nature of the gospel message was clearly presented to all in Antioch. It is against this backdrop that Chapter 15 is to be seen.

It may be interesting to consider that no report was given to the church in Jerusalem. As records of historians will show, Christianity spread rapidly throughout the area, although much division and heresy was to take place in subsequent years.

V. 28 - As in 11:26; the men did much work in the local congregation. Surely it is true and right that “teaching” is equally important with “evangelizing” people. Paul did both, and made provision for others to do likewise.

QUESTIONS

18. Does 14:1-2 indicate the nature of Christianity - always in struggle with the unpersuaded of the world?

19. Have you ever considered the different way the message of salvation has been described in Chapters 13 and 14?

20. In consideration of the departure of Paul and Barnabas from Iconium in the face of persecution, how does one decide when to do such in like circumstances? Must one always stand “one’s ground”?

21. Is the Lyconian cripple a good illustration of verse 3?

22. Do you see people in your day who do “vain things” like those in Lyconia tried to do?

23. In what way did God allow nations to walk in their own ways, v. 16? Why would God choose to permit this?

24. Do people yet today not see any evidence for God in the universe about them?

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25. Is faith often changed (cf. v. 22)?

26. How could men who were of recent conversion be qualified for eldership? (We don't know that any were Jewish before becoming Christian. However being a former Jew would not necessarily make one a candidate for an elder by any means).

LESSON TWO (15: 1-35)

The Trouble Over Circumcision The Jerusalem Council

Without any controversy, this chapter is one of the most challenging in the whole New Testament. The reason the issue in question came up is one reason the chapter is important; and the decision of the council (both as to its significance for Paul and those who were adherents to one position or the other) and the stipulations which were laid upon Gentile believers are likewise important, since the understanding of the basic nature of the church was in question. That these issues are yet relevant is hardly in need of assertion. The matter of law versus grace is always in need of understanding and clarification. The specific items enjoined upon Gentiles are likewise timeless in importance. So we have a great chapter at hand.

The text of Galatians 2:1ff probably is the same event from Paul's perspective. It gives much important information about the meeting, such as the fact that God instructed him to go the meeting in Jerusalem. It is doubtful if Paul would have gone otherwise since his apostolic authority was in question. God evidently considered that the most appropriate place to settle the issue once and for all

was at the source of the trouble. Hence, the directions for Paul to go.

False Teachers Trouble the Believers, **15:1**

15 *But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."*

V. 1 - The divergent doctrines finally caused a sharp clash, which resulted in a "face-down" between the two groups. We will note that the Jerusalem group disclaims any responsibility for the Judaizers' teachings. We need to see that the issue was not a matter of fleshly circumcision. It was rather what that act meant: keeping of the law to be saved. It is significant that some from Jerusalem yet taught lawkeeping despite the experience of Peter in Acts 10 and his explanation thereof in the Jerusalem church. Evidently not everyone was willing to believe what Peter taught. Some years had intervened between the event in Acts 10 and Acts 15; perhaps the memory of some had failed, or new converts who did not understand the true nature of Christianity may have been responsible for the problem.

Paul and Barnabas Sent to Jerusalem, **15:2,3**

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about the question. 3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles, and they gave great joy to all the brethren.

V. 2 - **Dissension** - The disagreement over circumcision caused discussions that were serious and extensive. The term for questionings is the ordinary word for seeking. All arguments among Christians should be seeking for truth and its

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application. See Matt. 13:45; Mark 13:7; 11:18; Rom. 2:7; I Cor. 13:5; I Tim. 6:4; II Tim. 2:23.

Certain others - Titus, a Greek, was among them. We again remark that if apostolic authority had been observed, no such trip would have been necessary. Note here Gal. 2:2. Paul did not oppose people who kept the law as a manner of life as long as they did not keep it for the purpose of claiming salvation in the keeping of it.

Their Reception in Jerusalem, 15:4,5

4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. 5 But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses."

V. 4 - Church - Apostles - Elders We again are reminded of the place the elders had in the early churches, even with apostles present. Gal. 2 has Paul meeting privately with the apostles and elders to compare notes. We can understand why this took place when we consider that revelation and understanding of revelation were two different things, as was true in Peter's case. Paul had to consider this point.

V. 5 - This verse shows us how wrong one can be and still have believed. The people of the Pharisees' sect, were insisting that one must keep Moses' law in every way to be saved. For them, Christianity was simply a "leaf" added to Judaism's book rather than a distinctly new relationship to God in Jesus. Paul described them in Gal. 2:4 as false brethren, who were attempting to take away the freedom in Christ. See here Gal. 5:1ff. It seems so clear, perhaps, from our point of view, but it was not to them. It is yet to many a real problem as how one is saved and remains saved. The problem is commonly discussed in the terms "faith and works".

The Elders and Apostles Meet to Settle the Dispute, 15:6-29

6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; 9 and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we shall be saved through grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

12 And all the assembly kept silence; and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written.

16 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up. 17 that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, 18 says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.'

19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, 20 but should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the leaders with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among brethren, 23 with the following letter: "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia,

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greeting. 24 Since we have heard that some persons form us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, 25 it has seemed good to us in assembly to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

V. 6 - **Matter** - The Greek term means here a way of thinking.

V. 7 - Apparently despite the presence of apostles, the matter was given full discussion. It was not a matter of whether the apostles understood all they preached, so much as it was that the revelation through them, if accepted, would have made the matter clear. It may well be that the case of Cornelius was considered unique, not normative. Hence, Peter repeats (v. 8) the matter, showing the total application.

V. 9 - The principle common to all for redemption: Faith. See especially Rom. 2:25-29; 9:27 - 10:4; and 11:32 on this point. Since this was so, what the Judaizers were arguing for was a test of God's judgment and expressed desire.

V. 10 - **Why tempt** - The same idea as in Exodus 17:7 or Numbers 13. God was not to be so treated, Matthew 4:7. Do not contest the words of God.

Neither we nor our fathers - A clearer picture of how impossible it was to actually "keep" the law. If such was so, then it was foolhardy to argue that salvation could be had by keeping the law. Jesus' yoke, Matt. 11:28-30, was the only yoke that could be borne with any success.

V. 11 - It would have been better if Peter had practiced as well as he preached - but at least he taught correctly. Grace and faith had always provided for a people of God, Rom. 11:1-6, and still would do so, since the Gospel was God's power unto salvation for both Jews and Gentiles alike. As God looked at people, the differences were only outward, because all were the same inside.

V. 13 - This James was probably the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19) and author of the epistle of James. He was in the Jerusalem church for many years, suffering stoning, according to tradition, about A.D. 64. He would have been influential with the Jewish Christians (note 21:18ff), and his agreement with and elaboration of the experience of Peter added weight to the argument for release from the law, etc.

V. 15 - Additionally, James showed that such as had happened was prophesied by God. Doubtless, the full meaning of the prophecy was only clearly realized after Pentecost, as God revealed through the apostles exactly what had been prophesied, and various things unfolded that had been foretold.

V. 16 - The prophecy was probably viewed prior to Pentecost in a literal sense: i.e., the rebuilding of a kingdom, etc. However, it was rather to be understood in a spiritual sense; i.e., in reference to a body made up of people characterized by faith, which faith transcended party lines and made people in every culture one flesh.

We may note with some interest that James quoted from the Greek version (LXX) of the prophet Amos rather than from the Hebrew which reads slightly different. As noted in other places, the New Testament has the only authoritative interpretation of the Old Testament. Sometimes the speaker or writer used the Old Testament to illustrate a point, sometimes to prove a point.

V. 17 - **Gentiles** - The Jews very likely understood this reference to mean that Gentiles would have to come under the law as proselytes.

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As this incident shows, they had a hard time accepting the fact that Gentiles by their faith, and apart from observance of any of the Mosaic law, were acceptable to God, and considered as equals in the sight of God.

V. 19 - Those who have turned to the Lord (as Amos had predicted) have done all that is essential - hence the circumcision party has not won a point, and Paul has been vindicated.

judgment - There is nothing scripturally wrong with judging people, unless one does so unjustly or as sitting in God's seat.

V. 20 - The four prohibitions were of themselves, a negative decision against the Judaizer's, since the keeping of the whole law was in question. These things were wrong without the Law given to Israel through Moses, See Gen. 9:4.

pollution of idols - explained in v. 29

unchastity - The Greek word means what we generally view as unlawful sex, of whatever nature.

strangled things and blood - from the context in Leviticus 17:10-16; Deuteronomy 12:15-16; 20-27, these things come. Little of the O.T., per se, was retained under the direction of the Holy Spirit. God's will was not that voiced by the Judaizers.

V. 21 - This verse seems to argue that since Jews would be omnipresent, abstention of the Gentile converts from these items would give less offense, and thus permit the Jews with scruples to associate with the Gentiles who had no such scruples until such time as the Jews could change. Others differ from this, holding that James meant that Moses (i.e., the law) was still read (obeyed) in many places (thus placating the Jews) and there would be those who accordingly followed the law.

V. 23 - As this decree would be of major importance everywhere, it was put into writing

under the auspices of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles, etc. Silas and Judas were added strength for Paul and Barnabas as they returned to Antioch. It surely would have been nice if the action had ended the controversy, but it didn't then, and hasn't yet. The nation of Jews still exists, and there are still people who cannot distinguish between grace and legalism.

V. 24 - The men in v. 1 had apparently claimed what was not true, i.e., that the Jerusalem church had sanctioned their view. The issue was clearly resolved from every point.

Unsettling your minds - subverting your souls would be a good translation. The Judaizers had wrought great problems in Antioch, and continued that in other places.

V. 25 - **In assembly** - The Greek word means "together" or "in agreement," "united," as in 1:14; 2:46; 4:24. Gal. 2:9 shows that the action of acceptance and agreement was done in a personal way as well as publicly.

V. 29 - The word translated "abstain" means "to hold oneself back from," as in I Thess. 4:3; I Tim. 4:3; I Peter 2:11. The necessity was apparently only for the association /fellowship of Gentiles and Jews, both of whom were Christians. The points of idolatry and unchastity were elsewhere forbidden for everyone for all time.

Farewell - The Greek word means "to be strong," "keep well," and was common at the close of letters.

The Work in Antioch, 15:30-35

30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 And when they read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. 32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them. 33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in

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peace by the brethren to those who had sent them.”
35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

V. 30 - The mission was over, and the truth of the gospel message was upheld - no wonder many rejoiced (v. 31).

V. 32 - **Judas and Silas** - Silas was to accompany Paul on the next missionary journey, and suffer many things from Jews because of his faith in Jesus.

prophets - The scriptures do not at any time equate the word “prophet” with the word “preacher.” The prophets did preach as a part of their function, but the prophets were called such because God revealed His words through them.

V. 33 - As seen in v. 40, either Judas returned to Jerusalem, while Silas remained Antioch, or Silas went to Jerusalem but returned to Antioch.

V. 35 - The point made in 11:26 is again pertinent; Paul did not always “evangelize” in the narrow sense of that term as often used today.

Peter’s Visit to Antioch, **Galatians 2:11-21**

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party 13 And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” 15 We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, 16 yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law, but

through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified. 17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.

QUESTIONS

28. What importance is there about ch. 15?

29. According to Galatians 2, why did Paul go to Jerusalem?

30. Who went with Paul?

31. Were the men who came from Jerusalem sent by the church there?

32. Was it merely a matter of circumcising the men that was the issue?

33. Could one be wrong about the relationship of Christianity to the Mosaic law and still be called a believer?

34. What position did Peter and James take in regard to the issue?

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35. By whose authority was the letter (epistle) written?

36. Were the prohibitions placed upon the Gentiles temporary or permanent in nature?

37. Can we “make trial” of God today as the men did in ch. 15?

LESSON THREE (15:36 - 18:22)

The Second Missionary Journey 15:36 - 18:22

In Antioch, 15:36-40

36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” 37 And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

V. 36 - Paul is just as interested in the upbuilding of Christians, their faith-progress, as he is in “disciplining” people, since each is equally important. Neither is to be neglected for Christian

growth is a must on the list of items for consideration by any church group. Paul felt the need for “daily care of the churches” (II Cor. 11:32), whether in Antioch or elsewhere. He now felt that it was wise to return to the converts in the Galatian area, since they were to suffer many things that could disturb their faith, 14:22.

V. 37 - John Mark was a relative (a cousin) of Barnabas, and probably was being considered by Barnabas in this light.

V. 38 - Each man was unchanging in his attitude about the matter, Barnabas insisting, Paul refusing.

V. 39 - It is ever the part of God to “tell it like it is.” So, we are treated to the occasion of two good men, each indebted to the other, who yet disagreed over another and, unable to resolve the matter, agreed to disagree. Doubtless God had this written down for “our admonition and our learning.” Often times it will be this way in regard to where one worships, or what methods one uses, where one labors, etc. We need to carefully consider the difference between likes and dislikes and doctrine, and keep them separated. One may even differ in matters of conscience (which often is equated in Scripture) with another, and yet both remain Christian.

V. 40 - Whether the brethren gave Barnabas and Mark the send-off they gave to Paul is not stated. We will see that Paul’s group returns to Antioch. No historical mention is made of Barnabas again, though Paul mentions him in I Cor. 15, and several references to Mark are in Paul’s letters. Silas probably the Silvanus of II Cor. 1:19; I Thess. 1; I Peter 5:12.

Through to Provinces of Syria and Cilicia, 15:41

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

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V. 41 - The route would be past Paul's home in Tarsus, over the mountains through the Cilician Gates, a rough and dangerous journey.

At Derbe, 16:1a

16 *And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra.*

16:1 - The presence of churches in Syria and Cilicia is mentioned, though we are not told how they arose. Perhaps they arose from Pentecost, or through Paul's efforts. (Note here 15:24.)

In Lystra, 16:1b-5

A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

V. 2 - Timothy, Paul's "son" in the faith, would serve well, and become a most valuable member of the Lord's team. Evidently the brethren thought highly of him.

V. 3 - The mixed background of Timothy made his acceptability to Jews questionable. Therefore, though no law was at issue, the factor of expediency was obviously considered valuable enough to cause Timothy's circumcision. This is most important to consider in the light of what happened in ch. 15, where Titus was not circumcised, though pressure to do so to keep the law was brought to bear.

Through the Cities of Iconium and Antioch to Whom They Delivered the Decrees of the Jerusalem Council, 16:4,5

V. 4 - In keeping with the intent of the conference, Paul and Silas convey the decision of Acts 15 to the various churches along the way. The general matters of the letter are contained in I Cor. 8-10 and Rom. 14:1-15:13. We must remember that the N.T. was mostly yet unwritten. What was written, if anything, would not be readily available to but a few. We also note that though the Holy Spirit directed its inception and writing, we have no actual copy of it except in Acts 15. There may have been other such epistles produced about which we know nothing.

V. 5 - A result of the missionary journey was that churches were strengthened.

Through the Region of Phrygia and Galatia, 16:6a

Cf. Galatians 4:13-15; I Cor. 16:1,2

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia,

V. 6 - The item of interest here: the restraint upon the men from the Holy Spirit. If this is so in other places and times, as seems evident, the Holy Spirit controlled more of the apostles' activities than just their speech and writings.

While in the Above Stated Regions They Were Forbidden by the Spirit to Speak the Word in Asia. They Passed Through the Province of Mysia and Attempted to go into the Province of Bithynia but They Were Again Forbidden, 16:6b-8a

having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia,

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but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; 8 so, passing by Mysia,

V. 7 - The Holy Spirit “hindered” (forbid) in v. 6, and will not permit (again forbid) in v. 7.

V. 8 - Troas was the major seaport serving all of the area.

At Troas, 16:8b-10

they went down to Troas 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the he night; a man of Macedonia was standing beseeking him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 10 And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

V. 9 - The vision Paul received is like that of Cornelius in chapter 10 and is the first positive response in direction, which, of course, Paul obeyed, even as he had obeyed the negative command.

V. 10 - Macedonia was a province in the Roman empire, though in another continent.

Luke joined the party, and continued with it to Philippi, where he remained when the others left.

At Samothrace, 16:11a

At Neapolis, 16:11b

11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,

V. 11 - The sailing weather was good, taking two days for what was later a five-day journey (20:6), 125 miles.

In Philippi, 16:12-40

12 and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days; 13 and on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. 17 She followed Paul and us, crying, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation”. 18 And this she did for many days, but Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.

19 But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; 20 and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, “These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. 21 They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” 22 The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. 23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. 24 Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 26 and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one’s fetters were unfastened. 27 When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he

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drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." 29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. 34 Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." 36 And the jailer reported the words to Paul, saying "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore come out and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now cast us out secretly? No! let them come themselves and take us out." 38 The police reported these word to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; 39 so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. 40 So they went out of the prison, and visited Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they exhorted them and departed.

V. 12 - Philippi (its name from Philip the Great) was near the area where a decisive battle in Rome's history took place. (Octavius and Anthony vs. Brutus and Cassius; and later Octavius defeated Anthony and Cleopatra. 31 B.C.) Philip had taken over the city because of the gold mines nearby. However, because it was on the main thoroughfare between Europe and Asia, its importance grew and commerce increased. It was made a Roman colony in 42 B.C., which meant its citizens received all the benefits of any Roman citizen.

V. 13 - It is noticeable that in all these cities (Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea), women are

prominent in the happenings. Archaeological evidence in Macedonia indicates that women were afforded much greater privileges than elsewhere.

V. 14 - Lydia was a common name, although her occupation was not so common. Some evidence exists to show that the Jews in Thyatira were involved in the dye business, which may be where Lydia received her knowledge of God, etc.

The basic problem is not new: how or why did God open Lydia's heart? The answer may well vary, even if your theology is not Calvinistic. See Luke 24:45 in this vein.

Proponents of infant baptism over the centuries have used this text and others to argue for their position. Obviously, their position is weak from several angles. The New Testament Scriptures always insist that each person is accountable to God, and one's relationship to God. The New Testament Scriptures do not teach anything except believer's immersion. Clearly, infants can not believe for themselves, and it is never stated that anyone else can believe for them. The inferences that are drawn (that the word "household" means all obeyed through the person who was the head, or that infants were in the household) are not provable at all. Their position is only mentioned because the point needs clarification.

V. 15 - The Philippian epistle is good evidence of the positive results which took place through the efforts of Paul's company.

Lydia's hospitality would be something for which Christians would be noted everywhere. She may have encouraged others to continue to help Paul, as they evidently did (Phil. 4).

V. 16 - **Spirit of Divination** - The Greek term was used in the Greek O.T. (LXX) of such as the witch of Endor (I Sam. 28) and those described as "mediums" in Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Isaiah 8:19, etc. As v. 18 indicates, the girl was inhabited by a spirit.

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The owners used the girl as a steady source of income. How much she willingly cooperated with the men is not stated.

V. 17 - Even though her testimony about the men was accurate, perhaps it was like that of demons to Jesus, which testimony he rejected because of the source (i.e., the devil. Note Mark 1:34. It may well have been because of such testimony that some accused Jesus of being in league with Satan).

V. 18 - Because the woman kept up her testimony for many days, Paul exercised miraculous powers (as did Peter, 3:6) to instantly “heal” the woman. As in all cases, Jesus’ power through the apostles was greater than the demon’s power (note Matt. 12:22ff).

V. 19 - The men, with a vested interest, reacted as most others: adversely, since their hope (source) of gain was now gone. That Christians were not free from such self-interests is evident in II Cor. 2:14-17. It will do us all good to consider why we wish certain people or institutions to continue rather than be phased out or discontinued.

Agora - This is the common term for marketplace or forum. Paul stood in Athens at the marketplace, 17:17. It was also the area where the judges appeared to hold court, etc.

V. 20 - Some think that the “rulers” of v. 19 and the “magistrates” here were the same persons described two different ways; while others feel that two different groups of rulers were meant. It is not too important in the end.

Being Jews - Whether or not the accusers knew, or, knowing, cared that Jews and Christians were different groups is not stated. Doubtless many did not perceive the fact was so (see 18:14-15; 25:14-19). The men were only interested in eliminating two troublemakers.

V. 21 - As this verse shows, the two men were merely considered as Jews of a certain brand. It seems to be apparent that the Romans allowed much religious freedom as long as no disruptions were evident. That the Jews actually made many into “God fearers” is also evident. When Christianity came into being, disruptions occurred, however, and thus the Romans were often involved. The statement of the girl’s owners about being “Romans” indicated that Jews were still a despised race in most Roman eyes.

V. 22 - We should note the mob spirit, that unthinking attitude that so often is evident in world history. Christianity is so very different from this, making its appeal to reason and to personal, individual responsibility. Paul will mention “shameful treatment” in Philippi (I Thess. 2:2) and that he had been beaten with rods “three” times (II Cor. 11). The Greek term for “gave orders” indicates that the orders were repeatedly given; the mob spirit was even in the magistrates.

V. 23 - As far as these beating went, no limit was placed as in Jewish law. It was the whim of the officer.

V. 24 - An inner prison was normally made so that no opening was in it except the door. Hence, the stocks were only additional forms of punishment, and not necessary for their safe-keeping.

V. 25 - Those totally committed to a cause as great as Christianity would be able to rejoice even with such circumstances as were upon the men. They were but practicing what Jesus taught in Matt. 5:11-12. The other prisoners were listening, some doubtless in awe and wonder. Perhaps the jailer listened too.

V. 26 - Since Paul and Silas were praying as well as singing, perhaps part of their prayers were directed to God in connection with their awful situations. At least God answered in a most impressive way (note 4:31).

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V. 27 - The jailer assumed too much; he, except for Paul, would have taken his life, and needlessly. His action was little different from the prior action of the mob - both were unthinking. He was responsible for the prisoners, and should have exercised some responsibility in regard to himself.

V. 28 - Brutus had taken his life near Philippi. It seems that the place was rather well-known for suicides.

Apparently some lights were in existence in the outer prison so that Paul could see what the man was about to do.

V. 29 - The jailer, unnerved by it all, fell down at the feet of the men, perhaps to worship them, surely to question them. His state of mind was like that described of Moses, 7:32; Hebrews 12:21.

V. 30 - The jailer's question is probably best understood in the light of the answer he received, although it could be understood in other ways (the Greek word means "save" in many ways, physical as well as otherwise.)

V. 31 - The answer is best understood in the sense that salvation (by faith) was in Christ rather than anywhere else, instead of in the more narrow sense of "believe," then "repent" then "be immersed" etc. The jailer was to accept Jesus for his salvation, trusting totally in Christ in place of anyone or anything else. The same thing could be true for this family as for him - all or any could trust in Jesus for salvation, as Peter said in 10:43, and Paul said in 13:39.

V. 32 - The men amplified the true but comprehensive statement in v. 31, so that the meager knowledge the jailer had would be added to and better understood by him and those of his household. We should add, however, that the issue of faith in connection with salvation is not the degree of faith in Jesus that one possesses, but the presence or absence of faith in Jesus that counts. One either believes (trusts) that Jesus is able to

save, or one doesn't so believe. Faith should increase, however, II Peter 1:5ff.

V. 33 - Here is a good test to consider two words involving usage of water - the jailer washed/bathed the outside of the prisoners' bodies, but he was washed/immersed for the afflictions of this inner man.

V. 34 - Like the treasurer in Acts 8:39, he rejoiced in the trust he had placed in Jesus) as did those of his household who had obeyed too).

V. 35 - Why the magistrates decided to let Paul and Silas go free is not known.

V. 36 - **In peace** - Probably the jailer, much more aware of the total situation than his bosses, suggested the "in peace". He may well have understood more about peace than at any time previous. Too, he could but rejoice over the sudden change of attitudes of the magistrates.

V. 37 - Paul's reply must have caused fear in the magistrates. It was unlawful to so treat any Roman. Emperor Claudius had taken the freedom from the city of Rhodes for having crucified a Roman citizen. The historian Cicero wrote, "To fetter a Roman citizen was a crime, to scourge him a scandal, to slay him parricide."

In Paul's reply, he says that the magistrates wanted "to cast them out" which he rejects, and used a word which means "let them come and escort us out," since they were Roman citizens who had been flogged without an investigation, and cast into prison - all beneath the treatment deserved by an Roman.

V. 38 - The magistrates were justly afraid, and tried to make the best of a bad matter.

V. 39 - Silas and Paul were escorted out, and were "begged" to leave, having been consoled/comforted. The Greek term is at times translated exhort, beseech. It may well be that the

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official action helped preclude any more mistreatment by the crowds.

V. 40 - Note “brethren” which shows several persons in mind. Seemingly only Silas and Paul leave, the others as Luke either remaining behind.

QUESTIONS

38. How could Paul and Barnabas “agree to disagree” and yet be brothers?

39. Did Paul spend all of his time evangelizing, or did he also spend time teaching in churches?

40. What was one result in the churches of the deliverance of the decree from Jerusalem?

41. Noting the interference of the Holy Spirit in the places where Paul planned to go, where else do we have any record of direction by the Holy Spirit in his activities?

42. Would direction from the Holy Spirit at one point in life mean that all of life was likewise directed (i.e. no free will at all?)

43. What sections of acts are “we” sections where Luke wrote in first person?

44. Describe Lydia.

45. How do you understand the phrase about God opening her heart?

46. Why do you think Paul was annoyed by what the girl was saying?

47. Why did he cast the demon out of her? Couldn't she keep on saying the same thing about him and Silas?

48. Why did the slave owners take Paul and Silas to the market place?

49. What customs were being advocated by Paul and Silas which were unlawful for Romans to keep?

50. Were the charges leveled against the men actually the reasons for their seizure?

51. How widespread was the earthquake?

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52. Do you think that God sent the earthquake?

53. How much does the text state that the jailer knew about his two prisoners?

54. What evidence is there for infant immersion (i.e., “household baptisms”)?

55. Why did Paul insist on a public and personal apology?

56. How many Christians were in Philippi?

Caesarea in Palestine in political influence. Paul remarked in I Thess. 1:8 that the gospel had “sounded forth” (from Thessalonica) everywhere. I Thess. 2:20 has Paul saying that the converts in Thessalonica were his “glory and joy”. He boasted to churches of their “steadfastness and faith” in all their persecutions, II Thess. 1:4. Note the description of the Jews there in 2:14-16. Through the middle ages it was a stronghold of Christianity in the East.

At Thessalonica, 17:1b-10a

where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” 4 And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas; as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked fellows of the rabble, they gathered a crowd, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities, crying, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them; and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” 8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard this. 9 And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. 10. The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea;

LESSON FOUR (17:1-34)

Passing Through the Cities of Amphipolis and Appollonia, 17:1a

17 *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Appollonia, they came to Thessalonica.*

V. 1 - Paul apparently did not stop in Amphipolis or Appollonia - they were both important cities - but went to Thessalonica, the capital city of Macedonia, about 100 miles from Philippi. It ranked with Antioch of Syria and

V. 2 - Paul reasoned/discussed from the “writings” (i.e., Scriptures) with the Jews in the synagogue, where he went first, as was his custom. He remarked in I Thess. 1:9 that some there had turned from idols; so his ministry encompassed people like the Greeks, v. 4. I Thess. 2 and II Thess. 3 both bring up Paul’s manner of life there.

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These incidental remarks may indicate a stay of some time, which included the three Sabbath days.

V. 3 - Luke described Paul's method as opening the Scripture (as in Luke 24:32, 45) and presenting his case: 1) that the Messiah must suffer and die (cf. Luke 24:25-27) and 2) that the Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. I Thess. 2:2 states that Paul faced great opposition. Doubtless the Jewish rabbis resisted the presentation.

V. 4 - Yet, some were open-minded and were persuaded (note the comments on 14:2) rather than being disobedient, and joined Paul.

leading women - This may mean wives of important men, or women in positions of importance, or both. 17:12 has a like reference. Luke's Gospel has more about women than the other Gospels have.

V. 5 - The jealousy of the Jews killed Jesus, and caused Christians no end of trouble. It is good to be jealous for the things of God, but not to the point of doing harm to others who disagree. The O.T. speaks of God being jealous, with an everlasting love (Deut. 4:24; Jer. 31:3). And Paul speaks of his jealousy for the Corinthians (II Cor. 11:2). Such must be tempered with restraint and wisdom, however.

The wicked fellows of the rabble were probably some who loafed around the market place; and "made a crowd" and raised a great tumult.

V. 6 - The description of the work of the apostles is somewhat revealing in regard to their accomplishments. Perhaps the description was overdrawn, but it certainly was accurate as to the intent of the Christians. The Greek word means "to stir up," "upset," and thus to create strife or revolt. Naturally, as in Ephesus, ch. 19, such could not be tolerated by Romans.

The word for the rulers of the city is an example of Luke's fine historical accuracy, as examples can be cited to show that the city was

ruled by men described by the exact word in our text.

V. 7 - Some think the charges were perverted, but in essence, the Christian system was, in some points, opposed to the decrees of Caesar. Rightly understood, any culture, Christian in nature, may have government (as witness even in Romans 13). of the people. But to set up someone in opposition to Caesar was not acceptable. The Christian system, in some ways, did exactly that, and Christians would in subsequent years, but put to death for refusing to bow to Caesar's image, and offer a pinch of incense thereupon. You may already have noticed that Luke, in his first book, has this same charge made against Jesus to Pilate, 23:2.

V. 8 - The charges from the crowd agitated the city fathers and may have affected them somewhat as the cries of the mob influenced Pilate's decision.

V. 9 - Just what the security from Jason was to insure is not quite clear, but Paul mentions (I Thess. 2:18) that he was unable to return, so it may have meant his leaving the city. Note also in 2:14-16 how Paul viewed the Jews who opposed him.

V. 10 - However long or short the time spent in the city, much good came from it, and many were saved in spite of the defiant Jews. We have no notice of any subsequent church activity there, as at Athens with the church begun there, 17:34. However, Paul's letters (that we possess) were not necessarily written to every church begun by him, but to churches with problems. He may have not written to other churches, or we may not have the letters.

At Beroea, 17:10b-14a

and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few

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Greek women of high standing as well as men. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Beroea also, they came there too, stirring up and inciting the crowds. 14 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea.

V. 11 - An oft-quoted verse, since it described the ideal attitude of anyone faced with a challenge to the position then held - i.e., check the charges being made as to their accord with truth. One has no need to fear truth, whoever has it. However, it is just as necessary to check how the various "truths" presented are fitted together. It may be in this area that most disagreements occur. This is where the problem invariably arose with Jesus' preaching, and with the preaching of the apostles; there was little argument about the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures foretold of a Messiah to come. The argument was about the nature and identification of that Messiah. Paul asserted the Messiah was Jesus; the Jews who disbelieved denied it.

For us, the same thing is true. Many people will agree with the assertion that all the Bible is from God. The point of dispute is how one views or arranges the material in the Bible.

The phrase "more noble" comes from a word meaning "a better kind." These Jews were eager to listen and learn, and did not allow pride and prejudice to detract them from pursuit of truth.

V. 12 - An impressive group both of men and women accepted the position advocated by Paul. Note that although the synagogue was the main place of work, others not necessarily connected with it were also evangelized and brought to faith in Jesus.

V. 13 - The jealous Jews wrought havoc in Beroea, stirring up (as an earthquake "shakes" things) and troubling (agitation again) the people to revolt against Paul. We note that the brethren in Beroea supplied a messenger to Jerusalem (20:4) and doubtless money for the collection which Paul's

group was taking there. Since they were a part of the Macedonian churches which gave so liberally, I Cor. 8,9.

V. 14 - We don't know for sure when Timothy came to Athens, if separately or with Silas. He would act as a messenger at a later time (I Thess. 3:1ff).

In Athens, 17:14b-34

but Silas and Timothy remained there.

15 Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. 17 So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market place every day with those who chanced to be there. 18 Some also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers met him. And some said, "What would this babblers say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities" - because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you present? 20 For you bring some strange things to our ears; we wish to know therefore what these things mean." 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except selling or hearing something new.

22 So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship. I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one every nation of men to live

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on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each of us, 28 for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, "for we are indeed his offspring." 29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead".

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, "We will hear you again about this." 33 So Paul went out from among them. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

V. 15 - Why Paul was such a prominent person is hard to understand at times, since others also preached the good news. However, the whole Acts account describes Paul as a very intense individual, and against such a person people react, whoever they may be. Others, such as Luke, Silas or Timothy, could stay where Paul could not, even though all were of the same persuasion. Perhaps this fact should be kept in mind today as we labor among people. Some can do one work, others another work, though all believe and teach alike.

V. 16 - Athens, well known in secular history because of its university, and the various men who graced its campus, such as Pericles, Demosthenes, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles and Euripides, now has a Jew turned Christian who is running from his own countrymen to enter its portals. Paul doubtless knew about its past, and its present, including such things as its renowned art centers, and the beautiful Parthenon crowning the Acropolis. He saw what others may also have seen; a city full of idols and people worshipping them.

But he had a different response than others: a substitute of the true for the false, the real thing for that which was deceiving. (Can we only dimly perceive how he felt, or could his reaction be replayed in our lives?)

Provoked is the Greek word also in ch. 15:39; I Cor. 13:5; Heb. 10:24. It indicates a strong reaction. He saw a city with idol statues everywhere. Note here Romans 1:18-23 - when one refuses the knowledge of the true God, idolatry is the natural and inevitable result. He surely did not view the art and sculpture merely for its own sake, but saw beyond it to what it said about the people. Historians of this period who suggest that it was easier to find an idol in Athens than a man perhaps exaggerated the matter, but there were evidently plenty of idols.

V. 17 - Paul's procedure was again the same - reasoning ("argued" as in 17:2) with Jews in their synagogues, and also others who chanced to pass by the market place where all would appear, sooner, or later.

V. 18 - Most commentaries will give information on the philosophical schools mentioned. Both groups were prominent in Athens. and were rather at opposite poles of thought. Stoicism tended more toward intellectualism. Epicureanism tended to emphasize a pleasurable (hedonism) life, having everything under control. Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) was anything but a sensualist, but followers over the centuries allowed his philosophy to degenerate. He had taught that man had freedom to act, and life ought to be so lived that none of the stresses and strains in it would bother, but that came to be simply "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (and cease existing).

Zeno, (340-265 B.C.) founder of Stoicism (from *stoa*, a colonnade or porch where Zeno taught), was pantheistic in theology, fatalistic in thought. Some have characterized the stoics as the Pharisees of Greek philosophy, since they tended to apathy about life. Paul may have known more

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about Stoicism, since Tarsus was a center of learning, and Stoicism was prominent in the school there (at least six famous Stoic philosophers made their home in Tarsus). It was a mixed bunch addressed by Paul.

The one point both of these had in common: they tended to exalt self. Paul's remarks seem to take in these philosophies, even if somewhat indirectly at times.

Babbler - The Greek word describes someone who had picked up bits and pieces of wisdom but had nothing to offer of genuine interest. They described him as one who proclaimed a strange doctrine of deities (i.e., a god who came to earth, was crucified and resurrected). In Athens, if a new doctrine of a god was introduced that would upset the current doctrine held, it was considered a capital offense. (At its ultimate, Christianity would do just that!) Socrates was killed for just such activity.

V. 19 - There is considerable doubt as to just where Paul was taken. The Greek text quite possibly indicates that Paul appeared before the council of the Areopagus (which met often times close to the Agora (market place) rather than on the hill itself, from whence the council got its name).

Their question indicates that they wondered if it were possible to know whereof Paul spoke. The reason for such a question was that many mystery religions of the day would not share their doctrines outside of those in the group.

V. 20 - Some surprising things, they affirm, Paul has brought to their attention, and they desire to know more.

V. 21 - Luke inserts a note for his readers' benefit, describing the basic character of those in Athens. Historians of the day confirm Luke's description. With this sort of desire apparent, Paul set himself to declare the eternal truth, both new and old.

V. 22 - The opportunity presented itself, and Paul was ready for the offensive. He through the previous activity (v. 17) knew his audience, and addressed them correctly and well. Some have taken Paul to task for his presentation, and quote I Cor. 2 as his personal reaction to this sermon. Such does not appear to be the best position. He clearly addressed them on their philosophical basis, showing errors therein, and led them directly to God, with relevant information. The resurrection was the point at issue, and could not be avoided. Furthermore, some believed, including one of the distinguished people of the court itself, and a church was begun in Athens. Who could ask for more? In regard to the I Cor. 2 text, the contrast is that of the wisdom of God, elaborated in ch. 1 and proclaimed through the apostles, versus the wisdom of those in Corinth, which tended to puff up, 8:1.

Very religious - a much better rendering of the Greek term than "superstitious" of K.J. The Athenians were just that, and not superstitious. The Greek term means a "fearer of deities".

V. 23 - The reason for the previous observation in v. 22 is in this verse. Paul had observed the many objects of their worship. Whether these men shared the common views or not, some, through the expression of the statue in question, had expressed the desire to know more. His approach was to amplify what some presently claimed, thus avoiding the charge of presenting something contrary to what was then held.

V. 24 - Of course, monotheism was not unknown to these men, but their religion was not so. In fact, polytheism was found (and still is) everywhere except among the Jews, who had a revelation from the one God whom they worshipped.

V. 25 - The Epicureans held that the "gods" were quite indifferent to human needs, and dwelt afar, not being bothered by any of earth's problems. The Stoics held that the "gods" animated the earth (but couldn't exist apart from it). Paul declared that God is both transcendent and more than the sum

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total of the universe since he made it while remaining separate from it.

V. 26 - This verse cut across their cultural belief that the Athenians were self-generated, and so superior. Christian doctrine teaches the opposite (though it is more difficult to practice such doctrine than to preach it). It may be added that such a view hit at the prejudice of the Jews too. Contrariwise, all were created of one origin (from Adam) and no one was innately superior to another.

The major problem here is to what extent God determined man's boundaries without transgressing man's free will. To some extent, the O.T. prophets showed that God did determine the movements of some peoples, especially Israel, though that nation was treated on the basis of what God knew they would do.

V. 27 - As in ch. 14, Paul asserted that God's witness should have led men to him, had they thought correctly. Note that here Paul denied what the Epicureans taught about the gods being far off from man. The true God had rather planned all of life so that it would bring men to him.

V. 28 - The part quoted was of a Greek philosopher of the Stoic school whose language was adapted to assert that God was the only source of life, movement, existence. The assertion was made of Zeus (Jupiter), but Paul went beyond Zeus, pointing out that man didn't produce God but rather God created man, and that God wasn't Zeus.

V. 29 - Now, the essential nature of the divine is not to be expressed in idols, and subject to man's ideas rather, God is transcendent and separate from his creation (thus arguing against the position of the Stoics who had their gods being immanent and pantheistic).

V. 30 - God's past revelation was rather incomplete for most peoples (only Jews had a written revelation) and men were judged accordingly (God looked beyond those times to what was to come). But now, the final and greater

revelation (in Christ) had come, and such actions as had been allowed were no longer allowed so repentance is in order in view of an impending judgment (thus arguing life after death in opposition to the Epicureans). Moreover, God had given assurance (Greek word for faith) that such was going to happen by evidence which all could know, and act accordingly. (See the importance of proclaiming a resurrected Jesus! Actually, faith in anything comes from evidence, which "persuades" that "whatever" is presented is trustworthy. It is always a process of persuasion through presentation of evidence, etc., as in 17:2-3.) As Paul wrote in Galatians 4, the fullness of time had come, and Jesus came that men might not be condemned but saved.

V. 32 - Paul had presented the essentials of Christianity: one eternal transcendent God who cared for man, who gave man a charge to repent in view of the day of reckoning to come. Some didn't believe in any life after death, while others thought the soul lived on. But none held to a bodily resurrection, the basic fact of Christianity.

V. 33 - With the possibility of another hearing, Paul departed, but not without results. Some of those listening were persuaded and formed part of the body of the church in Athens. Of interest is that one of the council was persuaded, and a woman, plus others. In consideration of the audience, hardly more results could have been expected. A university town is both open for promulgation and difficult to persuade.

As before mentioned, some think that I Cor. 2:1-5 is Paul's response to this sermon, in which the cross, per se, was not proclaimed. However, it seems that such a position discounts God's leading in what Paul did. If we believe that God directed Paul in what he preached and wrote, there is no good reason to think that this sermon was not so directed.

QUESTIONS

57. What words describe Paul's presentations in Thessalonica? in Beroea? in Athens?

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58. What two points did Paul make to the Jews of Thessalonica?

59. What was the actual charge in v. 7 leveled against Paul and Silas by the Jews?

60. What was the cultural effect of this charge, as stated in v. 6?

61. Have you treated other people like the Berean Jews treated Paul? (Weren't their actions like the "golden rule"?)

62. What sort of effect in Berea did the Jews from Thessalonica create?

63. Most cities of Paul's day were full of idols (cf. Thessalonica, I Thess. 1:9). Do you suppose that a center of learning such as Athens, with all its potential for evil, was somewhat more of a "provoker" to Paul than other cities?

64. What terms describe Paul in the Athenian eyes?

65. Summarize Paul's sermon.

66. In what way(s) did Paul differentiate between the Christian God and those of his hearers?

67. Is all the human race of one origin?

68. Do people yet today consider themselves better than others because of birth, wealth, etc.?

69. If you were in Paul's place, what would you preach?

70. Is there anything more powerful to preach than a resurrected Christ and universal judgment?

71. What were the results of Paul's sermon?

72. Do you suppose God directed Paul in remarks? (Read Matthew 10:17-20; I Thess. 2:13; Gal. 1:11,12).

LESSON FIVE

(18:1-22)

In Corinth, 18:1-17

18 *After this he left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them; 3 and because he was of the same trade he*

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stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers. 4 And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks. synagogue every

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. 6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go the Gentiles." 7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. 9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision. "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; 10 for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city." 11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack upon Paul and brought him before the tribunal, 13 saying, "This man is persuading men to worship God contrary to the law." 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "It if were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, I should have reason to bear with you, O Jews; 15 but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I refuse to be a judge of these things." 16 And he drove them from the tribunal. 17 And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to this.

V. 1 - Though some believed in Athens, Paul either had to leave or thought it best to leave. Hence, he went to the trade capital of Greece, Corinth, some 45 miles southwest of Athens, situated on the Isthmus that provided passageway from the Aegean Sea to the Adriatic, and thence to Rome.

The city is famous in history for its bad character which doubtless made all sorts of difficulty for the people in the church. Nevertheless the people needed Christ, and Paul was the man to do it. The two letters to the Corinthian brethren are doubtless the most helpful letters of any we have in the areas of understanding relationships in Christ, of brethren to each other, how to take care of church problems, what to do about support of preachers, how to live in the world but not be of the world, etc. Additionally, reading of the two epistles to Thessalonica both written during this time in Corinth, will aid in understanding Paul's spirit while in Corinth. (See, for example, II Thess. 3:2).

V. 2 - Aquila was probably from the Pontus next to Bithynia, and lived in Rome until Claudius drove (all) Jews out about the 9th year of his reign, approximately A.D. 49-50. They had therefore been in Corinth for some time, since it is now approximately A.D. 51-52.

V. 3 - It is not stated that Aquila and Priscilla were Christians, but if not they evidently became so before too much time had passed. Paul made reference in 20:34 that he worked in Ephesus, and in II Thess. 3:6ff, about working in Thessalonica (though he received financial help while there from the Philippians, 4:14-16). He wrote in II Cor. 12:13 that he was not a financial burden to the Corinthians.

V. 4 - Many Jews (a stone has been found in Corinth that probably had on it the words: "synagogue of the Jews") would be present in a place like Corinth, where business opportunities would be excellent. Paul kept reasoning with them.

V. 5 - Paul had left orders for Silas and Timothy to come when possible (17:15) and so they did come, bringing gifts from the Macedonians (I Thess. 3:6, II Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15). Timothy was evidently sent back to Thessalonica with the first epistle to the church there. The gifts of money (all evidence that brethren were supporting him) apparently freed Paul from tent-making so that he could increase his efforts, and doubtless also was

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aided by Timothy and Silas. (See II Cor. 1:19, and the Thessalonian epistles). He was compelled by the word to speak of Jesus as the Christ.

V. 6 - The Jews, like others previous, arrayed themselves against Paul, blaspheming the message he proclaimed. He, as before, left them, after warning them of the consequences of their choice. His statement was like that in Acts 20:26, and to the effect that he was not responsible for their damnation (see Ezek 3).

V. 7 - The scene of labor barely changes to the house next door, and the work goes on, with evident success (v. 9).

V. 8 - As is evident elsewhere, Jews and Greeks were convicted through the preached word. We note that some of the Corinthians were of bad backgrounds (I Cor. 6:9-11). Crispus is mentioned in I Cor. 1. His reception of Christianity undoubtedly was a major factor in the response of others.

V. 9 - Noting I Cor. 2:3, this action of God is most impressive. NASV correctly translates the Greek: Paul was to stop being afraid and to keep speaking, not becoming silent. Certainly the apostle well knew what Jewish hatred could do, as well as the wrath of Gentiles (see v. 12). The foreknowledge of God is displayed here. The human agency God used to accomplish his will. God had chosen Paul for a rugged life, but often encouraged Paul in a personal way.

V. 10 - **I have many people** - Perhaps this was partially prophetic, and would then have been a great encouragement to Paul.

V. 11 - Whether this is an inclusive statement of time, or to be considered apart from the time in v. 18, we have no knowledge. At any rate, Paul spent much time preaching to people, helping them become Christian and continuing with them to help them grow. He evidently did not practice what is sometimes said: "No one has the

right to hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once."

V. 12 - Gallio became proconsul (under the Roman senate) in July A.D. 51. So we know about when Paul was there. Gallio ruled one year, then left.

The court was a place of judgment which was located near the agora (market place). In recent years, excavation has been done, and the agora uncovered. It had an elevated platform for the bema (Latin rostra), which is undoubtedly the exact spot where Paul stood. The agora itself was surrounded by various shops where food, etc. could be bought. An underground tunnel for water supplies connected all the ships. The main roads leading to Corinth's two ports (Lechaian and Cenchreae) led away from this agora. A stone with the name Erastus, commissioner of public works, has recently been found; perhaps the same man as in Romans 16:24.

V. 13 - The charge was ambiguous: whose law was being broken, and in what way? Gallio was too sharp for the Jews, however, and refused to judge the case. Paul was indeed stirring people up by persuasion, but that was not necessarily unlawful.

V. 15 - Gallio stated that Paul was not a criminal, one who worked deceit, or a doer of evil. Therefore, he would not honor their charges. (This is somewhat the same thing as in seen later in Acts when Paul is arrested in Jerusalem, and is tried before Felix, etc.) His sentence had the effect of protecting Christianity by law, since the Jewish religion was approved under law, and Gallio had refused to make Christianity a separate thing.

V. 17 - This action may have pleased Gallio, since it might have given tacit approval to the onlookers that his decision was correct. I Cor. 1:1 mentions a Sosthenes. The name was common, but it is surely more than a coincidence that it appears in both accounts.

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At Cenchreae, 18:18

18 After this Paul stayed many days longer, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he cut his hair, for he had a vow.

V. 18 - Paul had a “scissors cut” in Cenchreae (in Acts 21, the word is “shave”, not “cut”). Cenchreae was the eastern port of Corinth. From Rom. 16, it appears that a congregation was evidently there, though we are not told how it began.

The vow Paul took has always been a point of contention. It was possible to become a Nazarite for a time, but why would Paul do so, since it generally involved abstinence from wine, etc., which Paul probably did not drink anyway. Since the hair was cut, not shaved, it may have been in connection with some other type of vow. Any or all of the law could be kept, as long as it was not kept for the purpose of redemption. Many Christians kept it, at least major points in it, as is evident here and elsewhere. Again, the reason for keeping it would be paramount.

In Ephesus, 18:19-21

19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself went into the synagogue and argued with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined; 21 but on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus.

V. 19 - Whether Ephesus was his intended stop in Asia is a guess. Maybe he was trying to see where the work could be done at some future time, though intending now to go to Antioch.

argued - The same procedure as in Thessalonica, 17:2, and the other places he has been.

Priscilla and Aquila evidently went back to Rome later, since A.D. 57 finds them in Rome (Rom. 16:3).

V. 21 - Ephesus was the capital of Asia, across the Aegean Sea from Greece, home of Diana (Artemis) of the Ephesians. Paul, recognizing the presence of God’s will in his plans, promised to return. We can’t help but admire Paul for his never-ceasing efforts to win his countrymen (Rom. 9:1ff; 11:13ff).

At Caesarea, 18:22a

22 When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church.

In Antioch, 18:22b

and then went down to Antioch.

QUESTIONS

73. What do you know about Corinth?
74. Approximately what year was it when Paul was in Corinth?
75. Did Paul have the right to be supported by the Christians in Corinth? (ref. I Cor. 9; II Cor. 12)
76. Why does the apostle always try to persuade people? Would this mean that God did not make them become Christians, but rather left each to decide what course life would take?

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LESSON SIX

(18:23 - 19:41)

The Third Missionary Journey

18:23 - 21:16

In Antioch of Syria, 18:23a

Through the Provinces of Galatia and Phrygia, 18:23b

23 After spending some time there he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

V. 23 - Which church Paul greeted is uncertain, but he evidently wasted little time anywhere, going on to Antioch. After some time, he returned through his earlier places of work, and then back to Ephesus (19:1). Over 1,500 miles were covered on this account by Luke, who does not even mention the long days and weary bones Paul must have experienced. Sometimes God included or excluded the strangest things in his revelation to us.

At Ephesus, 18:24-19:41

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully confuted the

77. When Paul argued that Jesus was the Messiah, would this indicate that the Jews believed in a coming Messiah, but disagreed as to who it was? (Isn't it often the case that the "facts" are the same for all, but it is the interpretation thereof that brings the disagreement?)

78. Did Paul's persuasiveness convince any to believe in Jesus?

79. What did the Corinthians who were persuaded do (v. 8)?

80. Did Paul need encouragement even as we do?

81. Considering the charge brought against Paul by the Jews, were they correct, in some senses, that Paul was trying to get people to worship God contrary to the law?

82. What do you know about Priscilla and Aquila?

83. Were the Jews in Ephesus willing to hear Paul's case?

84. What expression did Paul use that would be good for us to use (and practice)? See James 4.

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Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

19 *While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." 4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 There were about twelve of them in all.*

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God; 9 but when some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, mastered all of them, and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks; and fear fell upon them all; and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. 18 Many also of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. 19 And a number of those

who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily.

21 Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 About that time there arose no little stir concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. 25 These he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 26 And you see and hear than not only at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable company of people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may count for nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

28 When they heard this they were enraged, and cried out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 So the city was filled with the confusion; and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. 30 Paul wished to go in among the crowd, but the disciples would not let him; 31 some of the Asiarchs also, who were friends of his, sent to him and begged him not to venture into the theater. 32 Now some cried one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, wishing to make a defense to the people. 34 But when they recognized he was a Jew, for about two hours they all with one voice cried out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 35 And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, what

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man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be contradicted, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against any one, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, there being no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” 41 And when he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

V. 24 - While the beginning of Paul’s third journey is taking place, Luke the historian treats us to a notable personage in the life of the Corinthians, Apollos by name. One of the world’s great libraries was at Apollos’ home city in Alexandria. It was a major center of Jewish learning (Philo the Jewish philosopher was alive at this time). The Greek version of the O.T. (the Septuagint, LXX, in Hebrew) was made there. Many of the great church scholars (like Origen) lived in Alexandria, where Christians came to study. Apollos was a man of learning (i.e. wisdom/words) in the Scriptures - a worthy goal for any of us.

V. 25 - Just how he got this particular combination of knowledge we know not. It is clear, however, how twelve men could be in Ephesus who had been immersed with John’s immersion, and not the immersion in the authority of Jesus.

V. 26 - There is a play on words in the Greek where v. 25 has Apollos speaking “accurately” while v. 26 has him being instructed “more accurately”.

V. 27 - Here is evidence of a letter of recommendation for Apollos, such as we find in II Cor. 8. Note here II Cor. 3:1ff, Apollos, put together much that was helpful to the believers in Corinth, not only from his own knowledge of the

Scriptures but also with new framework provided by Aquila and his wife.

V. 28 - Apollos may not have caused the Jews to believe but he did show that they were incorrect in their position. His influence was so great that some in Corinth made him their leader (I Cor 1:12ff). Paul says that Apollos watered 3:6. Note also 4:6 and 16:12.

We might do well to note that many Jewish teachers might have been better versed in their traditions than in the law. Apollos knew the Scriptures, which may be the reason why he had such success.

19:1 - As Paul begins his ministry, the time is probably A.D. 52 or A.D. 53. The city of Ephesus was the capital of the province called Asia (an area on the western end of modern Turkey, and about 200x 300 miles) which was governed by the Romans senate. All of the cities in Revelation 2 and 3 were located in Asia, Ephesus being described in Revelation 2:1-7. In Paul’s day it was a great commercial seaport on the south of the Cayster river. Now the ruins are some seven miles inland, since the harbor has filled up. Some of the ancient ruins can still be seen, including the amphitheater where the crowds went, v. 29. Note I Cor. 15:32.

The basic religion was that of Diana, the goddess of fertility, protectress of all young, a beneficent and helpful deity of the night; to whom the creatures of nature were sacred. The temple that was built was one the world’s seven wonders, and employed eunuchs (quite a difference from Greek religions) in the worship. The religion was Asiatic not Greek, though the Greeks called the goddess Artemis. Temples were also there to the Roman emperors Claudius, Hadrian and Severua.

The city was prominent in church history, and said to be the place where John spent his last years. One of the early church councils (A.D. 431) was held there, with the major topic of discussion being about the heresy of Nestorius, who was

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appointed bishop of Constantinople in A.D. 428. He had become popular in defending Christianity against various heresies then prevalent in that area. Cyril of Alexandria charged that Nestorius did not believe that Christ was really God in the flesh, but had two natures, thus was two distinct persons. Nestorius argued that Mary was only mother of the human side of Jesus, and the two natures were joined Siamese-twin fashion.

One of the points in Revelation 2:7 is a reference to the “tree of life”. A date tree was part of the things sacred to the goddess and the religion surrounding her.

V. 2 - The disciples (v. 1) must have been like Apollos, or like the apostles prior to the time they followed Jesus. They may have learned what they knew from Apollos himself, prior to his instruction from Aquila and Priscilla.

We should note that the text in King James is not as accurate as some of the later versions (i.e., “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since you believed? and they said unto him, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost”). The better translation is “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

Your guess is as good as mine as to the reason Paul asked the question. It might be that many people were ignorant of the facts about Jesus, to whom John pointed, even as was Apollos, and Paul had encountered such persons in his travels. Their answer might indicate they had not understood what John preached (either about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, etc.) or had not known much of what he preached. He did mention the Holy Spirit, but they may not have heard/understood.

V. 3 - As Paul’s question makes clear, any immersion is “into” something (i.e., purposive, achieving certain results). John’s immersion was on the basis of information received, acceptance of that message (i.e., repentance), thus producing a change of mind, and immersion as the commanded response, resulting in remission of sins (Mark 1:4).

What differences there were between it and Christian immersion could be summed up in 1) preaching of Jesus as the crucified, resurrected Savior and Lord, 2) immersion into Jesus and his body and church, and receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit. Implicit in this “new” message, would be the fact that John’s immersion was no longer valid.

V. 4 - As noted above, a major difference between what was preached/believed was in relationship to “the coming one” whom John preached, but denied that he was, and Jesus, who asserted he was “the coming one”.

V. 5 - Since their immersion was not valid (having been done after the time when it was right “to fulfill God’s righteousness” by being immersed by John, Matt. 3:15), they were obedient by obeying Jesus’ command about immersion. It is pertinent to remark that one’s interpretation of this text will be determined by several things, such as presuppositions, ideas about immersion, the Holy Spirit and the believer, spiritual gifts, etc.

V. 6 - As is evident elsewhere, we know 1) that the apostles could give to others gifts through their hands, and 2) excepting Acts 1 and 10, no one received the special gifts of the Holy Spirit except by the Apostles. The results in these disciples were 1) languages and 2) prophecy.

V. 8 - Because the Jews were already interested (18:20), Paul apparently had a longer time of reception here than elsewhere. We also note that it is still “to the Jew first”. He followed his same procedures: reasoning and (trying to) persuade those listening concerning the kingdom of God, the church.

V. 9 - Some listeners “hardened” themselves, refusing to be persuaded (thus disobedient) and spoke evil of (“blasphemed”) the “Way” (i.e., Christianity) before the crowd.

The Greek text says that Paul “apostasized” from them (i.e., withdrew) and separated the disciples from the rest, setting up shop in the school of Tyrannus. One Greek manuscript reads that Paul

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taught from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Greek term for school originally meant a place of leisure, then of learning. Many places throughout history have served as meeting places for instruction and learning by the church. I Cor. 16:19 has a group meeting in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. See also Philemon v. 2.

V. 10 - Since from Ephesus roads radiated everywhere throughout the country of Asia, the news about Jesus would soon be carried everywhere in the region. This may well be how the “seven” churches got started, even though Paul did not in person visit some of the various places (Col. 2:1). (It would really be good to read the Ephesian letter at this point in your study. Remember also that both the Corinthian letters were written from Ephesus during this period. Paul received and sent messengers to and from Corinth, and quite possible made a trip there himself during this three-year period, according to his statement in 20:31.

V. 11 - Since v. 12 explains that some of the mighty works were “out of the ordinary,” we may be helped to see why the message had such wide hearing. Demetrius helps us see how effective Paul’s work was, v. 23ff. A Roman governor of the area, Pliny, writing to the emperor Trajan about A.D. 100 gives ample evidence that Christians were numerous and everywhere.

We may note in passing that though it seems somewhat odd to put faith in such things as aprons (i.e., something one worked in), yet Elisha wanted Elijah’s mantle, the woman (Luke 8) wanted to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment, and Peter’s shadow was thought beneficial, 5:15. The way God chooses to work is his wisdom being expressed. Sometimes he works in people’s lives despite either foolish beliefs rather than because of such.

V. 13 - The Jews were evidently like others who used an oath to do their work. The word “exorcist” means ‘to exact/use an oath’ in incantations, etc. These particular Jews traveled about performing for their living.

The work of Paul in Jesus’ name evidently was considered powerful, and evidently also thought to be a means of making fame and fortune (what a cruel twist! yet true for many, II Cor. 2:17) by these Jews. They may have considered Paul one of their own people. They evidently thought that success turned on the use of the correct incantation rather than sustaining a right relationship with Jesus.

V. 15 - This remark of the demon is universal throughout the N.T. Never once did demons (K.J. ‘devils’) fail to recognize who Jesus is. Note also the knowledge of the demons about people.

V. 16 - As is clear from Matthew 8, some people indwelt by evil spirits were unusually powerful - this one obviously was. Doubtless to the chagrin of these Jews, the cause of Christ was magnified by this incident, which lends added impetus to the remark in v. 11. It seems that all seven sons were present, and overcome by the evil spirit. What a spot for the candid camera!

V. 17 - **Fear fell** - We may make little out of it, or quote I John 4:18 to justify our behavior, but Scripture makes much (esp. in Acts) about fear falling upon people with results following. Let us not minimize effect of fear in our preaching. At the end of Paul’s description of sinful people in Romans, he said that there was no fear of God in their eyes, 3:18. A proper fear of God is the basis for wisdom. The result was good here, as fear kept falling upon people, motivating repentance and confession of sin, coupled with the magnifying of Jesus’ name.

V. 18 - This text gives evidence of how repentance (changing of the mind) is a continuous process in the Christian life. Many things may cause a Christian to become more Christ-like - such as increased knowledge, or better understanding of how a text may apply, etc. Notice too that confession is not related to becoming a Christian, but is often needed in the Christian life.

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Many...came - The Greek text indicates that people kept coming as time went by.

V. 19 - This text seems to be speaking about those who were not disciples (as were those in v. 18), but who learned that what they were doing was not right. Some, however, think that believers were also involved, which is surely a possible interpretation.

V. 20 - Change impresses! And as peoples' lives were transformed, God's Word (as it was seen to affect the lives of people) became more of a force in the area, growing and becoming stronger day by day.

We remind the reader that Luke's summary of the work in Ephesus has been considered by some to be a division marker in Acts. The outline by Barclay (see the Introduction) follows this thesis.

V. 21 - From the Corinthian epistles, especially I Cor. 16 and II Cor. 1, Paul apparently had planned to do somewhat differently than our text indicates. As it turned out, he did go from Ephesus into Macedonia, then to Corinth, thence to Jerusalem. As Romans 1 and 15 show, he had long prayed about going to Rome, thence to Spain (the far end of the Roman Empire).

purposed in the Spirit - It is not clear whether this has reference to the Holy Spirit or simply to the fact that Paul decided within himself to go.

V. 22 - As I Cor. 4:17 and II Cor. 12:17-18 indicate, both Timothy and Titus were sent by Paul to Corinth while Paul was in Ephesus. Timothy and Erastus (who was from Corinth, Rom. 16:23) now go to Macedonia to prepare the brethren for Paul's coming, while he remains in Ephesus. Apparently the "great and effectual door" of I Cor. 16:8,9 was the reason. As we shall see, however, Paul left before Pentecost, primarily because of the "many adversaries."

two of his helpers - The Greek term is commonly transliterated as "deacon". Hence, Paul sent two who were "ministering" (serving) him to minister to others.

V. 23- **no little stir** - ("Same song, second verse") - The comments of Alexander indicate just how much success Paul was having. Certainly the epistles to Ephesus and Colossae, and Revelation chs. 2 and 3 shows how great the word of the Lord grew. The riot occurred about the time of Paul's departure from Ephesus into Macedonia, apparently.

"the Way" - Notice again this unique designation for Christianity. In ch. 9:2, Paul was going to Damascus to arrest any of "The Way"; in 16:17, we had "way of salvation"; in 18:26.

the way of God - In 19:9 the Jews spoke evil of the "Way"; in 22:4, Paul in recounting his life told of persecuting "this Way to the death"; and in 24:14 said "after the Way which they call a sect". In 24:22; Felix is described as having a "rather accurate knowledge of the Way." Other texts of interest here would be Romans 3:17; Hebrews 9:8; 10:20; James 5:20 and II Peter 2:2; 15; 21.

V. 24 - The vested interest of people, if contrary to Christianity, invariably caused opposition at some point in time. One's treasure location will determine his loyalty, and rarely does loyalty go unchallenged. In fact, if Christ is to be Lord, every loyalty will be tested.

From epistles written from Ephesus, consider I Cor. 15:30ff and II Cor. 1:8ff for some feeling about this time on Paul's part.

The name Demetrius is common. He may have been the leader of the silversmiths in Ephesus. We should note in passing that this Artemis (Diana) and the Greek goddess Artemis are not identical, though both were worshipped.

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V. 25 - The appeal is made to their living, not to their religion necessarily, though the workmen may have also worshipped Diana.

V. 26 - Paul's preaching had changed many. The message must have been in principle like that in Acts 17. Compare I Cor. 8:4-6.

V. 27 - Now, the additional motivation of the greatness of their religion is brought up, after that major point is emphasized about their own interests. So, their living and their honor were at stake!

V. 28 - Demetrius achieved the desired result! Inscriptions show that this was the usual cry in the worship of the goddess by the multitudes.

We note the mob spirit is frequently seen in the Acts account, that spirit of mindlessness that so often acts before thinking, and sometimes with tragic results. Recall the "mob spirit" in ch. 7 with Stephen, ch. 12 with Herod, ch. 14 at Lystra, ch. 16 in Philippi, ch. 17 in Thessalonica, ch. 18 at the agora, then in ch. 21 in the temple. Christianity does not pander to mob spirit or mob psychology in any form. It is a religion of saneness and soberness, intended for serious and solemn consideration of its claims, and teaches personal responsibility. True, the multitudes can be preached to, and encouraged to individually respond, but that is a far cry from mass methods of getting responses by frenzied singing, and other methods of mass hypnosis.

V. 29 - The crowd was confused (the Greek term means "poured together" as a flooding river) and rushed impetuously into the amphitheater (the ruins are still extant) which seated some 25,000.

Aristarchus and Gaius from Macedonia were taken along with the mob. As is evident in Acts 20, they were helping Paul deliver money to Jerusalem. These men doubtless also helped in the evangelistic endeavors of Paul.

V. 30 - Some think that Aquila and Priscilla may have had a hand in the matter (see also Rom. 16:3,4).

V. 31 - Asiarchs were rulers of the province. These men were generally ten (10) in number, chosen from the various cities in the area. They supervised the emperor worship, public festivals and games, and from them was chosen the high priest of the emperor cult. They, as well as the disciples, probably considered that Paul would lose his life in the rioting crowds.

V 32- **the assembly - the church.** The Greek term regularly translated church means any assembly, from local to national or in a religious sense, a group of people associated together, having a common bond. The term is used both collectively and individually. There is little reason to use the etymology that some do (i.e., "to call out"). The word simply meant an assembly, whether "called out" or not.

V. 34 - A Jew was not acceptable, even though he tried to give a defense (Greek: apologia).

V 35 - The city of Ephesus had a proconsul (v. 38) who lived there, but the town clerk was an elected official from the local group, who would answer to the proconsul. He would be in charge of the city records and finances, etc. His opening remarks show that he knew how to handle the mob.

V. 36 - **No one can assert differently** he says, and then suggests that they do not rush headlong into anything, since (v. 40) their defense to the proconsul would be weak.

V. 37 - Though the two friends of Paul were not technically guilty of the charges he suggested, they were united with Paul in what he preached, as described by Demetrius in v. 26. The ultimate end of Paul's message would be opposition (blasphemy) against Artemis.

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V. 38 - The place for the trial was the agora (market place) where such things were heard (v. 39, and as in Acts 18), not by such a gathering as this.

V. 39 - This matter, and all others, were to be settled in legal, orderly fashion and at an assembly, the Roman way. (Consider this in reference to the uproar before Pilate's judgment seat, and the pressure he had, with his background in mind.) This region had the essence of the democratic process, and it was only proper that such matters should be handled therein.

V 40 - He reminded them that they could be accused/charged (as in v. 38) with unlawful proceedings, and should therefore come to their senses quickly. Otherwise the proconsul will demand an account of their disorderliness.

V. 41 - The authority of this man is seen by this verse. We should note that both Gaius and Aristarchus and Luke were together on the journey to Jerusalem. They probably furnished Luke with his information about this event.

QUESTIONS

85. Can you trace the three journeys of Paul, giving Scripture limitations and cities visited?

86. Describe Apollos.

87. What is the meaning of the phrase in 18:27 "those who through grace had believed"?

88. Describe the difference(s) between the immersion as practiced by John and the immersion of Christians.

89. How did Luke describe the activity of Paul in the synagogue in Ephesus?

90. What was the extent of Paul's work in the two-year span at Ephesus?

91. Describe the men who attempted to do miracles in Jesus' name.

92. What was the extent of knowledge of the world and people in it that the demon indicated? (Would this indicate how difficult the "war" is in which we are engaged, according to Ephesians 6:10ff.?)

93. What good result came to pass in Ephesus from the victory of the evil spirit?

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94. Were the Christians in Ephesus learning what being Christian in both thought and practice meant?
95. How did Luke describe the progress being made by God's word?

96. Approximately what year is it, as Paul concludes his work in Ephesus?

97. What descriptions of the Church and the Christians did Luke use in Acts?

98. What reasons did Demetrius have for opposing Paul?

99. How many times do you find the "mob spirit" in Acts? (Is it still evident in our time?)

100. What evidence do you see of the "democratic process" in Ephesus? (Remember that some of our government processes come from the Romans.)

101. What term used to describe the church also was used to describe the crowds in the theater?

LESSON SEVEN (20:1-38)

In Macedonia, 20:1,2

20 *After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples and having exhorted them took leave of them and departed for Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through these parts and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.*

V. 1 - Paul took leave from Ephesus, probably in the year A.D. 55 or 56, during the spring/summer. We recall that Timothy and Erastus were already in Macedonia, 19:22.

V. 2 - How much time he spent there in Macedonia is unknown. (Compare Romans 15:19). It is quite possible that II Corinthians was written during this trip. Titus finally arrived in Macedonia from Corinth (II Cor. 7:5ff) and helped lift an offering from those churches. He apparently took II Corinthians to Corinth, ahead of Paul's arrival there.

At Corinth in Greece, 20:3-5

3 There he spent three months and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia. 4 Sopater of Beroea, the son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These went on and were waiting for us at Troas,

V. 3 - While in Greece (Corinth), most think that Romans and Galatians were written. Because of the Jewish plot, instead of sailing to Syria, he went by land back through Macedonia. Thus from v. 1 to v. 6, most of a year had elapsed, in which time Paul was active in many ways.

V. 4 - All the men were chosen from the various churches in Macedonia and elsewhere to help with the collection being made for the Judean brethren, and some were evidently used to help evangelize also. The men sailed to Troas, awaiting Paul who was coming through Macedonia by land, with Luke as his companion. It is noticeable that

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Paul's party was careful with the offerings, doubtless thinking both of thieves and any who might be suspicious concerning Paul's integrity (cf. II Cor. 8:20,21).

V. 5 - Luke again became an eyewitness to the account we are studying.

At Philippi, 20:6a In Troas, 20:6b-13

6 but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 There were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered. 9 And a young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window. He sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer; and being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down and bent over him, and embracing him said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." 11 And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. 12 And they took the lad away alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there; for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land.

V. 6 - **the days of unleavened bread** - a point in time by the Jewish calendar. It has been at least a year since I Corinthians was written from Ephesus (note 1 Cor. 16) and it is now A.D. 56,57. As II Cor. 2:12 shows, Paul had been to Troas the preceding fall, but had not stayed, because of his concern for the report of Titus who was coming from Corinth.

V. 7 - This oft-quoted text shows the practice of the brethren in Troas. The churches in Corinth and Galatia (I Cor. 16:2) evidently had the same practice. The early churches evidently met on Sunday, and did not observe Saturday as a liturgical

day for 300 years. It seems evident that the early Christians understood that the fourth command was a part of the law that was made void in Christ.

The few records we have of the early centuries show some divergence in practice among the churches in regard to Sunday. In Bithynia, a service about dawn included singing, prayer and vows to lead holy lives. In the evening they observed the communion and other things such as confession of sins, preaching, etc. In some areas, the communion service was separate from the fellowship meal (as it seemed to be in I Cor. 11).

Early church councils encouraged observance of Sunday, and inveighed against Sabbath observance (because of Jews often attempted to Judaize those who observed the Sabbath). Little was said about rest on the Lord's Day, since many Christians were slaves and could not do so, while others recognized that the N.T. said nothing about rest in order to observe Sunday. It wasn't until the 6th century that manual labor was forbidden for Christians on Sunday.

Probably one of the major reasons why the early Christians felt so free to change days of worship was their recognition that Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath had the prerogative to change that day if he chose to do so. It seems clear from Romans 14 that one might hold one day above another, and others consider all to be alike. However, such differences of belief did not involve observance of Sunday or another day as a required part and parcel of his salvation. That sort of thinking essentially would make Christianity into a legal system. One must be careful that such does not happen, because it is rather easy to do so.

Justin (2nd century) argued that Sunday observance was proper because God began his creative work on the day, and Jesus arose on that day. All the "Church Fathers" used the expression "Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10) to refer to Sunday. From that time to this, Christians have kept Sunday as the day of worship, albeit in varying manners.

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As mentioned above, by the mid-second century the early morning worship had become the norm. In Justin Martyr's description, Sunday worship was composed of 1) immersions (if any), 2) preaching, 3) prayers, 4) Lord's Supper.

The problem with our text is: What system of time (Jewish or Roman) did Luke use? Since they were in Roman territory, and away from the area of Palestine, it is more probable that the meeting began on Sunday evening, and lasted until Monday morning.

V. 9 - The late hour, long speech, flickering lights: all proved too much for Eutychus, forever immortalized by those who follow in his train during preaching.

V. 10 - Paul repeated what Elijah (I Kings 17:21) and Elisha (II Kings 4:34) did. He cut off the tumult they were making (see Mark 5:39), and restored Eutychus to life.

V. 11 - **he conversed** - From the Greek we get our word "homily" or "sermon".

V. 12 - This verse shows that the boy was dead, but came back to life.

V. 13 - Troas was some 20-25 miles north of Assos, and about 150 miles north of Miletus.

At Assos, 20:14a

At Mitylene, 20:14b

Over against Chios, 20:15a

At Samos, 20:15b

In Miletus, 20:15c-38

14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. 15 And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening to

be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews: 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I now that all you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

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36 And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept and embraced Paul and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they brought him to the ship.

Luke notes that they “touched” at Samos (v. 15). Our word “parable” comes from the Greek word behind “touched” which implies a point of contact, etc. Miletus was about 28 miles south of Ephesus. It used to be an important city, but Ephesus eclipsed it. Like Ephesus, it is now several miles from the sea, the harbor being filled up with silt.

V. 16 - Paul left Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread (Passover) and intended to arrive in Jerusalem some 50 days later at Pentecost. We remember that an offering for the Judean brethren was being taken by Paul and those with him.

V. 17 - Unwilling to pass by Ephesus altogether, Paul called the elders there to him. We note that the Ephesian congregation had elders soon after its beginning, just as the congregation in Derbe, etc., did.

elders - Note that in v. 28, the Greek words for overseers (“guardians”) and shepherd (“to feed”) are used to describe these men. In the second century, bishops (overseers) were elevated over other elders as church polity began to depart from the Biblical pattern. Titus 1:5 and 1:7 will show that the terms were applied to the same man. etc. In I Peter 5:1-4, all three terms are used.

As is clear, these Christian men loved each other, although the Ephesian letter does not tell us as clearly as this account does. It will be good to recall that Timothy probably served the church in Ephesus - so read I Tim. in this light.

V. 18 - Not to detract from the importance of the text, and what is said - it is yet pertinent to note the similarities and differences from the other recorded speeches in Acts. As someone has said,

“It is most of Paul and least of Luke.” Luke probably did not hear the other speeches of Paul and Peter, but this one he did hear. The speech itself, when compared to Paul’s epistles, leaves little doubt as to the one giving it.

Again, call to mind the problems that he endured with the Corinthians (especially evident in the II Corinthian letter), and then meditate upon Paul’s appeal to these men regarding his ministry among them.

V. 19 - **serving** - The common word for slave/servant. The word was used by Jesus (Matt. 20:27) to describe the relationship that should exist of each Christian to the other. Note Matthew 6:24; Romans 12:11.

Paul did so with the Christian virtue (but considered anything but a virtue in the pagan world), lowliness of mind (Matt. 11:29; Isa. 53) and tears (note v. 31; II Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18); and in all these with knowledge that the Jews were continually attempting to silence him. (See Rom. 10:21) It certainly wasn’t a carefree life!

plots of the Jews - Some have been described for us in previous chapters, though doubtless many others occurred that Luke does not mention.

V. 20 - Paul, in spite of great difficulties, yet withheld not one thing he thought profitable to these people. One with less commitment might draw back for fear of others, but Paul publicly and privately served them.

house to house - I Cor. 16:9 mentions the house of Aquila and the church that met there.

V. 21 - **testifying** to everyone (in the synagogues, school of Tyrannus, and in their homes) about their need to repent towards God (i.e., recognize their sin and make right their relationship to God) and place trust in Jesus Christ as Lord (which act permits God to forgive their sins through the redemption in Christ Jesus). Thus, the basic

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gospel message was given to everyone in Ephesus/Asia. Peter “testified” (same word) in Acts 2:40.

We need not feel amiss in preaching the same basic message, even if immersion is not mentioned, per se. Immersion is only necessary when the mind has been changed in regard to God’s will and God’s son (Jesus). Trust in Christ will lead to obedience to him as Lord. Immersion is the action taken upon recognition of Jesus’ lordship over one’s life.

We need to realize that word order, per se, is not a very good basis for arguing what a person is to do, and in what order it is to be done. Consider here the fact that we often use Mark 16:15-16 in this fashion; arguing that since belief precedes immersion in the text, therefore, we must have faith prior to immersion. Our assertion about faith and immersion may well be correct, but it is not so just because one word proceeds another. Rather it is so because of the nature of the case. Otherwise, if we argue on the basis of word order, we must repent before we believe. The actual fact is, that when a person accepts Jesus as Lord, said person repents (i.e., changes the mind) in that act. To transfer trust/belief from something/someone to Jesus is a change of mind, and begins a life of mind changing until the mind of the flesh becomes as the mind of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13,14), so that the total person is an accurate, constant reflection of Jesus.

V. 22 - Despite warnings already received (v. 23) and those later from brethren in Tyre and Caesarea who spoke through “the Spirit” Paul will go to Jerusalem. I assume that the Holy Spirit revealed to these various ones the things that awaited Paul, and they on their own urged him not to go on that basis. Any other position means Paul disobeyed direction from the Holy Spirit which seems a doubtful possibility. It is better to hold that Paul had decided to go to Jerusalem, taking the collection with him, trusting that he would be able to serve profitably. (We note in passing that Luke does not mention any particular reason why Paul

was going to Jerusalem, though he knew about the offering, which Paul mentions in 24:17).

V. 23 - The Holy Spirit informed Paul, through many people, what awaited him in Jerusalem and would still be there when he arrived. Few of us could view the distant scene in such clear fashion and yet continue. Jesus knew what awaited him in Jerusalem, and yet continued. We may well rejoice that God does not reveal what lies ahead, and rather helps us take one step at a time.

V. 24 - **do not account** - The Greek says “Nothing of account I make my soul.” restated: My own life I consider to be as worth nothing. The reason for this is that the ministry he had received (bearing witness to the good news of God’s grace) was worth infinitely more than his life.

course - The Greek term means a way, a race, what is laid out ahead.

grace of God - The good news was about God’s grace, manifested in his son, Jesus.

V. 25 - It seems evident that Paul did not expect to see them again. However, from such passages as I Tim. 1:3; 3:14; 4:13; II Tim. 4:13, 20, an impression is given that perhaps he did see them again.

kingdom - Note that to preach the Gospel, v. 24, is to preach the church, and the kingdom, a synonymous entity; Christians being made and becoming a part of Jesus’ body.

V. 26 - Paul says: I did not fail in any regard to tell you all that was my duty to tell you. Clearly, every person, preacher or otherwise, ought to strive for that same goal. Just as clearly, however, is the fact that such a statement is a personal judgment which may not be shared by some or any. There are always those who feel that more could have been said or done. Somewhat disturbing is the fact that more could often have been done. Without questioning Paul’s testimony about himself, it appears to me that few if any get

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done all that is possible to do, even if one has a good conscience at the time. Hence, God's grace will doubtless be needed by most of us. Happily, God doesn't ask for perfection in us, just faithfulness.

innocent - The Greek term means pure, clean, thus innocent, not being the cause for any of them being lost.

V. 27 - Paul had come to them preaching the kingdom (v. 25), and "all the counsel of God." He spoke of the "church" in v. 28 as the effect of what was done. I assume that the church and the kingdom are identical, as far as the counsel/will/plan of God for us is concerned. Notice Ephesians 1:11 (1:3-14) and 3:1-11 in this vein.

V. 28 - The idea of flock and the shepherd is a prominent idea in the O.T. (Psalms 23; Ezek. 34; etc.) and evident in Jesus' teaching (Matt. 9:36; Luke 15:3-7; John 10.) The Holy Spirit had apparently made/placed the men as overseers of the flock through such instructions as are in I Tim. 3. Stated differently, I assume (believe) that the Holy Spirit directed the apostle(s) and the N.T. writers to spell out that which was wanted. In following said directions, the Holy Spirit would be responsible for the effects (in this case, elders in the Ephesus assembly).

Much argument has surrounded this verse, since the Greek texts vary between "church of God" and "church of (the) Lord." The reason is that the next phrase speaks of his blood. If "Lord" be the correct reading, no particular problem arises. If "God" be correct, then God shed his blood. To many, both then and now, to ascribe deity to Christ was bad enough, but to have God shedding his blood was too much. Hence, many scribes through the centuries wrote in the word their theology dictated. (A similar verse is John 1:18) The issue then is about the person of Jesus, his total nature, including the ideas of divinity and humanity uniting in one person. If Jesus were deity in flesh, then the text could correctly read that God could die (shed

his blood) to purchase the church. We so believe and teach.

V. 29 - Jesus had spoken of wolves (John 10:12) but not their source. Here Paul states the same fear, and I Tim. 1:20 shows that he spoke truly. Check Revelation 2:2.

V. 30 - As is plain in the several epistles, all kinds of false doctrine was taught, by those in and out of the assemblies. Some room for differences must be made, but some consideration of motives must also be made. Paul accused Elymas of perverting God's word in 13:10.

V. 31 - **be alert** - Watch or be careful. Jesus used this idea, as in Matthew 25:13, etc. Paul tried to admonish/warn/put sense into every person so that they would not be children, but mature in faith. The references to his own ministry among them had the purpose of helping the elders see what true leaders would do, their manner of life, etc. When the "wolves" came along, or men teaching perverse things, they could remember Paul's example and use it as a means of judgment.

V. 32 - The apostles knew that God's word, carefully followed, could do for them what nothing else could. It is surely obligatory upon us to teach God's Word if such results can be obtained.

Paul often wrote about building people up, and of the inheritance awaiting Christians. I Peter 1 speaks of Christians and their inheritance. Jude, v. 20 has "build yourselves up on your most holy faith."

In 14:23, Paul had committed the Christians there to the Lord; here to the word of his grace.

V. 33 - This verse doubtless counters accusations made against Paul by some perhaps on account of the offering he was taking to Jerusalem. Note II Cor. 12:11-18.

V. 34 - I Cor. 4:12 states that Paul worked to supply his own needs, as we know from Acts. Verse 35 will elaborate this point.

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Several times in his epistles, Paul encourages toil as in II Thess. 3 and Eph. 4:28. See Matthew 11:28.

V. 35 - Often Paul encouraged Christians to follow his example, and evidently always attempted to set before them a good example.

We surely understand the happy state of affairs in receiving from others, but doubtless also realize that more happiness is ours in giving to others (if giving is done freely, without thought of return. See Luke 6:27-36; 14:12-14; Matt. 5:43-48). Since this quotation is not in our extant Gospels, it has always caused men to wonder how much Paul knew of Jesus' teachings, and how much more was known than was written down for posterity.

V. 37 - The word for "kiss" is often translated "love". These men had learned and grown together, and loved one another in Christ.

V. 38 - **the face** - The Hebrew way of speaking about one's person/self.

QUESTIONS

102. Verses 3 and 19 speak of Jewish plots. Did Luke record any of these for us?

103. Who all was going with Paul to Jerusalem?

104. Why were these men traveling with him?

105. About what time of the year was it when the group left Philippi for Troas?

106. Does Luke state why Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem, or be there by Pentecost?

107. What terms describe the men from Ephesus that Paul called unto him?

108. How did Paul describe his ministry at Ephesus?

109. What had the Holy Spirit told Paul about the trip to Jerusalem?

110. What was more important to Paul than his own life?

111. Can one be innocent of the blood of another if the other person is yet unsaved?

112. Is the phrase "the whole counsel of God" defined for us?

113. What relationship did Paul say the elders had to the church in Ephesus?

114. For what reason(s) would the elders need to be watchful of themselves and of the flock?

115. What two things is God's Word capable of doing in a person's life?

116. Is it not a blessing to receive something?

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117. What command of Jesus had the men evidently obeyed? (cf. John 13:34-35)

LESSON EIGHT

(21:1-40)

At Cos, 21:a

At Rhodes, 21:1b

At Patara, 21:1c-2

21 *And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set sail.*

V. 1 - Cos was a famous place, Hippocrates and Apelles having been born there. There was also a great medical school there.

V. 2 - **Phoenicia** - This country, with its two main cities of Tyre and Sidon, had its major source of revenue from shipping, being a poor agricultural land.

In the Sight of Cyprus on the Left, 21:3a

At Tyre, 21:3b-6

3 When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. 4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. 5 And when our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were outside the city; and kneeling down on the beach we prayed and bade one another farewell. 6 Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

V. 3 - The ship was a larger one than they had previously used, a cargo ship, able to sail across the open seas. From the seven-day stay, it may have taken that long to unload its cargo and load it again in preparation for sailing.

V. 4 - The same general message was given Paul here as previously. As commented before, the Spirit had revealed to many that trouble awaited Paul in Jerusalem. On this basis, various ones were urging him not to go. No one, including Paul, had received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that he was not to go to Jerusalem.

V. 5 - We note “children” being mentioned by Luke, which he (as all other writers) rarely does.

V.6 - There is an idiom in Greek here, found also in John 1:11 and 19:27, “the things of them” (i.e., their homes).

In Ptolemais, 21:7

7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the brethren and stayed with them for one day.

V. 7- Ptolemais (Acre, Accho) commanded the road down the sea coast from Phoenicia to Egypt. The Israelites apparently never controlled it, though they did control the area south of it.

Notice that brethren are found everywhere, as seems evident also in chapter 11.

Caesarea, 21:8-14

8 On the morrow we departed and came to Caesarea; and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 And he had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied, 10 While we were staying for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us he took Paul’s girdle and bound his own feet and hands and said, “ Thus says the Holy spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard

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this, we and the people there begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "The will of the Lord be done."

V. 8 - Caesarea was the major Roman center in Palestine, with a good harbor. The journey from Ptolemais to Caesarea seems to have been by land.

Philip - It has been many years since our last notice of Philip in chapter 8. There Luke says he was "evangelizing" (8:40), and so became known as an evangelist (a bringer of good news). Consider that he is not designated a deacon which is a common mistake, in that the word is much broader in its usage than we traditionally use it. Stated differently, an evangelist (such as Timothy, II Tim. 4:5) could be described by the Greek word normally translated "deacon" (as could an apostle, Acts 20:24; Romans 11:13), as well as any who served others.

V. 9 - This verse brings up the point of women and their place in the church life. That God often used women in public worship and things of religion in general is obvious in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament (I Cor. 11). What seems to this writer quite as obvious is that they are to be under the authority of men, both in and out of the assembly (i.e., in public and at home). As I see it, no other restrictions than these are enjoined upon them. Hence, they may or may not be permitted to do something/anything, depending upon the decision of the men/husband/elders present and responsible. The text in I Cor. 11 clearly shows the "chain of command." In chapter 14, silence was enjoined upon them unless they had a revelation from God, vs. 26-32. In I Tim. 2:11,12, the place of men and women is again spelled out: she is to be subject to man, as was stated fully in I Cor. 11. Hence, the issue is of authority, submission and obedience.

V. 10 - Agabus may be the same person who appeared in chapter 11. In my judgment, a prophet in the Bible is not equal to a preacher even though both may do some of the same things. As is here shown, the prophet foretold something through direction of God. Such is the distinct facet of a prophet but not of a preacher. There is no good reason to appropriate the word and apply it to a preacher anyway. Preacher is a perfectly good word, and descriptive of a biblical function.

V. 11 - Agabus stated, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, what had been already revealed to Paul and to others who then told Paul. As did Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others, he symbolically portrayed the coming events.

V. 13 - As at Miletus (20:24), Paul considered his task was to take the offering unto Jerusalem. In my opinion, he thought it necessary to do so, but had no revelation on the subject. Hence, it was purely a human judgment on his part. As before mentioned, Luke does not state any reason for Paul going to Jerusalem. Paul does in Romans 15:22ff.

V. 14 - Since they could not persuade Paul (i.e., make him believe as they believed), they left it as it was.

Their expression may indicate several things, such as 1) May Paul's decision be God's; 2) May God use Paul's decision to His glory; 3) We can't change Paul's mind, so let's quit trying. This was quite a different matter than that of Jesus in Luke 9:51, in that Jesus was under God's direction to go to Jerusalem.

At Jerusalem, 21:15,16

15 After these days we made ready and went up to Jerusalem 16 and some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

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V. 15 - After some preparation, they left Caesara to travel the 64 miles to Jerusalem.

V.16- Mnason of Cyprus (note Joseph/Barnabas, and others) provided hospitality. He evidently was a first generation disciple.

The Voyage to Rome At Jerusalem, 21:17-40

17 When we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present. 19 After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; 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 not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. 22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23 Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 24 take these men and purify yourself along with along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law. 25 But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity." 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself with them and went into the temple, to give notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for every one of them.

27 When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, who had seen him in the temple, stirred up all the crowd, and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching men everywhere against

the people and the law and this place; moreover he also brought Greeks into the temple, and he has defiled this holy place." 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. 30 Then all the city was aroused, and the people ran together; they seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple and at once the gates were shut. 31 And as they were trying to kill him, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. 32 He at once took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them; and when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the tribune came up and arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing, some another; and as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. 35 And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd; 36 for the mob of the people followed, crying, "Away with him!"

37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek? 38 Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" 39 Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; I beg you, let me speak to the people." 40 And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying:

V. 17 - The time of arrival was around the feast of Pentecost; late May or early June. As the group comes to Jerusalem, call to mind the long-standing hostility of the Jews toward Paul. Additionally, since it is around A.D. 58, the Jewish people were growing ever more restless under the Roman rule. They were being encouraged in such thought by various groups of zealots in their midst. Of course, at such a time as Pentecost, with thousands of Jews in the Jerusalem area, religious

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and patriotic feelings would naturally be higher, and tempers shorter on every hand. Into this sort of situation Paul arrived with a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles, who were Christians. A more explosive situation would be hard to find.

V. 18 - Apparently the elders were “overseeing” the disciples in Jerusalem, and were the leaders of the church there, as the New Testament teaches they should be. James was probably Jesus’ brother.

V. 19 - Paul, some years after chapter 15, again shows how God had used him to evangelize the Gentiles (cf Romans 15:16-20). Make note again that the Greek term for “deacon” is used by Paul to describe his activities (i.e., his ministry).

V. 20 - What the response was to the money Paul brought to Jerusalem we know not. He was justly concerned about how it would be received, Romans 15:25-32. The brethren did glorify God for what he had done through Paul, just as they did in Acts 11:18 in Peter’s case.

What seems to be of interest is the multitude of Christians, Jewish by birth and background, who yet kept the Mosaic law as a habit of life. This fact highlighted the issue of what the gospel message did to the Law. Doubtless, many were so clear on just what the relationship was (it is not much better today). My opinion is that any or most of the law could be kept, just as long as one did not view said practice as replacing Christ or in any way achieving one’s salvation. Evidently Paul felt something of the kind, viewing the incident in our text, with what he taught generally. It is, however, pertinent to consider that his understanding was not necessarily equal to his revelation. Hence, his practice may not always have been equal to what he preached on this occasion or elsewhere. (Ref. Acts 6:14 and Stephen).

thousands -The Greek word is “my hands”, equaling ten thousand in Acts 19:19, or a large number as in Luke 12:1; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11; etc.

V. 21 - Paul was not anti-Jewish in some senses of the term, as he himself asserted (and see Acts 24:14-15; 26:6-7). Jesus taught that Moses and the prophets pointed to Him, and were fulfilled in Him - so Paul taught. He was a Jew and practiced as a Jew (I Cor. 9:19; Acts 16:3; etc.), though not holding such practice to accomplish his salvation.

V. 22 - Since his arrival was known to all, the question was about what should be done (about clarifying Paul’s stand, or pacifying the fanatics among them, or how?). As v. 23 shows, they thought they had a way to resolve the issues before them.

V. 23 - The vow, perhaps a Nazirite vow of short duration, could be countenanced without a compromise of the law or the gospel, or so they thought. Note here Numbers 6:1-5., and Acts 18:18.

V. 24 - Paul is to take the vow with these men. The idea of purify/cleanse occurs in the LXX at Numbers 6:1.

live in observance - It is pertinent to point out that though the plan seemed good, unless it was clearly explained to all, anyone who did not know differently could have concluded that Paul was like all other Jews. There was nothing particularly Christian about keeping any of the law, per se. Anyone should know that unless one explains what one is doing, those watching may draw any conclusion. God sent Jesus as an example of his love, but he did not neglect to spell out the fact. Jesus died on a cross, but it was simply a death until God stated what the death meant.

V. 25 - The elders believed they understood what Paul held true and were in agreement therewith. This verse is a record of the attempt to keep the record straight as far as they are concerned.

V. 26 - Some suggest that the costs would be considerable for all five men, even if the charges

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were just those for a Nazirite (Num. 6:13ff). How Paul had this money is not known.

V. 27 - We suppose that Luke mentions the Asian Jews for two reasons: 1) they would know Paul's position well, and 2) also know Trophimus. In passing, we note that they had come to Jerusalem for the Pentecost feast. They "stirred up" the crowds, just as the people in Ephesus were stirred up (the same Greek word in both places).

V. 28 - The charges they pronounced against Paul were serious and were intended to bring such action upon him as would (evidently) take his life. They said that he had defiled (Greek term "made common") the holy place (i.e., the place not common to everyone).

V. 29 - Whether they really supposed that Paul had done as they charged, or simply used Trophimus as an excuse for what they did is anyone's guess.

V. 30 - Since the Jews had the right to protect the temple grounds, their actions were in accord with their rights, insofar as the temple was concerned. Paul was apparently dragged outside the court reserved for Jews into the court for the Gentiles. The terms for "seize" and "drag" were used in ch. 16 when Paul was in Philippi.

V. 31 - We recall that the Romans kept guard in the tower of Antonia at the N.W. corner of the grounds. Any such riot as this was would quickly attract the soldier's attention.

cohort - At full strength, 1,000 men

tribune - The commander, who would have centurions under him.

V. 32 - It is somewhat of a miracle that the soldiers arrived in such good time. We assume that God had further use for Paul. The crowd was beating Paul. The Greek term is often seen in English, transliterated as "type." It originally meant to leave a mark, imprint, etc. Paul doubtless

believed they were leaving their marks (note Gal. 6:17).

V. 33 - The Roman (chiliarch) tribune, Claudius Lysias, assumed Paul was guilty of something, and inquired of what. Remember that one could be an Egyptian and still be Jew.

V. 34 - As noted under v. 27, the identical terms were used in Acts 19:31,32. Because of the crowd's confusion, Paul was taken to the tower, or the barracks. It has been well remarked that a crowd (mob) can be equally dangerous whether they know a reason for their action or not.

V. 35 - The Jews may have stopped beating Paul, but they were still very upset!

V. 36 - They shouted, "Away with him" which is equal to "kill him". See Luke 23:18; Acts 8:33; 13:28.

V. 38 - As is evident, Paul was not who Lysias thought him to be: an Egyptian. Perhaps he had drawn this conclusion from something said by the crowd. "Assassin" comes from a word meaning "short sword".

There were many efforts such as mentioned in those days, which was one reason why the Romans sent an army to quell a Jewish rebellion, and end the matter by destroying the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

V. 39 - Paul politely reveals his true identity, and ends with a somewhat surprising request.

V. 40 - We should probably understand that Paul spoke Aramaic, a kindred language to Biblical Hebrew, and the common dialect among the Jews at that time. As he faced the crowd, perhaps the comments made in vs. 20-21 about the Jewish conceptions of him can be seen more clearly. Certainly some Jews thought him an apostate.

QUESTIONS

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118. Did the travelers expect and receive hospitality from Christians along the way to Jerusalem?

119. Why does Luke describe Philip as an evangelist and not a deacon?

120. Did Philip's daughters have to prophecy to someone besides the Christians in assembly since they had to remain silent in said assembly?

121. Did Paul know to some extent what lay before him in Jerusalem?

122. About what time of year is it?

123. Does it seem as if the elders in Jerusalem were in agreement with Paul's work?

124. What did it mean to glorify God?

125. Could the people described in 21:20 have been like those in 15:5?

126. How would Paul taking a vow pacify the Jews?

127. Was Paul directed by God to do what he did, or was the action merely of man's wisdom?

128. In what way(s) was the charge in v. 28 true of Paul? False?

129. Is a mob equally dangerous whether the issue is clear or not?

130. Was Roman citizenship valuable?

LESSON NINE

(22:1-23:35)

The Voyage To Rome At Jerusalem. 22:1-30

22 *“Brethren and fathers, hear the defense which I now make before you.”*
And when they heard that he addressed them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet. And he said: 3 “I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. 6 “As I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.’ 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the

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voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do' 11 And when I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

12 "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And in that very hour I received my sight and saw him. 14 And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know this will, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' "

17 "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get quickly out of Jerusalem, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' 19 And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in thee. 20 And when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by and approving, and keeping the garments of those who killed him.' 21 And he said to me, 'Depart; for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' "

22 Up to this word they listened to him; then they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he ought not to live." 23 And as they cried out and waved their garments and threw dust into the air, 24 the tribune commanded him to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by scourging to find out why they shouted thus against him 25 But when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen, and uncondemned?" 26 When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen." 27 So the tribune came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." 28 The tribune answered, "I bought

this citizenship for a large sum." "But I," replied Paul, "was born a Roman citizen." 29 So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him instantly; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

30 But on the morrow, desiring to know the real reason why the Jews accused him, he unbound him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.

22:1 - **My defense** - This address tells the history of Paul's conversion, in an attempt to present Christ to them as the reason for his conversion.

V. 2 - Paul's past life gave him a keen understanding of his people and their preferences. Using their language was a smart thing to do.

V. 3 - **Tarsus** - A great city in the Roman empire. However, his religious education (the Greek term translated "educated" is more often translated as discipline, as in Hebrews 12, etc. It was used in Luke 23:16 to describe what Pilate intended to do with Jesus) had been in Jerusalem under the direction of an illustrious Hebrew scholar, which doubtless impressed many in his audience. Moreover, he recognized their earnestness for the things of God, and admitted that he had been as they were, zealous for God. See 21:20.

strict manner - A careful and exact manner of life. See the root of this word in Luke 1:3; Acts 18:26; 24:22 and Ephesians 5:15.

V. 4 - **this Way** - Clearly understood as meaning Christianity. See here Philippians 3. Paul's confession was that his ignorance and unbelief brought him to do such things. Then the implication was that had he understood the law

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rightly, he would have believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

V. 5 - The high priest would have been Caiaphas. Probably some of the Sanhedrin remembered Paul well. Paul attempted to show how zealous he was for the law, and how right (correct) he considered himself to be though so very wrong. (This is a good time for us to consider why we believe as we do).

V. 6 - The fact that it was midday makes the “great light” all the more meaningful, as it flashed around him, brighter than the noonday sun.

V. 7 - His recollection of the event was vivid, especially the idea of him being a persecutor of the Lord.

V. 8 - The speaker is revealed as being Jesus from Nazareth. We know that Jesus was a common name then, so the further identification was required. The crux of the gospel is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the son of the living God. His hearers doubtless listened to this with great interest, since it said a great deal about the true character of Jesus.

The obstacle here, as far as the listeners were concerned, was that Jesus was God. But the greater obstacle, and more unacceptable, was the fact that salvation in Jesus was for the Gentiles (see v. 22). Recall Peter’s opening words in ch. 2:22.

V. 9 - Those in Paul’s party saw the light and heard the sound of the voice in Aramaic. They evidently did not hear the word or did not understand what they heard - only Paul understood.

V. 10 - How different Paul’s obedience to the Lord should have been from what it was! Many of us have in some degree, learned that our discipleship is not perfect either. The commendable point in Paul was that his allegiance to the Lord was such that he was willing to do as he was commanded even when it meant a radical conversion of his lifestyle.

V. 11 - The heavenly source of his blindness is disclosed: the glory of the light. Some interesting uses of the effects of light are in Paul’s epistles, such as II Cor. 3:7; 4:4-6.

V. 12 - Notice the mention that Ananias was in favor with the Jewish populace of Damascus. We need to be aware that all these things are mentioned to convince his audience that he was a zealous Jew who only changed because of God’s intervention. Thus, Paul’s present status was in response to a divine imperative, which fact would hopefully bring his hearers to a point of acceptance of the “way” themselves.

V. 13 - **Brother** - The word meant one of a family or faith, as in 22:1; Rom. 10:1; etc.

V. 14 - **The God of our fathers** - Often this was Paul’s appeal to the Jews. For us, it spells out the sameness of God, the eternity of his being and plans for redeeming man, etc. Ananias explained just how Paul fit into God’s plans.

V. 15 - **witness** - The English “martyr” transliterates the Greek word. Notice here that the Christian religion is one of evidence and directed at one’s rationality.

V. 16 - A verse we often quote. The Greek term has a personal interest in it: get immersed for yourself (in your own interest). Paul was to invoke Jesus’ name (Rom. 10:13) and in the obedience, have his past life with its sinful nature replaced with a new life, hidden with Christ in God, II Cor. 5:17, Col. 3:1-4.

Here is a good place to comment further on the doctrine of immersion, supplementing what was said on 2:38 and 8:36. Certainly one’s theology is on the line insofar as the issue of becoming a Christian is concerned. In regard to immersion, some questions to be asked about the matter would be like these:

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1. What does the Scripture teach, if anything, about the person who is to do the immersing (in order for the immersion to be valid)?
2. What must be said, if anything, at the time of immersing (not what is possible, but does the Bible specify anything that must be stated orally)?
3. Can any part of the person be unimmersed and the act yet be valid?
4. What about the person who has ceased being Christian and then wishes to return to God - must they be immersed again, or were they merely a straying son?
5. Must anyone be present to witness the act other than the two people involved?

We need to recognize that the recitation of the facts about immersion may not indicate understanding them. For instance, for the act to be valid, must the candidate understand all the reasons why, or just some? Suppose said person believes some results accrue to him, but not others (though wrong about either or both)? If the results are not known or understood, are said results still applied?

Additionally, we need to consider the actual things we believe about immersion, as to what is to be taught prior to the act, as well as what is taught afterward? What must the candidate know or understand prior to immersion to make it valid? Can said person not believe that some results take place, and the results still happen regardless of the disbelief?

Some of the reasons and/or results for immersion might be these:

1. Jesus commanded it (and the apostles) (Matt. 28).
2. Remission of sins (i.e., to be saved).
3. Reception of Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
4. Putting on Christ (Rom. 6; Gal. 3).
5. Dying to law (Rom. 7).
6. Entering the kingdom of God, the Church (John 3; I Cor. 12).
7. Regeneration (II Cor. 5; Titus 3).
8. Obeying the righteousness of God (Matt. 3).
9. To obtain a clear conscience (I Peter 3).

10. Accepting Jesus' death for ours (Rom. 6).
11. Following example of Jesus (I Peter 2:21).

We reiterate the fact that the early Christians did not have problems either with the mode or the necessity of the act in question. None of the New Testament books argues about the "mode of baptism". It was only immersion that was taught and practiced. None of the epistles ever encourage the recipients to be immersed, but rather assume those who receive the letters have been immersed.

V. 17 - Ch. 9:26-30 reveals this incident from the viewpoint of Paul's acceptance by the church in Jerusalem, and gives the same basic reason for leaving Jerusalem: Jewish opposition. Note that he was in the temple, and praying - both indicate a continued interest in the Jewish way of life even though he was a Christian.

V. 19 - A reflection of his past life, to impress upon his auditors that something very demanding must have happened to have caused him to change from Saul the Jew unto Paul the Christian; thus to give his bearers a subtle hint to consider the facts.

V. 20 - Saul never could forget the death of Stephen. Perhaps it was because Stephen and he were brothers of the same synagogue.

V. 21 - Relating his vision in the temple, and the express command of God to him, was an attempt to convince the crowd that his actions were directed by God. A noble effort that failed.

V. 22 - The word "Gentiles" was too much and the riot resumed. The crowd kept shouting and saying that he should have been killed before this time.

V. 23 - Just how deep was the rage of the crowd is evident by this verse. They were screaming, and throwing their garments about, and heaving dirt into the air; surely a vivid picture of a mob.

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V. 24 - The chiliarch evidently thought Paul was guilty of more than seemed evident from Paul's speech (if he could understand it, being in Aramaic), and gave orders to get the correct information. We would note that police brutality is not a new thing.

V. 25 - The magic word: Roman citizen! Paul made the same point in 16:37, only too late. The command may have been given in Latin, and if Paul did not understand it, he would not have known what was to take place until he was being tied up.

V. 26 - It would be a grave error to proceed if what Paul affirmed was true. As v. 29 shows, it was bad enough to have chained him up. But as matters stood, not much else could have been done under the circumstances.

V. 27 - The chiliarch's question almost implies that Paul was lying.

V. 28 - During the reign of Claudius, Roman citizenship, a valuable possession, could be purchased. As we know, Paul's birth brought him the citizenship. Perhaps Paul's father or grandfather were citizens of Rome as well as being Jewish by birth and religion. Some argue that all born in Tarsus were Roman citizens.

V. 29 - At this development, the proceedings came to a halt, and a different course is taken. Paul's citizenship will explain the treatment he is accorded in ch. 23.

V. 30 - Because of Paul's varied background, Lysias has him brought before the Sanhedrin. We know that it was a question about Jewish law, but with far-reaching implications. Certainly the Jewish attitude about their law brought up trouble, such as in chapter 22, and now in chapter 23.

The Voyage To Rome At Jerusalem. 23:1-30

23 *And Paul, looking intently at the council, said, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience up to this day." 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God shall strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?" 4 Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" 5 And Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"*

6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial.." 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 Then a great clamor arose; and some of the scribes often Pharisees' party stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?" 10 And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him into the barracks.

11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome."

12 When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. 14 And they went to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. 15 You therefore, along with the council, give notice now to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

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16 Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush; so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. 17 And Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Bring this young man to the tribune; for he has something to tell him." 18 So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, "Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you." 19 The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, "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 were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. 21 But do not yield to them; for more than forty of their men lie in ambush for him, having bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." 22 So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of this."

23 Then he called two of the centurions and said, "At the third hour of the night get ready two hundred soldiers with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea. 24 Also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and bring him safely to Felix the governor." 25 And he wrote a letter to this effect:

26 "Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greeting. 27 This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. 28 and desiring to know the charge on which they accused him, I brought him down to their council. 29 I found that he was accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. 30 And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him."

23:1 - Paul fastened his eyes on the members of the Sanhedrin and delivered a real blast to them, in effect saying that his manner of life had been lived as he understood God wanted it to be lived. He had thought it correct to be zealous for

the law, persecuting Christians; and thought it correct to renounce Judaism for its appointed successor, Christianity. Hence, he had no apologies for anything in his life.

conscience - This facet of our consciousness (personality) is troublesome to many people. It is a God-given facet that is found in every person, which is based upon what is believed to be right or wrong, and having to do with the reaction that comes when either the right has been done, or the wrong done. The problem with conscience arises because each person can determine the base upon which conscience works. Obviously, the more one believes that a certain act is right or wrong, the greater the reaction when said person does the right, etc. Hence, there are vast differences of reaction in people over the same issue, and this even among Christians (i.e.: abortion, going to war, divorce, etc.). Paul was a murderer even under his own Mosaic law, but considered his actions not to be so, because he justified himself on the basis that what he was doing was right (i.e., Christians were blasphemers and deserved to be punished; and he was doing God a service, John 16:2). So it is with all of us. This is the reason why one could live in all good conscience and yet be condemned to hell.

lived - The Greek means one's manner of life or behavior as a citizenship. See Philippians 1:27; 3:20.

V. 2 - Ananias was a Sadducee, a politician (and scoundrel). He had been appointed high priest in A.D. 37, succeeding Caiaphas.

V. 3 - Jesus had spoken of turning the other cheek (but see John 18:22-23). Paul, perhaps willing to do so, still pointed out that what was done was not lawful in Jewish circles (even if it was commonly practiced).

whitewashed wall - Something close to the word "hypocrite".

V. 4 - The position, if not the person in it, was entitled to respect, since he was God's representative, as Paul well knew (v. 5).

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V. 6 - Several reasons might be suggested as to why Paul spoke as he did, among them 1) the remark just made had put him in a bad light (see Ex. 22:28), 2) no fair trial was possible, since he was a Christian, or 3) he considered that, as a Jewish Pharisee turned Christian, the cardinal point of the issue was a resurrection. Of course, since this was true, no fair trial was possible, since the issue would immediately divide the Sanhedrin (as it instantly did, v. 7).

V. 8 - **acknowledge** - Aside from the points of doctrine, the word in the Greek text stating what the Pharisees affirmed about certain points is normally translated “confess”. The Greek term simply means to affirm a point, or assert a belief, etc.

V. 9 - As the Greek text shows, a real fight occurred, and the trial was for all practical purposes over. If the Pharisees knew any of Paul’s experience on the Damascus road, even if they did not believe in Jesus, they could have agreed that an angel might have spoken to Paul. So they adjudged Paul innocent.

V. 10 - The Sadducees were not less adamant, and Paul was in danger of actually being torn in two. Recall the statement of Gallio in Ch. 18:15 about just such matters as are herein described.

V. 11 - God was not unaware of Paul’s inner feelings, and gave assurance that much was yet to be accomplished. One promise that Paul had received was to have words from Jesus, 22:14, and here were some of those words. It was a great help to Paul. The promise of going to Rome was undeniably a sustainer in the months and years ahead.

V. 12 - The 40 men, banding themselves together, and invoking with an oath and curse upon themselves, clearly show that the prejudice against Paul especially and Christians generally was unreasonable and beyond pacifying.

V. 14 - The men clearly had the support of the Jewish hierarchy.

V. 16 - Their best-laid plans were discovered by Paul’s nephew, who was yet friendly to his uncle (perhaps Paul’s relatives were Christians too?)

V. 17 - Note that the centurion was evidently not told what the Jews had in mind.

V. 18 - The nephew evidently was not an old person, though the same word described Paul in 7:58, and Eutyclus in 20:9.

V. 21 - The young man makes the case clear, and also makes the part Lysias is to play very important.

do not yield - The Greek word is the common- “to be persuaded” and thus obey.

V. 23 - The preparations show that Lysias knew the danger the Jews presented, and the importance of Paul.

V. 26 - Felix, and his brother Pallas, had been slaves, but were made freedmen by Emperor Claudius. He married a daughter of Herod Agrippa I, Drusilla, mostly to win Jewish favor. Some describe him as very evil. These things may account for his refusal to let Paul go, as 24:27 points out. Note Luke 1:3; Acts 24:2; 26:25 for the “most excellent.”

V. 27 - The report of Lysias is not quite accurate when compared with Luke’s account, but who cared in that day or our day?

V. 29 - The actual issue was about interpretation of the Jewish law. This brings up the point that although the law was the same for every Jew, many things caused it to be variously interpreted. It is yet the same today with the New Testament (not to mention the Old Testament), for though it reads the same, the many sides of interpretation cause much division. Consider how the same law could be said not to teach a

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resurrection, angels, etc., by one group of Jews, and the exact opposite by another group. It is not different today, when issues that appear to be so plain to one are not so to another. We do well to keep such as this in mind when we have class discussion, etc.

V. 30 - Lysias had decided to throw the hot potato into the lap of Felix. As far as Lysias was concerned, Paul was innocent.

At Antipatris, 23:31, 32

31 So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 And on the morrow they returned to the barracks, leaving the horsemen to go on with him.

V. 31 - **Antipatris** - Some 40 miles from Jerusalem, and then about 25 miles southeast of Caesarea.

In Caesarea, 23:33-27:1

33 When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. 34 On reading the letter, he asked to what province he belonged. When he learned that he was from Cilicia 35 he said, "I will hear you when your accusers arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium.

V. 35 - It is now about AD 58-59. After two years, Paul will go to Rome, and spend two years there. It is commonly thought that the information needed by Luke to write the gospel, and the parts of Acts that he did not personally experience, was gathered at this time.

Herod's praetorium - The Roman imperial guard. Paul mentions these in Philippians 1:13.

131. What things do you perceive Paul tried to accomplish in his address to the mob?

132. What reasons did Paul have for his conversion?

133. What did Ananias tell Paul God had planned for him?

134. Were Paul's sins forgiven before Ananias came to him or afterward?

135. Did Paul have faith in Jesus before Ananias came to him?

136. Why did Paul leave Jerusalem?

137. Do you suppose Paul purposely did not mention his Roman citizenship until he had to do so?

138. What evident rights did a Roman citizen possess?

139. What do you know about conscience?

140. Are rulers a terror to those who obey the law?

QUESTIONS

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141. Should a Christian respect the office or the person in the office?
142. How could Paul the Christian still identify with a Jewish Pharisee?
143. How could the same Bible be viewed so differently?
144. Did Jesus' promise in Matt. 28:20 hold true for Paul?
145. Were the "forty" somewhat like Paul had formerly been?
146. What did the preparation made by Lysias signify about Paul?
147. Why would Lysias write what was not true?
148. According to Lysias, was Paul guilty?
149. What do you see about Roman jurisprudence in our text?

The Voyage To Rome In Caesara 24:1-27

24 *And after five days the high priest hear you when your accusers arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium. Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul; 2 and when he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying:*

"Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your provision, most excellent Felix, reforms are introduced on behalf of this nation, 3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to learn from him about everything of which we accuse him."

9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all this was so.

10 And when the governor had motioned to him to speak, Paul replied:

"Realizing that for many years you have been judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. 11 As you may ascertain, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem; 12 and they did not find me disputing with any one or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues, or in the city. 13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bringing up against me. 14 But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets, 15 having a hope in God which these themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. 16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men. 17 Now after some years I came to bring to my nation alms and offerings. 18 As I was

LESSON TEN (24:1-27)

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doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia -

19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, if they have anything against me. 20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, 21 except this one thing which I cried out while standing among them, 'With respect to the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you this day.' ”

22 But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put him off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." 23 Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but should have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

24 After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess; and he sent for Paul and heard him speak upon faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he argued about justice and self-control and future judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present; when I have an opportunity I will summon you." 26 At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. 27 But when two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

24:1 - **spokesman** - our word orator. The Jews had hired legal counsel to present their case, someone who would understand proceedings in a Roman court, etc. It was his business to inform Felix about Paul. As the account shows, the “witnesses” were not brought to the trial, and the charges thus could not be proved.

V. 2 - Some historians tell a different story about Felix than Tertullus relates, that Felix was the cause of much trouble.

to accuse - Our English word “categorize” is a transliteration of the Greek word.

most excellent - The same Greek term used to describe Theophilus in Luke 1:3.

V. 4 - Tertullus said, “We will cut it short so as not to hinder your good work, etc.” The word for “kindness” denotes what is reasonable and fair and is a virtue to be found in Christians, I Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17 and I Peter 2:18.

V. 5 - **Pestilent** - Paul caused lots of trouble, including being a trouble-maker among the Jews, especially in the sense that he had started a sect in Judaism. These general charges were intended to make Felix realize that Paul was opposed to the Roman peace and the standing Jewish Hierarchy, and thus someone who should be eliminated from the scene.

Nazarene - Jesus was to be called such, Matt. 2:23, and his followers evidently were so labeled.

No connection can be found between the name Nazarene and the concept of the Nazirite of Numbers 6. Matt. 2:23 seems to be a summation of “prophets” rather than a prophet, per se.

The Hebrew roots are not the same for the two words. Since Jesus identified himself as being from Nazareth (Acts 22:8) it seems probable that the identification of this followers as Nazarenes is in reference to that idea, not to the idea of a Nazirite. The Hebrew root (word) that is used in Isaiah 11:1 to refer to Jesus means root/offshoot, etc., whereas the Hebrew root in Numbers 6 means to consecrate, or separate. As far as the town of Nazareth is concerned, its origin is unknown, so we can not draw any help from that source.

V. 6 - The accusation in 21:28 was to make common the temple, which was sacred (i.e., had been sanctified to Jewish use only). That the Jews had arrested Paul was not true; rather they had tried to kill him without any hearing at all.

tried to - The Greek term is often used in the sense of test or tempt.

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[NOTE: The RSV text does not contain verse 7.]

V. 8 - A thorough testing by Felix would reveal the true facts about Paul. Perhaps Felix thought that Paul's true nature and feelings would surface under questioning. If so, he was wrong.

V. 10 - Paul's defense (English apology transliterates the Greek word) begins and though the charges made against him were somewhat vague, he answered them one by one, v. 11-21. He denied the charge of insurrection; which would have been the main concern to Felix. Because v. 21 gives the real ground of difference, the issue was clearly a matter of interpretation. Recall that Gallio had surmised the same point, 18:14ff.

V. 11 - Since Tertullus had spoken of "knowing," Paul affirmed that Felix could know certain things, which he proceeded to state, denying the accusations against him. "In only twelve days, very little could have been done," Paul stated.

V. 13 - The only thing Tertullus had done was accuse, without proof, Paul said. One reason was that no witnesses were present.

V. 14 - **I admit** - The Greek term is generally translated "to confess" (or "to profess" in King James Version). Tertullus had spoken of the Christians as a sect (heresy) of the Jewish faith. Paul asserted that it was the fulfillment of it, and also in the Pharisaic sense of resurrection, etc., v. 15, 21.

V. 16 - Anyone who fears God will attempt to keep the conscience pure/clean. One may discover, as did Paul, that even such attainment does not mean one's life is acceptable to God.

take pains - The Greek term has the idea of doing one's very best, thus to labor hard, or strive greatly. Our word ascetic comes from this term.

V. 17 - Rather than having done what Tertullus had said, Paul affirms the opposite: he

had made every effort to be a good Jew, including the bringing of money to the Jewish nation (which may have alerted Felix to the possibility of a ransom from Paul for his release). Now if these things were so, then the basic charges against Paul were untrue. Felix so thought, and thus did not treat Paul as a troublemaker.

V. 19 - The absence of those who should have been witnesses at the trial was noted and was really an indictment of the Jewish case. Felix decided that Lysias would help clarify the matter, v. 22. In reality, if the truth were told Felix, the Jews had tried to kill Paul without any trial, and Lysias was going to scourge him without trial. Neither group would have looked too good in that case.

V. 21 - The obvious differences among those in the Sanhedrin, and known by Felix, were the only ground of accusation against Paul.

V. 22 - How Felix had obtained knowledge of Christianity is not stated. The real problem was his interest in pleasing the Jews, and wishing to receive money from Paul, v. 26. He thus put off a decision under the pretext of having Lysias come to Caesarea.

Some two years ago or better were spent in confinement. Most suppose that Luke took advantage of this time to investigate the facts about Jesus that are in his Gospel and the information needed for the early part of Acts.

V. 24 - Drusilla had been the wife of Azizus, king of Emesa, but became the third wife of Felix. Her great-grandfather was Herod the Great, her great-uncle killed John the Immerser, and her father killed James the apostle.

V. 25 - Many sermons have used this text. It surely sums up the essence of the faith and moral life of a Christian, and was an indictment of Felix and Drusilla.

V. 27 - We suppose the time was about A.D. 60-61. Some attempt to show that the time was

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much earlier, A.D. 55-57. We don't think the evidence is any better, if as good, for those dates as the ones suggested. It isn't of great moment in most ways. If the earlier times were so, the suggested dates for the writing of some of Paul's epistles, and the time of the events within them would be changed somewhat.

QUESTIONS

150. What important persons were not at the trial?

151. In what sense(s) were the accusations made by Tertullus against Paul both political and religious in nature?

152. Would taking a Gentile into the Jewish portion of the temple have been considered "profaning the temple"?

153. Would twelve days be sufficient time to cause an uprising?

154. Could a sharp agitator provoke all sorts of trouble while being innocent himself?

155. Is assertion of charges different from proving charges?

156. What clarification of the charge about the sect of the Nazarenes did Paul make?

157. Did Paul agree that Christianity was a sect of Judaism?

158. How much can you find in the Old Testament about a resurrection of both the just and the unjust?

159. Can one have a clear conscience and still be a sinner?

160. What conclusions did Lysias draw from the proceedings?

161. Does speaking on "faith in Christ Jesus" also include justice, self-control and future judgment?

162. Felix was alarmed. Is fear a good motivation to conversion?

163. Did Felix suppose that a ransom might be given for Paul's release?

164. For what reason did Felix keep Paul in prison the whole two years?

LESSON ELEVEN

(25:1-27)

The Voyage To Rome In Caesara 25:1-27

25 *Now when Festus had come into his province, after three days he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. 2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they urged him, 3 asking as a favor to*

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have the man sent to Jerusalem, planning an ambush to kill him on the way. 4 Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea, and that he himself intended to go there shortly. 5 “So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them accuse him.”

6 When he had stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea; and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. 7 And when he had come, the Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem stood about him, bringing against him many serious charges which they could not prove. 8 Paul said in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended at all.” 9 But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem, and there be tried on these charges before me?” 10 But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried; to the Jews I have done no wrong, as you know very well. 11 If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death; but if there is nothing in their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.”

13 Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to welcome Festus. 14 And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a man left prisoner by Felix; 15 and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews gave information about him, asking for sentence against him. 16 I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up any one before the accused met the accusers face to face, and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. 17 When therefore they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in. 18 When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in this case of such evils as I supposed; 19 but they had certain points of dispute with him about their own superstition and about one Jesus,

who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. 20 Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them, 21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I commanded him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.” 22 And Agrippa said to Festus, “I should like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” said he, “you shall hear him.”

23 So on the morrow Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then by command of Festus Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death; and as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him. Therefore I have brought him before you; and, especially before you, King Agrippa, that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. 27 For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.”

25:1 - The Greek expression used here is exactly the same as that used in reference to Jesus’ resurrection and means “on the third day” as in Acts 28:17 (see Luke 18:33, 24:7; etc.)

Province - Festus was a procurator serving under the Roman ruler of Syria.

V. 3 - The remarkable thing is that even after more than two years, the Jewish hatred for Paul is as intense as ever. They really practiced loving friends and hating enemies. In ch. 23, they had agreed to help others; here they plan it themselves.

V. 5 - Festus, at least in some ways, kept the case on the right track. although he later showed that he was not above political favors either. He

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doubtless wanted to start out right with the Jewish hierarchy, especially since much tension then existed.

V. 6 - The Greek term for the “tribunal” is the same as in 18:12, 17, which see for discussion.

V. 7 - Although the Jews made a great attempt, Luke wrote that they did not have the strength to prove the charges. The scene was much like that with Felix and Tertullus, or Pilate and Jesus.

V. 8 - Paul used the word generally translated “to sin” in his denial of the guilt of which he was accused. He noted that no Roman law was involved, which was of special interest to Festus.

V. 9 - The true character of both Felix and Festus is seen when they attempt to curry favor with the Jews rather than doing what they both knew was just. The redeeming factor (and maybe the express will of God) was that Paul ultimately arrived in Rome, even as God had promised (23:11)

favor - From the Greek root meaning a favor or gift. See it in 24:27; 25:11 and 16 (give). It is the root word meaning to give, etc.

V. 10 - Paul said in effect, “Festus, you are to judge me here. If you will not do so, I will appeal for justice elsewhere (and not to Jerusalem!).”

V. 12 - As a general rule, any appeal to Caesar had to be granted. Some exceptions to that rule were made, so not every appeal was granted, such as those of murderers.

V. 13 - This is Agrippa II, son of Agrippa I, and brother to Bernice and Drusilla. Bernice lived with him, also was married to several others, sided with the Romans when Jerusalem was destroyed, and became a mistress to Titus, the Roman general.

V. 14 - Because of the problem Festus had (cf. v. 27), the knowledge of Agrippa might help, so

the prisoner would appear before a king. Agrippa II ruled almost as much area as his great-grandfather (excepting Judea).

V. 16 - Festus made his former actions seem quite fair, even if they were not so. Notice again the Roman jurisprudence.

V. 17 - The truth of the case, Festus said, was different than he had supposed. Indeed, as Agrippa pointed out in 26:31,32, and as Festus knew well, Paul should have been freed.

V. 19 - Festus correctly stated the essence of the matter between Paul and the Jews.

The word Festus used to describe the Jewish religion was used by Paul in 17:22 in his remarks to the Athenians. The Greek word means either worship /reverence/ superstition, depending upon the context in which it occurs. It is probably better to translate religion here, as it is doubtful Festus would have wanted Agrippa to think the Jewish religion was a superstition.

V. 20 - Felix may well have been in doubt about Paul, and also attempting to gain Jewish favor at the same time. He probably wanted to have Paul appear before the Sanhedrin.

V. 22 - Some translations take Agrippa to say, “I should like...” while others take him to say, “I for some time have wanted...” Both are possible translations, and either might well be true. He was trying to be polite and yet show interest.

V. 23 - This sounds like a description by an eye-witness. Note that Festus made the occasion a grand one, which simply gave Paul a better audience to address. We can hardly appreciate the contrast between Paul in chains and his august audience of leading people, dressed finely, with all the show that politics can put on. Yet, as ch. 26 shows, Paul is one who has control. Jesus’ promise in Matt. 10:17-20 was again true in Paul’s life.

V. 24 - Evidently the Jews acted normally before Festus when he was in Jerusalem, v. 1,2.

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V. 25 - Consideration of the statement here by Festus makes him quite hypocritical, and places him in a bad light before those who knew all the facts. He hopes that King Agrippa can bail him out. He did not have to grant Paul's request to have an audience before Caesar (note v. 12). He could simply have dismissed the case for want of evidence.

V. 26 - **nothing definite** - Imagine sending a prisoner to Caesar himself and having no reason to do so! Yet, that is what happened. Because of this fact, it is probable that Paul was released at his first appearance before Nero.

QUESTIONS

165. What would be your description of the Roman procurators Felix and Festus?

166. Did Paul always work within the Roman law system?

167. Is the case with Paul like that of many others - a matter of interpretation of the law and one's actions?

168. Why would it be a favor to change the trial of Paul to Jerusalem?

169. What was the relation of Agrippa to the other Herods of the New Testament?

170. Over what general area was Agrippa king?

171. How did Festus assess the case of Paul in his conversation with Agrippa?

172. For what reason did Festus want Agrippa to hear Paul?

173. Can you describe the trial scene?

174. How did Festus describe Caesar?

LESSON TWELVE

(26:1-27:44)

The Voyage To Rome In Caesara 26:1-32

26 *Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:*

2 "I think myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 because you are especially familiar with all customs and controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4 "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. 5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand here on trial for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, 7 to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by the Jews, O king! 8 Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?"

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9 *"I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.*

12 *"Thus I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.' 15 And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' and the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles - to whom I send you 18 to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'*

19 *"Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and perform deeds worthy of their repentance. 21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass; 23 that the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."*

24 *And he thus made his defense. Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are mad; your*

great learning is turning you mad." 25 But Paul said, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth. 26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." 28 And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" 29 And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am - except for these chains."

30 *Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them; 31 and when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." 32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."*

26:1 - Since Festus has no case, he may consider that Paul's defense before Agrippa may reveal something he doesn't know. As it turns out, Festus evidently thinks (v. 24) that the Romans and the Jews are dealing with a man who is out of his mind. We should be aware that this is not so much a trial as a hearing.

Though the lesson begins here in ch. 26, we suggest that some consideration be given to a light once-over of this chapter, since you have already studied ch. 9 and ch. 22, and more extensive attention given to ch. 27.

V. 2 - **fortunate** - The Greek term is normally translated blessed/happy, as in Matthew 5. It is evident that Paul does not unduly flatter his chief auditor, or other listeners.

V. 3 - Agrippa was knowledgeable in Jewish affairs, and had control of the temple, high-priest appointment, etc. He would know, perhaps better than most, what the situation was.

patiently - as in Rom. 2:4; II Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; II Peter 3:15.

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V. 4 - Though some of the Jews in general knew about Paul, some might not of those present, so Paul recited basically what has been recorded by Luke prior to this event.

manner of life - how one lives, life-style.

strictest party - As we noted on 24:5, the Greek term is transliterated “heresy” and translated often as “sect”. **strictest** - same as in 22:3.

V. 6 - The very end of our hope as a Jew is what is found in Christ, Paul asserts.

V. 7 - An interesting point is Paul’s expression “twelve tribes”, even though ten tribes had disappeared from the scene seven centuries earlier, for all practical purposes.

earnestly - The Israelites “stretched themselves” to do God’s will, Paul’s word indicated.

worship - From the Greek term as in Matt. 4:10; Luke 1:74; Acts 7:7; Rom. 12:2; Hebrews 9:9, 14, meaning service to a deity.

V. 8 - This expression is addressed to all of his auditors, and is intended to illuminate the essence of the hope he had just mentioned, as well as to challenge their own preconceptions. (Recall the scene in Acts 17.) The incongruity is, Paul says, that he is being accused for the Jewish hope. He points out, in v. 9, that he had once thought God did not raise Jesus from the dead, though such a position was not correct (which is why he changed).

V. 9 - His religious position as a Jew caused him to oppose the Christian heresy, specifically identified with one Jesus from Nazareth.

V. 10 - Some have argued pro and con from this verse about Paul’s position on the Sanhedrin. We can not show, from this verse, or any other verse, that he was a member thereof. He may only have meant that he was for such acts as he detailed

and willfully participated in them. It seems more natural taking the verse as meaning that Paul was a member of the council, however.

V. 11 - His efforts were zealous, and continued over a period of time and various places. He made (or tried to make) Christians blaspheme (that is, reverse their stand and speak against faith in Jesus as the hope of the twelve tribes, etc.).

Notice Paul’s efforts: he pursued Christians everywhere, continually working at making them reverse their position about Jesus when he caught them, and even killed some of them.

V. 14 - Some see in the common Greek proverb about the goad that he mentioned an attempt to speak to the culture of this audience. The Greek text indicates he had often kicked against a goad, figuratively speaking. He may have reference to his conscience (24:16) or his inability to believe in God though rejecting the resurrection, etc.

Hebrew - Paul is probably speaking in Greek.

persecute - Note that though Paul was persecuting Christians, and not Jesus per se, yet Jesus identified with the Christians, since they were members which made up Jesus’ body.

V. 16 - **appoint** - Select, choose, as in 3:30; 22:14.

V. 17 - God’s agency is herein expressed. We know he did many times deliver for Paul (v. 22).

Gentiles - This word was a real stumbling block to Jews, who could not accept the fact that their hope was extended to Gentiles.

V. 18 - This verse has the essence of the Gospel message and that which it does for those who accept it. As elsewhere in the N.T., only two state in life are possible. In consideration of this fact, Paul preached (v. 20) repentance, the change of mind that brings one to turn to God and away

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from idols (cf. Acts 14:15), and practice a life in keeping with such a decision (see Luke 3:8ff). For the “power/authority” of Satan, see II Cor. 4:4; II Tim. 2:26; I John 5:19.

V. 19 - This verse indicates that God had plans for Paul, but Paul had to be willing.

V. 21 - The truth is stated, as seen by Paul!

V. 22 - **The prophets and Moses** - Note here Jesus’ comments in Luke 24:25-27; Acts 3:18-25. The expression “Moses and the prophets” generally included the Old Testament, especially as it related to what God previously promised and was in the process of fulfilling at the time of speaking. Fulfilled prophecy was and is a great apologetic to lead people to a position of faith. Paul certainly used this very point in his sermon, and appealed to Agrippa on this basis, v. 27.

V. 23 - Note II Tim. 1:10, and the contrast of “darkness” in v. 18 to light through Christ. Of course, John’s gospel and first epistle are full of light/darkness.

first to rise - The first can either mean first to rise by virtue of who he was, or first in point of importance. See I Cor. 15:20, 23.

V. 24 - The Greek term translated “mad” has a general idea of frenzy/mania/disturbed mind, or even irrationality. In view of Festus and his background, the last meaning is likely, since Festus evidently thought that Paul had overdrawn his conclusions, and was thus attempting to do what was not justified. The Greek word occurs in John 10:20; Acts 12:15 and I Cor. 14:23.

V. 25 - Some have pointed out that much of this discourse, not only in the arrangement of words (syntax) but the very words chosen, is in the classical Greek of the day rather than the more common Greek of the street. If so, then Paul’s educational training is used before this cultured audience. He certainly was courteous in the response to Festus.

V. 26 - **sober truth** - The Greek text has “true and sound words” (i.e., not mad or deceitful).

V. 27 - Agrippa could hardly deny believing the prophets, though maybe he did not believe them as Paul had presented them, which, of course, was the point at issue.

V. 28 - The answer of Agrippa is most difficult to decipher, since the various phrases and words can mean different things. Paul had argued that the O.T. had pointed to Christ and Christianity. He then appealed to Agrippa on this basis. What Agrippa meant could be: “With so little effort as this, do you think you can make me become a Christian?” or “With such little effort do you think I would reject possibilities”, though the King James translation is not a very good possibility.

V. 29 - Again, Paul’s consummate skill came to light, as he took Agrippa’s reply, whatever it might have meant, and turned it into something in his favor. One can easily believe that the promised help of the Holy Spirit for the apostles was his on this occasion.

chains - The status of Paul was hard to appreciate, if one considered his position that Christianity was the consummation of Judaism. If so, then of all people, Jews should not be persecuting him (cf. v. 7). He would yet have been a Jew except for the divine intervention in his life that brought about the change. If all Jews would accept the truth, Paul asserted, then every difficulty would vanish.

V. 31 - The unanimous conclusion was: innocent. The problem is yet with Festus: what to do with Paul. He still could have freed him in spite of the appeal, had his desire for justice matched his desire for Jewish favor.

QUESTIONS

175. Was Paul on trial before Agrippa?

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176. Was Paul's former life as a Jew an important part of his defense?

177. Why did Paul think it somewhat absurd to be persecuted by the Jews?

178. What do you think was so convincing to Paul to make him oppose Jesus?

179. Do you think v. 14 indicates that Paul had some inner turmoil about his avid persecution of Christians?

180. Why did Jesus say he appeared to Paul?

181. Did Jesus promise to help Paul in times of trouble?

182. Describe the effects of conversion as stated in v. 18.

183. When Paul remarked that he was not disobedient, v. 19, did that indicate that he believed he had a choice in serving as God wanted?

184. Why did Paul talk about repentance in v. 20 rather than faith or immersion?

185. In what way did Paul mean that Jesus was "first to rise from the dead" in v. 23?

186. What did Jesus bring to light among "the people and the Gentiles?" (Cf. II Tim. 1:10)

187. What caused Festus to speak so in v. 24?

188. What was not done in a corner?

189. Did Agrippa consider Paul innocent?

190. What do you think makes ch. 26 such a great chapter to study?

Leaving for Rome, 27:1,2

27 *And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius. 2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.*

27:1 - It will be good to review the four centurions (Matt. 8; Luke 23; Acts 10; here) that are prominent in the New Testament, all of whom were noteworthy for some reason. Though the lesson is inclusive of Ch. 26, further study of this chapter will surely be profitable. The character of Julius and that of Paul as revealed on this voyage are worth much reflection.

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V. 2 - Evidently Paul and two companions Luke and Aristarcus, sailed to Italy.

Adramyttium- a city of Mysia in Asia.

At Sidon, 27:3

3 The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.

V. 3 - **kindly** - Translates a Greek term with the Greek word for love as a prefix.

friends - The above Greek word is the root of this term also. These people may have been Christians, or otherwise.

Under the Lee of Cyprus, 27:4

4 And putting to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us.

V. 4 - It was late Fall, and the wrong time to be sailing on the sea (see v. 9). The sea became treacherous with storms and wind, with which the vessels of that time were not capable to cope.

At Myra, 27:5-6

5 And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy, and put us on board.

V. 6 - Much sea traffic moved to and from Alexandria, mostly because of the commodities involved.

At Cnidus, 27:7a

Under the Lee of Crete, 27:7b

7 We sailed slowly for a number of days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go on, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone.

V. 8 - The voyage so far: Caesarea to Sidon, about 70 miles. Sidon to Myra, about 450 miles. Myra to Fair Havens, about 350 miles (Fair Havens to Malta, some 500 miles).

At Fair Havens, 27:8-15

8 Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

9 As much time had been lost, and the voyage was already dangerous because the Fast had already gone by, Paul advised them, 10 saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." 11 But the centurion paid more attention to the captain and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. 12 And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to put to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, looking northeast and southeast, and winter there.

13 And when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close inshore. 14 But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land; 15 and when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven.

V 9 - **The fast** - The Jewish day of Atonement, occurring on the 10th day of the seventh month (of the religious calendar) and on the 10th day of the first month of the civil calendar. It came in late September or early October. Today it is called Yom Kippur. It was the only day that the Old Testament somewhat officially designated as a fast day, although many Jews fasted otherwise. Paul may or may not have observed the day - Luke may simply have recorded it as a point in time.

V. 10 - Perhaps Paul is speaking from experience, since he had been shipwrecked before. As it turned out, God's intervention saved the people, though the ship was lost.

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V. 11 - **paid more attention** - The centurion was actually in charge of the ship. The captain and the owner did a better job of persuading (which is the Greek word used) than did Paul. The fact that a prisoner should have even been considered speaks volumes both about Paul and Julius.

V. 13 - The northeast wind had been giving them problems. It had died out, and the south wind seemed to be what they needed to get from Fair Havens to Phoenix, about 40 miles distance.

V. 14 - Our word typhoon transliterates the Greek term. It was a violent storm, and “caught” (to take violently, as in Luke 8:29; Acts 6:12; 19:29) the ship, and drove (carried) it out from shore to the open sea. The Greek verb for “were driven” is seen in Matthew 14:11; Luke 24:1; John 21:18; Acts 12:10; Hebrews 1:3; II Peter 1:21, with the idea of something being carried or driven, not of its own accord.

Cauda, 27: 16-17

16 And running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the boat; 17 after hoisting it up, they took measures to undergird the ship; then, fearing that they should run on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and so were driven.

V.17 - Because of the possibility of being driven south onto a dangerous area, they attempted to use the wind and keep a course at right angles to it, thus being blown westward. undergird - Evidently they tried to tie the ship together in some way to keep it from breaking into pieces.

Driven for 14 Days by the Wind, 27:18-27

18 As we were violently storm-tossed, they began next day to throw the cargo overboard; 19 and the third day they cast out with their own hands the tackle of the ship. 20 And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many a day, and no small

tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

21 As they had been long without food, Paul then came forward among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me, and should not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. 22 I now bid you take heart; for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For this very night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and to whom I worship, 24 and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and lo, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we shall have to run on some island.”

27 When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the sea of Adrea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land.

V. 18 - **storm tossed** - the reason for the action in v. 17.

V. 19 - **tackle of ship** - The vessels and whatever of the ropes, etc., that could be spared to lighten the ship and help prevent it from being filled with water from the boisterous seas. Note that not everything was thrown overboard, but what was thought could be spared.

V. 20 - Their condition was bad enough, but they could not chart any course without the sun and stars to guide them. Thus they won't know where they are until they get on the island, 28:1. Luke says that their hope of being saved (in a physical sense, though the Greek term is the same for salvation, etc.) was gradually “taken from around them” as one takes off a layer of something) at a time.

V. 21- Lack of hope causes many other things to happen. For the ship's passengers, loss of appetite was a result. Some think that the ship may have been a government ship, carrying wheat from Egypt's granaries to Rome. If so, then the ship's captain would have been in the employ of Rome,

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and with the centurion in charge, they thought they knew more than the “landlubber” Paul. He, however, still stood by them, and with God’s encouragement, helped them in a tight spot.

V. 22- **no loss of life** - He believed God’s word, and it proved true.

V. 24- Paul evidently was being affected by the others. God, knowing this, used the occasions to encourage Paul and to create faith in the others through Paul.

V. 25 - **Take heart** - Surely needed, since all hope was gone. The word is used again in v. 36, also in James 5:13. Paul’s stand on God’s expressed word was made on the basis of his past experiences with God, who had always proved faithful. Christians often are called upon to do much the same thing; we can’t prove to anyone, even ourselves, that God’s promises, yet unfulfilled, will be honored. However, consideration of what God has done in the past, especially as relevant as the Bible, gives us a foundation upon which to build our faith and hope. (Some evidently didn’t believe too much in Paul, as v. 30-42 shows.)

V. 26 - The manner of the salvation of the people was not specifically spelled out.

V. 27 - The ship was still on a storm-tossed sea, and driven to and fro.

Coming to Land, 27:28-44

28 So they sounded and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. 29 And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let our four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. 30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the boat into sea, under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let it go.

33 As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. 34 Therefore I urge you to take some food; it will give you strength, since not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.” 35 And when he had said this, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. 36 Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. 37 (We were in all two hundred and seventy-six persons in the ship.) 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. 39 Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to bring the ship ashore. 40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders; then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. 41 But striking a shoal they ran the vessel aground; the bow struck and remained immovable, and the stern was broken up by the surf. 42 The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape; 43 but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their purpose. He ordered those who could swim to throw themselves overboard first and make for the land, 44 and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all escaped to land.

V. 28 - **fathoms** - Originally, the distance of the outstretched arms, about 6 feet.

V. 29 - The usual practice was to anchor from the bow rather than the stern/rear (see v. 30).

V. 30 - The sailors evidently did not trust Paul, or anyone but themselves.

V. 31 - Even if God had spoken about he salvation of all being assured, the sailors, Paul figured, would be needed to help with the ship. As it turned out, they were not needed, but Paul understood God’s promise to preclude such action as the sailors were taking. (The soldiers finally believed Paul, and cut loose the little boat.) This is

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a good example of how human reasoning enters in the understanding of God's revelation. As nearly as we know the sailors were not said to be a part of the salvation process.

V. 34 - Again Paul is emphatic about God's promise and ability to save them all - even to the hair of their heads! As previously noted, not all was thrown overboard, but only what was considered expendable.

V. 35 - Thanksgiving to God for food was both a Christian thing to do (Matt. 15:36; I Tim. 4:3-5) and a good witness to all 276 aboard. A good example was set before them all by Paul, who then put his trust and advice into action.

V. 38 - The last of the ship's cargo was cast overboard. They considered themselves ready to do the best possible, whatever that would be.

V. 39 - Because of the stormy conditions, they had lost track of their position (v. 20).

V. 41 - The sea was still big enough to destroy the ship - so danger was yet present. The sailors evidently attempted to go between two obstacles or through a channel which was not deep enough to permit passage. The ship was apparently "chancy" since efforts had been made earlier (v. 17) to keep it from falling apart. The currents were from two directions at that point, and the buffeting of the ship from one side and then the other was too severe for the ship to stand it. It began breaking up, and something had to be done immediately in order for the people to be saved.

V. 42 - The soldiers were responsible for the prisoners, and perhaps thought that their escape would cost them their lives, as in Acts 12.

V. 43 - The centurion realized the debt all owed to Paul, and determined to save him. The salvation of all was a great example of God's ability and their trust in him.

191. Describe Julius, as chapters 27 and 28 present him.

192. Name people in "Paul's party"

193. Have you ever used a map to trace the sea adventure?

194. Was Paul's expression (v. 10) about the voyage true?

195. What provisions were made to help save the ship (prior to arriving at Malta)?

196. How do you reconcile Paul's statement in v. 10 and v. 24?

197. Does one's trust (faith) in God sometimes mean that God's Word will have to be trusted, even if it can't be proved?

198. How do you see Paul's statement in v. 31 with God's revelation in v. 24?

199. What conditions of mind would describe the people on the ship?

200. Did God's promise to Paul come true?

201. Isn't this chapter a great chapter on the subject of God's ability and God's faithfulness?

QUESTIONS

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LESSON THIRTEEN

(28:1-31)

At Melita, 28:1-10

28 *After we had escaped, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 2 And the natives showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. 3 Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, when a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. 4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.” 5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 They waited expecting him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead; but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.*

7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. 8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery; and Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. 9 And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. 10 They presented many gifts to us; and when we sailed, they put on board whatever we needed.

28:1 - Melita/Malta, was an island some 75 miles south of the island of Sicily and about 100 miles from Syracuse on the island. They had been blown some 500 miles from the island of Crete.

V. 2 - **natives** - The Greek term is translated Barbarians in Romans 1:14. It simply meant a people who did not speak Greek, or whatever language was native to the listener (or writer).

unusual kindness - The Greek term is the two words love and man - love of man (the source of our word philanthropy). They were such by receiving them all, building a fire for their comfort, etc. See v. 7 also. Many other people would have taken advantage of the situation. Perhaps God caused these people to so act.

viper - John and Jesus (Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:33) used this same word in reference to people of their day.

heat - The Greek term is transliterated into our “thermos.” Observe that Paul was also helping - not afraid to work.

V. 4 - The natives thought like most other people do at times - that physical calamities are an evidence of some sin in the lives of those being punished. However, it is not necessarily so. And every Christian should remember it. God often uses such things to teach lessons, even to the righteous. The very death of Jesus disproves the thought (if nothing else does) - the just suffering for the unjust. It is pertinent that people thought the snake was poison, whether we can prove it was or was not.

V. 5 - Paul will show that their theology is bad. But that doesn't help, since they immediately draw another false conclusion,

V. 6. **harm** - the common Greek word for evil or bad.

he had escaped - “Paul had been ‘saved’ from the problem of the sea, but he was not going to escape his just punishment” was their thinking. How fickle is popular opinion! (Reread Acts 14:8-18).

V. 7 - **hospitably** - The Greek word is the word for lovingmindedly; or in a friendly manner.

V. 8 - **dysentery** - A transliteration of the Greek term. His “fever” was perhaps caused by the dysentery, or something else. Peter's mother-in-law had a fever, Luke 4:38,39.

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V. 9 - Luke may have helped in the healing of those who came. The word for weakness is used of disease or a deficiency of some sort; often in a comparative sense, as in II Cor. 12:9,10 or Rom. 14:1-15:7.

At Syracuse, 28:11-12

11 After three months we set sail in a ship which had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the Twin Brothers as figurehead. 12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.

V. 11 - The three winter months were probably December through February. Note that even if Malta was but a short distance from Sicily, another ship had wintered there, the captain probably afraid of the stormy sea. Some think that the ship's name was given because the sailors thought that the constellation was a good luck omen. It stood for the sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux.

At Rhegium, 28:13a In Puteoli, 28:13b, 14

13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.

V. 13 - Puteoli was an important seaport, and the chief port for Rome. It lay some 180 miles up the coast from Rhegium, which was about 75 miles north of Syracuse. Since it was such an important place, Christians were almost certain to be there, v. 14, although we know not how Christianity came to Italy. The faith of the Roman Christians was known everywhere, however. Some think that those from Rome in Jerusalem on Pentecost could have been among those converted, and then took their faith back to Italy when they went.

Paul at Rome, 28:15-30

15 And the brethren there, when they heard of us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them Paul thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.

17 After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews; and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar - though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain." 21 And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. 24 And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved. 25 So, as they disagreed among themselves, they departed, after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

26 'Go to this people, and say, You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. 27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand

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with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.'

28 Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

30 And he lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.

V. 15 - The Roman road is yet visible and used. The Christians came some 40 miles over the road, which was then over 300 years old. How they heard that Paul was coming is unknown. His letter to them some years earlier had introduced him to some, and he obviously knew some of them at the time of writing.

Paul...took courage - God may have been with Paul many times earlier, and have given him special revelations along, even to promising him that he would stand before Caesar, but Paul was still human and was encouraged by the brethren who loved him (even if perhaps not knowing him) enough to come and meet him. It is a good example for us.

V. 16 - As in Caesarea, and pretty much throughout the trip the prisoner was treated kindly.

V. 17 - Of course, multitudes of Jews were in Rome and thereabouts, and the Roman letter gives evidence that some were Christians. Paul, even if an apostle to the Gentiles, still attempts to win some of his brethren according to the flesh.

V. 19 - **Jews** - The first time that Paul so characterizes those who opposed him.

V. 20 - Note again: Paul's thrust was about the "hope of Israel" which was fully realized in Christ Jesus. For some, it would not help to so state.

V. 21 - As far as the Jews were concerned, they were not predisposed against Paul, though they

may well have heard of him (see v. 22). They evidently did not know why he was in Rome until he informed them. This may say something indirectly about his case - the Jews in Judea considered their evidence so flimsy that they didn't bother to go to Rome to defend themselves.

V. 22 - **sect** - the same word as in 24:5. It also occurs in Galatians 5:20. As used then, it seemed to mean a party or faction of a larger group (i.e., Jewish Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.). Now, we use it various ways, sometimes making it equal to heresy (which word transliterates the Greek term rather than translating it). Heresy means, generally, either a position held contrary to a revealed truth, or a doctrine considered to be untrue, and to which a group adheres, making it a major part of their belief. It is fair to say, however, that it is defined various ways, though generally the above is true. It obviously relates to what is considered as essential and truth rather than opinion.

In the early years of Christianity, those considered heretics were anathematized from the fellowship.

In later years of the church, that which was considered essential and normative for the members was called "dogma" or sometimes (essential) doctrine or confession of faith. Wrapped up in this problem is the question of infallibility (Whose interpretation shall be held as correct?) which rightly must be considered, since the basic principle upon which the Protestantism stands is that every man is his own interpreter and no one has the right to lord it over another. Hence, for these and other reasons, heresy and sect are difficult concepts to handle. For instance, one might be divisive (schismatic) and not over any major doctrine, or even a minor doctrine, etc. Various positions might be held on certain things, and yet no one would be accused of heresy. One ought to be careful about terms, being biblical if possible, and correct according to current usage as well.

The Jewish men doubtless knew of the Christians in Rome, and also knew that the report about Christians were generally bad.

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V. 23 - **the kingdom of God** - It seems to me that from Paul's testimony in Acts, the kingdom of God and the church were equal in his thinking. At least he never distinguishes between them (see v. 31).

trying to convince - The Greek term meant persuade, which we have pointed out many times before, was and is the method most used by Paul. Those unpersuaded are then called "unbelievers."

V. 24 - Two groups as always: some persuaded, some still unbelieving. In v. 25, Luke describes the two groups as being unable to speak together (i.e. agree with each other by speaking the same thing).

V. 25 - Notice the evidence and manner of inspiration of the prophet (another reason why I think it is misleading to say *prophet* and *preacher* are synonymous) Isaiah, and Paul's judgment that what was said 700 years earlier yet had a present-day application. The general text occurs in Matthew 13:14,15; Rom. 11:8. Or, in the words of Stephen in Acts 7, and Jesus in Matt. 23:29ff., the Jewish people were characteristically unbelieving, resistant to the Holy Spirit speaking through men to them. Note again Romans 10:18-21, where the indictment of guilty is placed upon them, because they were responsible for their hearts and unbelief. Note the idea "and turn" (i.e., repent. See Acts 20:21; 26:20 etc.).

V 28 - Another item the Jews, as a whole could not get straight: that God loved the Gentiles just like he loved Jews. Observe that Paul stated that the Gentiles would listen; perhaps in contrast to Jews who would not listen.

V. 30 - As is clear elsewhere, many supported Paul in his ministry, which, it seems to me, establishes the right of a congregation to support someone, or the right of someone to be supported by a congregation or individuals.

V. 31 - Note again "the kingdom of God" and "the things concerning Jesus Christ." To me, to do the one is to do the other (i.e., to preach Christ is to preach the kingdom, and vice versa).

unhindered - Most commentators remark about this word with which the book of Acts ends, since it has so many interesting connotations. For instance, through many trials, Paul yet arrived in Rome, and continued to preach Christ, allowing nothing to hinder him. Again, the Gospels, Acts and all the epistles tell how God tried to lead the Jews from their allegiance to the law to the gospel, which alone makes men free and unhindered. Certainly the book of Acts is an engrossing history of the early Christians, so often hindered in their understanding, or by their culture, and their attempts to remove all obstacles so that the gospel might "run and have free course" (Phil. 1:12-14; II Thess. 3:1).

We might recall in passing that some of the epistles were written here, such as Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, and perhaps others of which we do not know. We should also consider that the surroundings in this imprisonment seem to be much more pleasant than those reflected in II Timothy.

Various people came to see Paul, or work with him, like Epaphroditus, Onesimus, Epaphras, Tychicus, Demos and Timothy among others.

Acts is truly a great book - may we be grateful to God for using Luke to write it for mankind, and that we have been privileged to study it for our edification and upbuilding in faith.

QUESTIONS

202. How did the people on Malta contrast to the Jews with whom Paul had been dealing?

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203. Does it seem to you that the stay on Malta was rather encouraging to the travelers, even after three months?

204. Did the news of Paul's coming travel ahead of him?

205. Does God sometimes work through others to encourage us?

206. How does Paul plead his case (before the state) in Rome?

207. Why did Paul say he was in chains?

208. Were the Roman Jews cordial to him?

209. What were the sources of Paul's presentation to the Jewish brethren?

210. What does Paul see as being true in Isaiah's day and also in his day?

211. Had God spoken in Isaiah's day of a salvation of the Jews which they were rejecting and would reject?

212. What would be true of (some) Gentiles that would not be true of (some) Jews in regard to this promised salvation?

213. How does Luke describe Paul's two years in Rome?

214. What do you see in the word "unhindered"?

SPECIAL STUDY ON BAPTISM

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by Jack Cottrell

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ACTS 22:16

Baptism is mentioned a number of times in the book of Acts after 2:38, but mostly just to record the fact that certain individuals were baptized (e.g., 8:12,38; 9:18; 10:48; 16:15,33). Only one other passage reflects significantly on the actual *meaning* of baptism, viz., Acts 22:16. Here God's servant Ananias addresses the humble Saul of Tarsus (who is about to become Paul the Apostle) with these words: "And now why do you

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delay? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

Saul the Sinner

To understand the meaning of baptism as taught in this passage, again we must study the historical context in which the statement is made. Especially we must inquire concerning Saul’s spiritual state at the time Ananias addresses him. Is he already saved, or is he still an unsaved sinner? To find the answer we must study all three accounts of Saul’s conversion together: Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-16; and 26:1-18.

Before his conversion experience Saul considered himself to be among the elite in believing Israel, a devout Jew who was “zealous for God” (22:3). From his perspective as a Christian, however, he realized that he had been the foremost sinner (I Tim. 1:15). He was guilty of blasphemy, persecution of Christians and of Christ Himself (26:14-15), violence, and unbelief (I Tim. 1:13). This is another example of how even the most sincere Old Covenant faith was no longer sufficient once Christ was known.

While Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute more Christians, the risen and living Christ appeared to him and demanded, “Saul, why are you persecuting me?” The bewildered and bedazzled Saul could only ask, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply: “I am Jesus, the one you are actually persecuting” (9:5; 22:8; 26:15). Immediately filled with a sense of his guilt and with fear, Saul could only ask, “What shall I do, Lord?” The reply: “Go into Damascus, and there someone will tell you what to do” (22:10).

Blinded by the brilliance of the risen Christ, Saul was led into Damascus; but no one came to him for three days. During this time the blind Saul prayed and fasted, waiting for someone to help him. He knew from a vision that a man named Ananias would come for this purpose (9:9-12). Ananias himself prepared by a vision, finally arrived after the three days of fasting and prayer. First he laid his hands on Saul so that the latter’s sight might be

miraculously restored (9:12, 17,18; 22:13). Then he announced why the Lord had confronted him to be an apostle to the Gentiles (22:14,15; see (:15,16).ⁱ Finally, Ananias told Saul what to do about his sin and guilt: “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (22:16).

Now the crucial question is this: can we discern whether Saul is still in his sins when thus exhorted, or whether he has already been saved? To put it another way, is there any point prior to this where he might have been fully converted?

Someone might suggest that he was converted on the Damascus road at the time of his encounter with Christ. Since he calls Jesus “Lord” (22:8,10), perhaps this means that he was at that point surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. This is unlikely, however. The word itself (Greek, *kurios*) was the usual term of respectful address, on which occasions it was roughly equivalent to our word “sir”. Perhaps this is all Saul meant in his first use of this term, since at this point he does not even know who Jesus is: “Who art Thou, Lord?” (22:8). But after Jesus identifies Himself (22:8), Saul again calls Him “Lord” (22:10), perhaps in a stronger sense than before, and perhaps even indicating an attitude of submission. It is still unlikely, though, that any true conversion has taken place. Saul had not yet heard the gospel offer, nor had he been told the conditions for receiving what is offered. This is why he asks, “What shall I do, Lord?” (22:10).

The fact that Saul asked this question suggests that he was at that time in the same spiritual condition as the Jews who were convicted by Peter’s Pentecost sermon. They asked, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Saul’s question is exactly the same: “What shall I do?” But whereas they were immediately told who to receive forgiveness, Saul was not told at this point what to do about his sins. Thus we conclude that he is still in them here on the Damascus road.

But even if this is so, someone might say that Saul was surely converted during the three days when he was fasting and praying. But there is no indication that any change took place in him during

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this time. Conversion is usually accompanied by a deep sense of joy and relief (see Acts 8:39; 16:34), but this is not mentioned here. The fact that Saul continues to pray and fast during the whole three days shows he has not yet received that for which he is praying and fasting. He has still not had his question answered: “What shall I do?” He knows that someone named Ananias will come and tell him what to do (9:6,12), but nothing happens for three days. During this time he is still in his blindness, which is symbolic of the fact that he is still in his sins.

When Ananias first encounters Saul, what does he assume about the latter’s spiritual condition? The fact that he addresses him as “Brother Saul” (9:17; 22:13) is taken by many to be a sure indication that Ananias accepts him as a fellow Christian and thus as a saved person. It is true that Christians called each other “brother” and “brethren.” About 30 instances occur in Acts and 130 in Paul’s own writings. But this practice probably arose from the fact that the *Jews* already customarily called each other “brethren,”ⁱⁱⁱ by which they meant only “fellow Jews.” This is the sense in which Paul refers to all Jews as “my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3). The addressing of fellow Jews as brethren occurs quite often in the book of Acts;ⁱⁱⁱ thus we need not think that anything more than this is implied by Ananias’ address of Saul as “brother.”

In fact there are two strong indications that Ananias did not view Saul as a saved Christian brother when he first encountered him. As we have seen in our study of Acts 2:38, salvation in the Messianic age includes receiving the Holy Spirit. But Ananias says that he has been sent to Saul for the very purpose of filling him with the Holy Spirit (9:17). This shows that Saul was not yet saved, and that Ananias was quite aware of it. The other element of the double cure of salvation is forgiveness of sins. Now, when Ananias tells Saul to rise up and wash away his sins (22:16), this shows that he sees Saul as still bearing the burden of guilt.

Thus there is nothing in the text or context that places Saul in the company of the saved when he first meets Ananias. He welcomes Ananias as the one whom God has sent at last to tell him what to do to be saved, and baptism is a central element in the instruction. It is related both to receiving the Spirit and to forgiveness, just as in Acts 2:38.

We can infer its relation to the Spirit in Saul’s case from Acts 9:12, 17,18. In verse 17 Ananias mentions two reasons why he was sent: that Saul might regain his sight and be filled with the Spirit. In the very next verse we are told that Saul’s sight returned (when Ananias laid his hands on him, v. 12) *and* that he was baptized. The implication is that the latter was the occasion for the giving of the Spirit, as promised in Acts 2:38.

The relation of baptism to the forgiveness of Saul’s sins is the focal point of Acts 22:16. We now turn to a more detailed study of this aspect of the verse.

Wash Away Your Sins

Ananias’ instruction to Saul includes two aorist participles, “rising up” and “calling upon”; and two imperatives, “be baptized” and “wash away your sins.” This last item is the crucial one. What does it mean to “wash away” sins? At first the imagery might suggest to our minds the second part of the double cure, or the cleansing of our souls from the condition of sinfulness, a purifying change wrought within our very hearts. But this is not the main idea. It rather refers to the first part of the double cure, namely, the washing away of the *guilt* we have incurred because of our sins. It is equivalent to the forgiveness of sins as discussed in the study of Acts 2:38; its background is the washing or ritual cleansing ceremonies of the Old Testament. It is accomplished only by the application of the blood of Christ to our lives: “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7). When Ananias says, “Get your sins washed away,” he is simply saying, “Get your sins forgiven.”

The significant point for our purposes is the close connection between baptism and the washing

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away of sins. The most natural understanding is that the former is somehow the occasion or the condition of the latter. This is true for several reasons. First, this is consistent with the situation as described in the last section. Saul is under deep conviction of his sins, and has been fasting and praying for three days while awaiting instruction as to what he should do about them. Thus when Ananias tells him to “be baptized and wash away your sins,” the guilt-ridden Saul would most naturally take baptism to be what he should do to wash his sins away.

Second, this view is consistent with other New Testament teaching about baptism and salvation in general and with its teaching about baptism and forgiveness in particular. It is in effect the exact equivalent of Peter’s instruction in Acts 2:38. “Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins” means the very same thing as “be baptized and wash away your sins.”

Third, the very fact that Saul is instructed with an *imperative* to *wash away his sins* shows that it must be the result of baptism. As noted above, the only true means of washing sins away is the blood of Jesus Christ. All would surely agree that only the Lord Himself can apply His blood to our souls. That is to say, the washing away of sins is an act of God and not the act of any human being. It is a spiritual act accomplished by divine power alone. It is impossible for Saul or anyone else to literally wash away his own sins. What sense does it make, then, for Saul to be told to “wash away your sins”? How could he possibly do such a thing? Here is the answer: there was *no way* that he could do this himself *unless* the washing away of sins was dependent on something he *could* do, namely submit to Christian baptism. This is the implication of the fact that “wash away” is in the imperative form.

Finally, the *number* and *order* of the imperatives show that baptism is a condition for washing away sins. If the outward act were *only* a symbolic picture of a prior inner cleansing, we would not expect him to put both in the imperative form. In such a case it would be appropriate for the

“washing away” to be an aorist participle (like “rising up” and “calling upon”). Strictly speaking the action of an aorist participle *precedes* the action of the main verb. Ananias thus would have said, “Be baptized [imperative], having washed away your sins [aorist participle].” But he does not say this; he uses two imperatives instead.

But does the use of two imperatives in itself mean that baptism is a condition for washing away sins? Not necessarily. Both could be imperative, with baptism still being just a symbolic picture of the prior inner cleansing. But in this case, the imperatives would have to be reversed: “wash away your sins and be baptized.” In fact, *only* if they were in this order could we say that baptism just pictures the prior cleansing. But they are not; “be baptized” - an imperative - precedes “wash away your sins” - an imperative. This order of the two imperatives, along with the other reasons cited above, requires us to conclude that baptism is a preceding condition for the washing away or forgiveness of sins.

The close connection between baptism and washing in Acts 22:16 helps us to understand the baptismal content of other New Testament references to washing. For example, Paul says to the converted sinners at Corinth, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:11). All three verbs are in the aorist tense, referring to a single action in the past. The verb for “washed” is the same as that used in Acts 22:16, where the action is connected with baptism. This suggests that I Cor. 6:11 is also referring to baptism.

The two modifying phrases in this verse in Corinthians also point to baptism. “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” recalls Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; and I Cor. 1:13. “In [ev] the Spirit” is the same expression as Matthew 3:11 (and parallels); Acts 1:5; and Acts 11:16. These are all baptismal references. The fact that the two phrases are used to modify all three verbs shows that the latter are all referring to a single act, namely baptism. “You were washed,” at which

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time “you were sanctified” and “you were justified.”

Another passage that speaks of washing is Hebrews 10:22, which says that we have had “our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” That this speaks of baptism is clear not only from the reference to washing but also from its description as an application of water to our bodies. The statement as a whole refers to the inner and outer aspects of the “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5), namely, the cleansing of the heart from sin and the immersion of the body in water.

Two other inferences to washing that most probably are speaking of baptism are Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5. These will be discussed in separate chapters.

Calling on His Name

Ananias instructs Saul to arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins, “calling on His name.” The verb here is an aorist participle. This means that this action, while intimately connected with that of the main verb, is nevertheless meant to precede it. Saul is thus told to “call on His name” as a preface to his baptism and the washing away of his sins.

What is the significance of this action? To understand this we must look to the origin of this expression in Joel and its use elsewhere in the New Testament, especially in Acts. The Old Testament source is Joel 2:32, “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered.” Since this appears in connection with Joel’s prophecy concerning the coming of the Spirit, we are not surprised that Peter quotes it in Acts 2:21, “And it shall be, that every one who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Paul quotes it in Romans 10:13, “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” Christians are described as those who call upon His name (Acts 9:14,21; I Cor. 1:2).

Specifically, *whose* name is being called upon? In Joel it is the name of Yahweh (Jehovah), whom we know in the New Covenant revelation to include Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the New Testament passages the name “Lord” specifically refers to Jesus Christ. This is especially clear in Acts 9:13-17; Romans 10:9-13; and I Cor. 1:2. Thus, although no specific name is mentioned in Acts 22:16, it undoubtedly refers to calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the crucial question is this: *for what purpose* or *what end* was Saul told to call upon the name of the Lord? Here again the answer is not in doubt. He must call upon the name of the Lord *for salvation*. This is Joel’s point: “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD *will be delivered*.” This is how Peter and Paul quote it: whoever calls on the name of the Lord *will be saved*. Paul equates it with the confession of the mouth that Jesus is Lord, a confession that results in salvation (Rom. 10:9,10; cf. 10:13).

Thus Ananias’ instruction does no less than confirm the unanimous Biblical testimony to the saving significance of baptism. God has promised to save us - to give us forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit - in Christian baptism. As a person prepares to be baptized, he should call upon God to keep this promise; he should call upon the Lord Jesus Christ to apply His cleansing blood to his sinful heart and to send the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a prayer of faith in the faithfulness of God.

As it applied to Saul, it meant two things. First, the fact that he was supposed to call upon the Lord’s name in connection with his baptism meant that he had not yet received salvation. The whole point of his calling upon the Lord’s name was *to be saved*. Thus this is one final confirmation of the conclusion already reached above, that Saul was not saved on the Damascus Road nor during his three days of fasting and prayer. He was not saved until he called upon the Lord’s name in baptism. Second, this “calling upon His name” was an indication of Saul’s *faith* in Jesus. We may note

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that there is no specific mention of faith in Ananias' instruction, but it is implied nevertheless. According to Romans 10:14, one cannot call upon Him unless he has believed in Him. Thus Saul is here being told to do what every good Jew has to do now that the Messiah has come, namely, transform his limited Old Covenant faith into the fully-rounded faith that accepts Jesus as Yahweh Himself and as the source of salvation.

Summary

In this chapter we have explored the teaching of Acts 22:16 on the meaning of baptism. First we recounted the basic facts of Saul's encounters with Jesus and Ananias, and concluded that he was not yet saved when Ananias instructed him concerning baptism. We noted that Ananias gave him the gospel offer of the double cure: forgiveness (the "washing away" of the guilt of his sins) and the Holy Spirit.

Next, we concentrated on the relation between baptism and the washing away of sins. We concluded that the only reasonable understanding of Ananias' words is that the washing takes place in the act of baptism. This is consistent with the context and with other New Testament teaching. Also, it is required by the fact that "wash away" is an imperative as such, and also by the number and order of the two imperatives in the verse.

Finally we saw that "calling on His name" refers to calling on the name of Jesus for His promised salvation. That this precedes baptism is shown by the participle construction and confirms the fact that baptism is for salvation. The sinner approaches baptism calling upon the Lord to save him as He has promised.

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ⁱ In his brief retelling of this event to King Agrippa, Paul does not mention the role of Ananias. His summary of his commission in 26:16-18 is most

likely what Jesus told him later through Ananias, rather than something spoken directly to him on the Damascus road.

ⁱⁱ Hans von Soden, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I:145.

ⁱⁱⁱ Acts 2:29,37; 3:17; 7:2,23; 13:15,26,38; 22:1,5; 23:1,5,6; 28:17,21. See also Luke 6:42 and Heb. 7:5.