

SIMPLE, STIMULATING STUDIES

IN THE...

*Great
Book of Acts*

...BY

DONALD G. HUNT



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INTRODUCTION

Those who are interested in the New Testament church have always held the book of Acts to be one of the most important books of the Bible. Its early chapters tell of its establishment and of life and activities in the early days of the church. In the midst of some of the darkest days the church had during the book of Acts events comes the totally unexpected conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and neither he nor the apostolic church was ever the same thereafter. His conversion was well timed for his monumental work of invading the Roman Empire with the gospel.

The book of Acts is sometimes referred to as the "book of conversion", and so it is, for it records the conversions on Pentecost (Acts 2), the Samaritans and the Ethiopian (Acts 8), Saul (Acts 9,22,26), Cornelius (Acts 10), Lydia and the jailer (Acts 16), and others. Our conclusions reached from a study of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46, 47; John 20:21-23) on the subject of conversion (becoming Christians) are abundantly confirmed by these examples under the preaching of the apostles and their contemporaries.

The author (Luke), the recipient (Theophilus), the time of writing (when Paul had been a prisoner for two full years in Rome), and the place of writing (Rome) usually treated in the Introductions of books will be found in this book where such enter into the text-material. More people will read such there than if locked up in this Introduction.

The principal uses for this study-book are for making a study of the book of Acts either individually or as a class and as a reference work for those needing help on a particular verse from time to time.

Since more people still use the King James Version than any other, it is the basis of comment and quotation throughout this work. However, other ver-

sions are referred to in those places where they have a special contribution to make. And some references are made to the original Greek itself where such is helpful to our understanding.

Your author believes more people will make use of this book in its present study-form than if it were in a commentary-form. Those wishing to consult it as they would a commentary will find the references at the top of the pages convenient for locating information.

In compiling such a work your author has at times consulted the following men's commentaries: *J. W. McGarvey, Gareth Reece, H. Leo Boles, Don DeWalt, Orrin Root-John Wade, Albert Barnes, and Adam Clarke*; also Zondervan's *"Pictorial Bible Dictionary"*; also these Greek works: *"Thayer's Lexicon," "Englishman's Greek Concordance," "Expositor's Greek New Testament," "Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words"* by Vine, and *"Word Pictures in the New Testament"* by A. T. Robertson.

God's help and blessing have been repeatedly sought throughout this book's year of compilation, and now as it goes forth to the reading public we especially ask that it might be used and blessed far beyond the author's ability to foresee.

PART ONE

THE CHURCH

IN

JERUSALEM

CHAPTER 1

The Church is Established

I. Background

A. Luke Recounts Certain Pre-Ascension Events
(Study Acts 1:1-3)

The "former treatise" which the author has written to Theophilus (v. 1) is the book of Luke. The Gospel of Luke is well described as setting forth what "Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up" (v. 1,2), for that gospel account covers the life of Jesus clear to the day of His ascension (see Luke 24:50,51).

"Theophilus" means "lover of God". Some conjecture that "Theophilus" is not a real person but any "lover of God". But notice he is called "most excellent Theophilus" in Luke 1:3, which points not only to his being a person in real life but to being a government official. Note that the governor Felix is addressed as "most excellent Felix" in Acts 23:26 and 24:3.

The "commandments" Jesus gave His apostles before His ascension (v. 2) are the commandments of the Great Commission.

We are entirely indebted to v. 3 for information on how long Jesus was here on earth after His resurrection. "Forty days" is nearly six weeks and close to one-half of one of our calendar seasons. Those days were spent (1) demonstrating by a variety of reliable proofs to His apostles (and other witnesses most of whom are listed in I Cor. 15:5-7 that He is indeed alive from the dead, and (2) instructing them further concerning the coming kingdom.

QUESTIONS: 1. What was the "former treatise" Luke has written to Theophilus? 2. What does "Theophilus" mean? 3. What is meant by calling him "most excellent" Theophilus? 4. What "commandments" does Jesus give just before ascending? 5. How many days is it between the resurrection and the ascension? 6. What two things does Jesus do in those days?

B. Ascension Day
(Study Acts 1:4-11)

Though the apostles are from Galilee (v. 11), Jesus has told them not to return there but remain in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them (compare Luke 24:49). The Spirit's coming will be a fulfillment of what John the Baptist prophesied concerning Jesus' baptizing with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11).

Their question, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (v. 6) shows that even after Jesus' having taught them more about the kingdom during those forty days, they still do not have everything straight about the kingdom. Their coming inspiration by the Spirit will take care of that, for they will speak thereafter as the Spirit inspires them and gives them utterance. The Spirit will finish teaching what they have not been able to comprehend while Jesus was with them (John 16:12,13).

V. 8 gives us the order of places they will preach. They are to begin in "Jerusalem". This will be according to both Isa. 2:2,3 and Luke 24:47. Then after the dispersion of the Jerusalem congregation (Acts 8:1) the gospel will go out into "Judea" (the district around Jerusalem) and north to "Samaria" (by Philip in Acts 8), and then to the "uttermost parts of the earth" (by Paul and others, Acts 13:46,47). Some have said v. 8 contains a miniature outline of the

whole book of Acts: (1) the gospel to Jerusalem--chapters 1-7; (2) the gospel to Judea and Samaria--chapters 8-12; and (3) the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth--chapters 13-28.

After thus speaking to the apostles as to where they are to bear witness of Him, He begins to arise bodily from the earth in a sight they will never forget. As He enters the cloud, they evidently expect Him to emerge again into view above it, for they keep looking up (v.9). Intently are their eyes and attention fixed on the cloud and the sky that they hardly notice the two angels (men in white apparel--compare Mark 16:5 and Matt. 28:5,6), who have taken their places near them. Simultaneously they speak and dramatically announce that Jesus will someday return just as they have seen Him go away. He has left in a cloud and will return in clouds (Rev. 1:7). That He is to return someday is not a new thought to the apostles, for Jesus Himself has spoken to them about it (John 14:2,3; Matt. 16:27; etc.).

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where are the apostles to go after Jesus' ascension?* 2. *What great experience does Jesus say they will have within a few days?* 3. *What question about the kingdom do they ask Jesus?* 4. *Where are they to begin preaching?* 5. *After what event will they preach out in Judea and Samaria?* 6. *Who will be the most responsible for carrying the gospel to far-distant places?* 7. *Give the miniature outline of the book of Acts that can be drawn from Acts 1:8.* 8. *In the ascension what receives Jesus out of their sight?* 9. *What do two angels dramatically announce?*

C. Apostles and Others Pray and "Wait"
(Study Acts 1:12-14)

If we had only Acts' account of the ascension, we would suppose Jesus has ascended from the very top of

the Mt. of Olives just east of Jerusalem, but Luke 24:50 says Jesus led them out "as far as Bethany", but the American Standard says He led them out "until they were over against Bethany", making it a little difficult to pin-point just what is meant. In his "Lands of the Bible" McGarvey has this interesting observation: "About half a mile southeast of the principal summit of the mount is a rounded knoll nearly of the same height...Bethany lies immediately under this knoll, on its eastern slope, and on top of the knoll the disciples would be 'as far as to Bethany' without being in it." He says, "This must have been the true site of the ascension." It would still be the Mount of Olives from which the disciples return to Jerusalem afterwards, and it would be "over against Bethany". A "sabbath day's journey" (v. 12) is what Jewish tradition allows a person to walk outside of Jerusalem on the sabbath and is fixed at 7/8 of a mile.

Jesus has told them in John 14:1 not to sorrow over His departure. They have now evidently come to realize the importance of His returning to heaven, for Luke 24:52 says they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy". Then, too, they have to be excited as they contemplate the fulfillment of His promise, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (v. 5).

The apostles' names are recorded four times: Luke 6:13-16 and Mark 3:13-19 (when He chose them); Matt. 10:1-7 (when He sent them out in pairs to preach); and here in v. 13. The Acts' list, of course, contains only eleven names, for Judas is no more.

Meeting together with the eleven for prayer are the faithful women who were at the cross (Matt. 27:55, 56) and who took spices to the tomb (Luke 23:55--24:1), also Jesus' mother (and this is the last time she is mentioned in the Bible), plus Jesus' brothers. We are utterly surprised to read of His brothers now being included among the closest followers of Jesus, for

only a few months before they were not believers in Him (John 7:3-5). Evidence points to Jesus father having been dead for several years. In Jewish culture the care of a widowed mother fell on the shoulders of her oldest son, which in Mary's family would have been Jesus. He has evidently taken care of her for quite some time but at the cross commits her to the care of the apostle John (John 19:26,27). Why does not the brother next to Jesus in age take care of her? Likely because their unbelief in Jesus has caused a rift between her and them. We are glad to learn that His brothers are now on the right track, but what has brought about their change? They believe in Jesus, and yet not one word has been preached on Pentecost to change them. The key to their change is the special resurrection appearance Jesus made to one of them--James (I Cor. 15:17), who later became an additional apostle (see Gal. 1:18,19).

So as this group "waits" for the coming of the Holy Spirit as Jesus has instructed them in Luke 24:49 and for the beginning of their preaching, they "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

QUESTIONS: 1. *The names of what mountain and what town are connected with Jesus' ascension?* 2. *What authority fixes a "sabbath day's journey"?* 3. *How far is a sabbath day's journey?* 4. *How many times does the New Testament list the apostles' names?* 5. *Why is Acts's list one name short?* 6. *What women, whose mother, and whose brothers meet with the apostles for prayer?* 7. *Which of these is it surprising to find in the group?* 8. *What has probably brought about their happy change?*

D. Judas's successor is Mattias
(Study Acts 1:15-26)

The number of these meeting together during the

ten days between the ascension and Pentecost has come to be around 120 (v. 15)--surely too many to crowd into the "upper room" mentioned in v. 13. But don't overlook Luke 24:53, which says they were "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Likely it is in one of the courts of the temple where "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples" to secure a successor for Judas. Even though they pray over which of the two men should be chosen and then cast lots to determine the mind of God in the matter, the lot falling on Matthias (v.26), there are those who argue against the apostleship of Matthias because this is done before Peter is inspired on Pentecost. These claim that Paul is Judas's rightful successor. To us the whole case turns on whether God accepts Matthias or not. If he does, then Peter is acting under direction of God. If God does not accept Matthias, it will surely be evident to all when the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles, for Matthias alone will have no cloven tongue like fire sitting on him, and he alone will not be speaking in tongues. Peter will not stand up with the "eleven" (v. 14) but with the "ten". In the absence of Matthias's apostolic credentials they will conclude that Judas's place is still vacant. Even as far into the book of Acts as the problem of the Grecian widows being neglected in the daily ministrations, Matthias is still one of the apostles, for Acts 6:3 says the "twelve" call the multitude together and lead in settling the matter.

Judas's successor is to be a witness with the other apostles of Jesus' resurrection (v. 22). Judas being gone before the actual witnessing begins, a successor is sought for him. But by the time the apostle James is martyred (Acts 12:1), no mention is made of there being any successor for him. By that time the witnessing concerning the resurrection is well established, so the apostles have no successors except in

the case of Judas.

It has been charged that Acts' description of Judas's end (v, k8) is contradictory of Matt. 27:5's saying he hanged himself. If you have been at Acedama, you can see how Judas could have hanged himself as Matthew records and at the same time these things reported in Acts have taken place also. Judas climbs a tree on the bluff overlooking the valley below. He hangs himself, and being an abandoned person nobody bothers to take his unwanted body down. His body decays day by day until ultimately something breaks (the tree limb or the rope or his neck-section), causing him to fall feet-first. Upon impact with the ground the bloated body drops off the bluff to the valley below. Upon impact there his deteriorated body bursts open, and his insides gush out. (Note: This implies that some time has passed since his death, for if a newly-dead body fell down headlong the insides would not gush out.)

We should not be surprised that they pray and cast lots to see which of the two qualified men will become an apostle (v. 26), for this means of determination was used during the Old Testament. Examples: which animal was to be the scapegoat on the day of Atonement (Lev. 16:8); the territory which each tribe was to receive (Acts 13:19); determining the guilty party (Josh. 7:14); determining God's choice for king (I Sam. 10:20,21); etc. In Old Testament times Prov. 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." But after the church began, we have no record of this practice being continued.

Judas "purchased a field" (v. 18) in the sense that it is money which he brought back to the chief priest that is used to make the purchase (Matt. 27: 3-7).

QUESTIONS: 1. Where do the 120 probably get together besides the upper room? 2. What argument(s) is advanced against Matthias being Judas's successor? 3. What are arguments for his being Judas's successor? 4. Why is a successor sought for Judas when later none is sought for James? 5. Show that Matthew's account of Judas's suicide and Acts's account of his miserable end are not contradictory. 6. Why are we not surprised that the apostles cast lots to determine the mind of the Lord concerning Judas's successor? 7. In what sense has Judas purchased that field?

II. The Church is Established

A. *The Holy Spirit Comes upon the Apostles* (Study Acts 2:1-13)

Recall that Jesus has spoken considerably to the apostles about His sending the Holy Spirit to them (John 14:25,26; John 15:26,27; John 16:7-15). And just before He ascended, He spoke to them again about the matter (Acts 1:4,5,8). For the Spirit's coming they are waiting in Jerusalem.

At the last feast of the Jews (Passover) Jesus had been crucified. God chooses at their next Jewish feast (this Pentecost) to announce to the nation that Jesus whom they crucified God has raised from the dead. With this announcement and attendant preaching He will also begin the new covenant and the establishment of the church.

The "Day of Pentecost" appears first here in the New Testament (v. 1). Paul will again refer to it later on (Acts 20:16). "Pentecost" comes from the Greek word "fifty". During the Passover a special wave-offering of the first-fruits of their wheat and barley harvest was made on the day after the sabbath during that week. With that as Day-1 the Day of Pentecost is

Day-50 (Lev. 23:4-22). Since Day-1 is on the first day of the week, so will Day-50 be. Thus, the new covenant is going into effect on the first day of the week, and the church will come into existence on the first day of the week also. And you will recall that Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9). You can see why the first day of the week is the day on which Christians meet for the breaking of bread, preaching, and other things spiritual (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2).

For God to choose a time when Jews from every nation are in Jerusalem (v. 5) to begin the preaching of the gospel is surely wise. When they go home from Pentecost, they can carry the message back to their various places. This may be the way the church at Rome and in many other places came into existence (converts from Pentecost returning to their homes).

Some insist that the baptism of the Holy Spirit has come upon the 120 and not just the 12 apostles. They would like to open the door so that all believers receive the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit with tongues-speaking, etc. But the promises in John 14,15, 16 (cited above) and in Acts 1:4,5 as well as in Luke 24:49 are to the apostles. This will inspire them for making known the gospel truths that are now in our New Testament, and the tongues will prove to the world that the apostles are inspired of God. Tongues will be for a "sign" to the unbelievers (I Cor. 14:22) and they are one of the several "signs" of the apostles (II Cor. 12:12). There is actually no purpose to give this outpouring to the 120, for they are not to be inspired, and we will never hear of them again. Notice too that when Peter stands up to explain the outpouring, he stands up with the "eleven" (v. 14) and not with the 120.

The fact that these Galileans can speak in so many different languages catches the attention of the feast-attenders in Jerusalem (v. 7,8). Word spreads

throughout the city of its unusualness, and many thousands come together to see the phenomenon. This is exactly what God wants--a multitude to whom Peter can preach the resurrected Jesus. To get such a throng together all the apostles speak in tongues, but after the multitude has assembled Peter alone does the explaining and the preaching.

QUESTIONS: 1. At what feast has Jesus been crucified? 2. At what feast will His resurrection be proclaimed? 3. How do we know the Day of Pentecost is on the first day of the week? 4. Why do some people like to believe the 120 are baptized with the Holy Spirit? 5. How do we know it is the apostles and not the 120 who are baptized with the Holy Spirit? 6. What do the apostles do as a result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that has confounded the Jews in Jerusalem? 7. Do all the 12 or only Peter do the preaching on Pentecost?

B. Peter Explains the Unusual Happening
(Study Acts 2:14-21)

Nobody has ever seen or heard such as is taking place in Jerusalem (presumably in one of the large courts of the temple). The sincere onlookers are "all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" (v. 12) while the mockers ridiculously charge, "These men are full of new wine" (v. 13). Peter gets their attention and shows the wine-charge to be untrue (v. 15). The "third hour of the day" is 9:00 in the morning. Inspiration leads him to show that what they have seen is that which their own prophet Joel predicted (v. 16-21) in Joel 2:28-32. How thrilled they should be to realize they are actually beholding what one of their sacred writers had foreseen! Joel, a Jewish prophet writing to Jewish people,

said God would pour out His Holy Spirit in the "last days". Their nation had its beginning when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt (around 1500 B.C.). Their nation is going to be destroyed in A. D. 70 (only 40 years away). Indeed the Holy Spirit's outpouring is taking place in the "last days" of the Jewish nation!

The prediction in Joel involves the whole Christian dispensation (from the Day of Pentecost to the Day of Judgment--the "great and notable day of the Lord"). This is the beginning of its total fulfillment, for there are several things in the prediction that will come to pass later: the gift of prophecy on God's "handmaidens" (like Philip's daughters, Acts 21:9), the Spirit upon the Gentiles (the "all flesh" of v. 17 being taken as "Jewish" in the case of the apostles and "Gentile" in the case of Cornelius in Acts 10), and the "wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath" to take place before the coming of Christ. Luke 21:25-28 shows these signs will take place immediately prior to Christ's return--in fact, that is why they are called "signs". The same language in Isa. 13:1-19 (especially v. 10) and in Eze. 32:2-16 (especially v. 7,8) depict war and the fall of great nations. We expect the years immediately preceding Jesus' return to be characterized by political upheavals and war.

Joel's prediction also includes the most important item about the Age of the Spirit (the Christian dispensation)--it will be a time of salvation for all (Jew and Gentile included in his "whosoever") who will look to the Lord for it (v. 21). The same statement from Joel is also quoted by Paul in Rom. 10:13. The conversions in Acts become our divine explanation of what God meant by "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved". If it means calling Jesus "Lord", He would not have said what He did in Matt. 7:21. If it means a lost sinner praying for salvation, Saul of Tarsus surely would have fulfilled it in the

three days of fasting and prayer he did (Acts 9:9,10). But even after such praying Saul was still in his sins when God sent Ananias to him to complete his conversion obedience. He was told, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). To surrender to the Lord's requirements is itself a calling on the name of the Lord for one's salvation.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What do the mockers say about the tongues-speaking apostles?* 2. *How does Peter refute their charge?* 3. *What Old Testament prophet has predicted the baptism of the Holy Spirit?* 4. *In what sense is the A.D. 30 Day of Pentecost in the "last days"?* 5. *What in Joel's prophecy is yet to be fulfilled after Pentecost?* 6. *Show that more than mere prayer is involved in calling on the name of the Lord?*

C. Peter's Sermon
(Study Acts 2:22-36)

This will be the first message preached under the Great Commission. In the Commission Jesus has commanded them to preach the "gospel" (Mark 16:15), which means "good news". The gospel is the good news of salvation through Christ. Peter is the preacher on this occasion (the Jews' first opportunity to hear) even as he will be when the Gentiles have their first opportunity (Acts 15:7), using the "keys of the kingdom" according to Jesus' promise to him (Matt. 16:19).

Peter loses no time getting to the point of his message. After saying, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words," he comes directly to the Person he is preaching ("Jesus of Nazareth," v. 22). He was well known among them for over three years. And the Jews from the rest of the world who have not seen Him in person have heard much about Him, including what has happened to

Him at their most recent Passover.

Peter's first affirmation about Jesus is that He was approved by God by the miracles of God that He performed among them (v. 22). For "miracles and wonders and signs" some translations give "mighty works and wonders and signs". Indeed Jesus' miracles were (1) "mighty works" (works of great power), (2) "wonders" (in their effect on the onlookers), and (3) "signs" (credentials that God was with Him).

God foreordained that Jesus bear our sins (compare I Pet. 1:18-20), but Jews are guilty of having brought about His death (v. 23). But the One who submitted to death by their plot in order to be our atonement has not remained 'dead--God saw to that, for He resurrected Him (v. 24)! Death cannot hold in its grip Him who is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25) and who has raised others (Jairus's daughter, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus). His hearers have probably already heard the lie being circulated by the paid-off Roman soldiers (that while they slept, the disciples came and stole the body from the tomb--Matt. 28:12,13). Now they hear what Peter says. And nobody comes forward to deny what Peter is proclaiming! The preaching of the resurrection first takes place here in the very city where it occurred and only a few days after it has transpired. If it can be successfully refuted, it will be refuted here.

Peter next refers (v. 25-29) to a psalm of David (Psa. 16:6-11) and shows it has been fulfilled in Jesus (the "Holy one" whose body did not suffer decay--did not "see corruption") and not in David whose sepulchre is still intact in Jerusalem as Peter preaches. That psalm did not refer to David, for his body did decay. But Jesus' body has not--God raised it on the third day after its death! Where the King James gives the word "hell" in v. 27 most versions give "hades". "Hades" is correct according to the Greek.

God promised David, "Thy throne shall be estab-

lished for ever" (II Sam. 7:16). Here on Pentecost Peter preaches that God has raised up the crucified Messiah to sit on David's throne (v. 30). It was prophesied that Christ would occupy that throne (Isa. 9: 6,7 and Luke 1:32). Christ's occupying the throne following His resurrection is borne out by the prophecy in Dan. 7:13,14 which foresaw the ascension (Christ returning on clouds to the Ancient of days--God) after which He is given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The earthly beginning of Christ's rule as God's sovereign with all authority begins here on Pentecost, and His kingdom is His church which He said He would build (Matt. 16:18,19).

Naturally Peter's hearers cannot see Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, but they can see the cloven tongues like fire, and they have heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind and the apostles speak in many languages. These are all visible and audible evidence of Christ's sending the Holy Spirit from the Father into their midst (v. 33) and who is saying through Peter, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (v. 36). They are also told in v. 34,35 that Christ is fulfilling another prediction made by David: "The Lord (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (the Messiah), Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool" (Psa. 110: 1).

QUESTIONS: 1. What has Jesus said is to be preached? 2. What promise of Jesus to Peter explains why Peter is the preacher on Pentecost? 3. In what sense have Jesus' miracles been (1) mighty works, (2) wonders, and (3) signs? 4. Who comes forward with factual information to refute what Peter is preaching

about Jesus having risen from the dead? 5. What promise to David has God fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection? 6. Who does Peter say have crucified Jesus? 7. Jesus is to be on God's right hand until what happens?

D. The Church's First Additions
(Study Acts 2:37-41)

The Holy Spirit has come to convict people (John 16:8). and He begins this work on this very day He has arrived: "They were pricked in their heart" (v. 37). He has convicted them through the preaching of Peter, for it is "when they heard this" that "they were pricked in their heart" (v. 37). The Word of God is called the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), and it is "sharper than any two-edged sword" of man (Heb. 4:12).

When they realize the one killed under the direction of their Jewish leaders is actually the Messiah, oh, the bitterness of their anguish! Zech. 12:10 is a prophecy of Pentecost, and it includes their mourning: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Is there anything that can be done by or for these guilty of such a heinous sin?

In deep contrition they cry out, "What shall we do?" (v. 37). Notice they cry out to the very apostles to whom Jesus previously said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them" (John 20:23). What will their answers be? And notice the man who answered their question (Peter) is the very apostle to whom Jesus promised the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:19). Notice too they are in the very city where Jesus said

human repentance and divine remission of sins through the blood of Christ should be preached first (Luke 24:47). All these considerations make it important for all who wish to be saved according to the Bible to know and to regard the inspired answer: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (v. 38). It is actually a double command to these convicted believers: "Repent and be baptized." And it carries a double promise: "Remission of sins, and...the gift of the Holy Spirit." And the divine plan is for "every one" to obey! There isn't a plan for one person or group and then another plan for another person or group. There is a law of physical birth by which people are born into this life, and there is a law of spiritual birth by which people are born spiritually (John 3:5-7). The converts here were born again according to Jesus' teachings to Nicodemus in the John 3 passage.

Taking a closer look at Peter's answer, he does not command them to believe, for it is evident they already believe, or they would not be crying out as they are. Repentance is where "self" is crucified, and this is necessary if we would follow Jesus (Luke 9:23). This repentance God demands of all persons everywhere (Acts 17:30); all must do this or perish (Luke 13:3); and this hands the reins of one's life over to Christ so that thereafter a person can say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Baptism is the "water" mentioned in John 3:5 ("born of water and of the Spirit") which is necessary for entering God's kingdom (John 3:5). The very meaning of the Greek word "baptizo" is "immersion" (burial), and that meaning is borne out by various passages of Scripture (John 3:23; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Acts 8:38,39; Matt. 3:16). The Bible teaches immersion and immersion only. It is the "one baptism" of Eph. 4:5. And it is "for" or "in order to" the remission of sins. Yet Fundamentalist churches of our day generally discount the necessity

of baptism for one's salvation, but how can they do so in view of so many plain-as-day Scriptures (see Mark 16:16; I Pet. 3:20,21; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-5,17,18; Acts 2:38)?

The promised "gift of the Holy Spirit" in v. 38 is the indwelling measure of the Spirit that produces the "fruit of the Spirit" enumerated in Gal. 5:22,23 rather than miraculous works like the apostles were doing through their baptismal measure. In promising them the help of the Spirit God knows they have need of this help for the Christian life as much as they need the remission of sins. When Peter says the promise is even for all who are "afar off" (v. 39), he is referring to the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11,13). Even though inspired to say what he is saying, it is evident from a study of Acts 10 that even he does not grasp the meaning of this part of his statement.

Those who cry out asking what to do but stir Peter's heart to tell them more about Jesus ("testify"--v. 40) and to "exhort" them to be saved--to make a decision to be obedient to Jesus (v. 40). Preachers are still to do two things in their messages: (1) present gospel truths, and (2) urge people to be obedient. What an example for preachers and teachers! One can present gospel facts without urging an acceptance, or he can be strong on the appeal but short on the facts they need as a foundation for their acceptance.

What a beginning response--3,000 baptized (v. 41)! And they are baptized the "same day"--not sometime in the future. Baptism is a part of accepting Christ and of being saved, so it is not something to delay. The jailer was baptized the "same hour of the night" that he made his decision (Acts 16:33). Since there is no living stream anywhere near Jerusalem, they had to be baptized in one or more of the pools in Jerusalem. Here is your answer as to whether it is all right to be baptized in a baptistery (a man-made pool), or whether one must be baptized in running

water (as some people argue).

QUESTIONS: 1. How does the Spirit convict people on Pentecost? 2. What Old Testament prophet predicted the contrition of some who have helped kill Jesus? 3. What two things does Peter command them to do? 4. What two blessings are promised if they obey? 5. Prove that all must do the same thing in accepting Christ. 6. What is crucified in repentance? 7. What is the meaning of the Greek word "baptizo"? 8. What are some Bible passages showing the necessity of baptism? 9. What two things that Peter does are preachers still to do? 10. How many are baptized on Pentecost? 11. Where are they evidently baptized?

III. Life in the Early Church

A. Its Faithfulness to God (Study Acts 2:42)

What is the first thing affirmed of the first members of the church? "They continued steadfastly!" Jesus' teaching in John 15:4-8 shows it to be as imperative to abide in Christ as to accept Him. More accept Christ (make the start) than continue in Him (finish the race). Many Scriptures show the importance of continuing in the Christian life (Luke 14:28-35; I. Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9; Col. 1:21-23; Heb. 3:14; Heb. 10:38,39; II Pet. 2:20-22; Rev. 2:10).

Four things are specifically mentioned in which they steadfastly continue. Can any church rightfully claim to be a New Testament church that does not continue steadfastly in these same four things today?

The "apostles' doctrine" is the teaching the apostles gave which is now found in the New Testament. New Testament teaching determines the faith of the church. We are to preach the same message (II Tim. 4:2). If we preach a different message, we are under a curse (Gal. 1:8,9).

Concerning "fellowship" there has been considerable indefiniteness as to what is meant by it in our verse. The Greek word is "koinonia" and is related to the Greek word "koinonos" (partner), which signifies "relationship". Both words come from the Greek word "koinos" (common). Your writer's own studied conclusion on "koinonia" is that the church is a fellowship in which those who accept Christ are brothers (sons of the same heavenly Father), partners in the same great Cause, members of the same body of Christ. As such they have many things in "common": "like precious faith" (II Pet. 1:1); the "same rule" by which to walk (Phil. 2:16); like-mindedness (Phil. 2:2); salvation (Jude 3); etc. Being a part of the same spiritual family the participants lovingly care about one another so that if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it," and on the other hand if "one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (I Cor. 12:26). This accounts for the word "koinonia" being used in II Cor. 8:4 and other places for financial help to needy brethren. Since they were partners in spreading the gospel, "koinonia" shows up in Gal. 2:9 and Phil. 1:4,5 (compare Phil. 4:15-18). But don't conclude that this "fellowship" was only social--just between brethren. It was deeper than that--it was a fellowship with God also (I John 1:3,7 and I Cor. 1:9). To continue steadfastly, then, in the "fellowship" in our present verse is to be an active part of the newly-formed church in all of its worship and work!

The "breaking of bread" is the Lord's supper instituted by Jesus at the most recent Passover (Matt. 26:26-29). The early Christians came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). Paul gives some important material on the importance of correctly partaking of the Lord's supper in I Cor. 11:23-34.

The "prayers" are also a very important part of the life of the early church and remains such to this day.

QUESTIONS: 1. How do the early members of the church continue? 2. Cite at least 2 passages of Scripture showing the necessity of continuing in the Christian life. 3. What is meant by the "apostles' doctrine"? 4. What is meant by the "fellowship"? 5. What is meant by the "breaking of bread"? 6. What is the fourth thing in which they continue?

B. Apostolic Miracles
(Study Acts 2:43)

Notice it is the "apostles" (not the other members) who work miracles, for they alone have received the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit. This is not their first experience, though, at working miracles, for when Jesus sent them out in Matt. 10:1 He gave them miracle-power. Mark 6:13 shows they used it.

What is the purpose of these apostolic miracles? Remember that the message they are preaching, which will later become our written New Testament, is a brand new message from God. It is being revealed and delivered to the world through them. How can the people know they are not making up this message? Because God bears them witness with "signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 2:3,4); "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3); "They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

And what is the result of these many miracles? "Fear came upon every soul" (v. 43).

QUESTIONS: 1. Who is said to be performing miracles? 2. When had they performed miracles before? 3. Explain why God gives them miracle-power.

C. The Unselfishness of the Early Converts
(Study Acts 2:44,45)

Periodically through the centuries there have been religious groups that have forfeited private-ownership and have practiced community-of-goods. How many of us would do this if this were the will of God revealed in the New Testament? All should be willing to do anything that is the revealed will of God. Since this seems not to have been practiced anywhere else in the times of the apostles, since it is not taught elsewhere in the New Testament, and since other passages reflect private-ownership (like Acts 11:28,29; I Cor. 16:2; I Tim. 6:1,2; I Tim. 6:17), we are left to sensible conjecture as to why this is being done in Jerusalem at this time.

There is a situation prevailing that probably explains it. Doubtless some (maybe many) of the new converts are from places far away from Jerusalem. Those living in Jerusalem will continue to have the personal teaching of the apostles, but if these converts from foreign countries depart to their homes with no further access to apostolic teaching, how can they carry on for Christ? Their case dictates that they remain in Jerusalem for a time to become grounded in and further informed concerning being followers of Jesus Christ. But how can they do this without more money than they have brought with them? The unselfish love of the Jerusalem brethren responds to their need! This will be mentioned again in Acts 4,5. In so doing they show what Christians are to do under similar conditions. If Christians are called on to lay down their lives for one another (I John 3:16), surely they are to give up some (or even all) their earthly possessions to feed, clothe, etc. fellow-Christians in dire need. Let us not fail in this test of our Christianity if such an occasion presents itself. Consider I John 3:16,17.

QUESTIONS: 1. Cite 2 New Testament passages reflecting private ownership. 2. What is a plausible setting for the Jerusalem church members selling their possessions and giving to those among them? 3. If a similar condition prevailed today, should we do likewise?

D. Daily Happiness and Victories
(Study Acts 2:46,47)

Each day finds them assembling in one of the courts of the temple (no doubt for more teaching by the apostles). We can be sure these new converts do not absent themselves from these special daily meetings. We refer to them as "special", for in apostolic times the congregations normally came together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). But there is a need for congregations to have "special" services in addition to their regular Lord's day meetings, and when a church does have revival services, evangelistic meetings, rallies, or any such special service the members should be present just as these Jerusalem members were. They are an example for us.

"Breaking of bread," a term for a regular meal (Luke 24:28-31,35), here in v. 42 refers to the Lord's supper. In the book of Acts when the setting is religious (like in Troas where they came together on the Lord's day for that very purpose--Acts 20:7), it is the Lord's supper. But in v. 46 they leave the assembly and go to their houses for the "breaking of bread" (their regular meals). Joy and happiness blessed them whether they are in the temple together or at their homes afterwards. They attribute their happiness to God, for they praise Him (v. 47). They are also well respected by their fellow-Jews of Jerusalem (v. 47). As a result the Lord is adding to their number additional converts on a daily basis (v. 47).

V. 41 uses the word "added". Who did the adding? "The Lord." We can be sure He adds only those believers who repent and are baptized. Their names are written in heaven (Heb. 12:23). The importance of this will be seen on the day of judgment (Rev. 20:15; Rev. 21:27).

Such is the victorious beginning of our Christianity in the very city where they have publicly crucified Jesus only a few weeks ago. Yes, this is the "beginning". Jesus has so spoken of it in Luke 24:47, and Peter will later speak of it in the same way (Acts 11:15).

QUESTIONS: 1. *Were these daily meetings the regular practice of the early church or special meetings?* 2. *In what 2 ways is "breaking of bread" used in the Bible?* 3. *How is it used in this section?* 4. *Whom does the Lord add to the church?*

CHAPTER 2

Opposition Begins

I. The Cause

A. A Lame Man is Healed
(Study Acts 3:1-11)

These two former fishermen on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:18-24) and the first apostles to view Christ's empty tomb (John 20:1-10) have now become very prominent in the early days of Christianity. Together Peter and John go to the temple at the Jewish afternoon "hour of prayer" (v. 1). Incense is burned in the temple two times a day--morning and evening (Exo. 30:78). As the priest is in the Holy Place doing this, people congregate without in one of the temple courts for prayer (Luke 1:10). The "ninth hour" is 3:00 in the afternoon--the evening incense time.

As they are about to enter the temple gate called "Beautiful", a grown man crippled from birth, is daily brought to beg alms from those entering the temple. Routinely he sought alms of the two men. As the preachers stop they ask the crippled man to look at them. The man is sure from this request that he is about to receive a sizable gift only to be told of their low financial condition (v. 6). Yet Peter presents him with something far more valuable than any alms that any rich man can give him: an immediate, complete, totally-unexpected healing of his body (v. 6,7)! Imagine the man's unprecedented happiness as he leaps and walks for the first time in his life (v. 8). How grateful he is as he enters the temple with Peter and John, praising God! The people recognize him and are

curious as to how he is now well. His gratitude toward Peter and John is displayed by his holding on to them as the people gather to see him (v. 11).

QUESTIONS: 1. *What time of day is the Jewish hour of prayer?* 2. *What does a priest do in the temple at the same time?* 3. *What does the lame man think when Peter first speaks to him?* 4. *Where does the man go upon being healed?*

B. Peter's Sermon Resulting from the Miracle
(Study Acts 3:12-26)

On Pentecost the speaking in tongues assembled a great multitude for preaching. This unusual miracle on a publicly-known lame beggar affords Peter an audience also.

At the outset he disclaims any inherent power or holiness in themselves as the source of the man's healing (v. 12). He tells them their great God (the God of their fathers) who glorified His Son Jesus whom they have rejected and crucified has brought about this miracle. And by what means has God executed the wonder? By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Peter uses this occasion also to show again their utter mistreatment of Jesus. He said: (1) you delivered Him to Pilate; (2) you denied Him when Pilate insisted on releasing Him; (3) you preferred a wicked murderer Barabbas to the holy and just Jesus; and (4) you killed the Prince (or Author) of life. These charges are even more definite than those made on Pentecost. And again he preaches the resurrection of Jesus as an act of God in contrast to their killing Him (v. 15).

The importance of believing in Jesus is asserted in v. 16, which is the point of all Peter's preaching. The purpose of this miracle is to give Peter a basis for being heard and believed.

Several times the Bible indicates the Jews did not really realize what they were doing when they executed Jesus (v. 17; I Cor. 2:8; Luke 23:34). Yes, they knew they were killing Him, and they knew He claimed to be God's Son, but they didn't believe Him. Like Saul of Tarsus they did it "ignorantly in unbelief" (I Tim. 1:13).

Numerous Old Testament prophecies predicted the sufferings of Christ, the two most elaborate being Psa. 22 and Isa. 53. Other New Testament passages affirming the sufferings of Christ were predicted by the prophets: Luke 24:44-46 and I Pet. 1:10,11.

In the command, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted" (v. 19), Peter is merely varying his expression from his "repent, and be baptized" in Acts 2:38 just as any preacher may do from one invitation service to another. We can be sure he is preaching the same gospel, and those who respond are obedient in the same way. Those who respond will not only have their sins "blotted out" but will get in on the "times of refreshing" that will come from God (the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, spiritual victories, etc. here and that will climax in the greatest of all "times of refreshing" that "shall come from the presence of the Lord"--Christ's coming) (v. 20), who will remain in heaven throughout this age when the gospel is being preached to get mankind restored to God (v. 21). Isaiah is among the greatest of the prophets to foretell the gospel age (v. 21). Consider these from his book: Isa. 2:2-4; Isa. 35:1-10; Isa. 40:9-11; Isa. 60:1-5; etc.).

Peter's Jewish hearers professedly respect Moses. Peter now tells them this "restitution of all things" is to be brought about by One whom Moses said in Deut. 18:15-18 God would raise up and who would be like him--a law-giving prophet whom the people are to hear and obey (v. 22,23). Not only Moses but Samuel and all their Old Testament prophets likewise foretold the

coming of Jesus and the beginning of the church (v. 24). Truly then Peter can say to his hearers, "Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham (in Gen. 22:18; Gen. 26:4; Gen. 28:14), And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (v. 25). Jesus is that "seed" (Gal. 3:16).

Peter's great words on this occasion climax in v. 26 with his telling them (1) God has raised up His Son Jesus; (2) He has sent Him to bless them in turning them away from their iniquities (conversion); and (3) Before being sent to anybody else, Jesus has been sent "first" to them, Peter's Jewish hearers (compare Rom. 1:16).

QUESTIONS: 1. *What is the first thing Peter makes clear about the healing?* 2. *Show that the charges Peter makes in this message to be more definite than his charges on Pentecost.* 3. *What 2 Old Testament chapters have predicted much about Christ's sufferings?* 4. *Compare Peter's command here with his command on Pentecost and comment on them.* 5. *Comment on "times of refreshing".* 6. *Show that Moses predicted the coming of Jesus as a law-giving prophet.* 7. *What is Peter's final thought in this message?*

II. Opposed by Jewish Leaders

A. *Peter and John are Arrested* (Study Acts 4:1-4)

We usually think, "Do good, and everybody will praise you for it." That is not always the case as Peter and John find out from healing the lame man and preaching Jesus.

What in their preaching grieves the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees? Their preaching through Jesus the resurrection from the dead

(v. 2) for two reasons: (1) the apostles are saying God raised Jesus after the Jews were partners to His crucifixion; and (2) the priesthood and temple are under their control, and they do not believe in a resurrection of anybody (Acts 23:8). Being in charge of the temple they will stand for this preaching no longer. They interrupt their message, arrest them, and put them in jail until a hearing the next morning (v. 1, 3).

In reporting their disbelief the author Luke is careful to report the contrasting belief of many others--about five thousand (v. 4), which is two thousand more than his last reported number (Acts 2:41).

QUESTIONS: 1. *What in the preaching has grieved the temple-leaders and why?* 2. *How opposed are the leaders to Peter and John's preaching?* 3. *About how many believers are mentioned?*

B. Peter's Words to the Authorities
(Study Acts 4:5-12)

Only a few weeks ago Jesus appeared before this same Jewish tribunal, so the apostles find themselves also before Annas and Caiaphas. Will the apostles receive a more just hearing than Jesus did? The Sanhedrin customarily sat in a semi-circle with the accused "in the midst" (v. 7).

It is a little difficult to determine just why they ask the apostles to inform them concerning the power and name by which they have healed the lame man. The council knows they are representatives of Jesus. Probably to obtain a verbal charge against them. Do they hope Peter will bend again under pressure as he did the night of Jesus' trial (Matt. 26:69-75)? Or if he doesn't, will they get rid of the apostles as they did Jesus? What will the apostles answer?

Jesus told them such times would come upon them, and He has made adequate arrangements to carry them through: "Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils...When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:17-20). Christ has kept His promise, for v. 8 says, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said..."

Why are they hauled into court? They should not be. Peter is not amiss when he reminds them it is for "the good deed done to the impotent man" and especially "by what means he is made whole" (v. 9). And he has no inclination toward denying Jesus this time but says it is "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead...doth this man stand here before you whole" (v. 10). Three speeches by Peter to the Jews so far in Acts, and three times he has affirmed that God has raised Jesus whom they crucified (Acts 2:36; Acts 3:14,15; here). He even tells them in v. 11 that the exaltation of Jesus after their rejection of Him was divinely prophesied in Psa. 118:22 ("The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner"). And speaking of the name of Jesus Peter boldly affirms, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (v. 12). Then He is the only way to God (compare John 14:6 and I Tim. 2:5)! Human morality cannot save; denominational affiliation cannot; lodge performance cannot. Nothing but Christ can save. That is what Peter proclaims!

QUESTIONS: 1. *Why are some of the council-members the same as when Jesus appeared before the council?*
2. *What promise of Jesus about the Holy Spirit is fulfilled on this occasion?* 3. *What great statement does Peter make about the name of Jesus and salvation?*

C. The Leaders' Decision
(Study Acts 4:13-22)

As the leaders sit and listen to Peter's words, they are struck with their boldness as arrested persons thus fearlessly speaking to them especially since Peter and John are from the masses of common people and not from the elite (v. 13). Jesus, their crucified Master, had not been educated in the Jews' rabbinical schools, and He feared not their council. The same spirit is found in these apostles, and the council attributes their boldness to the One whom they had been with (v. 13).

A factor in the apostles' boldness besides the Holy Spirit within them is the healed man standing with them--the well known lame beggar now healed! This fact proves to be a real problem to the rulers doing anything to the apostles (v. 13) as we shall see in coming verses.

Rather than continue with the embarrassing situation in which the rulers find themselves, they decide to confer privately before proceeding (v. 14). The hypocrisy of these leaders who used false witnesses against Jesus (Matt. 26:29) is evident (v. 15). Since they cannot deny the miracle, why should they do anything to the apostles? Because they are bent on putting a halt to the spread of Christianity (v. 17). Rather than doing anything to them, they decide to release them under threat not to preach any more about Jesus (v. 17). When Peter and John are again brought before them and threatened, immediately the leaders can see these bold men are not going to be intimidated by their threat. Peter shows that to hearken to them means to disobey God, which they refuse to do. As true witnesses they will continue to affirm what they have seen and heard about Jesus (v. 19,20). It is the conviction, the honesty, and the courage of these apostolic preachers, transplanted into the early Christ-

ians, that will give Christianity its unstoppable power here in its beginning tests, and we today should not settle for convictionless preaching and unconsecrated members if we expect to please God and see Christianity triumph!

Before leaving the account of the healed man, Luke tells us he is over forty years of age (v. 22), making the miracle even more remarkable.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What is there about Peter and John that causes the leaders to marvel?* 2. *What in this event proves the dishonesty of these leaders?* 3. *How do these leaders know these men are not going to regard their threat?* 4. *How old is the man healed by Peter?*

D. Their Report and Prayer
(Study Acts 4:23-31)

Where do Peter and John go after being released? "To their own company" (Greek: "To their own ones") (v. 23). Christians are not only joined to Christ (Rom. 7:4) as members of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:27) but are also members of one another (Rom. 12:5). "Blest be the tie that binds!" And what do they do when back with their brothers and sisters? "Reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them" (v. 23). And then they go to God in prayer (v. 24ff). Their leaders having been threatened by men, it is comforting to know they can call on God who is so great! Their prayer begins with these words: "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is." Their being opposed by human rulers reminds them of the words of Psa. 2:1,2 (v. 25,26). You can see in v. 27 the early church's view of who were involved in crucifying Jesus: "Herod, and Pontius Pilate" (for not releasing Him when admittedly innocent), "Gentiles" (the Roman

soldiery who actually executed Him), and "the people of Israel" (their rulers who hated Him, arrested Him, condemned Him, and kept endless pressure on Pilate until he yielded to their demands to crucify Him).

God willed that Jesus die for our sins (v. 28), and He allowed it to be done at the hands of men, who did it of their own volition, in order to provide an unparalleled example of His love for mankind in even seeking to be merciful to His Son's crucifiers (Acts 2:36-38; compare Luke 23:34).

In the face of the leaders' threatenings, for what do they pray? For more diplomacy or for more courage? The latter (v. 29). And they ask God to stand by them with more miracles (v. 30). The earth-tremor along with each of them being filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 31) brings great assurance to them that God is indeed with them and is hearing their prayers. To Christians it is "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). And God answers their prayer for courage, for "they spake the word of God with boldness" (v. 31). They are true soldiers of Christ, being brave when the going is rough.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where do Peter and John go upon being released?* 2. *With what words do they begin their prayer?* 3. *For what do they ask?* 4. *What evidence do we have that God has answered their prayers?*

E. The Church Marches On
(Study Acts 4:32-37)

No, the church is not going to be stopped by human opposition. Persecution but strengthens the devotion of its members. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," and this is fully shown by those who have possessions sharing with those who have needs (v. 32). As long as the church has a strong faith in God and a great love for one a-

nother, Satan cannot stop its ongoing. Expect Satan to chisel away at the church's faith and at the members' love for one another. In Ananias and Sapphira's case (coming up) will be his first successful attempt. No wonder then that I John 3:23 says, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

As wonderful as the fellowship of the church is, let us realize it does not exist merely for its own spiritual enjoyment. It must continue preaching the gospel to the unsaved outsiders. Still dedicated to its proclamation, still undaunted by the leaders' threats, and now more fully emboldened by God's answering their prayer, "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (the very doctrine that grieved the opposition--see Acts 4:1,2), for God was truly with them (v. 33).

V. 34,35 give us more details about their sharing-program. Nobody lacks because the better-to-do sell what they have (lands or houses) and bring the sale-money to the apostles for distribution according to the others' needs. They are willing to do this because there is a need (see I John 3:17) and because they consider themselves stewards and not owners of what they have (v. 32). Truly they are fulfilling Matt. 6:20,21 and Gal. 6:10.

V. 36,37 introduce us to an important figure later in the book of Acts--Barnabas. At this time he is "Josès" but will later be called "Barnabas" ("son of consolation" or maybe "son of exhortation") by the apostles, a name very befitting this good man. Since he is from the isle of Cyprus, the possession which he sells is likely there. In that case he makes a special trip there to sell it and returns to Jerusalem with the money. His action ending chapter 4 is set in striking contrast to that of Ananias and Sapphira in the opening of chapter 5.

QUESTIONS: 1. In their benevolent program each has given as he has been, and each has received as he has had 2. What forbidden doctrine do they continue to preach? 3. What was Barnabas's name originally? 4. What island is his home? 5. What great thing does he do?

CHAPTER 3

Additional Problems Arise*A. Ananias and Sapphira's Hypocrisy*
(Study Acts 5:1-11)

In order to be in step with what others in the church are doing, this couple sells a possession, but instead of bringing the full amount they keep back a part of it (v. 1,2). They have probably gotten a good price for it and think they can get away with keeping a little of it. In order to fool the others though, they must bring most of it. Actually their wrong is not in keeping back some of it (Peter recognizes their right in the matter--v. 4) but in lying about it--representing that it is the full amount. The role of Satan (the tempter) is pointed out (v. 3). Other times that Satan's role is similarly pointed out: Judas (John 13:2,27) and David (I Chron. 21:1). We note too that since theirs is a religious act (giving), Ananias is lying to God and not merely to man (v. 4). The last words Ananias hears on this earth are these: "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God," for with his hearing these words he falls down dead before Peter (v. 6). This is not a heart attack but a miracle, for the same will happen to his wife when she comes in (v. 10). Most of the Bible's miracles are blessings to those on whom they are performed (miracles of healing, resurrections, etc.), but this is a miracle of judgment and destruction (like Elijah's calling down fire on the wicked king's captains and their soldiers--see II Kings 1:9-12).

We might wonder why all who through the centuries have misrepresented their giving have not dropped dead. Many times the first infraction of a dispensation or after a law is proclaimed finds God visiting

an open judgment on the violater as a warning to all later cases: thus Achan was stoned (Josh. 7:24-26); Nadab and Abihu were devoured by fire (Lev. 10:1,2); the earth swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:27-33); fire consumed the two hundred fifty men who should not have been burning incense (Num. 16:35); etc.

We might wonder at the liberty taken to bury a dead man without even notifying his relatives. Commentaries generally by-pass this very obvious question. Since Ananias was a divine-judgment case of death, they treat his dead body just like Israel did Achan's (Josh. 7:25,26) and Absalom's (II Sam. 18:17).

Three hours later Sapphira comes in (v. 7). She may be looking for Ananias or may be coming to share in the praise received because of their sale and gift. Peter gives her an opportunity to tell the truth, but she shares in the lie (v. 8). She too is told of their sin against God's Spirit, and the last words she hears on this earth are: "Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out" (v. 9). And they do (v. 10).

We can understand the fear that comes on the other members as well as on outsiders as a consequence (v. 11). Such judgments cause people to "hear and fear" (Deut. 21:18-21) and to be reluctant to follow the example of such victims (Deut. 13:11).

QUESTIONS: 1. *Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira sell their possession?* 2. *What is their actual sin?* 3. *What are the last words Ananias hears?* 4. *Why have not all who have misrepresented their giving dropped dead?* 5. *What are the last words Sapphira hears?*

B. All the Apostles are Arrested
(Study Acts 5:12-42)

Such mighty miracles being performed by the a-

postles (v. 12) cause people to magnify them as a very special group that no man dares join (v. 12,13). The church has lost two members in Ananias and Sapphira (hypocritical members), but their number is more than replaced, for "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (v. 14). When word gets out that even the shadow of Peter passing over the bodies of the sick in the streets brings healing, people begin to bring their sick from surrounding cities.

This is too much for the envious, spiteful high priest (Caiaphas) and his fellow Sadducees, whose word not to speak to anybody in the name of Jesus (Acts 4: 17,18) has been totally disregarded. They arrest all the apostles and put them in jail (v. 18). But it does them no good, for an angel releases them and tells them to go to the temple and preach (v. 19,20).

Unaware of the angel's action the high priest calls the council together the next morning and sends to the prison for the apostles (v. 21). The officers startle the council by returning with the message, "The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within" (v. 22, 23). The council members' puzzled remarks to one another are interrupted by one coming in reporting that the apostles are in the temple preaching to the people (v. 24,25).

We would think the leaders would call it "quits" by this time. But no, they send the captain and his officers to bring them--but without the use of force. And why no force? "They feared the people, lest they should be stoned" (v. 26). You think they will refrain because of fearing God. But remember they are Sadducees and do not believe in any hereafter (Acts 23: 8)--consequently do not believe in any judgment or any hell. They are not concerned about right and wrong. They are unprincipled. The only fear they are concerned about is what the people might do to them. (v. 26).

It is evident that Peter and John do not fear them (see Matt. 10:27,28) but have continued in the course they said they would (see Acts 4:18-20). When faced with the charge of disregarding their command not to teach in the name of Jesus, they are again bold in their reply: "We ought to obey God rather than man." The "fear of man" brings no "snare" to them (see Prov. 29:25). "The righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1). And they go on to implicate further the leaders in guilt (v. 20), to glorify Jesus (v. 31), and to declare their own apostolic place in this divine program (v. 32). And how is this received by the leaders? "They were cut to the heart (compare Heb. 4:12), and took counsel to slay them" (v. 33). All that keeps the council from doing to the apostles what they did to Jesus is the advice of the famous teacher Gamaliel, the same Gamaliel who had been Saul of Tarsus's teacher (Acts 22:3).

Gamaliel asks to speak to the council in private where he warns them about killing the apostles, for if they are sent of God the council will be fighting against God (v. 39). He also assured them on the basis of other attempted leaders among Jewish segments (Theudas and Judas of Galilee--v. 36,37) that if the apostles have instigated this movement themselves it will soon run its course and fail (v. 38). His advice is the voice of one who has not made up his mind whether this work is of God or of man. The caution he shows is evidence that the transpirings have made inroads in his mind that have not been made in the minds of the others. (Note: Had Gamaliel known Christianity to be a humanly originated movement and not of God, his advice would and should have been different).

They yield to his counsel, but in releasing them the council gives them a beating and further charges them not to speak in the name of Jesus (v. 40). As the apostles depart, they rejoice to be able to suffer for Jesus. Jesus had taught another reason to rejoice over

persecution: "Great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:10-12). They fulfill what Peter later wrote: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (I Pet. 4:16).

Nor does this persecution stop their spreading the gospel: "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ"--"daily in the temple, and in every house" (v. 42). Jesus must be preached if people are to accept Him. Evangelism is a "daily" matter. This preaching must be done to the masses in public places (like their "temple") and in the homes of the unsaved. Compare Acts 20:20.

QUESTIONS: 1. Has the church lost or gained numbers over the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira? 2. What is said about Peter's shadow? 3. Why do the leaders arrest the apostles? 4. How do the apostles get out of jail? 5. Why does the council bring the apostles without the use of force? 6. What saves the apostles from the wrath of the council? 7. In what 2 places do the apostles continue teaching and preaching?

C. The Grecian-Widow Problem (Study Acts 6:1-7)

Christ intends for the church to grow like a grain of mustard seed (Matt. 13:31,32) and to spread like leaven in meal (Matt. 13:33). On Pentecost there are three thousand additions (Acts 2:41), and day by day the Lord continues to add to that number (Acts 2:47). By Acts 4:4 the number has grown to five thousand. Following the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). And now Acts 6:1 speaks of the number of the disciples multiplying! The gospel-leaven is working even in Jerusalem.

We are not told why the Grecian widows are neglected in the daily ministration of food (v. 1).

Likely it is not intentional. These are not Gentiles but Jews. Grecian Jews are Jews born and brought up outside of Palestine and who, as a result, have Greek as their native tongue. (All Jews dispersed throughout the world were "Grecian" Jews. Such Jews were found in almost every city where Paul preached.) The Hebrew Jews are Jews who are natives of Palestine, and they feel superior to those Jews residing in other lands.

Rather than letting the negligence continue and the murmuring become worse, the apostles set an example of getting things settled before they proceed further. Many matters are wisely handled by leadership alone, but in this case the apostles involve the membership in the solution. Rather than the apostles adding overseeing the daily distribution to their present responsibilities, which would curtail their preaching work, they call on the membership to select an ample number of men to care for the matter. The fact that seven men will be needed indicates just how sizeable the Jerusalem congregation is.

The men selected are to be of "honest report" (v. 3), for they will be administering the money of the church. They are also to be men of "wisdom", for they will have judgments to make from case to case. And they are to be men "full of the Holy Spirit", really godly men who will in no way become involved affectionately with the widows. With such men in charge the apostles can continue to give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (v. 4). The apostles' time is to be devoted to two things: prayer to God and ministering the Word to people. This is their time-consuming labor. They don't just pray (like monks isolated in a monastery), but they preach also (they are people-involved). On the other hand they don't just preach, trusting their own wisdom and ability but spend much time praying for God to help them and use them. All of us need to heed Prov. 3:5:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

It is not difficult to solve problems when people want them solved. Both the apostles and the membership see the justness of the Grecians' complaint and do not reprimand them for their charge but set out to right their wrong. The proposed solution by the apostles pleases the whole multitude (v. 5), and they choose seven good men for the task. All seven have Greek names--the membership goes full distance to provide acceptable leadership for the project. Greeks looking out for Grecian widows! To add to the first name in the list the fact that Stephen is a man "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (v. 5) shows that he is especially qualified and is probably the one put in charge of the Grecian distribution program. We will hear more about him later as well as the next man in the list (Philip). We know nothing more of the other five than what is mentioned here.

The question of whether these seven are deacons is often discussed and yet not easily settled. Able scholars can be found on both sides of the question. Since the question is not directly discussed in the setting, possibly no one should be absolutely dogmatic about the matter. Your writer's studies incline him toward the position that they are a committee of seven to take care of a particular matter while the need prevails. The committee members might have been selected by the leaders (as is customary with a committee) but which in this case was referred to the people themselves, resulting in the happy selections reported above. The three qualifications required here are significantly fewer than those in the deacon-qualification list in I Tim. 3:8-13. If they are deacons, is their only work to take care of a special segment of widows rather than the other work of deacons too? The chief argument advanced for their being deacons is found in v. 2, where the apostles say it is not right

for them to leave the Word of God to serve (Greek: "diakonein") tables. This of itself does not prove the point, for that verbal (infinitive) comes from the verb "diakoneo" which is commonly used of many who were not deacons. It is usually translated "ministered". For instance angels "ministered" to Jesus (Matt. 4:11). Peter's mother-in-law "ministered" to Jesus and the apostles (Matt. 8:15). Jesus came to "minister" and give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). These few examples are merely a sample of many such cited in any Greek Concordance, proving that these seven cannot be said to be deacons simply on the basis that they are going to serve ("diakonein") tables. Check this if you have references works to do so.

Now comes the actual setting these men apart to their work. The apostles approve their qualifications, then solemnly pray and lay their hands on them. In the light of Acts 6:8 (Stephen) and of Acts 8:6 (Philip) this imposition of apostolic hands has evidently imparted miraculous powers to them also, as we shall see.

Does this arrangement settle the Grecian-widow problem? Does the congregation survive this problem? And does the church now go marching on? V. 7 answers with three definite statements: (1) the Word of God increases (more are willing to listen to the preaching of the apostles); (2) the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplies greatly (more people are convinced that Christianity is right); and (3) even many of the Jewish priests become obedient to the faith (the priests are Sadducees, and that sect does not believe in any resurrection; hence, the preaching of the resurrected Christ is indeed making significant inroads into this very party that has been desperately trying to stop it--see Acts 3:1-3; 5:17,18,24-28,40). Every so often there is a verse or two in Luke's writings in Acts in which a great summary of matters is made. Such is v. 7 along with 2:46,47; 9:31; 11:26--to list a few. They make great memory verses.

QUESTIONS: 1. Who are Grecian Jews? 2. How many men will it take to care for the Grecian widows? 3. What qualifications are these men to have? 4. In what 2 things will the apostles busy themselves? 5. What favors the men selected not being deacons? 6. Why does the Greek word for "serve" being "diakonein" not prove they are deacons? 7. How are these men set apart for their work?

D. Stephen is Stoned
(Study Acts 6:8--8:4)

Stephen is here said to be performing miracles among the people, and from what follows we can see he is doing more than serving tables--or maybe the daily-ministration has passed. If the former is the case, we observe the rule that when people consecrate themselves to serving God, they are not content to do only what they started out to do, but their service to the Lord grows and takes on additional aspects. It is probable too that by this time those who have stayed over in Jerusalem following Pentecost have received enough teaching to return to their many far-scattered homes so that the "seven" (thus they are referred to in Acts 21) are no longer needed in that role. This section follows Stephen. Chapter 8 will follow Philip. We have nothing extra concerning the other five men.

Both Stephen and Philip are credited with performing miracles (Acts 6:8 for Stephen and Acts 8:6 for Philip). They are the first other than apostles to work miracles since Christ's ascension. Since the laying on of apostles' hands brings miraculous power (II Tim. 1:6; Acts 8:18; Acts 19:6), these two men likely received their power when the apostles' hands were laid on them in Acts 6:6.

In commenting on v. 1 about the Grecian Jews (Jews born and brought up outside of Palestine), we explained that the native-born Jews of Jerusalem and

Palestine felt superior to Grecian Jews. Such Grecian Jews, men of different places listed in v. 9, have a synagogue of their own in Jerusalem. Stephen himself, as we have noticed from his Greek name, is Grecian and may have been identified with their synagogue before his acceptance of Christ. They do not agree with his alignment with the followers of Jesus. They involve him in a dispute (v. 9). Can't you hear them get louder and louder as he tries to persuade them concerning Jesus and as they defend their leaders' action in condemning and crucifying Jesus? It is some dispute, for when Jews dispute, they dispute--especially in Palestine! Though it is one man against several, they cannot resist the wisdom and Spirit by which Stephen speaks (v. 10)--just as Jesus had promised: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Luke 21:15).

What will Stephen's opponents do since they find themselves the losers in the dispute? Believe? If they have good and honest hearts, the Word will bring forth fruit in their lives (Luke 8:15), but since they are "disputing" the case is different. When people dispute, their goal is to prove the other person wrong. When they don't succeed, they do not give in and join the side that is right.

Stephen's opponents are so defeated and enraged they are determined to get rid of him. And in order to do so they stoop to the same dishonesty Jezebel employed to get Naboth condemned (I Kings 21:13) and the council used to condemn Jesus (Matt. 26:59-61). Their procedure: (1) They secure men (probably with bribe-money) to circulate this report among the people: "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (v. 11). (2) This stirs up the people against Stephen who will then side with Stephen's enemies (v. 12). (3) The elders and scribes arrest him and bring him to the council that has already shown its prejudice against Christianity (Acts 4:16-18) (v.

12). (4) False witnesses (probably the same ones mentioned in v. 11) inform the council that "this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law," and they go on to say, "We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us" (v. 13,14).

At this point our text interrupts the court proceedings to tell us that all who were in the courtroom "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (v. 15). His case is either similar to that of Moses ("The children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone," Exo. 34:35) or that he looked "angelic" to them. I personally question the latter, for people see nothing good or beautiful about a person whom they hate--and would he appear that way to all of them at the same time? This reasoning leaves us with the other probability: God miraculously made an angelic radiance come into his face. But does this deter his enemies? No, it but further demonstrates how determined hatred can be in disregarding truth that is against its personal ends. Disregarding the look, the high priest gets back to the charge made against Stephen. He asks, "Are these things so?" (7:1).

Instead of giving the high priest a simple "yes" or "no" answer, Stephen goes into a lengthy recitation of Jewish history beginning back when God first communicated with Abraham to leave Ur and go to a land He would show him (v. 2-50). We might marvel at the council's patience with such a detailed and seemingly irrelevant answer except that as Jews they are fond of hearing their own history recited (see other instances of such recitations: Josh. 24:1-13, Psa. 105:8-45; Neh. 9:4-38, Acts 13:16-39, and others), and they are likely curious as to what he is leading up to (we shall find that out later).

He addresses them in v. 2 as "men" (the council members are all male), as "brethren" (Jewish followers

of Christ never disowned their physical ties with their Jewish people: Acts 2:29; Acts 3:17; Acts 9:17; etc.), and as "fathers" (the council members were the leaders of the nation).

Occasionally the New Testament (by inspiration) includes some information about Old Testament events not recorded in the Old Testament itself. Reece in his commentary on Acts lists a number of them: Enoch's prophecy (Jude 12); the names of the Egyptian magicians (II Tim. 3:8); the hope that sustained Abraham as he went to offer Isaac (Heb. 11:19); Moses' acknowledgment of fear at Mt. Sinai (Heb. 12:21); Moses' motive for leaving the court of Pharaoh (Heb. 11:24-26); and the prayer of Elijah (Jas. 5:17). Added to this list is the first thing Stephen mentions here: that even before God called Abraham to leave Haran and proceed into Canaan He had appeared to him at Ur (v. 1-4). While Gen. recognizes that Abraham first lived in Ur of Chaldea (Gen. 11:31), it does not record God's call that Stephen mentions. Abraham's call was to leave his country (a test of his obedience), to leave his kindred (they were idolatrous--Josh. 24:2), and to go to a land He would show him (a test of his faith--Heb. 11:8). Gen. 12:1-3 does record Abraham's call to leave Haran. He was 75 at the time and took his nephew Lot with him into Canaan (Gen. 12:4,5).

Abraham merely sojourned in Canaan. He did not own any of the land (v. 5) except the Cave of Machpelah which he bought as a burial place (Gen. 23:1-20). (Please see comments on v. 16 also.) As he sojourned in various places in the land, he realized that someday it would all belong to his offspring, God having promised it to his descendants even before he had any children (v. 5). This promise is in Gen. 15:2-7,18-21. That very night God gave him a vision of things to come referred to by Stephen's words in v. 6, 7 (see Gen. 15:12-16).

Many years of history are boiled down in v. 8.

The covenant of circumcision was instituted in Gen. 17:9-12. The Old Testament people of God began with Abraham. God took one of Abraham's descendants--Isaac. Then He took only one of Isaac's--Jacob. Then He was ready to take all of one man's descendants as His people--Jacob's descendants. You can see why the names "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" are frequently linked together (Exo. 3:6; Exo. 6:8; Deut. 9:27; Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28; and many other instances). Stephen aptly calls Jacob's twelve sons "patriarchs" for the descendants of each of these sons became one of the twelve tribes of Israel following the Exodus.

Then in v. 9 Stephen comes to Joseph's brothers selling him (Gen. 37:12-28) because of "envy" (Gen. 37:2-11 gives a background of their feelings against Joseph). Most translations give "jealousy" instead of the King James' "envy". Down into Egypt he was taken (Gen. 39:1). The blessing of God was with him (v. 9) to help him overcome his sorrows and to get him released from the jail into which he had been unrighteously cast (Gen. 39:21--41:9).

Stephen recalls to his listeners the two trips to Egypt by Joseph's brothers and his being made known to them (v. 11,12). The details are found in Gen. 42:1--45:8. Joseph then sent for his father and all Jacob's offspring to move into Egypt (v. 14). When Gen. 46:27 says the total number of Israelites dwelling in Egypt was 70, we are surprised when we hear Stephen say 75. If he is quoting the Hebrew for Gen. 46:27, he will say 70. Since he is quoting the Greek translation commonly in use among his hearers, it says 75. Inspiration has him utilizing the Greek Septuagint rather than stop to argue the point. Jacob was 130 when he went to Egypt (Gen. 47:9). He spent the last seventeen years of his life there, dying at the age of 147 (Gen. 47:28). Before dying he requested to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah were already entombed (Gen. 49:29-

31), making it one of the most famous tombs in the world. You may visit that famous place today at Hebron though you are not admitted to the tomb-chamber itself. Gen. 50:1,2 sounds as if Joseph had him mummified. If so, his mummy is probably in the tomb-chamber even yet, which the Arabs, who control it, neither enter nor allow anybody else to.

A random reading of v. 15,16 might lead one to think Jacob was buried in Sychem (Shechem), which would pose a problem since Gen. 49 says he was buried in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron. The Greek clears up the problem. In Greek "our fathers" (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, etc.) is nominative plural, making it the subject of a new clause with the verb "died" understood. The "and" before "our fathers" shows it to be a compound sentence whose meaning is: Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, and our fathers died and were carried over into Sychem (Shechem) and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought...

As previously stated, Stephen's sermon contains a number of inspired details not recorded in the Old Testament. V. 16 contains two: (1) Gen. tells that when Jacob died, his body was carried to Hebron and buried (Gen. 50:13). Joseph charged the Israelites to take his body with them when they would leave Egypt (Gen. 50:24,25), and they did (Exo. 13:19; Josh. 24:32). But the Old Testament drops the coverage there. But Stephen shows that each of the other sons of Jacob received the same loving treatment. All of them were entombed at the same place as Joseph, according to Stephen. (2) Gen. 33:19 and Josh. 24:32 credit Jacob with purchasing that piece of ground at Shechem from the sons of Hamor. Stephen says Abraham purchased it. Abraham likely purchased it when he early lived at Shechem (in Gen. 12). The rest of his life he spent in the south. Then came the life of Isaac. Then the early life of Jacob. With no family residing in the Shechem area all those years to keep Abraham's possession in-

tact, it became lost to the family, and Jacob had to repurchase it in order to have it. He probably wanted it because it had once belonged to his grandfather. He gave it to Joseph and his offspring (Josh. 24:32; compare John 4:5). Joseph's forgiving attitude toward his brothers lived on in his offspring's attitude, permitting the rest of Israel to bury their fathers there. Joseph's famous sepulchre is about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from Jacob's Well, which comports with John 4:56.

"The time of the promise" to Abraham that drew near (v. 17) was the end of four hundred years in Egypt (Gen. 15:13,14). For a vivid statement of how the Israelites multiplied in Egypt (v. 17) see Exo. 1:7.

The new king who arose who knew not Joseph (v. 18) was likely the king of a new dynasty of kings-- a new regime that took over Egypt. When a new power takes over a country, that power does not regard the heroes in a former regime. An historian Manetho, living in the Inter-Testament Period (the period between our Old and New Testaments), divided Egyptian history into the different dynasties that ruled it. The Hyksos kings (sometimes called the Shepherd kings) had ruled Egypt for sometime. They were Asiatic in origin and were Semitic, thus feeling a kinship with the Israelites. The next dynasty that regarded not Joseph was a native Egyptian dynasty.

Stephen recalls in v. 19 the hardships brought on their forefathers by the new ruling set-up in Egypt, hardships that had been envisioned by Abraham (Gen. 15:13). Particularly does he recall the law against the male babies (Exo. 1:15-22). He recounts in v. 20, 21 the well known history of their great leader Moses who was born in those dark days and hidden as long as he could be and who was rescued from his floating basket by Pharaoh's daughter (Exo. 2:1-10; Heb. 11:25).

When you study into ancient Egyptian culture, two things really stand out: (1) their wisdom in being able to construct their pyramids, temples, obelisks,

etc.; and (2) the wealth and treasure they amassed. V. 22 shows Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and Stephen's statement that he was "mighty in words and deeds" does not approve Moses' alibi, "I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exo. 4:10). Heb. 11:24-26 speaks of his forsaking the riches and treasures of Egypt, the circumstances of which Stephen next narrates (v. 23-29). Compare Exo. 2:11-15. Stephen's statement in v. 25 gives us an insight into Moses' thinking not previously revealed. God later called him to do what he had earlier attempted on his own. His previous failure probably explains one of the reasons he was reluctant to attempt it again even when divinely called to the project (Exo. 3:10--4:17).

The two sons he fathered in Midian (v. 29) were Gershom and Eliezer, and his wife was Zipporah (Exo. 18:2,3).

What a different life Moses had for the next forty years as he was out of the green Nile Valley and out of the Egyptian palace leading the life of a simple shepherd in the Mt. Sinai region! This was the middle forty years of his life. His last forty years were spent as Israel's leader.

Stephen mentions in v. 30,31 that day when the routine of Moses' shepherd life was interrupted by the strangeness of a desert bush on fire and yet not being consumed. We can imagine the terror that possessed him as he heard the voice of God speaking to him out of the very bush he was curiously approaching (v. 32). With the words, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," the silence of the centuries was broken, and God took up with Moses where He had left off with the Hebrew patriarchs. Jesus referred to God's utterance at the burning bush in showing the Sadducees that the departed yet live following physical death (Matt. 22:31, 32). Two men in the Bible were told to take off their

shoes because of the sacredness of the occasions: Moses (v. 33) and Joshua (Josh. 5:15). With Moses' shoes off, what does God say or do? He said, "I have seen... I have heard...and am come down" to do something about it--referring to the condition of Moses' people in Egypt (v. 34). That was all well and good until God said, "Come, I will send thee into Egypt"--the last place Moses wanted or ever expected to go!

Stephen's abbreviated account passes over Moses' trying to get out of going (Exo. 3:11--4:20). And he briefs down the periods of the plagues on Egypt and the Exodus itself into only one verse (v. 36), but he does not overlook Moses' statement in Deut. 18:15, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear" (v. 37), which Peter shows in Acts 3:20-26 applies to Jesus.

Moses is the "he" of v. 38 who Stephen says was in the "church" (congregation of Israel) in the wilderness who received the "lively oracles" ("living oracles," ASV). An "oracle" is a divine utterance. God's oracles are "living". God speaks to us through His Word even though it was written many centuries ago (I Pet. 1:24,25; Matt. 24:35; Heb. 4:12). The "lively oracles" Stephen is referring to is the law given through Moses to their fathers.

Stephen mentions the "angel" who spoke to Moses at the giving of the law. This may have been the angel who accompanied them all those years in the wilderness (Isa. 63:9). Several times does the New Testament connect angels with the giving of the law (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2).

Stephen mentions their fathers' disobedience to their leader Moses (v. 39). This manifested itself frequently during those forty years beginning as early as their golden-calf blunder while he was in the mountain receiving the law (v. 40,41). The forty days God detained Moses in the mountain were too long for Is-

rael to retain its composure. In their idle restlessness they concluded that Moses would not return to them, and he had been their contact with the invisible God of their fathers and their leader up to this time. According to Stephen they decided to return to Egypt (a fact not reported in Exo. 32). When they said, "Make us gods," in Exo. 32:1, the Hebrew says, "Make us Elohim," a Hebrew word used 32 times in the first chapter of Gen. to refer to "god" and many other times throughout the Old Testament in the same way while only occasionally to refer to idol substitutes for the true God (like Exo. 34:15-17 where "Elohim" is 5 times translated "gods" or "god"). To this author it is possible that Israel was saying to Aaron, "Make us a likeness of Elohim to go before us." They linked the "Elohim" which they made with "Elohim" who had brought them out of Egypt (Exo. 32:4: "These be thy Elohim, O Israel, which brought thee up out of...Egypt"). Israel was happy with the form of a calf made of gold for they were accustomed to the worship of bulls in Egypt. Reece observes that "to go before us" would be like the pagan's practice of "carrying their idols in the forefront of their army's marching columns".

This beginning of idolatry plagued Israel, especially during the Judges Period (Judg. 2:8-19), but from Samuel to David it was subdued only to recur in Solomon's latter years (I Kings 11:1-8). From that time forth it was a part of their national life until the North fell to the Assyrians in 721 B.C. and the South went into Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C. This idolatry in various forms (v. 43) nullified the acceptability of their sacrifices (v. 42). "Moloch" was an Ammonite god. "Remphan" was another heathen deity worshiped by Israel but not absolutely identifiable at this time. All twelve Minor Prophet books (Hosea through Malachi) were brief enough to all be written on one scroll. Hence, v. 42,43 though a quotation from Amos 5:25-27 is said to be "written in book of the prophets". The Amos quotation actually warns the

Northern Kingdom of their being carried "beyond Damascus" (Amos 5:27), and it was, for Assyria was "beyond Damascus". Stephen brings the punishment for idolatry up to date by saying "beyond Babylon", where the Southern Kingdom had later been carried. A play on words: "Ye took up (or carried) the tabernacle of Moloch...I will carry you away beyond Babylon."

In contrast to the "tabernacle of Moloch" Stephen mentions the true "tabernacle" which Moses was directed to make according to God's divine pattern (v. 44). This they brought into Canaan under Joshua. Both here and in Heb. 4:8 the King James puts "Jesus" for the Old Testament Joshua. "Jesus" and "Joshua" are the same name in two different languages--"Jesus" in Greek and "Joshua" in Hebrew. Most translations properly use "Joshua". It was not until the days of King David (v. 45,46) that anybody seriously considered replacing the portable tabernacle with a permanent structure (temple) (see I Chron. 17:1-4,11,12), and not until Solomon was a temple built to replace it (v. 47). I Kings 5,6 tell of Solomon's construction.

The accusation against Stephen is that he has spoken blasphemous words against the temple and the law (6:13), and that he has reportedly said, "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered." He has already spoken of God's calling Moses and giving the law to him, and in so doing he brought in Moses' prediction of another law-giving prophet like himself whom God would raise up. He has just shown his great respect for the building of the temple and now goes on to affirm that God does not dwell in temples made by human hands (v. 48), and he quotes their great prophet Isaiah's book where God said, "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" (v. 49,50--a quotation of Isa. 66:1,2). In Athens while in sight of

their many religious temples Paul went one step further, for after reaffirming that God does not dwell in temples made by hands he went on to say He is not worshiped by man's artistic designs and structures. The great cathedral-builders of the Middle Ages must have missed both Stephen's and Paul's statements!

Stephen's enemies do not like what they are hearing about the temple, and their rebellious response is evident to him. So without continuing his thoughts he abruptly charges them with being "stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," always resisting God's Spirit just as their fathers did who would not listen to the prophets but killed them, inspired men who foretold the coming of the Just One whom they themselves had murdered (v. 51,52). When he says they have received the law but have not kept it, they show that his description of them is accurate for they "gnash" on him with their teeth. In hatred and rage, like vicious animals about to attack their victim, they grind their teeth together, and it is evident that they are about to kill him. But God is not deserting Stephen in this hour. The special mention of the "Holy Spirit" at this time (v.55) blesses Stephen in two ways: gives him that inner peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7) so that death has no fear for him and enables him to look into heaven where he beholds Jesus who is watching what His faithful witness is undergoing! Instead of Jesus' usual "sitting at the right hand of God" (Heb. 1:3; Heb. 12:2; etc.) He is "standing" at God's right hand, thus honoring the first Christian martyr. The vision is so glorious Stephen cannot keep it to himself, but his persecutors do not want to hear any more. They drown out his beautiful words with hateful words of their own, stop their ears, lay hold on him, and take him out the city gate that today bears his name because of this event (the gate on Jerusalem's east wall just north of the temple area), and there they stone him. It was customary to

stone (or execute) criminals outside the town or city (I Kings 21:13; Luke 4:29; Heb. 13:12). It is thought to have been based on Lev. 24:14.

As they began throwing stones at him, Stephen prays that the Lord will take his spirit (v. 59). He addresses his request to Jesus because he beholds Him at God's right hand (v. 56). Still having strength to be heard, he kneels down and with a loud voice prays, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (v. 60), thus fulfilling Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:44) and emulating the example of Jesus when He Himself was being crucified (Luke 23:34). These are Stephen's last words, and the curtain drops on a career that was faithful though brief.

Death is here called a "sleep" (v. 60) as it is in numerous other passages (John 11:11-14; Luke 8:52, 53; I Cor. 15:6,51). It is the body that has died (not the spirit--notice Jas. 2:26), and it is the part that has been in the grave that will be wakened (Dan. 12:2).

We note that Saul, at whose feet Stephen's stoners laid their outer garments as they stone him (v. 58), is here called a "young man" (v. 58)--he is probably around forty. This is concluded by blending bits of information found in several passages. In Acts 26:10 he says he gave his "voice" against those being put to death. In Greek the meaning is that he cast his vote to have them killed, indicating he was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. That he was young to be so high in the Jewish regime is borne out by Gal. 1:14: I "profited ('advanced,' ASV) in the Jews' religion above many my equals ('my own age,' ASV) in my own nation." He surely would have to be around forty to be so high in his nation and surely not much more than that still to be called a "young man".

The dying Stephen has no way of knowing Saul will later become an apostle and be the most effective campaigner for Jesus and the church during the apostolic age. Some think Stephen's prayer, so much like Jesus'

on the cross (Luke 23:34) and an example of what Jesus taught (Matt. 5:44), may be one of the factors ultimately bringing about the change in Saul. In later years Paul remorsefully recalls his part in Stephen's tragic death (Acts 22:20).

What an introduction to the prominent Jew Paul! After saying the witnesses laid their clothes at his feet while they proceeded to stone Stephen, 8:1 says he was definitely "consenting to his death", and he did it in all good conscience (Acts 23:1; Acts 26:9-11), fulfilling Jesus' prediction to His apostles, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). To Saul persecuting the church is a manifestation of his religious zeal (Phil. 3:6).

Prior to the death of Stephen the church's enemies had only told them not to teach or preach in Jesus' name and had threatened them and beaten them for disregarding their order. But Stephen's death opens a real door of persecution against the first congregation of the church, and it becomes necessary for its members to flee from Jerusalem in order to save their lives (v. 1). "Judea and Samaria" are particularly mentioned as places to which they escaped. Judea was the district around Jerusalem. Samaria lay just to the north of Judea (between it and Galilee). Both of these districts will receive the gospel through these refugees, as we shall see later.

It remains somewhat a secret why the apostles do not flee from Jerusalem, and how they can survive there when the others cannot. We can mostly ask questions and make conjectures about the matter. The Jewish authorities may fear doing anything to the apostles on the basis of four things: (1) their power to heal a man lame from birth; (2) the report of the immediate deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in the presence of Peter; (3) the apostles' miraculous escape from their prison (Acts 5:17,25); and (4) they may still be

afraid of being stoned by the people if they do anything to the apostles (Acts 5:26). Or God may have told the apostles to remain in Jerusalem, and He will take care of them. They need to re-establish the church in Jerusalem, and from later references to it (Acts 11:22; Acts 15:4; etc.) we see they do. Also it seems it is God's will they remain in Jerusalem so that as congregations are established in various places they can go forth to lay hands on their local leaders and impart the gift of inspiration and confirming powers (an example: Acts 8:14,15,18,19).

Stephen is greatly lamented (v. 2) because he is well known (Acts 6:5-8) and because of the circumstances of his death. Those so close they have sold their lands and possessions so each can be cared for physically surely lament when one of their number dies such a violent, undeserved death.

To young Saul of Tarsus Stephen's death is just the beginning. He is determined to blot out the new religion that has been established among his people and which he is convinced is false. And he makes havoc of the church by going into the homes of the members and "haling" ("dragging," ASV) them to prison. In later years as a Christian himself he gives his own version of this erroneous chapter of his life (Acts 26:9:11; Acts 22:4,5). But instead of blotting out the church this violent persecution only spreads the church, for "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (v. 4). We would not say God has willed that His faithful preacher be murdered, but He definitely uses it to see the church move out into the next fields of evangelism--sending the gospel to Judea and Samaria (notice Acts 1:8).

Why do the early church members flee from their homes rather than deny their faith? Because they truly believe in Jesus, because they love Him, because to deny Him before men means He will deny them before the Father in heaven (Matt. 10:33). This first congregation is setting an example that will be followed by

successive generations of Christians when the Roman emperors will do all within their power to destroy Christianity only to find that persecution can never prevail against the church.

QUESTIONS: 1. Who were the first 2 men not apostles to perform miracles in Acts? 2. Why can't Stephen's opposers resist his wisdom? 3. What lie do they tell about Stephen? 4. Comment on Stephen's face being like the face of an angel. 5. With what Old Testament person does Stephen begin his message? 6. Why does Stephen call his hearers "brethren" when they are not followers of Christ? 7. Name 3 facts of Old Testament history in Stephen's sermon that are not recorded in the Old Testament. 8. Narrate the various information Stephen gives about Moses. 9. What personal charge does Stephen bring against his hearers? 10. What does "gnash" with their teeth mean? 11. What does Stephen see as he looks into heaven? 12. What is Stephen's dying prayer? 13. What is Saul of Tarsus's part in this event? 14. What happens to the Jerusalem congregation following Stephen's death? 15. How can the apostles stay in Jerusalem when others can't? 16. What does Saul now busy himself doing?

PART TWO

VARIOUS MISSIONS



JOURNEYS

CHAPTER 4

Philip's Journeys*A. To the City of Samaria*
(Study 8:5-25)

Philip, one of the seven of Acts 6:3-6, is no longer needed to see about the Jerusalem Grecian widows' daily needs. He is one of the refugees who give up their Jerusalem homes and flee to other places. Because of the evangelistic work he is now beginning, he will be known as "Philip the evangelist" (Acts 21:8).

His first field of labor in this new role is the city of Samaria. King Omri of the Northern Kingdom purchased this great hill from a man Shemer and named the capital city he built on it after Shemer (I Kings 16:23,24). It remained an important city until destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. when the Northern Kingdom fell. Today when you visit the site of Samaria, the principal ruins you see belong to Herod the Great's construction (the city that Philip goes to).

Why is he going to Samaria when the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans (John 4:9)? And why no special call of Philip to go there and no baptism of the Holy Spirit on the Samaritans to convince Philip they are to be evangelized? Probably because of Jesus' two-day stop in Samaria (John 4), coupled with His commission-words in Acts 1:8.

It is interesting to note Luke's summary of Philip's preaching: he preaches "Christ" at Samaria (v. 5); the Samaritans believe Philip preaching "the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (v. 12); and he preaches "Jesus" to the Ethiopian (v. 35). All these are synonymous with preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15).

What a city-wide reception is given the gospel in

Samaria (v. 6)! The miracles he performs have much to do with their receiving him as a divine messenger (v. 6,7). This is God's purpose in giving His original messengers miracle-power (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3,4; Acts 14:3). Philip is the second person in Acts to perform miracles who is not an apostle, Stephen being the first. Want an easy way to remember where to find their miracle reports? Stephen is the first (Acts 6:8); Philip is the second (Acts 8:6). Philip's coming brings great joy to the city (v. 8), reminiscent of great revival meetings that once affected whole communities in our own land.

Time out to tell you about the sorcerer Simon (v. 9-13). He has "bewitched" (Greek means "astonished" or "amazed") them with his sorceries. He poses as "some great one", and from the least citizen to the greatest they fall for it. His sorceries convince them he is the "great power of God", and this spell has been over them for years.

But the miracles of Philip are the "great power of God", and they see the difference and listen to him. They believe and are baptized, the normal report in Acts for those accepting Christ. Preachers in Acts all respect Christ's plan in Mark 16:16. Mention is made that these being baptized are "men and women". Why not infants also as is regularly practiced in Roman Catholicism and in many large Protestant churches? Because the New Testament in no way teaches infant baptism.

And guess who is also baptized? Simon (v. 13)! Having fooled the people so long with his sorcery-tricks, he is amazed at the real miracles performed by Philip (v. 13).

Word of Philip's great success in Samaria reaches the apostles at Jerusalem (v. 14). God will soon call Philip away from Samaria to preach to the Ethiopian (later in the chapter). How can these converts carry on as followers of Christ with no leader, and the New

Testament not written as yet? The apostles Peter and John are dispatched to Samaria to impart the Holy Spirit (v. 14-16) in the measure needed in their situation. Let us realize these converts have all received the indwelling measure of the Holy Spirit when they were baptized as promised in Acts 2:38,39. It is important to note that when the Bible talks in other places about the Holy Spirit being "poured out" (Acts 2:17,18) or "shed forth" (Acts 2:33) or "came on" (Acts 19:6) or "fell on" people (Acts 10:44; Acts 11:15), it is always a miraculous outpouring. So when our present verse says, "As yet he was fallen upon none of them," it means they have not received the Holy Spirit in a miraculous measure. The reason they have not is that this Philip is not an apostle, and only apostles are recorded as conferring miraculous gifts. This is why Peter and John come from Jerusalem. Simon sees it is through the laying on of their hands that these powers are conferred. (Since Paul was an apostle, at no time was it necessary for other apostles to follow up his work and lay hands on certain ones--Paul did this himself, Acts 19:6.) As we shall see later, Peter passes through all places where Philip preaches, evidently following up his work in this necessary way (Acts 8:40; Acts 9:32ff).

It is Peter and John's conferring these spiritual gifts that presents a temptation to Simon. He who has been the "great one" for a long time again wants to be the superior person--the one who bestows the spiritual power. And he gets his wallet out and offers money for this power (v. 18,19). And from this act we have our word "simony", defined by Webster as "traffic in that which is sacred; specif., the crime of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferment." There is no temptation on Peter's part to accept the money. Instead he withers Simon with these shocking words: "Thy money perish with thee...Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter...Thy heart is not right in the sight of God...Repent therefore of this thy wicked-

ness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee...Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (v. 20-23). Had Simon foreknown Peter's reaction, he would not be making this offer. He is greedy for power and supposes Peter will accept money. But the scheme breaks down because he does not understand that God's gifts are not to be purchased (v. 20) and that God's true servants cannot be "bought off".

Some teach that Simon was never converted (his case doesn't coincide with their "once saved always saved" teaching). But v. 13 shows he believes just as much as the others (note the word "also") and was baptized like the others. If one has smoked before conversion, that will be his temptation immediately after conversion. If he has been a drunkard, drinking will be an immediate temptation. Simon has been proud, and the desire to be the big one returns as a post-conversion temptation.

He is not told to be baptized. That has been done properly. A sinning Christian is to "repent" and "pray". He is to "confess" his sins to the One who is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse him from all sin (I John 1:9). Suppose Simon does not repent, does not confess his sins to God, does not pray for forgiveness. He will be unforgiven, will continue in the gall of bitterness and iniquity's bondage, his heart will not be right with God, he will have no part in God's program, and he will perish. Why raise this question? Because many backsliders today do not repent and get right, and both they and we need to realize their condition before God.

Notice too that Peter does not disregard the condition Simon is in. He doesn't act as if all is well when it isn't. A preacher is to "rebuke" at times (II Tim. 4:2,3), and here is a time for it. Peter does so in compliance with God's will for a preacher and in respect to Simon's need. And how does Simon respond? Does he get offended at Peter's words? Does he clam

up in his shell? Does he say this is just Peter's view of things? No, he recognizes Peter's divine leadership, accepts his statement of his condition, and humbles himself, saying, "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me" (v. 24). From this we conclude that Simon repents and prays. His long-range future, however, is different if we can believe the descriptions and identifications of some post-apostolic Christian writers. In the early times of the church there was some "Simon" who was an arch-enemy of the truth and one with whom Peter had a number of personal confrontations, a leader of an heretical group, and it may have been this Simon or some other Simon. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, among others, identify that Simon with this Simon of Samaria. If so, his case is an example of the church sometimes being hurt later by one whom it has converted only to have Satan overturn him to do a destructive work in the church. Church people usually are B.P.O.E. ("Best People On Earth"): however, some can be the "Biggest Problems on Earth".

V. 25 shows they stay in Samaria for a time and preach. This will strengthen them in the faith and faithfulness. This is referred to as "confirming" in Acts 14:22 and Acts 15:41. And on their way back to Jerusalem they preach in many Samaritan cities (v. 25), the first-time hearing for these cities unless some of the other Jerusalem refugees have been there first.

QUESTIONS: 1. Give background information on the city of Samaria. 2. Why is Philip willing to go to Samaria when normally the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans? 3. How does Luke summarize Philip's preaching at Samaria? 4. In what ways do Philip's miracles affect success in Samaria? 5. Tell about Simon before conversion? 6. What measure of the Holy

Spirit do Peter and John confer at Samaria? 7. Discuss Simon's financial offer to Peter and what came out of it.

B. To the Ethiopian
(Study Acts 8:26-39)

It seems to this writer that Philip's work in Samaria concludes with v. 13, but his call to leave and go south to teach the Ethiopian is not narrated until v. 26 so as to make no break between the sorcerer's conversion and his run-in with Peter and John. Having followed his case through v. 24 and the apostles' return-trip in v. 25, we are now back with Philip for his next mission.

The angelic call that Philip receives (v. 26) and the Spirit's telling him the man in the chariot is his next assignment (v. 29) are connected with his being an inspired New Testament prophet. Since Samaria is an estimated forty miles north of Jerusalem, God is calling Philip to head south even before the Ethiopian leaves Jerusalem. Providence looks down on the whereabouts of both and will have Philip's arrival at the Jerusalem-Gaza road at the precise moment the Ethiopian is riding by. Precision-timing must be one of God's specialties. Do not we who pray for His guidance and protection count on it?

Philip is eager to spread the gospel, so he does not insist on staying with his success at Samaria. Rather he is encouraged by his success there to go elsewhere--especially at the call of God (v. 26,27). It will make no difference to him that he is called away from a city to address a lone individual riding in a chariot nor that he is likely a black man from Ethiopia ("Ethiopia" means "burnt faces" and is the country just south of Egypt). Philip is God's man to go anywhere and to preach to any person or group. As such he is much easier to direct than Jonah. Others

might not be as willing to go to the hated Samaritans nor to this black man, but Philip shows no prejudice in spreading the gospel. This may be traceable to his being a Grecian Jew ("Philip" is a Greek name), a secondary-Jew in the eyes of the Hebrew Jews. His willingness to follow the Lord's decisions is also due to his being genuinely converted, for Saul of Tarsus (a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," Phil. 3:5) after his conversion became the great apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7-9).

Since he has been to Jerusalem to worship (v. 27), the Ethiopian is either a Jew or a proselyte--both Jews and proselytes go to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 2:10). If he is a black Ethiopian, he is a proselyte. McGarvey favors his being a Jew, observing that "it was not uncommon for Jews born and reared in foreign lands to attain to eminent positions such as this man enjoyed and especially in the department of finance for which they have always possessed natural fitness."

McGarvey also observes, "His being a eunuch debarred him from the privilege of mingling in the Jewish congregation, or entering the Jewish court of the temple; but it did not debar him from the court of the Gentiles, in which men of all nations, clean or unclean, were at liberty to worship." The above was an outgrowth of Deut. 23:1.

In Samaria Philip carries the gospel to a duped people (deceived by Simon). Here he is carrying it to a prominent man who is in charge of a queen's treasure. (It was customary for eunuchs to be utilized where close association with a queen was involved--note II Kings 9:30-32.) "Candace" is not a woman's name but the title worn by the queens of Ethiopia like "Pharaoh" by the kings of Egypt.

A map will show that this man has come at least 600 miles from Ethiopia to Jerusalem and is now on his return trip home. Can we doubt the sincerity of this

man as he makes a 1,200 mile trip in a chariot to worship and is reading from his Old Testament as he rides home? God, who is not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9) and who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4), is going to give this man a special opportunity to hear the gospel which he cannot hear at home. And we shall find that this honest seeker-after-God will respond to the riches of the gospel like the man in the parable who came upon treasure in the field and sold all he had to buy that field (Matt. 13:44). Let us join Philip and this man.

The Spirit tells him this is the prospect (v. 29). Philip runs to the chariot as the man is reading, and he asks him, "Understandest thou what thou readeest?" (v. 30). This is what we call the "approach" in personal work, and Philip has made a good approach by using a natural setting--asking him if he understands what he is reading. Frankly the man is having trouble with the passage and so is happy to invite the interested inquirer to have a ride and discuss the passage (v. 31).

There are two chapters in the Old Testament more than any others that predicted the crucifixion of Jesus (Psa. 22 and Isa. 53). The treasurer is reading the latter and wonders if the author Isaiah, who historically suffered a violent death under King Manasseh, was predicting his own calamity or that of somebody else (v. 32,33). It is good that he is not merely "reading his chapter for the day" but is really wanting to know the meaning of what he is reading. Since the Isa. 53:7,8 reading was pointing to the crucifixion, what an opportunity for Philip to begin at the same Scripture and preach unto him "Jesus" (v. 35)! We have no way of knowing just how far back in the story of Jesus Philip went, but we are sure nobody can ever receive a better presentation than the Ethiopian receives. And we know Philip carries the presentation

forward to Christ's giving the Great Commission because of the man's question about being baptized. And again the timing is perfect, for after learning what he must do to accept Jesus, they come upon a certain water, and when the prospect sees it he points to it and asks, "See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (v. 36). The "water" they come to depends on which route from Jerusalem to Gaza the eunuch is taking. Because of the word "desert" in v. 26 Boles thinks it is "probably the one by Hebron which went through the desert hills of southern Judea". Present Palestine guides concur with this as they show a large man-made storage pool beside the road from Jerusalem to Hebron as the traditional place of this baptism. McGarvey thinks it is the great paved Roman road between Jerusalem and Gaza. If so the "water" might be the brook in the valley of Elah, "a mountain stream which goes dry in the summer but flows with a strong current through the winter and the spring. Such streams always wear out pools here and there very suitable for baptizing. If the chariot had already crossed this stream when the eunuch requested baptism, there was another in the Philistine Plain, now called Wady el Hasy...a perennial stream and suitable for baptizing at any season of the year. It is not at all improbable, however, that the real place of their baptism was one of the many artificial pools with which the country abounded at that time and the ruins of which are found in every section. The rainless season of seven months, which is experienced there every year, made it necessary when the country was filled with people and flocks and herds to make extraordinary provision of water for stock and for irrigating the summer crops; and no country was ever so well supplied in this way as Judea" (McGarvey).

Here is a case of a non-Christian asking if he can be baptized, not the gospel worker pleading with the prospect to submit. Philip knows this is the man's

first hearing of the gospel and wants to be sure he really believes Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (v. 37). Ancient manuscripts differ concerning the last part of v. 37. A few include it, but most don't. If it was in Luke's original copy, it somehow got left out in some of the ancient hand-written copies, and if it was not in his original copy somebody somehow added it. Most translations omit it or carry it in the margin because many more ancient copies lack it than have it. Since Rom. 10:9,10; I Tim. 6:12; and II Tim. 2:19 teach the confession of faith as a part of one's salvation, its presence here merely reflects the practice of the church of taking a person's confession before baptizing him. As we read the text up to this statement and the text following it, we are sure the Ethiopian gave Philip some kind of assurance of his faith in Jesus whether Luke recorded it or not.

We are to confess our faith in Jesus before "men" (Matt. 10:32). Who is present besides Philip to hear the Ethiopian's confession? A man of his wealth and position is not likely to be traveling alone. There will be certain servants along one of whom is driving the chariot and to whom he gives the order to stop the chariot for the baptism (v. 38).

That baptism in this dispensation is "water" baptism, and that it is "immersion" could not be clearer than in the Ethiopian's case. "Water" is also mentioned in connection with Cornelius's baptism (Acts 10:47). And don't forget Heb. 10:22 ("bodies washed with pure water"). Since baptism is initiatory, "water" in John 3:5 refers to the act of baptism. And just as surely as men are to baptize (Matt. 28:19), it will be "water" baptism, for only Christ can baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11). Philip and the treasurer both go down into the water and after the baptism come up out of it (v. 38,39), things they would not be doing if the candidate is being sprinkled or poured. Denominationalists belittle the necessity of baptism,

but conversion-reports throughout Acts always include it, and here the preacher is not taken away before the baptism has taken place.

The Spirit who said, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (v. 29), now catches Philip away so the two men see each other no more. We are left to wonder why God so suddenly terminates their brief time together and in such a way that they are forbidden the normal courtesies of "goodbyes". Possibly in this way the Ethiopian realizes all the more that he has been blessed with a divinely-sent messenger, and the message brought to him is thus confirmed as of God. So the convert goes on his way rejoicing (v. 39), the same as the Philippian jailer after his baptism (Acts 16:33,34). We have no Biblical information as to God's provision for this man's future continuance and development in the Christian life, but we are confident that He who has begun a good work in him with His conversion will care for his case in the future (consider Phil. 1:6). Had the Spirit not caught Philip away, Philip might have felt responsible for teaching him to observe all things following baptism (Matt. 28:20). But by the Spirit's snatching Philip away and totally removing him from the future of the Ethiopian's case, it is no longer Philip's job to teach him his post-conversion responsibilities. Thus, Philip is free to begin evangelistic labors elsewhere, which he does in our next section of study.

QUESTIONS: 1. Discuss the divine timing of Philip's meeting with the Ethiopian. 2. Discuss the willingness of Philip to go anywhere and preach to anybody. 3. Discuss the possibility of the Ethiopian eunuch being either a Jew or a proselyte. 4. What indications do we have of his sincerity? 5. Begin with what the Ethiopian was reading and show Philip's procedure. 6. Discuss the "water" where he was baptized.

C. North To Caesarea
(Study Acts 8:40)

There is more than meets the eye in this single verse. Having been caught away from the eunuch, Philip finds himself at Azotus (the former ancient Philistine city Ashdod). Since we do not know just where Philip is snatched away from the eunuch, we cannot say how many miles this strange experience carries him to deposit him at Azotus. Beginning at Azotus he preaches his way up the coast, preaching in the cities of the maritime plain until he comes to Caesarea (check your map). We do not know what all these cities are, but likely Philip's preaching accounts for the "saints" at Lydda (Acts 9:32) as well as a certain "disciple" Tabitha at Joppa (Acts 9:36).

Caesarea is the capital of the country since the days of its builder (Herod the Great) and is on the Mediterranean coast. From this verse and from Acts 21:8 it appears Philip makes this great city his home and the center of his future evangelistic efforts.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What was Azotus called in the Old Testament?* 2. *What are some cities where Philip preaches in going north?* 3. *Where does Philip settle?*

CHAPTER 5

Saul's Journeys*A. To Damascus*
(Study Acts 9:1-22)

Having followed some of the preaching in various places that resulted from the persecution against the Jerusalem church after it was touched off by the stoning of Stephen, we now return to the Jewish official who consented to that stoning (Acts 22:20) and at whose feet the stoners laid their cloaks (Acts 7:58). What has he been doing since then? Surprised that Stephen's death does not end the church, Saul is stunned that these fleeing are making believers in many places. He is obsessed with the determination to fight Christianity with all within him. Listen to his own words in later life about his persecuting activities: "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:10,11). It is while he is persecuting them even to strange cities that he goes to the high priest at Jerusalem to get letters to the synagogue rulers at Damascus authorizing him to arrest any believers there and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished (v. 1,2).

It has been a trip of several days for Saul and his companions. As they near the great city of Damascus, long-time capital of Syria and still one of the world's oldest existing cities, something happens that not only changes this persecution-leader but the whole

fortunes of the church that he has been seeking to destroy. Never has there been such a turn-about in a person and the course of a life as we are about to witness. The church's greatest enemy is going to become the church's greatest preacher. His conversion and future service are so important that that number of apostles which has been so long fixed at twelve now gives way to make room for another apostle who will be called on to pen more books of the New Testament than all the original twelve apostles combined and whose work among the Gentiles will be the principal part of Christianity to survive the Mohammedan Conquest of the 600's and the Middle Ages and continue to this very day!

The whole change begins when God steps in by sending such a bright light that even though it is near noon it is much brighter than the noon-day sun (Acts 26:13). (From here on as we consider this important event, we will also use additional thoughts and explanations from Saul's own reports of it later in life as recorded in Acts 22:6-16 and Acts 26:13-19.)

As he and his companions fall to the ground in fright, Saul hears these words in Hebrew from somewhere: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (v. 5). Israel was God's Old Testament people, and whoever touched them touched the apple of God's eye (Zech. 2:8), so anybody persecuting the church, like Saul, is in reality persecuting Christ.

His response, "Who art thou, Lord?" (v. 5) shows he is bewildered as to just who spoke. The Greek word translated "Lord" signifies one with authority and is used variously in the New Testament (sometimes for God, sometimes for rulers, sometimes for masters, etc.). Saul's use of it here shows he is overpowered by and feels subject to whoever is speaking, and the very circumstances prevailing cause him to think it is some heavenly Being addressing him. How stunned he is when the answer comes, "I am Jesus ('Jesus of Naza-

reth,' Acts 22:8) whom thou persecutest" (v. 5). Saul has always lived conscientiously (Acts 23:1) even when persecuting those believing on Jesus (Acts 26:9,10). Now what is a conscientious person to do who learns he has been so mistaken and wrong? Jesus' words. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks ('goad,' ASV), are significant (v. 5). As an ox found it better to obey his master than kick against his sharp goad, so Saul will find it hard to go against the goading of his own conscience now demanding that he make an about-face with reference to Jesus and his persecuting efforts or the goading that God is giving him by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to show His displeasure with his persecuting course. As always before with Saul, conscience wins out, and Luke aptly describes his double feelings ("trembling" and "astonished") as he yieldingly asks, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (v. 6). We can understand his fear and also his astonishment that Jesus is actually the One God sent into the world to be the Messiah. Imagine the thoughts possessing his mind in these life-changing moments.

We are not told at precisely what moment Jesus appears to him, but that he is given a vision of Jesus is apparent from Acts 26:16; Acts 22:14; and I Cor. 9:1. What better instant for Jesus to manifest Himself visibly to Saul than when He says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest!"

All the group sees the light, but only Saul sees Jesus. All hear a sound, but only Saul hears a message. (In v. 7 I would translate the Greek "phonane" "sound" instead of "voice"--it can be translated either, but "sound" keeps this verse from being in conflict with Acts 22:9). Or as McGarvey observes, "It is common among all classes of men to say, 'I did not hear,' when they mean they did not hear the words spoken through they did hear the sound of the speaker's voice." We say, "I didn't hear you," when we mean, "I

didn't understand what you said."

To become an apostle it is necessary for Saul to see the Christ and be personally called by Him (Acts 22:14,15), which explains why those with him do not see Jesus (v. 7) and do not hear what He says to Saul (Acts 22:9). Their seeing the bright light and hearing the sound (v. 7), though, are necessary to keep them from thinking Saul has "gone off his rocker" in inexplicable behavior. They know something has happened.

Keep in mind we are studying two matters in this event: (1) Saul's becoming a Christian, and (2) his becoming an apostle. It is important not to confuse the elements involved in his becoming a Christian with those involved in his becoming an apostle. Christ's appearance to him "as of one born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:8) is thus explained to him by Jesus Himself: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:16-18).

What is Saul's response going to be to all this? He does not kick against the goad but in all honesty and submission asks, "Lord" (and this time he well understands whom he is addressing by this designation), "what wilt thou have me to do?" (v. 6). Augustine said in the 300's that the conversion of Saul is the answer to Stephen's prayer. You can be sure that other persecuted disciples have prayed for Saul too, but did their faith really envision what all is happening?

You expect God to tell Saul what he is to do, but ever since the Great Commission that responsibility is committed to human beings, so Saul is told to go into

Damascus, and there it will be told him what to do (v. 6). The gospel is to be borne in "earthen" vessels (II Cor. 4:7). Saul himself is to become such a "vessel" (Acts 9:15). Saul rises from the ground, and since he (their leader) is blind (Acts 22:11), his companions lead him into the city (v. 8) to the house of a man by the name of Judas on Straight Street (v. 11). Here we are left to wonderment as to Saul's companions, their departure from Saul, and their report upon their return to Jerusalem.

At this time Saul has no knowledge of whether his blindness is permanent or temporary nor who will come to tell him what to do. That which is dominating his whole being is remorse over his persecuting career. He is so broken and undone that he refuses either to eat or drink (v. 9) and can only cry out to God in prayer (v. 11). No doubt his prayers of contrition are asking God over and over to forgive him. He is doing what is natural under the circumstances--not something God has told him to do. People who use his case as an example of a lost sinner praying for forgiveness should note that his praying is completely voluntary, his own response to his guilt (while he waits and waits), and his prayers do not acquire forgiveness (see Acts 22:16). God can send His messenger immediately, but psychologically Saul needs to "fry in his own fat" for a while so he will never forget what he has done and how merciful God is to forgive him. And he doesn't forget, for he frequently refers to this later on (to Jerusalem, Acts 22:3-16; to Agrippa, Acts 26:9-19; to the Corinthians, I Cor. 15:9,10; and to Timothy, I Tim. 1:13-16). So it is three days of agony of soul before God sends His messenger of mercy (v. 9).

In a vision God appears to a Damascus disciple Ananias, a man of excellent report among the Jews--Acts 22:12 (v. 10). He instructs Ananias to go to the praying Saul (v. 11), assuring him He has given Saul a vision of a man by his very name coming to him, laying

his hand on him, and restoring his sight (v. 12). Ananias's reply in v. 13,14 not only shows his hesitancy to go but that the Damascus disciples are aware of Saul's trip to their city to persecute them. Ananias can hardly believe his ears when he hears the Lord say, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before" three groups: "the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (v. 15). Saul will become the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), spending much of his ministry among them (Acts 15:12). He will preach to kings when he is arraigned before them (Acts 24:10-21; Acts 24:24-26; Acts 26:2-29). And we will see him in many synagogues of the Jews (Acts 13:5; Acts 13:14ff; Acts 14:1; Acts 17:17; Acts 18:4; Acts 19:8).

The first intimation that Saul himself will be greatly persecuted as he preaches the gospel is found in the Lord's final words to Ananias: "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (v. 16). That Saul did so suffer unbelievable sufferings during his ministry is found in such reports as I Cor. 4:9-13; II Cor. 6:4,5,8-10; II Cor. 11:23-28. Acts records some of these incidents: Acts 13:45,50; Acts 14:5,6; Acts 14:19; Acts 16:19-24; Acts 19:23-32; Acts 21:27-32; Acts 22:22-24.

With the Lord's further explanation Ananias feels more sure as he makes his way to the designated house. The waiting Saul is glad for his coming. Ananias tells him he has come for two purposes: (1) that he might receive his sight (Oh, what good news!); and (2) that he might receive the Holy Spirit. Each is connected with something Ananias does for Saul: his sight is restored through the imposition of his hands (v. 12,17,18); in his baptism Saul receives the same indwelling Holy Spirit that others have received (Acts 2:38,39). (Note--We are not told just where or when Saul receives the apostolic measure of the Holy Spirit that imparts inspiration and miraculous power to him.)

Let us pause as we see him who is merely designed as a "certain disciple" (v. 10) baptizing Saul to observe that any disciple of the Lord may perform a baptism--not merely those who have been ordained to the ministry as in denominational circles. May Christians teach others? Yes. Then they may also baptize, for those who teach others may also baptize them (see Matt. 28:19).

Because Ananias addresses Saul as "Brother Saul" (v. 17), some use this as supposed proof that Saul is already a Christian. But when Peter addressed his Jewish hearers on Pentecost as "Men and brethren" (Acts 2:29), were they already converted to Jesus? No, they were his Jewish brethren just as Saul is Ananias's Jewish brother. Notice other similar instances: Acts 3:17; Acts 7:2; Acts 15:26,38.

Now notice Ananias's words to Saul concerning his coming apostleship: "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:14,15). And notice his words concerning the forgiveness of his sins--that which Saul wanted so much: "Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Numerous passages connect believers' baptism with the remission of past sins (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:41; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; Heb. 10:22; I Pet. 3:20,21), but the setting of Acts 22:16 makes it one of the most unanswerable by those who wish to deny baptism's place in a convert's salvation. Saul has believed, repented, has even fasted and prayed, yet he is still unforgiven prior to being baptized. Baptism is the final matter in New Testament conversion.

Following his baptism Saul eats for the first time since his Damascus-Road experience (v. 19).

Through Ananias the new convert is made welcome among the Damascus disciples. We can be sure they give great praise to God for the unexpected conversion of their chief enemy. Not only is he with them, but he boldly enters the Damascus synagogues and preaches Jesus (v. 20). Since the persecution against the disciples emanated from Jerusalem with Saul as its leader, he really is in no immediate danger in so preaching. Later it will be different. His present hearers are all amazed at the change that has come over him (v. 21). Saul's preaching activities only make him stronger in his belief in Jesus, and his powerful message makes more disciples for Jesus (v. 22).

QUESTIONS: 1. *When the stoning of Stephen and the scattering of the Jerusalem church do not accomplish all that Saul desires, what does he do next?* 2. *How bright is the light that he sees near Damascus?* 3. *What question of Saul shows he is ready to submit to Jesus?* 4. *What 2 possible solutions are there as to whether the men who are with Saul hear or do not hear the voice?* 5. *Why does Christ not personally tell Saul what to do but has Ananias tell him?* 6. *Why is Saul's praying not a Scriptural example of an alien sinner praying for salvation?* 7. *For what 2 purposes has Ananias come to Saul, and what 2 things does he do to bring these about?* 8. *Why is Saul in no immediate danger in preaching Jesus at Damascus?*

B. To Arabia
(not mentioned in Acts)

There is a time-break between v. 22 and v. 23 due to Saul's being in Arabia as mentioned in Gal. 1:17. Neither Gal. or any other Scripture gives us any detailed information about his trip to or stay in Ara-

bia nor to which part of that sizable country he goes. To conjecture that he goes there to meditate or to figure out his theology, as some say, seems to this writer to be at odds with his restless spirit to preach, and such also seems to discount his inspiration.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What epistle of Paul mentions his going to Arabia?* 2. *What do some say is his purpose in going to Arabia?* 3. *What does he probably do there?*

C. Return to Damascus
(Study Acts 9:23-25)

Gal. 1:17 shows that after his trip to Arabia, he returns to Damascus. Though Acts 9 mentions nothing about Arabia, it allows for it by showing the event in v. 23-25 to be some time after the report in v. 22.

Upon his return to Damascus we have only one aspect of his visit recorded; an organized effort to arrest him. Combining Saul's own account of it in II Cor. 11:32,33 with our Acts 9 account we find his trouble originates with the Jews whose intention it is to kill him (v. 25). Saul learns of their lying in wait (v. 24). To complicate matters they have secured the help of the governor and his garrison of soldiers who watch every gate day and night to see he does not get out (v. 24; II Cor. 11:32). But in the darkness of night through the help of his Christian brethren he climbs through a window in the wall and is lowered in a basket by rope to the ground below and to safety. The above is only the first of many such close-calls with death he will have in the future (II Cor. 1:8-10; II Cor. 11:23-28).

QUESTIONS: 1. *What group in Damascus wants to kill Saul?* 2. *Who assists them in their attempt?* 3. *How does he escape?*

*D. Back to Jerusalem for the First
Time since Conversion
(Study Acts 9:26-30)*

It appears from Gal. 1:18 that it has been three years since his conversion--also that his chief purpose in coming to Jerusalem at this time is to see Peter. In anticipation we might say, "What a meeting that will be of these two great apostles!" But Saul runs into a new trouble upon arrival: the disciples at Jerusalem are afraid of him and do not want to receive him, not believing he is really one of them (v. 26). Their reaction is to be expected. If any word has gotten back to them about the change that has come over Saul, they have not believed it. They fear he is like the wooden horse at Troy--wanting to get on the inside only to arrest them. Many people would be offended if they wished to be identified with a congregation that would not receive them. But Saul understands their fears and appreciates Barnabas's effort in his behalf (v. 27). Remember Barnabas from Acts 4:36,37? We will see even more of this important man in future chapters. But how Barnabas knows about Saul's change when the others don't we are not informed. It is interesting to note that God does not reveal to the apostles the genuineness of Saul, which He can do, but utilizes Barnabas to inform them. Even divine power is not needlessly expended--if something can be done naturally, why should God do it miraculously? Human hands could roll away the stone from Lazarus's tomb, so it was not done miraculously (John 11:39,41). Human hands could loose Lazarus's graveclothes, so no miracle was

performed to do it (John 11:44). But human hands could not raise Lazarus from the dead--miracle-power did that (John 11:45)! Divine power takes over where human power ends ("Man's extremity is God's opportunity"), but it does not do for us what we are able to do for ourselves.

When v. 27 says Barnabas brings Saul to the "apostles", the Gal. account shows that there are only two apostles whom Saul gets to see on this trip--Peter and James the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:18,19). Where the other apostles are at this time or why Saul does not see them if they are in Jerusalem is not explained.

It is good to note that Barnabas's mediation is accepted so that Saul is now one of them (v. 28).

QUESTIONS: 1. *How long is it between his conversion and his first trip back to Jerusalem?* 2. *What is the Jerusalem church's attitude toward his wanting to be identified with it?* 3. *Who solves the problem?* 4. *What apostles does Saul get to see on this trip?*

E. To Tarsus
(Study Acts 9:30,31)

But Saul's stay in Jerusalem is brief--only fifteen days (Gal. 1:18). Likely he would stay longer, but in his speaking boldly in the name of Jesus and his disputing with the Grecian Jews his stay is shortened for he learns of their intent to kill him. It is while he is in the temple praying that God speaks to him in a trance, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me...Depart" (Acts 22:17-21). The Jerusalem brethren realizing the imminent danger he is in hurry him out of Jerusalem for his native Tarsus (v. 29,30).

His abbreviated stay in Jerusalem and vicinity has not allowed him opportunity to preach in the Judean congregations outside of Jerusalem, for later he wrote that he "was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea...they had only heard, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me" (Gal. 1:22, 23).

Here Acts takes its leave of Saul in order to cover some other important matters before returning to his case in Acts 11:25. Acts 9:31 is a great summarizing verse concerning church matters at this time: "Then had the churches rest" (from persecution) "throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" (the three divisions of Palestine, "and were edified" (the Greek word is from the construction business--to build up a house and is used here spiritually as it is used several times in Paul's own writings: I Cor. 8:1; I Cor. 10:23; I Thess. 5:11), "and walking in the fear of the Lord" (reverence for the God who could do what no human being could do: turn Saul around from the determined persecutor he has been to the zealous proclaimer he is), "and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost" (the way all this has been accomplished brings even more than physical peace to them--it brings a divine comfort and assurance that God is with them and will continue to be), "were multiplied" (it is a time of great evangelistic expansion and numerical growth). Before leaving this great transitional verse DeWalt observes, "We have felt all the time that while we were following the labors of Philip, Peter and John, and Saul that there were many others preaching the word, and no doubt the events of their lives were just as interesting as were those of the men discussed."

QUESTIONS: 1. *How long is Saul's stay in Jerusalem?* 2. *Why does he leave so soon?* 3. *Where does he*

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go? 4. From what did the Palestine churches have rest? 5. What does "edify" mean?

CHAPTER 6

Peter's Journeys

A. To Lydda
(Study Acts 9:32-35)

It appears that wherever Philip goes with the gospel, Peter follows up to impart spiritual gifts (see earlier comments on Acts 8:14-17). Since the name "Christians" has not yet been given and won't be until Acts 11:26, Luke refers to them here (v. 32) as "saints" (referring to the holy character of their lives). Paul frequently calls Christians "saints" (Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25; I Cor. 14:33; 16:1,15; etc.). Lydda was called "Lod" in the Old Testament (I Chron. 8:12). Since Lod is in the proximity of present-day Tel Aviv, Israel's principal airport is called Lod International Airport.

To a paralytic who has been bedfast for eight years Peter says, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole" (compare Acts 5:6): "arise, and make thy bed" (v. 34). Both surprised and excited over the fortunate blessing that has instantly come to him, he gets up a well man (v. 34)! These Jews of the maritime plain have only heard of the miracles of Jesus, for we have no record of Jesus ever being down in this section. As a result of this miracle many at Lydda and up and down the Sharon Valley turn to the Lord (v. 35).

QUESTIONS: 1. *What is implied by the designation "saints"?* 2. *What was Lydda called in the Old Testament?* 3. *How many years has Aeneas been bedfast?*

B. To Joppa
(Study Acts 9:36-43)

A little over ten miles from Lydda is the seaport town Joppa on the Mediterranean. Jerusalem being an inland city Joppa is its seaport-contact with the world to the west. Solomon had the logs for his temple floated down the coast from Lebanon to Joppa (II Chron. 2:16). After the Babylonian Captivity when they were rebuilding the temple, they did the same (Ezra 3:7). Between these two incidents Joppa was where Jonah boarded the ship for his ill-fated voyage (Jon. 1:3). Being in the Sharon Valley these in Joppa have also heard of Peter's healing Aeneas. There are disciples at Joppa (probably from the preaching of Philip---see Acts 8:40). When one of them (Tabitha in Hebrew, Dorcas in Greek) dies, instead of burying her they wash her body and lay it in an upper chamber while sending to Lydda for Peter (v. 36-38). Peter doesn't hesitate to return to Joppa with them (v. 39). Upon his arrival he meets the dear friends of Dorcas--weeping widows who want him to know what a wonderful woman she has been--and they show him the various garments she has made for the needy (v. 39, compare v. 36).

Reminiscent of what Jesus did when He went in to raise Jairus's daughter (Matt. 9:25), Peter is alone with the dead body. De Welt comments, "What a beautiful scene is portrayed for us. Peter first kneels down and prays the prayer of faith, and then turning to the body he spoke but two words ('Tabitha, arise'). Once again life flowed into the body, the eyes were opened. Seeing Peter in the room she sat up. Without a word Peter gave her his hand, and she stood up. Then came the glad call for the saints and the widows. What unspeakable joy there must have been in that upper chamber on that memorable day!" (v. 41,41). And word of this spreads throughout the city and causes many to turn to the Lord here too (v. 42).

For the time that Peter remains in Joppa, he is put up at the home of a tanner by the name of Simon (v. 43) whose house is next to the sea (Acts 10:6). A tanner was one who preserved skins and made leather from them. "Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary" observes that among the Jews a tanner was considered operating a ceremonially unclean business (probably because of his handling that which was dead), so his operation had to be outside of town. We do not know how long the "many days" are that Peter is here, but on one of these days he has an experience that has to do with the gospel first being preached to Gentiles.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What were some Old Testament events connected with Joppa?* 2. *What kind of person has Dorcas been?* 3. *Where is Peter residing in Joppa?*

C. To Caesarea
(Study Acts 10:1--11:1)

Up the coast about thirty miles is a Roman centurion stationed at Caesarea. A "centurion" is a military officer in charge of one hundred soldiers. Caesarea is the capital of Palestine and has been since the days of Herod the Great who built it 25-13 B.C. For sometime now the Jews have had exclusive rights to the gospel, which is God's plan (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16; Acts 3:25,26). But the time has come when God wants the gospel sent to Gentiles as well. The apostle who was promised the keys of the kingdom in Matt. 16:19 and who did the preaching to the Jews on Christianity's opening day (Acts 2:14ff) is also to be the first to preach to Gentiles (Acts 15:7). God has likewise chosen the first Gentile to be given the opportunity to hear it--this Roman centurion Cornelius stationed at Caesarea. His soldiers are Italians. We

are surprised to find a Roman military man described as "devout", "one that feared God with all his house," a man generous with "alms" to the poor, and a man of continual prayer (10:2). Though he is not a Jew nor a proselyte to Judaism, he is one of those Gentiles who, though they have not the law of Moses themselves, yet through contact with the Jews "do by nature the things contained in the law" (Rom. 2:14). That his religious qualities have come to him through the Jews is evident from his praying at the Jews' afternoon hour of prayer (compare 10:3,30 and 3:1).

Cornelius is understandably startled when the angel appears and calls him by name (v. 3,4). Cornelius's alms and prayers have erected a "memorial" for him before God (v. 4) so that God's decision to make him the first Gentile convert is based on it. He is told to send for Peter "who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). Cornelius's case is proof that it takes religious sincerity plus the gospel to be saved. Religious sincerity cannot be better than in Cornelius, yet he is not saved apart from the gospel. Nor is he offended by the angel's message.

The centurion loses no time obeying but dispatches a devout soldier and two household servants to Joppa (v. 7,8). We are not told where they spend the night, but it is the next day around noon as they near Joppa that Peter has gone up to Simon's housetop (their roofs are flat and are used for various things--like drying flax, Josh. 2:6) to pray while the meal is being prepared (v. 9). In his hunger he sees in a divine vision a great sheet let down from heaven by its four corners, and it is filled with all kinds of living creatures (v. 10-12). Peter is startled by the voice that says, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat" (v. 13). Why would a divine voice tell him to kill and eat animals that are forbidden by the law of Moses to be eaten? (See Lev. 11). Is the command given to test Pe-

ter's obedience when he is physically hungry enough to be tempted to eat anything? It is obvious from Peter's answer ("Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean," v. 14) that inspiration has not yet revealed to the apostles that the law of Moses has passed away. Christ had intimated that all meats were to be "purged" or made clean (Mark 7:19). Now for the first time (here to Peter on the housetop) He declares that all meats are "clean" and allowable for men to eat (v. 15), and He uses this as an object lesson, as well as other matters in this rapidly developing event, to teach Peter he should now call no man common or unclean (v. 28)--not even Gentiles.

When v. 16 says, "This was done thrice," it makes the matter unforgettable and impressive. Then Peter watches as the sheet full of animals goes away into heaven (v. 16), leaving him in a state of bewilderment as to just what is really meant by the vision. But its lesson will begin to unfold with things about to take place (v. 17).

Just as God had the timing just right in the case of Philip and the Ethiopian, so does He in this event. Cornelius's men have just arrived and are inquiring at Simon's door for Peter when the Spirit says to Peter, "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them" (v. 17-20). When he goes down, meets the men, and hears their story, he can see God is calling him to go with them to preach to their Gentile master in Caesarea (v. 21,22). After lodging them for the night, he departs with them and takes with him certain Jewish brethren from Joppa--six brethren altogether (11:12). These brethren are taken along as witnesses, for he is aware that his actions will be called in question--and they will be (11:1-3).

Before arriving at Cornelius's house let us inform you that Simon's ancient house by the sea has

been preserved and is respected alike by Christians and Moslems--a very interesting place to visit.

Cornelius knows about how long it will take for his men to get to Joppa and back, so he, along with certain friends and kinsmen whom he has called together for the occasion, is waiting for Peter and them (v. 24). When he first meets Peter, he bows down before him to worship him (v. 25). This is the very thing the wise men did when they came to the Christ-child (Matt. 2:11) and was what Satan wanted Jesus to do in the temptation (Matt. 4:9). Similarly Peter himself earlier fell at Jesus' knees and addressed Him as "Lord" (Luke 5:8). Peter is no pope (as the Romanists claim), and being a man he corrects Cornelius's well-meaning action by refusing to be worshiped (v. 26) even as the angel did the action of the apostle John in Rev. 22:8, 9. It is obvious from v. 27 that Cornelius's home is no small house, for the foregoing has transpired at the door while the group is in another portion of the building.

Who will speak first in the presence of the group? Peter or Cornelius? The Jew Peter, realizing that his keeping company with and entering the home of one of another nation is contrary to Jewish religious custom, speaks first and states that God has shown him he is to call no man common or unclean (v. 28,29).

Cornelius's reply, in addition to the obvious, contains several items worthy of remark. (1) Their way of referring to time is seen in his saying, "Four days ago" I was told to send for you. Day 1 would be when he dispatches his men to Joppa (10:7); day 2 would be when they arrive at Simon's house (10:9); day 3 is when they leave for Caesarea (10:23,24); and day 4 is when they arrive at Cornelius's place (10:24). We would say, "Three days ago," while they say, "Four." This helps us understand how Jesus said that in three days He would rise again when He was buried late Friday afternoon and resurrected early Sunday morning,

the time-interval being not quite two full days. (2) He mentions he was "fasting" as well as praying. And consider the double connection of "prayer" with this Biblical event: it is while Cornelius is praying at Caesarea that the angel appears to him, and it is while Peter is praying at Joppa that God calls him to go to Cornelius. (3) Cornelius speaks of a "man... in bright clothing" in describing the angel (10:3). For the same, see Mark 16:5 and Matt. 28:5. Such makes us comfortable in saying the two men in white apparel at the ascension (Acts 1:10) were angels. (4) Cornelius's statement, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (v. 33), should be the attitude of everyone who attends church, and all who preach should preach all things that are commanded them of God!

Continuing to see the leading of God in this whole matter Peter hesitates not to say, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," meaning that "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" regardless of whether Jew or Gentile (v. 34,35). No Jew had ever said this or even thought it prior to this statement by Peter. It was implied by the "whosoever" in Joel 2:32 and quoted by Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2:21) even though neither Joel nor Peter understood it when they spoke it. It is Rom. 10:11,12 that applies a similar "whosoever" of Isa. 28:16 to mean either Jew or Gentile.

In v. 36 Peter begins his actual message for their responsible reception or rejection. He tells them of God's sending a message of peace by Jesus Christ (v. 36), the good news of how man can now be reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:18,19) and also how Jew and Gentile can be at peace through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:11-19). While Jesus was sent unto the children of Israel in His earthly ministry (Matt. 15:24), He is "Lord of all" now ("There is no difference between the Jews and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich

unto all that call upon him," (Rom. 10:12). "Judea and Galilee" (v. 37) were the two Jewish sections where Jesus conducted His ministry, and it all began after John the Baptist had prepared the people for His coming (v. 37). The opening words of v. 37, "That word, I say, ye know," show these Gentiles knew about the earthly ministry of Jesus though obviously they were not participants in nor recipients during it.

Peter proceeds to declare three things God has done for Jesus: (1) He anointed Him with the Holy Spirit (v. 38,39); (2) He raised Him from the dead (v. 40-42); and (3) He appointed Him to be the final judge of all men (v. 42), going on to point out that He is the fulfillment of the prophets, and that whoever accepts Him will receive the remission of sins (v. 43). Let us consider what Peter says about each of the above.

The anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit took place at His baptism (Matt. 3:16). Heb. 1:9 refers to this divine anointing under the figure of "oil of gladness", and Jesus Himself claimed to be anointed with the Spirit in fulfillment of Isa. 61:1,2 (Luke 4:17-21). Jesus is the "Christ", and in Greek "Christ" means "anointed". This anointing brought "power" that exhibited itself in His miracles (v. 38). Satan has "oppressed" mankind with many maladies through the sin he brought into the world, and Jesus was sent to destroy this and every other work of the devil (I John 3:8). For instance, the poor bent woman of Luke 13:11-16 whom Satan had "bound" for eighteen years Jesus "loosed" when He healed her. Jesus used His miracle-power for the "good" (v. 38) of many people. In v. 39 Peter affirms he himself was one of the witnesses of Jesus' miracles in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

Peter's mention of "Jerusalem" is his transition between Jesus' ministry years and His crucifixion (v. 39), for Jerusalem is where the crucifixion took place. Peter uses a strong description of their bru-

tality when he says, "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree." Stephen called them "murderers" (Acts 7:52).

Peter feels good to tell a new audience that Jesus was raised from the dead the third day, and he goes on to inform them that Jesus did not appear to people indiscriminately nor to crowds here and there but to "witnesses chosen before of God", especially to His closest followers (v. 40,41). This coincides with the eleven accounts of His resurrection appearances: to Mary Magdalene first (Mark 16:9), to the other women who went to the tomb (Matt. 28:8,9), to Peter himself (I Cor. 15:4), to the two men of Emmaus (Luke 24:13-31), to the apostles except Thomas and the two Emmaus men (John 20:19,20; Luke 24:33-36), to five hundred brethren (I Cor. 15:6), to James (I Cor. 15:7), to all the apostles including Thomas (John 20:26-28), to seven apostles at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14), to the apostles on a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20), and to the apostles in Jerusalem (Luke 24:50,51).

The resurrected Jesus, Peter tells his attentive audience, commanded them to preach (referring to the Great Commission) and to testify that He is the God-ordained judge of everybody: those still living (the "quick") and those whose lives are over (the "dead"). Paul later wrote that Christ is to do this judging of "the quick and the dead" (II Tim. 4:1). While everyone is to give an account to "God" (Rom. 14:12), the world will be doing this when it appears "before the judgment seat of Christ" (II Cor. 5:10), for God is going to judge the world through His Son (Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; John 5:22).

Peter's reference to the "prophets" who foretold Christ's coming (v. 43) indicates that Cornelius has some knowledge of the Jewish Old Testament, and the "whosoever" who believes on Christ and thereby receives the remission of sins (v. 43) certainly includes Gentiles like Cornelius, for it is upon Peter's

saying this that the Holy Spirit instantly falls on him and on all in Peter's listening audience (v. 44) to the astonishment of those who have come with Peter (v. 45). This is the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15,16), the same measure the apostles themselves received on Pentecost (Acts 11:15). And just as the apostles praised God in their tongues-utterance (Acts 2:11), so do these "magnify God" in theirs (v. 46). Because v. 45 and Acts 2:38 both call the baptismal measure and the indwelling gift of Acts 2:38 the gift of the Holy Spirit, don't equate the two gifts as the same. Every measure of the Holy Spirit given to man has been referred to by the term "gift" (baptismal measure: Acts 10:45; miraculous gifts: I Cor. 12:8-10; and indwelling: Acts 2:38), but each measure is different.

The baptismal descent of the Spirit upon these Gentiles is the final convincing point for Peter. For him to forbid these the privilege of becoming members of the church would be to "resist God" (Acts 11:15-17). But are the six Jewish brethren who are with him also convinced? Evidently, for when he asks them, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? (v. 47), there appears to be no opposition. Peter therefore "commanded them to be baptized in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord" (v. 48).

And thus comes to a termination this series of divine workings to have the gospel preached to the first Gentile!

When visiting the spectacular ruins of this once great city (capital of Palestine, home of Philip the evangelist and his family, place of Paul's two-year imprisonment and appearances before Felix and Festus and Agrippa, and other events in Acts as well as the home of Eusebius to whom we are indebted for preserving church history information from the death of the apostles to the time of Constantine), the one thought

about this city that stirs your writer above all others is that here is where we Gentiles were first given the opportunity to come into the family of God through the gospel!

After their baptism Cornelius and his friends do not want Peter to leave immediately but to remain with them a few days (v. 48). It is while he remains at Caesarea and before he gets back to Jerusalem that word reaches the apostles and brethren in Judea as to what he has done (Acts 11:1). Oh, how fast news travels when people think somebody has done something wrong! And yet the facts that would vindicate Peter do not accompany the report.

QUESTIONS: 1. Who is a centurion? 2. How is Cornelius described? 3. What is Cornelius told to do? 4. Tell of Peter's housetop experience. 5. Who all await Peter's arrival at Caesarea? 6. What does Cornelius do wrong when welcoming Peter? 7. What are some of the things in Peter's message? 8. What measure of the Holy Spirit comes on Cornelius and those with him? 9. What does this do for Peter and those with him?

D. To Jerusalem
(Study Acts 11:2-18)

Since they do not understand the divine workings at both Caesarea and Joppa that have been involved, Peter's colleagues at Jerusalem are both concerned and critical. The six brethren from Joppa accompany him to Jerusalem (v. 12). When they arrive, the apostles and brethren contend with Peter (v. 2): "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them" (v. 3). But upon his rehearsal of the whole matter (v. 4-17), they come to the same conclusion as

he. In fact they not only hold their peace but glorify God saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (v. 18).

Before leaving this section let us note several things. In v. 15 Peter has to go clear back to Pentecost (here called the "beginning") to find a parallel to the Holy Spirit baptism on Cornelius, another indication that the Holy Spirit baptism was not a common occurrence. We notice too that Peter is concerned about not resisting God (v. 17). The other apostles also are to be credited with letting God have His way. But not all who are religious will set aside their prejudices, their own ideas, their transitional religion, etc. when they learn the will of God. In fact the above are so strong and so precious to many people that they will not learn the will of God because of them. So they live in a state of resisting God whether they realize it or not. Some use Cornelius's case to argue that people receive the Holy Spirit before baptism. That is not what Peter himself preached (see Acts 2:38). Cornelius's case is a special case, and the Holy Spirit's coming on him is not the usual indwelling gift of the Spirit but a special sign to Peter and the other Jews that God is now willing to accept the Gentiles.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What do the other apostles think about Peter's having gone to Gentiles?* 2. *Who accompanies Peter to Jerusalem?* 3. *What do the apostles think after Peter rehearses everything to them?*

CHAPTER 7

Journeys of Barnabas and Saul

A. Barnabas's Trip to Antioch (Study Acts 11:19-24)

Now that the conversion of Saul and its early-years' aftermath are out of the way (Acts 9:1-31), and Peter's journey that led to the conversion of the first Gentiles is adequately reported (Acts 9:32--11:18), Acts now returns to the developments growing out of the dispersion of the Jerusalem church (see Acts 8:1-4).

We have followed Philip's work after the dispersion as he went to Samaria (Acts 8:5-13), next to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39), and then up the Mediterranean coast to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). We now learn that other fleeing disciples went "as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch," and as they went they preached the Word to "none but...Jews" (v. 19). "Phenice" is short for "Phoenicia", the country along the Mediterranean coast to the north and west of Palestine. Tyre is one of its famous cities, and Paul will later stop several days with "disciples" here (Acts 21:3-5). The church at Tyre is likely traceable to the efforts of these refugees. "Cyprus" is an island in the Mediterranean. Barnabas being from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), it is reasonable to think he helped bring the gospel to this island. "Antioch" is the great city much to the north of Palestine which under the Romans has replaced Damascus as capital of Syria. This is the city which will become so prominently connected with Christianity

that it will actually replace Jerusalem as the center of Christian influence. What we are being told is that after Stephen's death, not only does Christianity spread throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee (Acts 9: 31) but that it also is carried by various ones as far as Cyprus and Phoenicia and Antioch. If Stephen were permitted to look down from heaven upon the evangelistic activities growing out of his stoning, he would see he did not die in vain!

Since v. 19 says they preached to "Jews only", the "Grecians" mentioned in v. 20 as later receiving the gospel were not Grecian Jews like those in Acts 6: 1. Antioch is therefore the first congregation mentioned as having both Jews and Gentiles in its membership. It is men from Cyprus (the island) and from Cyrene (a city in northern Africa, the home of Simon of Cyrene who was made to carry the cross for Jesus--Mark 15:21) who first bring the gospel to the Greek population of Antioch. Word has evidently reached Cyprus and Cyrene of Peter's going to the Gentiles, for they would not be preaching to Greeks at Antioch. And the same report must have reached the church at Antioch, or it would not be receiving Gentiles into its membership. The "hand of the Lord" being with them (v. 21) indicates His blessing, thus accounting for the great number who believe and turn to Christ (God giving the increase--I Cor. 3:6).

As the Jerusalem church hears of the spread of the gospel to the north, it dispatches faithful Barnabas to visit the new congregations "as far as Antioch" (v. 22). We have no record of his stops before Antioch, but they are implied in the language of v. 22. How impressed he is and overwhelmed with joy as he sees the great congregation that has been assembled through preaching and conversion (v. 23)! His original name was Joses, but exhortation is so characteristic of him that the apostles have surnamed him "Barnabas", which means "son of consolation" (or, as other ver-

sions render it, "son of exhortation") (Acts 4:36). As he sees this great group of recent converts, he exhorts all of them to be faithful to Christ with "purpose of heart" (v. 23), an expression indicating they are not merely to be "joiners" and "go-alongers" but people who really know what they are doing and why. Christ bids all His followers to "abide" in Him (John 15:4), and unless we do we will never weather the storms nor be faithful to death (Rev. 2:10) necessary to being saved--the initial purpose of accepting Christ. And only as they remain faithful and become fruitful can the church at Antioch become the great, strong congregation Christ wills for each of His congregations to be. Just as Stephen was described as a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 6:5), so Barnabas is said to be "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith", to which has been added, "He was a good man" (v. 24). We are taught to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18), for it is by being filled with God's Spirit that we bear the fruit mentioned in Gal. 5:22-23, put to death the sinful deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13), and are transformed into the likeness of Jesus (II Cor. 3:18). The place of faith, both in Christian living and in our service to Christ, cannot be over-emphasized. A "good" man is one who does good to and for others, and this is the whole story of Barnabas's life as seen throughout Acts. The result of the work done by him and others at Antioch is that "much people" are won to the Lord (v. 24).

QUESTIONS: 1. How far out from Jerusalem and to whom do those fleeing in Acts 8:4 go in preaching the Word? 2. To what segment of people do they limit their preaching at this time? 3. What is the first congregation to have both Jews and Gentiles in it? 4. What was Barnabas's original name? 5. What

- does his apostles' given name of "Barnabas" mean?
 6. What does he exhort the Antioch members to do?
 7. How is Barnabas described?

B. Barnabas's Trip to Tarsus
 (Study Acts 11:25-29)

No doubt Barnabas and Saul are eager to get back to the full-flowered work at Antioch. For a whole year they pour themselves into furthering this good work, teaching much people. And for the first time since the church began God bestows the name "Christians" on the followers of Christ (v. 26). The place is Antioch, and the time is this "whole year" that Barnabas and Saul are with the Antioch congregation. Denominational scholars frequently say the name "Christians" is nothing but a nickname conferred by the enemies of the church in derision. But the Greek word translated "called" is "chrematizo", which is used 9 times in the New Testament. Here are the 9 times it is used (the words in *italics* represent "chrematizo" in the original: "*Being warned of God* in a dream that they should not return to Herod..." (Matt. 2:12); "*Being warned of God* in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee" (Matt. 2:22); "It was *revealed* unto him by the Holy Ghost..." (Luke 2:26); "Cornelius...*was warned from God* by an holy angel" (Acts 10:22); "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26); "If, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she *shall be called* an adulteress (Rom. 7:3); "As Moses *was admonished of God* when he was about to make the tabernacle..." (Heb. 8:5); "Noah, *being warned of God* of things not seen as yet..." (Heb. 11:7); "If they escaped not who refused him that *spake* on earth..." (Heb. 12:25). Now with the instances before you, judge for yourself. Why shouldn't

the translators have translated Acts 11:26, "The disciples *were divinely called* Christians first in Antioch"? The divine giving of a new name after the gospel has gone to the Gentiles was predicted in Isa. 62:2.

Why has God waited until now to confer this holy name? We are not told, but the followers of Christ are not altogether like Christ (Christian) until they grasp the universal scope of the church such as here in the first congregation composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

While Barnabas and Saul are in this great year with the Antioch church, some prophets from Jerusalem come, and one of them (Agabus--also mentioned later in Acts 21:10,11) foretells a great famine which the writer Luke says later took place while Claudius Caesar was emperor (v. 27,28) between the time of Agabus's prophecy and his writing Acts. Just as the Jerusalem members rallied to the needs of those among them (Acts 4:34,35), so does the same spirit of generosity prompt the Antioch brethren to send relief to their Christian brethren in Judea. Notice: (1) "Every man" joins in to send help--not just a few. (2) "According to his ability"--compare I Cor. 16:2 concerning a later benevolent offering taken. (3) "Determined"--they don't have to be talked in to doing it. Nothing is said about Barnabas and Saul exhorting and constraining them to do this. This makes for "cheerful" giving (compare II Cor. 9:7). (4) They not only intend to do it, but it says, "Which also they did." By way of contrast how many times people intend to do something but never get it done! With this famine to be worldwide (v. 28), why send help to Jerusalem? Gentile Christians feel a material obligation to their Jewish brethren for the gospel which they have received from them (Rom. 15:26, 27).

QUESTIONS: 1. *How long do Barnabas and Saul labor at this time with the Antioch church?* 2. *What*

name is first given to the disciples here at Antioch? 3. Who do denominational scholars say gives the disciples this name? 4. Present arguments for this being a divinely given name. 5. What prophet predicts a coming famine? 6. What do the Antioch brethren decide to do about it?

C. Barnabas and Saul's Trip to Jerusalem
(Study Acts 11:30--12:24)

Again these two men take to the road--to Jerusalem with Antioch's offering for the brethren in Judea.

Before mentioning in Acts 12:25 their return to Antioch, the inspired account drops in a non-related event that cannot be left out of the divine record, for it concerns the slaying of the first apostle and the near-killing of the apostle Peter. The material in Acts 12:1-24 is parenthetic--jumped in at this point because it takes place at Jerusalem about the time Barnabas and Saul are bringing the offering here and to defer recording it until Barnabas and Saul get back to Antioch would be to place it later than it occurred.

In history this Herod is actually Herod Agrippa I, father of the Agrippa before whom Paul later appears in Acts 26. He is much more favorable to the Jews than was his grandfather (the Herod ruling when Jesus was born). Since several men in prominent leadership in Jerusalem wear the name James (James the Lord's brother, the apostle James the son of Alphaeus, and this James), Luke tells us this James is the "brother of John" to distinguish him from the others. Poor James is killed by the sword (likely beheaded like John the Baptist) (v. 1). While he is the first apostle to die, his brother John will be the last of them to die. When Jesus asked these two brothers if they

could drink of the cup He would drink of and be baptized (overwhelmed with sufferings) with the baptism He would be baptized with (at His death), they said they could (Matt. 20:22), and James's martyr-death shows they really meant it.

The Jews are pleased with Herod's action, so he proceeds to imprison Peter for slaying after the Passover season ends (v. 3). The King James' word "Easter" in v. 4 is more properly "Passover" or "Unleavened Bread" as in other versions. A "quarternion" is composed of four soldiers, so the "four quarternions" assigned to guard Peter are sixteen soldiers! His hands are also chained (v. 7) for extreme precaution. Could it be that Herod's extra caution is due to the unsuccessful jailing of the apostles earlier (Acts 5:17-26)?

V. 5 tells of unceasing prayer by the church for Peter while v. 12 tells of a sizable group crowded into Mark's mother's home for prayer. It is a time of deepest concern for the church because the government is killing off its apostolic leaders.

The Passover is ended, and tomorrow morning Peter is scheduled to be brought out of prison to be killed. While Christians are praying, God sends an angel to deliver him from prison. He strikes the sleeping apostle on his side to arouse him and says, "Arise up quickly." Immediately the chains binding him to the two sleeping soldiers fall off without arousing them (v. 6,7). Peter is told to gird himself and put on his sandals and outer garment and follow him (v. 8). Peter is obedient even though he is still groggy with sleep and is under the illusion he is having a vision (v. 9). As the two proceed through the different wards of the prison, the great iron gate of the prison opens of its own accord, and they emerge outside the wall into the city street. Here the angel departs, leaving Peter alone (v. 10).

As Peter stands alone he gets fully awake and

realizes he is not dreaming but has indeed been divinely released from prison (v. 11). For a moment he stands considering just what to do and where to go at such an hour. He decides to go to the home of Mark and his mother Mary. He is surprised that anybody is still up at that late hour. Not knowing that a crowd is inside praying for him, he knocks at the door and calls. When the damsel Rhoda comes to the door and recognizes the voice to be Peter's, she is more excited to run and tell them Peter is at the door than to let him in. He continues knocking as the praying group stops praying to dispute her report. Nobody believes her, some affirming she is mentally off while others say it must be Peter's angel she saw, "The Jews held that everyone had his guardian angel, and they thought this angel had assumed Peter's voice" (B. W. Johnson). Rhoda returns to the door and admits Peter to the utter amazement of them all (v. 12-16). Their prayers may have been for Peter to be courageous in the face of death, and that his faith fail not. If, on the other hand, they have been praying for him to escape death somehow, then they have done more asking than believing--an all-to-common failure of praying people.

His standing in their presence touches off a noisy response. Wishing to share with them the good news of how he has been delivered, he seeks to get an opportunity to be heard by beckoning with his hand (v. 17) (compare Acts 13:16). He explains to them how he was released and then tells them to inform James (evidence would point to James the Lord's brother, one of the leading men in the Jerusalem church) and the other brethren of his release. While it is yet dark and he can flee to a better hiding place than Mary's house, he departs into "another place" (v. 17). Some even think "another place" may signify another place besides Jerusalem where he cannot be so easily located.

We can imagine the "no small stir among the soldiers" (v. 18) when daylight breaks with their prison-

er gone! They are aware of the Roman penalty for not keeping a prisoner committed to their care (death). And that is exactly what befalls them (v. 19). Herod is provoked over Peter's alluding him and his intentions concerning him. With his business in Judea accomplished, he returns to his capital city Caesarea (v. 19).

From the above events about James and Peter, the inspired historian Luke moves his attention to Caesarea, following Herod. Why follow him? To witness the divine judgment that will befall him for lifting up his hand against the church, for executing innocent guards, and for something very grave about to happen. Let's see.

We are not told what it is that causes Herod Agrippa I to be so "highly displeased" with those of Phoenicia's two famous cities (Tyre and Sidon) (v. 20). The marginal reading says he "bare an hostile mind, intending war." This may explain why they come desiring peace, for Palestine is a chief source of their imported food supply (v. 20). The Phoenician delegation must get by Herod's chamberlain in order to see the king personally (chamberlains kept the door to a king's private quarter--Esth. 6:2). Herod's trusted chamberlain is Blastus, and they accomplish their purpose of placating Herod's wrath through Blastus. Luke's account now moves us forward to Herod's sudden and miserable death which appears to be on the heels of the Phoenicians' coming.

His death is also reported by the Jewish historian Josephus, and the similarities between his account and the brief notice of it here in Acts make it interesting and profitable to draw details from both accounts. Josephus says it was in the great stadium at Caesarea while attending sports and games honoring the emperor Claudius Caesar while Acts does not tell us where it was. Acts tells of the oration Herod delivers--Josephus does not include it. Acts mentions the

"royal apparel" worn by Herod, while Josephus elaborates on it as follows: "He put on a garment wholly of silver, and of wonderful contexture, and early in the morning came into the theatre (place of shows and games), at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the first reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone after a surprising manner." Acts says the people shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man" (v. 22), while Josephus puts it like this: "The flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another, that he was a god; and they added, 'Be thou merciful unto us, for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a king, yet shall we henceforth own thee as a superior to mortal nature'." Acts says Herod "gave not God the glory", taking the honor of God to himself (v. 23), while Josephus says he did "neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery." Acts says, "The Lord smote him..., he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (v. 25), while Josephus says he was seized with violent pains in the bowels and died in great torture five days later. The terrible pain was caused by intestinal worms eating on him--something he nor anybody could do anything to alleviate. It was the same thing history says happened to two other wicked enemies of God's people: Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod the Great.

In the first part of this chapter Herod sets out to stop the church in order to please the Jews. By the end of the chapter he is dead and gone. In contrast to him v. 24 says, "But the word of God grew and multiplied," reminding us of I Pet. 1:24,25: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

QUESTIONS: 1. *What tragedy befalls the church about the time Barnabas and Saul are at Jerusalem with*

Antioch's offering? 2. Which Herod is this? 3. Does his act displease or please the Jews? 4. In whose house are many gathered for prayer? 5. Tell of Peter's release from prison. 6. Who answers Peter's knock at the door? 7. What happens to those assigned to guard Peter? 8. Blend Josephus's account of Herod's death with Luke's account in Acts.

*E. Barnabas and Saul's Return to Antioch
(Study Acts 12:25)*

Having safely and faithfully delivered the Antioch offering to the Jerusalem elders to have on hand when the Agabus-predicted famine arrives (see Acts 11:27,28), Barnabas and Saul go back to Antioch, taking John Mark with them. You will remember it was in his mother's house in Jerusalem where many were gathered praying for Peter (Acts 12:12). It is thought by many that Mark was the "young man" he tells about in his own account of the arrest of Jesus--the young man who fled out of the garden naked when they tried to lay hold on him too (Mark 14:51,52). His boyhood name was "John". We know him more by his later name "Mark", possibly because of this name being attached to the New Testament book he penned.

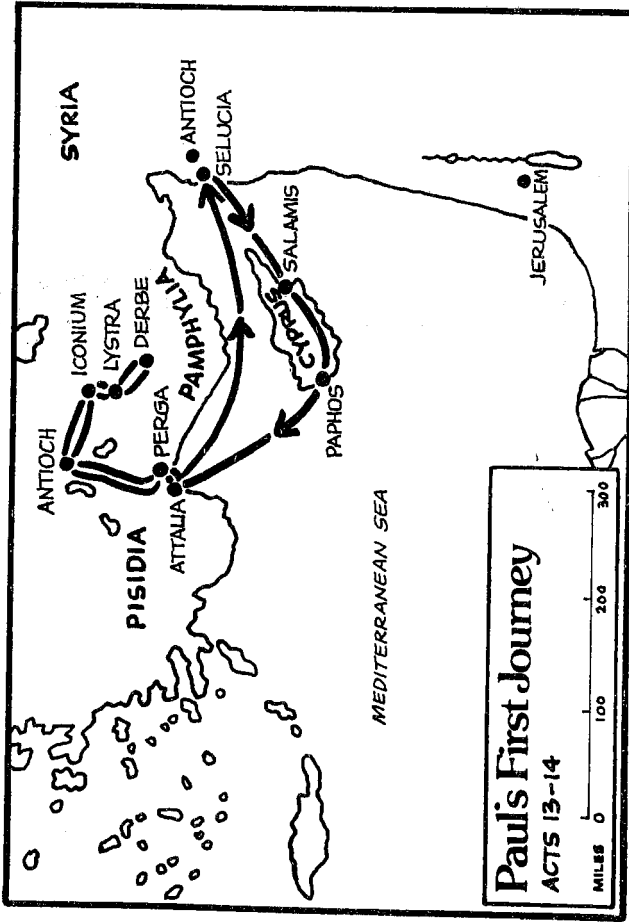
QUESTIONS: 1. *Who accompanies Barnabas and Saul back to Antioch?* 2. *What is his other name?*

PART THREE

PAUL'S THREE

EVANGELISTIC TOURS

THE GREAT BOOK OF ACTS



CHAPTER 8

The First Tour*A. Antioch of Syria*
(Study Acts 13:1-3)

Ever since the gospel was brought to Antioch, capital of Syria, a few miles inland from the Mediterranean and an estimated 200 miles north of the Galilean border, it has been unconsciously gearing up to become the next great center of Christianity following the original center at Jerusalem. A "great number" of that city believes and turns to the Lord before Barnabas comes (Acts 11:21), and after he comes "much people was added unto the Lord" (Acts 11:24). Then comes that whole year when he and Saul labor together here teaching "much people" (Acts 11:26).

As our new chapter opens, the Antioch work is blessed (equipped) with five "prophets and teachers" (some evidently inspired and some not). Barnabas's name heads the list while Saul's is listed last (probably because he is the latest to come to Antioch). Something is said about each of the other three. Simeon is evidently black, for he is called "Niger" which means "black". Lucius is from Cyrene. He was probably among those Cyrenians who first brought the gospel to Antioch (Acts 11:19,20). Mansen "had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch", ruler of Galilee who stole his brother's wife and had John the Baptist beheaded.

Though all five of these are great men and involved in the important work at Antioch, we know much about Barnabas and Saul but only the above scanty information about the other three. Why? It has been pointed out that Acts is primarily a book of expansion, the gospel spreading to new people and places, the church launching forth through leaders sent out

and leaders willing to go. Thus Acts follows the travel-labors of Barnabas and Saul, of Paul and Silas, etc. while not telling us of these others' continuing labors at Antioch. Again, the apostles stay in Jerusalem after the scattering of that congregation, but Acts follows Philip's labors rather than covering the apostles' reestablishment of the Jerusalem church. And finally, Peter is an elder in Jerusalem (I Pet. 5:1), but Acts does not report on his work as an elder in Jerusalem but of the times he was out of Jerusalem (Acts 8:14-25; Acts 9:32-43; Acts 10:9-48).

It is during the faithfulness of these five leaders' labors in Antioch and while they are fasting over some unrecorded matter that it is revealed through one or more of them that Barnabas and Saul are to be sent forth on a tour of taking the gospel to new places (v. 2). Antioch has received the gospel from others--now it is to share two of its great leaders so that others also may hear. All in Christ recognize that He is "Lord" (ruler, master), and that as head of the church (Col. 1:18) He can say to one, "Go," and to another, "Stay," and though blessed with the power of choice, Christians are pleased to let Christ decide the "moves" much like a checker-player moves his checkers from one spot on the board to another.

And how are they sent forth? By fasting, prayer, and having hands laid on them. Since Paul is already an apostle and therefore already has miracle-power, it is obvious that this is not to confer miracle-power on them. Furthermore, those laying on hands are not apostles, so they cannot be conferring such power (see notes on Acts 8:14ff). When people are embarking on special, important assignments for Christ, it is Biblical to have such a service to ask God's blessing on the work He is calling them to do (Acts 6:6; I Tim. 4:14). This is a solemn way of recommending such workers to have the grace of God upon them (notice Acts 14:26 as it-looks back on this service). From the

language in Acts 15:40 it appears that such a service will again be held when Paul and Silas launch forth on Paul's next tour.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What place will become the next great center of Christianity?* 2. *Name the 5 prophets and teachers now in Antioch?* 3. *Which 2 of them do we know the most about?* 4. *What single item of information do we know about each of the other 3?* 4. *What call do Barnabas and Saul receive?* 5. *What 3 things does the church do in sending them forth?*

B. Seleucia
(Study Acts 13:4)

The first leg of their westward trip is to the seaport town Seleucia, 16 miles west of Antioch. It was built in 300 B.C. (during the Inter-Testament period) by Seleucus Nicator to provide a seaport for Antioch, and it was named for its founder. From here they sail to the island of Cyprus, Barnabas's native island (Acts 4:36).

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where is Seleucia located?* 2. *When was it built?* 3. *For whom was it named?*

C. Salamis
(Study Acts 13:5)

Salamis is on the east side of Cyprus island and is the largest city. Jews are so numerous in Salamis that Barnabas and Saul preach in several synagogues. Why are there so many Jews here? Reece says it is because the Roman emperor Augustus has farmed out Cyprus's copper mines to Herod I, and many Jews have

come here to work in them. It is also not far off the Palestine mainland. We note that Mark, who has accompanied them to Antioch from Jerusalem (Acts 12:25), is with them on this tour.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where is Salamis located?* 2. *Where do Barnabas and Saul preach here?* 3. *Who is the third member of their party?* 4. *Why are there so many Jews here?*

D. Paphos
(Study Acts 13:6-12)

The two evangelists and Mark make their way across this 100-mile-long island to a city on its west side--Paphos (v. 6), the capital of the island and seat of Roman government. They may have preached in other places coming across the island, but in preaching to the major cities of Salamis and Paphos we begin to discern a general pattern observable later throughout the ministry of Paul to go to the centers of population and preach, expecting the gospel to spread out from those centers to the smaller places and area around (Ephesus and its surrounding area is an example--Acts 19:8-10).

At Paphos they are confronted with a renegade Jew who seeks to hinder their influencing Sergius Paulus, a government official, with the gospel. The King James speaks of him as a "deputy". The American Standard and other versions translate the word "proconsul". A coin has been found bearing the inscription, "Paulus the proconsul," which indicates the prominence of the man with whom Barnabas and Saul are in connection. He is said to be a "prudent" man, one desirous to hear what Christ's men are preaching (v. 7). The sorcerer Elymas is probably the proconsul's private "prophet" whom he

consults for divine answers. Being a sorcerer the Bible labels him a "false prophet", and since he is a "Jew" he is an apostate from the Jewish religion. He withstands Barnabas and Saul (opposes what they are saying) (v. 8) because he is a sorcerer, because he is an apostate, and possibly because he can foresee that his very job and position are in jeopardy should the proconsul side with Christianity.

Right in the middle of this event we learn that Saul also has another name ("Paul"), and from the moment he takes over this situation we know him by his Roman name "Paul" rather than his Hebrew name "Saul". It is probably because he will be working with more among the Roman world than with the Jewish that this change has occurred. Furthermore from this event his name usually precedes Barnabas's name so that what was "Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2) has now become "Paul and Barnabas" (Acts 13:46; Acts 15:2,22,35) but not always (see Acts 14:14 and Acts 15:12). However as we follow Luke's account of the rest of this trip, it is evident that Paul is the recognized leader from this point forward.

From what you know from his epistles about the apostle Paul, how would you like him to fasten his eyes on you as he does on the sorcerer (v. 9) in preparation for delivering the scathing rebuke found in the following verse? As can be seen from v. 9 he is especially directed of the Spirit to administer probably the most personal, most cutting rebuke found in all the Bible when he calls him not one undesirable name but three: "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness" (v. 10). Though these are not music to the sorcerer's ears, they are not erroneous. And with his question, "Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" he is demanding that Elymas cease his resistance to their teaching the proconsul (v. 10). And to be sure that he will, and that the

proconsul might know who is right in the confrontation, Paul pronounces a visible judgment on the sorcerer: "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season" (v. 11), and "immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." To use an expression current when your writer was a boy, "That took the starch out of him!"

The proconsul can see that the power of God is with Paul, who now can proceed teaching him. We assume that when Luke says he "believed" (v. 12), it means he became a Christian (as in Acts 4:4,32; Acts 5:14; Acts 14:1). The blindness that fell on Elymas is reminiscent of God's smiting Paul himself blind on the road to Damascus when he too had to have others lead him by the hand (Acts 9:8). This miracle is evidently performed to signify to the proconsul that these messengers are of God (compare Mark 16:20). His blindness having fulfilled its purpose, Elymas's sight will return to him in time, for he is to be blind "for a season"--not permanently.

QUESTIONS: 1. How far is it across Cyprus? 2. What city is on its west side? 3. Who is the proconsul? 4. Who is Elymas? 5. What wicked thing does Elymas do? 6. What does Paul say to him? 7. What happens to Elymas? 8. What is the final thing said about the proconsul? 9. What evidence do we have that it is here that Paul becomes the main leader of the party?

E. Perga
(Study Acts 13:13)

"So completely has Paul now become the central figure of Luke's narrative that Barnabas and John Mark are called simply 'his company'," McGarvey observes as they leave Cyprus and sail north to Perga on the main-

land of Asia. "Perga" is the city and "Pamphylia" the province. It seems we have hardly been told that "they had also John to their minister" (v. 5) that we are now told, "And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."

Howsom thinks it is because of the robbers lurking in the Pisidian highlands before them that prompts Mark to leave the party: "No population through the midst of which Paul ever traveled abounded more in those 'perils of robbers' of which he speaks, than the wild and lawless clans of the Pisidian highlands," referring to his "perils of robbers" in connection with his journeys to preach the gospel in II Cor. 11:26. Later there will be a sharp difference between him and Barnabas over Mark's case, and from the way Acts 15:38 words it ("Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work"), you might think Mark has merely flunked out and treated his work-responsibility very irresponsibly.

Why return to "Jerusalem"? That is his home (Acts 12:12). He is young and possibly unsettled. The novelty of going along on a big trip into new country has now worn off, and he can think of only one thing--go home! And so "go home" he does without regard to what effect his decision will have on the salvation of many souls. If Paul and Barnabas take the same attitude, the trip will terminate, and they will fail to do the work the Holy Spirit had for them to do when He said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:3). But they do not let this deter them, proceeding as planned.

QUESTIONS: 1. What is the relationship of "Perga" to "Pamphylia"? 2. What unexpected thing happens at Perga? 3. What are some explanations as to why this happens?

F. Antioch of Pisidia
(Study Acts 13:14-52)

Luke is sure to inform us that this is Antioch "of Pisidia" to distinguish it from Antioch "of Syria" where the tour began. This Antioch, like the one in Syria, was built by Seleucus Nicator and named in honor of his father Antiochus.

Again their first attempt to win converts to Christianity is the synagogue sabbath service. After the reading of the law and the prophets the synagogue ruler invites them to bring an exhortation to the people, likely not realizing they are anything other than Jewish in their religion (v. 14,15). What an opportunity for these who wish to tell men of Jesus!

Again we notice it is "Paul" who speaks (v. 16). We have in Acts sermons by Peter (Acts 2 and 3) and one by Stephen (Acts 7). Now we are to be treated to Paul's first recorded message! It is in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia.

After addressing them as "Men and brethren" and "Ye that fear God" (v. 16) Paul likewise begins a brief reference to certain events in their glorious Old Testament history: their Exodus from Egypt (v. 17); their 40 years in the wilderness (v. 18); the Conquest Period (v. 19); the Judges Period (v. 20); the 40-year reign of King Saul (v. 21); and the reign of King David (v. 22). The "about 450 years" in v. 19 needs to be fitted in with I Kings 6:1's statement that Solomon built his temple in the 480th year after the Exodus. V. 19 is talking about the length of time it took Israel to subdue the whole land God promised to Israel, a project that began under Moses and was not fully completed until the time of David, about 450 years of the 480 of I Kings 6:1 would be involved.

The "seven nations" whose land God gave to Israel were the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (Deut. 7:1). Saul's

reign having been "forty years" in length is another one of those New Testament bits of information not recorded in the Old Testament. V. 22 explains God's statement about David ("a man after mine own heart") as meaning one who would fulfill all His will in contrast to Saul who was rejected for his disobedience (I Sam. 15:1-26).

Paul points out to his Antioch of Pisidia audience that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Saviour, born of David's line (v. 23). Mention is made of the ministry of John the Baptist (v. 24) who had been sent to the nation of Israel ahead of time to prepare the way, to his statement that he was not the Christ, and to his reiteration that the Christ was coming after him (v. 25).

It is at this point that Paul shows he is getting to the heart of his message when he calls them to special attention in v. 26 by inserting, "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God," before proceeding with, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," and he gets right into the meat of his message showing that in their rulers' rejection and crucifying of Jesus they were unknowingly fulfilling the very thing their prophets had predicted concerning the Messiah (v. 27-29).

Paul goes on to inform his baffled audience that God raised Jesus from the dead and in so doing fulfilled His promises to the Hebrew patriarchs and several prophecies by or about David (v. 32-35) found in Psa. 2:7; Isa. 55:3; Psa. 16:10. Not to see corruption meant his body would not decay. His body decayed by being dead so many years, but Jesus' body did not (v. 36,37) being resurrected the third day.

Now that Paul is ready to draw some conclusions, he again calls their attention ("Men and brethren") (v. 38). He tells them the forgiveness of sins is preached through Jesus, something they can never receive through the law of Moses (v. 38,39). See John 1:

17 for the same teaching.

The prophet Habakkuk predicted that the calamities God would soon send on his people in Old Testament times would be so great His audience would not believe him when he tried to tell them (Hab. 1:5-11). In like manner the good news of the gospel is so great that many people hardly think such can be true (v. 40, 41). It is obvious that many of Paul's hearers are rejecting what he is saying. But the Gentiles want his message repeated to them the next sabbath (v. 42). We observe that what some don't want to hear is what others ask for. But don't conclude from these verses that it is only Gentiles who are interested in what the preachers have to say, for "many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas" (v. 43). Their speaking to them and persuading them to continue in the grace of God (v. 43) are between the sabbath past and the sabbath coming up.

Spirit mounts in the city as the next sabbath nears. Finally it comes, and v. 44 says, "The next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." This is what the Great Commission envisions--every creature hearing the gospel. Obviously there are believers made, but Luke's coverage pays particular attention to the gospel's opposers: "When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming" (v. 45). Envy begrudges others' success and more often than not manifests itself outwardly instead of remaining hidden within their hearts. The preachers are not cowed by their opposition nor do they doubt the rightness of their message. Boldly they announce they will be turning to the Gentiles who will be willing to hear rather than continuing to preach to people who are interested in their traditional religion instead of eternal life (v. 46), pointing out that their chief mission is to the Gentiles anyway (v. 47). As to be

expected this brings great joy to the Gentiles (v. 48).

V. 48's "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" sounds in contrast to the many other Bible passages where man's free will is taught (such as I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9; Rev. 22:17; John 1:11,12; Matt. 11:28; John 5:40; Matt. 23:37; etc.; etc.; etc.). The Greek word for "ordained" is *tetragmenai* and can be translated as a perfect passive participle where somebody else does the ordaining concerning a person's case (as it is translated in the King James and many other versions), or it can be translated as a perfect middle participle where one does the ordaining for himself. To translate it passively not only sets this verse against many Bible passages (as indicated above) but also sets it against the other verses right around it. In the verses just preceding it the Jews who are resisting what Paul and Barnabas are preaching are making their own decision concerning eternal life ("Seeing ye...judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"--v. 46). The Gentiles who believe are just the opposite: they "ordained themselves" (a middle participle translation) to eternal life. They are interested in salvation--they want to be saved, so they believe. There are several translations that seek to bring out this thought: "They believed--as many as had become disposed for age-abiding life" (Rotherham); "As many as were disposed for aionian Life, believed" (Emphatic Diaglott); and others. Since this is a possible translation of the Greek, either translation is allowable, it is a translator's choice, and since treating it as middle is in harmony with the immediate Scripture setting instead of clashing with it, and since it is in harmony with what the rest of the Bible says on this subject rather than in opposition to it, your writer's personal conclusion is that it should be translated as a perfect middle participle instead of a perfect passive participle.

While Paul and his party are in certain cities for some length of time, several times does Acts record the gospel spreading to surrounding territories (v. 49 and Acts 19:10).

It is in the midst of these evangelistic successes (particularly among Gentiles) that the Jews raise an opposition against Paul and Barnaba that results in their being banned from Antioch of Pisidia (v. 50). We notice this opposition works through "devout and honourable women", "devout" indicating they are religious women and "honourable" ("honorable estate," ASV) that they are prominent, and also through the "chief men of the city" (unconverted rulers). Realizing the general low estate of women in Bible days we might wonder why the Jews enlist "women" to get the apostles expelled. Robertson observes, "The prominence of women in public life here at Antioch is quite in accord with what we know of conditions in the cities of Asia Minor." "Thus women were appointed under the empire as magistrates, as presidents of the games, and even the Jews elected a woman as Archisynagogos, at least in one instance at Smyrna."

Writing years later Paul recalls these persecutions and afflictions received here at "Antioch" and the ones at "Iconium" and "Lystra" coming up (II Tim. 3:11). Our Acts coverage however does not give us even the slightest report of any of these persecutions except Paul's coming stoning at Lystra.

We can only admire and desire to emulate these dedicated men who can add this adversity at Antioch of Pisidia on the heels of Mark's turning back at Perga and still go on to the next place (Iconium) (v. 51) to preach the gospel. They do not doubt the rightness of their message even when there are those who don't believe it. They simply shake off the dust of their feet against them as Jesus instructed (Mark 6:11). It is good to note also that these developments in Antioch do not overturn the converts in their new-found faith,

for v. 52 says they are "filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

QUESTIONS: 1. Where is Paul's first sermon preached that has been preserved for us? 2. What are some of the Old Testament events mentioned in this sermon? 3. Name the 7 nations living in Palestine before Israel took their land. 4. Whose body did not see corruption--David's or Jesus'? 5. Who want to hear more the next sabbath? 6. How do the Jews react the next sabbath when so many assemble to hear the preaching? 7. To whom do the preachers announce they will go to preach? 8. Which way does your author prefer to translate the Greek "tetragmenai"--"as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" or "as many as ordained themselves to eternal life believed?" 9. Comment on the "devout" and "honorable" women who cause the preachers to be banned from the city?

G. Iconium
(Study Acts 14:1-6a)

The city's name "Iconium" attracts our attention for its root syllable "icon" is the Greek word for "image". Obviously it was the site of a famous image, but we are too many centuries this side of its ancient history to know what image. There are several legends that "Blaiklock" in his book, "Cities of the New Testament," calls "aetiological" myths (stories made up later to account for an existing fact, name, or institution). If such were true, we would have the explanation.

In spite of their declared statement at Antioch that they will "turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46), their love for their fellow-Jews in other places who have not as yet heard the gospel again possesses them

as at Iconium they go into the Jewish synagogue and preach (v. 1). And their faith is rewarded, for "a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (v. 1). The well-known verse, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), is well illustrated by this verse's statement that they so speak that many believe. People cannot believe the message of God until they have heard it (Rom. 10:14), giving high purpose to preaching and to being a messenger of Christ.

The "Greeks" in v. 1 are in some sense distinguished from the "Jews". Since they are in the synagogue, they are probably Greek proselytes to Judaism. They are distinguished from "Gentiles" in v. 2. If we have rightly concluded that Greeks here are proselytes, and the conclusion seems warranted, it shows that the word "Greek" or "Greeks" must be studied in each of its occurrences in Acts to determine its meaning in each instance. For additional meanings: we have seen that "Grecians" in Acts 6:1 were Grecian Jews (Jews born outside of and living outside of Palestine who talked Greek), and in Rom. 1:16 it appears to be synonymous with "Gentiles".

We are not told in what way the unbelieving Jews stir up the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas and those who believe (v. 2), but the evangelists do not run--they stay on for an extended time, speaking boldly for the Lord who grants them power to work many miracles (v. 3). McGarvey is observant when he comments on v. 3: "This is the only note of time given by Luke in the whole account of this tour."

The gospel makes enough inroads into Iconium that the city is divided--the result of not running, the result of boldly continuing to preach and work. Paul and Barnabas have been here long enough that when they learn of a plot to stone them (stoning was Jewish), they abruptly break off their Iconium labors, trusting that sufficient start has been made to carry on until

such a time as it will be safe to return, and they move on to evangelistic labors elsewhere.

QUESTIONS: 1. What does "icon" in "Iconium" mean? 2. Where do they first preach in Iconium? 3. How is faith brought about in people? 4. What are some of different usages of the word "Greeks" in the New Testament? 5. Do they have a short or an extended ministry here in Iconium? 6. What plot causes them to leave town?

H. Lystra

(Study Acts 14:6b-20a)

Lystra is 40 miles south of Iconium, far enough in those days to do another good work before word can reach Iconium of their whereabouts. V. 6 is a general report of the final places preached before beginning their return to Antioch of Syria. Lycaonia is the province, and Lystra and Derbe are two cities in it. We note that in addition to preaching in these cities, they preach in the region around them. With v. 8 Luke tells of excitement and danger attending their labors in Lystra.

It all centers around a certain cripple who has never walked (v. 8) who as a result of listening to Paul's message about the miracle-working Christ believes he too can be healed by these representatives of Christ. The man's faith is noted by Paul either by something he says or does or by God's revealing it to him, and here in this heathen city Paul is about to perform one of his most notable miracles. That the man may know he is to be healed and that all who see the man immediately well will connect the healing with Paul's preaching, he speaks to the man in a loud

voice, "Stand upright on thy feet" (v. 10). The miracle is obvious when the man leaps as well as walks!

In heathen mythology their gods were supposed to come down at times in the form of men, and Lystra being a worshiper of Jupiter (Zeus, chief of the gods) they immediately and excitedly draw the conclusion that the evangelists are actually gods in the form of men. They label Barnabas "Jupiter" and Paul "Mercury" (Hermes, speaker for the gods). You can imagine the excitement reigning as they change their attention from the healed man to these looked on as gods who healed him! Imagine, Jupiter and Mercury in their very streets! They must be worshiped, and here come the priest of Jupiter's temple and the people with oxen to sacrifice to them. "Garlands" are wreaths of flowers put on the horns of the oxen.

What their intentions are is obvious to Barnabas and Paul. Besides they have heard them say in their Lycaonian language, "The gods are come down to us." How can the apostles understand their strange language? This is what I Cor. 12:10 calls the "interpretation of tongues", the opposite of speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is speaking in a language the speaker does not know while interpretation of tongues is understanding a language the hearer does not know.

Barnabas and Saul rend their clothes in strong feeling, run in among the people to stop the idolatrous procession, and cry out, "Sirs, why do ye these things?" explaining they themselves are but men and are in town to preach to them to turn from such idolatry (here labeled 'vanities') to the "living God" (v. 14,15). Evangelizing among the Jews their message is that Jesus is the Son of God, but evangelizing among the Gentiles their message has to begin with who the true God is before stating anything about His Son whom He has sent to save the world. What do they tell the people of Lystra about the living God? That He is one

great God (not several gods) who made everything: the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them, and that He permitted all nations to follow their own ways throughout Old Testament times when God was dealing with the Jews alone, yet manifesting Himself all the time in the rain and fruitful seasons He sent on the earth (v. 15-17). It seems they are just getting underway with the preaching when the people are more eager than ever to sacrifice to them (v. 18).

But then come those enemies from the last two places the brethren have preached (Antioch and Iconium), and their lies will change the preachers from gods to devils in the eyes of the people of Lystra, for in the same city where they are about to be worshiped Paul is stoned and left for dead (v. 19).

It is interesting to note that about fourteen years later when Paul is writing II Cor. 12, he writes of an experience he had fourteen years earlier when he was "caught up to the third heaven" (II Cor. 12:3) ("paradise," v. 4) and heard things he was not permitted to come back to earth and tell. The experience was divinely planned completely for Paul's own blessing. It is commonly thought that the "third heaven" experience takes place while the brethren in Acts 9:20 are standing around his motionless body in Lystra. When he suddenly rises in their midst and departs the next day with Barnabas to Derbe, they are not sure whether he has indeed risen from the dead or has been miraculously healed and brought out of a coma. And II Cor. 12 does not shed any conclusive light on the matter, for Paul himself wrote that he did not know whether he was in the body (unconscious but alive) or whether out of the body (dead) (II Cor. 12:2,3). And if Paul didn't know, it seems sure that we have no certain way of knowing either.

- QUESTIONS: 1. *How far is Lystra from Iconium?*
2. *What notable miracle does Paul perform in Lystra?*

3. What mythological gods do the townspeople take Paul and Barnabas to be? 4. What are the people about to do that would be wrong? 5. What does Paul say to them about it? 5. Enemies from what 2 places come to Lystra? 6. What happens to Paul as a result? 7. In writing II Cor. years later what does Paul say about this event?

I. Derbe

(Study Acts 14:20b)

This is the terminus of this First Evangelistic Tour--the final place they will go with the message. And the briefest report is given of their labors here: they do evidently stay here for sometime and teach "many" before returning to Antioch where the tour began.

QUESTIONS: 1. From what city do they begin their return trip to Antioch? 2. What is said of their labors in this place?

J. Their Return Trip to Antioch in Syria

(Study Acts 14:21-26)

These verses include the places where they stop on their return: Lystra, Iconium, Antioch of Pisidia, Perga in Pamphylia, and Attalia. This is a retracing their trip out place by place. Evidently they do not return by way of the isle of Cyprus. Attalia is a new name, merely being the seaport where they board ship for Antioch.

Why are they going back to the places where Paul was stoned (Lystra) and from which they had to flee for their very lives (Iconium and Antioch)? First to

confirm the disciples through repreaching the things that had won them to Christ, to exhort them to continue in the Christian life, and to help them realize it is through much tribulation that Christians will enter the kingdom of God (v. 22).

This "confirming" is not a ceremony but is done through preaching and teaching (see Acts 15:32,41 for similar uses of the word). In the religious world "Confirmation" is a ceremony coming at the end of a period of catechism for those who were sprinkled as infants but now wish to "confirm" their parents' decision to have them sprinkled. Time-out to remark that the whole system is built on the false premise that man is born a sinner (the doctrine of "Original Sin"). Since man is supposedly born a sinner, they say he needs to be baptized immediately even though too young to understand--hence, infant baptism so-called. And then when one is old enough to be personally responsible for accepting or rejecting the sprinkling performed by the decision of his parents, he can then be "confirmed". But the use of the word "confirmed" in Acts does not point to a ceremony.

Another purpose for returning to these young congregations is to ordain elders for each place (v. 23). Just as each Jewish town or city has its "elders" (the ones in charge of the business of the town), so is each congregation given elders to oversee it. An elder is called a "bishop" in Tit. 1:7 (compare I Tim. 3:1, 2). The word "bishop" is translated from the Greek word "episcopos" which means "overseer". Elders are to take the oversight (I Pet. 5:2), watching over the souls entrusted to their shepherd-care (Heb. 13:17). I Tim. 5:17 aptly speaks of elders ruling well. Paul and Barnabas better understand the kind of men needed to fulfill the role of shepherds than the people themselves", thus the American Standard properly translates, "They (Paul and Barnabas)...appointed for them (dative case in Greek signifying indirect object) elders in every church" (v. 23). For a fuller treatment

of the appointment of elders, see your author's work, "Editorials on the Eldership." "Fasting" along with their praying shows the solemnity of their commending them to the Lord for His blessings on their lives and labors as elders (v. 23).

Now that suitable leadership has been provided for the congregations, they continue their homeward journey, stopping at Perga to preach, the place where John Mark deserted them on their journey out (Acts 13:13), catching a ship at the seaport Attalia for their Antioch destination.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What route do they follow in returning to Antioch?* 2. *What do they do on their return trip?* 3. *Why does the word "confirm" here not uphold the denominational doctrine of "Confirmation"?* 4. *How many "elders" are appointed by them?* 5. *What is another New Testament designation of "elders"?*

K. Back at Antioch
(Study Acts 14:26-28)

Antioch is said to be the place where "they had been recommended to the grace of God" by the fasting and prayers and laying on of hands (Acts 13:3) "for the work which they fulfilled", "the work" whereunto the Holy Spirit had called them (see Acts 13:3). The Antioch congregation is eager to hear how God has used them to open the door of faith to many Gentiles (v. 27). As evangelists sent forth from that congregation they are giving a report of the work for which they were sent forth. After all the dangers and difficulties they have experienced on the trip, they are glad to have time to labor again with the Antioch congregation (v. 28).

QUESTIONS: 1. *Is the Antioch congregation eager to*

learn of the success of their labors? 2. After giving their report to the congregation, do they leave immediately or labor for sometime with the congregation?

L. *A Problem Arises between the First and Second Tours*
(Study Acts 15:1-35)

The devil will not long leave alone a work that is prospering for God. He makes his appearance in Antioch at this time in certain men who come from Judea and say that except the Gentile Christians be circumcised, they cannot be saved (v. 1). Who are these men? According to v. 5 they are Pharisees who have accepted Christ and according to Acts 21:20 are representatives of several thousand Jews of Jerusalem who believe in Jesus but are zealous for the law at the same time. Paul labels them "false brethren" in Gal. 2:4. Though being a decided element in the Jerusalem church in Acts 21, they will eventually become an isolated group known in Church History as the Ebionites.

New Testament evangelism finds it easier to convince some people that Jesus is the Christ, the divine Son of God, than to convince them that all authority resides in Him. The Ebionites were Jews who wished to keep their former law (Law of Moses) also. Another group in the church of the early centuries (the Greek Gnostics) wanted to retain some of their Greek philosophical ideas to go along with the gospel. And then the Manicheans sought to blend Persian and Christian thought.

Paul by inspiration taught there is "one Lord" and "one faith", that Lord being Jesus Christ, "the head of the church" who in all things has the preeminence (Eph. 4:5 and Col. 1:18). He affirmed that in Christ are "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3) so that we are "complete in him" (Col. 2:

10). He warned his readers about being beguiled by enticing words (Col. 2:4) and said, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

From the above we can well understand Paul and Barnabas arising in Antioch and having no small disputation with these Judean teachers (v. 2). The great Antioch church is torn by this question. McGarvey says, "We have to think of a congregation in our own day, distracted by an earnest controversy between its teachers over a vital question of doctrine, in order to realize the distress and confusion which must have racked the minds of the brethren in Antioch while this controversy was in progress."

Well might Paul, being an apostle, refuse to go up to Jerusalem in order to ascertain the mind of the Lord in the matter. It was necessary for Him to reveal to Paul that he should go up, for in Gal. 2:2 he writes that "by revelation" he went up to Jerusalem when the Antioch brethren wished him to go.

It is appropriate to remark that even today when any problem or question arises in the church, the matter should be referred to Christ's apostles for settlement. We do this by consulting the "apostles' doctrine" in the New Testament in which the church is to continue (Acts 2:42). If they speak on any question, that should settle the matter. If it is a question on which they do not speak, then it must be considered a subject without a Biblical treatment and therefore one over which brethren should not claim, "I'm right...you are wrong:" or, "This is true...that is false." Adherence to what we have just said will save the church from endless controversy and division.

Disregarding it will bring nothing but trouble and disaster.

"Being brought on their way by the church" (v. 3), an expression found in Paul's writings in Rom. 15:

24; I Cor. 16:6; and II Cor. 1:16, can mean they are provided with travel companions as in Acts 20:38 where "accompanied" comes from the same Greek word as "brought" in this verse, or it can mean they are given provisions along the way. The latter, in this writer's judgment, is the more likely meaning, especially in view of two other instances of the same Greek word. In III John 5-8 John writes, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." "Bring forward" is the same Greek word, and it is surrounded with indication of Gaius's hospitality. In Tit. 3:13 Titus is told to "bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently"--why? "that nothing be wanting unto them." Those who are sent out by the church and who do the work of the church should be thus provided for, for Paul writes, "Who goeth at warfare any time at his own charges?" (I Cor. 9:7).

Their journey to Jerusalem takes them south from Antioch through Phenice (Phoenicia) probably to Ptolemais and then inland by way of the Esdraelon Plain and then south through Samaria. (For an account of the evangelization of Phenice and Samaria, see Acts 11:19 and Acts 8:5-25.) The Jewish brethren in Phenice and the Samaritan brethren both rejoice to hear the account of conversions among Gentiles (v. 3).

Upon arrival it is noteworthy that they are "received" of the church as well as of the "apostles and elders" unto whom they have been sent by Antioch (see v. 2). In the report of their work among Gentiles they are careful to tell them of things that "God" has done through them. Certain of the Pharisees rise to dispute this fact (v. 5). Since this is just an "arrival get-

together", they do not continue with a discussion. Before the big meeting of v. 6, when "the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter", Gal. 2:2 shows Paul meets with the apostles James, Peter (Cephas), and John to be sure they are all standing firm on the question. If the Jerusalem apostles side with the opposition, it will have a nullifying effect on the work of Paul and Barnabas ("lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain," Gal. 2:2). But they are all in agreement not only in what they are teaching but in their carrying it out: Titus, a Greek whom they have evidently purposely brought along, is not compelled to be circumcised (Gal. 2:1,3), and they find the Jerusalem apostles to be "pillars", who give Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship to continue their labors with the heathen while they continue theirs among the Jews (Gal. 2:9). They are now ready to meet in the public meeting to settle the matter.

V. 7 passes over many words and strong feelings when it puts into one dependent clause this non-detailed report: "When there had been much disputing." Luke now proceeds with the side that really matters-- what the apostles say. It seems wise that Peter should take the floor first, reminding them that God sent him to the Gentiles, putting "no difference between us (the Jews) and them (the Gentiles), purifying their hearts by faith," neither requiring them to be circumcised nor observe the law of Moses (v. 7-9). When he pleads for them not "to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (v. 10), and when he says, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (v. 11), "all the multitude kept silence" (v. 12). Thus the stage is set for Barnabas and Saul to speak. Barnabas is listed first, for he is likely more accepted in Jerusalem because of his past connections in the Jerusalem church than Saul who is their chief target of criticism. They declare

"what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them" on their great tour (v. 12). This being unanswerable the critics continue to hold their peace (v. 13), for they can see which way the wind is blowing with the apostles as a united group. Since James (the Lord's brother--the other James is dead, Acts 12:1) is the most acceptable to those in opposition, it seems intentional that he has been chosen to conclude the meeting (v. 13). Let us notice his conclusion and proposal.

When Amos and other Jewish prophets wrote of the future, they spoke of the Gentiles being brought in (Amos 9:11,12). James finds what Peter did in going to the Gentiles completely in harmony with their predictions (v. 14-18). His inspired judgment, "that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God" (v. 19), declares that Gentiles do not have to be circumcised nor keep the law of Moses to be Christians. But since for centuries the Gentiles have had abominable practices of idols, fornication, and eating things strangled and blood (practices contrary to the patriarchal code even before there was a law of Moses, practices into which Gentile weakness for such will make it easy for them to revert), James proposes they send a special epistle to the Gentiles warning them against these named practices (v. 19,20). The Jews with their law read every sabbath for generations do not need to be told specially to abstain from the above (v. 21), but the Gentiles without a written revelation have drifted far from the original oral understanding of God's will and need to be specially told of the wrongness of such practices.

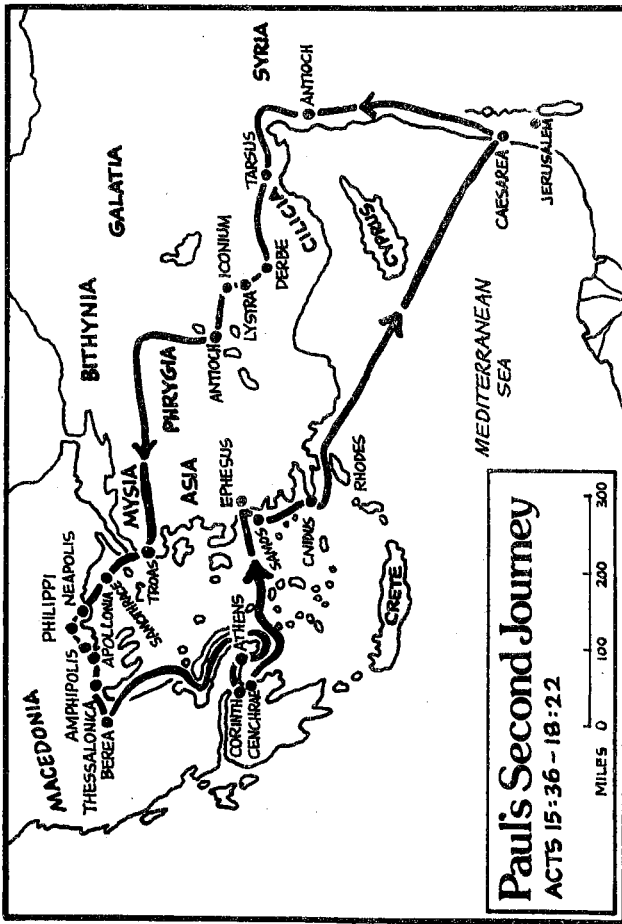
Obviously all the inspired apostles are agreeable to James's words, and so the matter is settled (v. 22). In addition to Barnabas and Saul's taking back an oral report of the decision along with the written warning to the Gentile Christians, they decide to send with them two well known Jerusalem men (Judas and Si-

las) to verify their report (v. 22,27). Judas and Silas are provided with a letter of introduction from which we learn they are men who have "hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 26). Upon the group's arrival in Antioch they gather the church together and give their report (v. 30). The Antioch church is relieved to know that its Gentile members are right, that it has been right in receiving them without circumcision, and that the matter is now settled (v. 31).

Judas and Silas do not immediately return to Jerusalem, but being prophets they stay on to exhort and further confirm the Antioch brethren (v. 32). When the time comes for them to go back, Silas decides to remain at Antioch (v. 33,34). So with Silas, Paul, Barnabas, and several others teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord in Antioch (v. 35), it is a great time of strengthening for the saints.

QUESTIONS: 1. What are some of the Judean Jews saying about the Gentile converts? 2. What does Paul label these Jews? 3. What did the Ebionites want to go by as well as the gospel? 4. What ideas did the Gnostics later want to retain? 5. What did the Manicheans later seek to blend with the gospel? 6. Do Paul and Barnabas combat this Judean teaching? 7. What does the Antioch church want Paul and Barnabas to do? 8. What causes us to know that God confirms the fact that they should go? 9. To whom should doctrinal matters be referred today for settlement? 10. Suppose they have nothing to say on the subject being disputed? 11. What does "being brought on their way by the church" mean? 12. Why do Paul and Barnabas meet with the other apostles before going into the big meeting? 13. Which apostle speaks first at the circumcision council? 14. Who follows him? 15. Which apostle summarizes the meeting and proposes the con-

clusion? 16. What 4 practices do they especially warn the Gentiles about? 17. Who accompany Paul and Barnabas and the letter back to Antioch? 18. Why do these 2 men stay on in Antioch for awhile? 19. Which stays in Antioch when the other returns to Jerusalem?



CHAPTER 9

The Second Tour*A. Antioch of Syria*
(Study Acts 15:36-40)

Time goes by, conditions in Antioch no longer require their staying longer, and Paul wonders how the churches established on the First Tour are getting along. He proposes to Barnabas they make another tour of them. Barnabas is agreeable, but a contention arises between them over whether to take John Mark who is obviously back at Antioch. (Did he come back with them from Jerusalem, or has he been in Antioch for sometime?) Barnabas, a relative of Mark (Col. 4:10), is set on taking him with them (v. 37), but Paul is just as set not to take him on the basis that he once deserted them and the Lord's work (v. 38). Even though they are both inspired men, it is obvious that Inspiration that gives them their message does not destroy the role of personal decision in matters such as is now before them.

Neither one finds it within himself to budge. Barnabas has always been big hearted, and Paul has always been rigid. Both are acting according to the dominant elements in their characters. So being unable to agree on the matter they part ways, Barnabas taking Mark and going to his native Cyprus (Acts 4:36), the first area covered by the First Tour and the part of the tour when Mark was still with them. Paul finds a replacement partner in Silas and goes forth with the Antioch brethren's blessing (v. 40). It appears that Antioch's sympathies are more with Paul than Barnabas.

But regardless of who is right or wrong we rejoice over two facts: (1) Mark evidently takes advantage of the opportunity to do better, for he becomes great enough to be chosen later to pen the Gospel account that bears his name, Paul accepts him (Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11), and he holds no ill-will against Paul, understanding why Paul acted toward him as he did; and (2) the rift between Paul and Barnabas is not permanent, for in Paul's later writings he speaks of Barnabas and himself most companionately (I Cor. 9:6). Cleavages between sincere brethren do not have to be permanent. God can help them come together again after time has passed during which they have busied themselves in God's work. Praise the holy name of God for this assurance!

QUESTIONS: 1. *What proposal does Paul make to Barnabas?* 2. *Over whom do they have a disagreement?* 3. *Why would Barnabas want to take him along?* 4. *Why does Paul think it best not to take him?* 5. *How serious is their disagreement?* 6. *What 2 new parties are formed?* 7. *How good a man does Mark later turn out to be?* 8. *How do we know Paul and Barnabas have no permanent hard feelings over this matter?*

B. Syria and Cilicia
(Study Acts 15:41)

Antioch is in "Syria", and "Cilicia" is Paul's native province where Tarsus is located. Neither Barnabas nor Paul want to make their difference something to carry to the churches, so just as Barnabas goes to one group Paul and Silas take the land-route north and then west through the two countries mentioned. No mention was made on the First Tour of any work done in

Cilicia, but you will recall when the apostles rushed Paul out of Jerusalem in Acts 9:29,30, they sent him to Tarsus. Paul refers to this himself in Gal. 1:2ff where he mentions preaching in Cilicia. Thus there are "churches" to confirm on this tour (v. 41) in Cilicia as well as in Syria.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where do Paul and Silas go instead of paralleling Barnabas and Mark's trip to Cyprus?*
2. *What are Paul and Silas said to be doing among the congregations where they go?*

C. Derbe and Lystra
(Study Acts 16:1-3)

Only one item is mentioned in connection with their stop in Derbe and Lystra, that of securing young Timothy of Lystra as an addition to their evangelistic party. You will remember that on the First Tour after Paul and Barnabas had suffered at Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium, they came to Lystra where at first they were taken for gods but later Paul was stoned. Since Timothy seems to be familiar with these First Tour sufferings (see II Tim. 3:10,11), likely he as well as his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois (II Tim. 1:5) became Christians on Paul's first visit. If so, the interval between Paul's Lystra visits has been a great period of spiritual development for Timothy, who is well reported not only in his local area of Lystra and Derbe but also at Iconium some distance away. Future leaders are to be "faithful" men even before being considered for leadership (II Tim. 2:2).

So impressed is Paul with Timothy that he desires to take him with him (v. 3), and as long as Paul will live Timothy will serve as a son with him in the gos-

pel (Phil. 2:22). Paul will speak of him in the most laudatory way (Phil. 2:19,20). We note too that Timothy becomes the first person added to Paul's party from any of the places where he has gone preaching.

You might wonder why Paul speaks so highly of Timothy's mother in II Tim. 1:5 when she is married to a "Greek" (v. 1). But remember in the patriarchal culture a girl did not choose whom she would marry. Her marriage was worked out for her by her father. This accounts for Timothy's not being circumcised. Since this will be a stumblingblock to evangelizing among the Jews, Paul circumcises him (v. 3) in harmony with his statement in I Cor. 9:20. The case of Titus the Greek is totally different, which explains why Paul did not circumcise him (Gal. 2:3).

It is probably at this time that the hands of the "presbytery" (eldership) are laid on Timothy (I Tim. 4:14), separating him to the work of the gospel. At some time Paul himself lays his hands on Timothy also (II Tim. 1:6), which confers inspiration and miraculous power on him. It may be now--or possibly later after Paul sees how Timothy does.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What one event is recorded in conjunction with their stop at Derbe and Lystra?* 2. *How is Timothy described?* 3. *Why does Paul speak so highly of Timothy's mother when she is married to a Greek?* 4. *Why does Paul circumcise Timothy?*

D. A Parenthetical Report
(Study Acts 16:4,5)

One of the things done on this Second Tour is deliver the Jerusalem circumcision decree wherever they go. We note that they deliver the decrees to the churches to "keep"--not to decide on. The apostles and

elders issue the inspired decision, so the deciding is already done. In Christianity we accept the teachings of the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). This is God's plan, and it is the only way questions can be settled and the church have peace. And v. 5 shows the churches where Paul and Silas go accepting the apostolic decision and becoming established in the faith. And all this results in daily additions to the congregations (v. 5).

QUESTIONS: 1. *What are they carrying with them and delivering to the congregations on this tour?* 2. *What results does this bring?*

E. On to Troas
(Study Acts 16:6-10)

From here on the party presses into new country not covered by the First Tour. The Second Tour is so much more extensive in territory covered than the First. You must look at the map of Paul's travels to see what Luke is recording in these verses. Going north and west from Lystra they go through both Phrygia and Galatia, and though our text does not record their work it seems right to assume they preach throughout Phrygia and Galatia. When they come to the point where the region of Mysia begins, they intend to turn to the left into the province of Asia, but the Holy Spirit reveals to them not to, nor does He allow them to turn to the right into Bithynia. "Something's different," Paul has a right to think, for we do not read of this happening before. God has something great in mind for them instead of continuing their work in these parts. He does not forbid their work in Mysia, so they proceed to the seaport city of Troas (the ancient Troy of history--remember the fall of Troy via the "wooden horse" full of soldiers?). They might well

wonder what God has in store for them. In time He will reveal it.

While in Troas they evidently convert a physician named Luke (Col. 4:14) who is so thrilled with Christianity that he drops his doctoring profession and joins Paul's party also, for no commentator overlooks the fact that when Paul's party departs from Troas the Acts account quits talking about the party as "they" and begins talking about it as "we" (note Acts 16:10, 11,12,13). The author Luke is along! Thus on this tour Paul has picked up two great associates in Timothy and Luke, men who will be with him much of the time until his death. Luke was with him even at the end (II Tim. 4:11).

One night Paul is given a vision. Macedonia (northern Greece) is over in Europe across the Aegean Sea from Troas. In the vision a man of Macedonia beckons Paul to "come over into Macedonia and help us" (v. 9). This is commonly referred to as the "Macedonian Call". Even though this will mean leaving Asia and entering Europe, the party is eager to go because the Lord is especially directing them there (v. 10).

QUESTIONS: 1. Which tour was the more extensive-- the First or the Second? 2. Before they arrive at Troas, what is probably baffling to the party? 3. What was Troas called in ancient history? 4. Who joins the party in Troas? 5. What has been his occupation? 6. What famous vision does God give Paul here? 7. Are they obedient to God's call?

F. Over to Philippi
(Study Acts 16:11-40)

Their voyage takes them from Troas to the island Samothracia, and another day of sailing brings them to the seaport Neapolis on the European mainland. Their

destination is the larger city Philippi, ten miles inland.

The Jewish element of the city is practically non-existent. There is no synagogue in which to preach, but on the sabbath they go down to the river where the King James says, "Prayer was wont (accustomed) to be made," while the American Standard and many other versions say, "Where we supposed there was a place of prayer." The difference is not in translating but in what the original Greek word was. In both instances the verb stem is the same, but those Greek copies followed by the King James have a third person singular subject for this verb while the other versions follow those copies where a first person plural subject is used. This slight difference in the sentence's subject also affects the choice of meanings for the very stem itself. If the King James is right, Paul and his party learn of this sabbath riverside prayer meeting and go out to teach the Jewish women who meet because there is no synagogue to attend. If the other versions are correct, Paul supposes there might be such a prayer meeting from a traditional Jewish practice going back to the Jews in Babylonian Captivity who congregated along rivers when there was no synagogue in which to meet (see Psa. 137:1,2).

Paul's European labors begin on a very small scale, but Zech. 4:10 says not to despise (belittle) the day of small things. One who takes a small opportunity when that is the only known opportunity will likely be given larger opportunities.

Let us look at this woman Lydia. She is from "Thyatira" in Asia (one of the seven-churches-of-Asia cities--Rev. 1:11). She is a "seller of purple". Purple is the royal color in Lydia's day because its scarcity makes it costly and obtainable only by the very rich. Their lone source of purple dye is a rare shell-fish (*Murex Purpurarius*) along the coast of Tyre, each shell-fish yielding only one drop. So Ly-

dia is a woman of means.

Though wealthy she is a very religious woman, very conscientious. Though away from her native setting and in a city where there is no synagogue, she carefully observes the sabbath even though her heathen competitors will proceed with their business as usual.

As she listens to Paul's message, it makes sense to her. The Lord uses the message to open her heart so that she and her household are obedient to the faith (v. 14,15). In her case her "household" is likely herself and her maidens (servants).

We do not know where the party of four (Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke) are staying while in Philippi, but it is probably mediocre at best. Her wealth enables her to invite them to make her home their home while in Philippi. Evidently they protest that such is an unreasonable imposition on her, for she "constrained" them. She counts it a privilege to show hospitality to these who have brought the gospel to her. She does not look down on them as objects of charity. She doesn't say, "Since you have no other place to go, come to my house;" but, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house" (v. 15)--not just for a meal but to "abide" (stay).

It appears from v. 18's "This she did many days" that the sabbath-day prayer get-together has become a daily prayer meeting (v. 16). A soothsaying girl possessed of a demon follows them as they go to prayer, and she tells the truth when she says, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation (v. 16,17). Demons also spoke the truth when crying out concerning Jesus (Mark 1:23,24), but Jesus cast them out and quieted them (Mark 1:25, 34) even as Paul does to this soothsaying girl (v. 18). Just as Jesus was displeased with demons giving Him publicity, so Paul is "grieved" with the same (v. 18). In print we have what the demons say, but print

does not convey the tone nor the attitude with which they speak. Paul considers this poor advertising much like a known prostitute following an evangelistic party through the city streets saying, "These be the men of the most high God who are preaching the gospel at 38th and Adams Street every night."

Possibly not all who undertake to tell fortunes are demon-possessed, but this young woman surely has been, and now that the demon is gone out of her she is no longer able to perform as she was accustomed to do. Her money-making masters are enraged and haul Paul and Silas into court and wildly charge them before the city's magistrates (v. 19-21). The masters get the multitude to join them in crying out against the preachers. Poor Paul and Silas have many stripes laid across their bare backs, and this does not fulfill their punishment--they are put into prison, and the jailer is severely charged to keep them safely (v. 22, 23). What kind of criminals are these! The jailer takes no chances on their escape--he puts them into the innermost prison and secures their feet in stocks (v. 24).

Here we are about to see a demonstration of the victory Christianity brings into people's lives. The men do not complain of their hardships and mistreatment. They could have been killed. At midnight they sing praises to God and pray, and the other prisoners take note (v. 25). God is pleased with them and honors them by sending an earthquake that shakes the prison to its very foundation. In the process the prison doors are thrown open and each prisoner's bands loosed (v. 26). The quake also wakes the jailer, who seeing the prison doors open and supposing the prisoners to be gone draws his sword to take his life, realizing the fate awaiting him if the prisoners are gone (v. 27). But a voice from the dark innermost prison calls out, "Do thyself no harm for we are all here" (v. 28). He recognizes this as the voice of one of the preach-

ers. He calls for a light, goes in where they are, falls down before them begging, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (v. 30). For a heathen who has not sat in even one church service, he couldn't word his question any better than he has, for "salvation" is what everyone needs, it is that which Paul and Silas are preaching, there are things a person "must do" to be saved, and these are things which everyone must do.

When Paul tells him to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" which will bring the salvation he is inquiring about, he is not eliminating either repentance or baptism which he has been preaching throughout the book of Acts. Numerous times does the Bible connect a single matter with salvation: "love" in Jas. 1:12, "obedience" in Heb. 5:9, "baptism" in I Pet. 3:21, "faith" here, etc. To one like the jailer who as yet has heard no preaching, it is understandable why Paul summarizes and simplifies the answer in "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ". The jailer takes them to his house, and though it is past midnight he has all his household listen as Paul and Silas bring their message to them (v. 32). Convinced, he washes their bloody backs and is baptized, he and all his, straightway (v. 33). Oh, how happy he and his household are now that they believe in the true God and are Christians (v. 34)! And Paul and Silas are treated to some good food in his house (v. 34).

Paul and Silas return to the jail, probably voluntarily to safeguard the jailer from being executed for their absence. In the meantime the rulers have decided to release them anyway (v. 35,36), but Paul tells their messenger, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily: but let them come themselves and fetch us out" (v. 37). Roman citizens are not to be scourged according to a law enacted in 300 B.C. Learning that they have beaten Roman citizens when imprisoning them the night be-

fore puts fear into these Philippian authorities. Why Paul didn't tell them this earlier and save themselves such mistreatment as he did later (Acts 22:22-29) we are not told. The authorities are glad to see them depart from their city, but before leaving the city they report back to Lydia and tell those at her house how they are released and are proceeding to other places to preach.

This report of Lydia's conversion is the only reference to her in the New Testament, and though the account of her is short it does indicate that she possesses many great qualities.

Before bidding her goodbye let us observe that hers is one of four cases of household conversion either narrated or mentioned in the New Testament: Cornelius (Acts 10:44,48), Lydia (Acts 16:14,15), the jailer (Acts 16:33), and Stephanas (I Cor. 1:16). Those who believe in infant baptism sometimes use these household baptisms as proof of infant baptism in the Bible. But many households do not have infants in them--actually more households don't than do. No mention of infants is found in any of the above accounts. Furthermore the New Testament contains information on most if not all of these cases to the effect that they do not contain infants. All in Cornelius's house heard the Word and spoke in tongues (Acts 10:44-47). Those in Lydia's house are comforted when Paul and Silas get out of jail (Acts 16:40). All in the jailer's house turned to belief in God (Acts 16:34). Those of Stephanas's house were consecrated to ministering to the saints (I Cor. 16:15).

QUESTIONS: 1. *At what seaport in Europe do they land?* 2. *They go inland to what chief city?* 3. *What indication is there that this city has very few Jews in it?* 4. *Where does Paul go to speak?* 5. *From what*

city is Lydia? 6. What was the source of "purple"? 7. Who are converted on this day? 8. With what words does Lydia urge the preachers to stay where she is living? 9. What does the demon-possessed girl say of the preachers? 10. What does Paul do that gets him and Barnabas beaten and jailed? 11. What do they do while in the jail? 12. What special divine act does God perform? 13. Why is the jailer about to kill himself? 13. What keeps him from doing it? 14. What does he ask the preachers? 15. What is their answer? 16. Where do they teach him and his household? 16. In what hour are they baptized? 17. What do they do before returning to the jail? 18. What fact does Paul reveal in the morning that puts fear into the authorities? 19. Where do the preachers go before leaving town? 20. How do the cases of household conversion mentioned in the New Testament not support infant baptism?

G. On to Thessalonica
(Study Acts 17:1-10)

Locate Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessalonica on the map, and you will see the movements of the evangelistic party after leaving Philippi. Thessalonica, his next stop, remains a great city to this day. Paul finds it a city with numerous Jews, and according to his custom already noticed he goes to the synagogue on the Jewish sabbath to speak to them if the opportunity is available. He does this for three sabbaths until their hostility causes him to leave their city (v. 2). We note that he "reasoned" with them "out of the Scriptures" (v. 2). These "Scriptures" are the Old Testament (the Word of God), and his synagogue-method is to "reason" with them (a method still very useful in presenting the truth for people's honest consideration).

What is meant by "opening and alleging" in v. 3?

Since he reasons with them "out of the Scriptures", obviously he opens their copy of the Scriptures. At the same time "open" is the same Greek word used by Luke in Luke 24:45 ("Then opened he their minds" so they might understand the Scriptures). "Expositor's Greek New Testament" says, "Making plain to the understanding the meaning of the Scriptures." "Alleging" means "to set forth", and from the Old Testament Paul is setting forth the facts that the Messiah was to suffer and be resurrected and then the fact that Jesus whom he is preaching is indeed the Messiah (v. 3).

The Jewish concept of the Messiah was that He would be a reigning monarch, One who would rule and be triumphant--not One who would be killed by His enemies. This shows up in John 12:34. It also explains Paul's statement in I Cor. 1:23 that a crucified Christ, when preached to Jews, was a stumblingblock to their acceptance of Jesus. We are not told what arguments he uses to prove each point, but he probably uses Psa. 22:1-18 and Isa. 53:1-12 to show that the words in Psa. 22:1 are the very words Jesus spoke when dying, that the scorn and reproach in Psa. 22:6,7 well describe what happened to Jesus on the cross, that Psa. 22:18 uses the very words Jesus' enemies hollered out at the cross, that Psa. 22:14,15 describe His sufferings, that His hands and feet were pierced according to Psa. 22:16, and that the soldiers cast lots for the various pieces of His clothing just as Psa. 22:18 predicted. It is easy for Paul to show that the rejection and sufferings brought on Jesus were thoroughly predicted in Isa. 53. Paul also shows from the Old Testament that the Messiah was to rise from the dead. The following great prediction is found right in the midst of Isa. 53: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hands" (v. 10). It is a prediction of Christ's resurrection, and that God's program (Christianity) will be

in Christ's hands following the resurrection, and it will prosper. From the above it is not hard for Paul to offer a good case for Jesus being the Messiah.

Paul's presentation is used by the Holy Spirit to persuade "some" of the Jews and "many devout Greeks" including numerous "prominent women" (v. 4). But what about those who don't believe? They are "moved with envy" and utilize "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort" (worthless idlers who hang around the marketplace) to stir up the whole city so that a crowd descends on the house of Paul's host Jason in order to lay hold on the preachers (v. 5). But Paul and those with him are usually a step ahead of impending danger. This probably accounts for their not being found at Jason's house now. The enemies are wrathful enough that they take Jason into custody, charging him with receiving men who have "turned the world upside down" with their preaching another king (Jesus) besides Caesar (v. 6,7). Note two things: (1) They are preaching that Jesus is king, one of several Biblical indications that the kingdom is already in existence. However, He is not the same kind of king as Caesar (John 18:36). (2) Their preaching is turning the world upside down, indicative of great changes brought about by their preaching in different places. Since Thessalonica is one of the first places in Macedonia where they have preached, what they have done through preaching elsewhere has spread to Thessalonica and all around. Jonah's preaching affected Nineveh (Jon. 3:1-10), John the Baptist's affected Judea (Matt. 3:1,2,5,6), Philip's affected Samaria (Acts 8:5-8,12), etc. Christianity has a message. It is a preaching religion. We need to realize that God has not changed His plan for saving the world but will still bless that preaching with results (Matt. 28:20).

Because the charges brought against Jason stir up the rulers and people (v. 8), he will face trial. It is interesting to note that even back then a person

could post bond and be free until the time of his trial (v. 9). How bad Paul and company feel as they learn of the hardship they have brought on their host. Since Acts does not tell us how Jason came out, we are left to our own wondering.

The city authorities may not know where Paul and party are, but the brethren do, for they send Paul and Silas away for their own safety, taking advantage of the darkness of night to smuggle them out (v. 10).

This is the beginning of the church at Thessalonica. Later Paul will write two epistles to this church. Actually there is more in the first chapter of I Thess. about their stop here in Thessalonica than in Acts itself. It will add to your appreciation of their entering Thessalonica if you read I Thess. 2:1-14, 19, 20. To study I Thess. 1:5-10 will reveal several additional bits of information. The Thessalonian church has so assumed its evangelistic responsibility that it sounds forth the Word of the Lord both in its district of Macedonia and also in Achaia to its south, and their turning from idolatry to Christianity is so significant that wherever Paul goes he finds people already knowing about it.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What next great city do they stop in for labor?* 2. *What is Paul's custom where there are Jews?* 3. *What is meant by "opening" and "alleging"?* 4. *What false concept of the Messiah do the Jews hold?* 5. *What are some Old Testament verses Paul may be using to connect the sufferings of Jesus with their prophecies?* 6. *In whose home is Paul a guest?* 7. *When the mob cannot find Paul anywhere, what do they do with his host?* 8. *When do the preachers leave Thessalonica?* 8. *What chapters in I Thess. give us additional information on their stay in Thessalonica?*

H. In Berea
(Study Acts 17:10-14)

Berea is southwest of Philippi (note map). The Christian workers' mistreatment does not stop this zealous group. They understand that Christians are soldiers of Christ, and they are enduring hardness as good soldiers (II Tim. 2:3). The work of Christ is furthered by those who understand that Christianity involves renouncing self, taking up the cross daily, and following Jesus (Luke 9:23).

Since they again begin their work in the Jewish synagogue, they are not denying Jews in Berea the gospel on the basis that certain Thessalonian Jews persecuted them. And they are rewarded, for the Jews in Berea are "more noble than those in Thessalonica," for "they searched the scriptures daily" to see if the things Paul is preaching are true (v. 11). In view of what we have read in I Thess. 1,2 about the success of the gospel in Thessalonica, this verse has to indicate an even greater turning to Christ in Berea. The fact that the Bereans search their Scriptures shows they are not prejudiced (unwilling to believe after facts). That they do so before believing shows at the same time they are not gullible (willing to swallow anything). Few people indeed are not guilty of either prejudice or gullibility. V. 12 again demonstrates the relationship between honest hearing and faith (compare Rom. 10:14,17; John 20:31; Acts 14:1). Luke mentions in v. 12 first the Jews who believe and then the honorable women and men who are Greeks. Such successes with the gospel sustain the preachers in their persecutions.

When Paul later writes of the "churches of Macedonia" (II Cor. 8:1), praised in II Cor. 8,9 for their generosity, Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi were among those Macedonian congregations.

Amid the success at Berea Paul and party must again experience persecution. When word reaches the un-

believing Jews at Thessalonica, they come to Berea to stir up the people against them (v. 13). The Berean brethren do not underestimate the potential danger to Paul but send him away by sea without delay (v. 14). The fact that Silas and Timothy can remain at Berea indicates that Paul is their main target.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Why does mistreatment not stop Paul?*
2. *What about the Jews of Berea in comparison to those of Thessalonica?* 3. *Why do they search the Scriptures?*
4. *How does this prove they are not prejudiced?*
5. *How does this prove they are not gullible?* 6. *Who come and stir up the people against the preachers?*
7. *Who leaves Thessalonica and who stay?*

I. At Athens
(Study Acts 17:15-34)

Since Paul's method is to go to the great cities, we can see why he comes to Athens, one of the great cities of his times. It was a great city even before there was a country of Greece when there were only city-states like Athens, Sparta, etc. It is to this Greek city, center of philosophy and architecture, that Paul has hastily come. From v. 15 it is obvious he has been escorted and accompanied here by brethren from Berea. As they depart for home, Paul sends a message by them to Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens with all haste (v. 15). No mention is made in this chapter whether they do or don't join him before his leaving Athens. The first verse of the next chapter (18:1) gives us our information. From it we learn that Silas and Timothy join Paul at his next place of labor

(Corinth). They come from Macedonia (18:5), where Berea is located. It takes information by Paul himself in his first letter to the Thessalonians to be filled in on what has happened. According to I Thess. 3:1-5 Timothy joins Paul at Athens, but Paul's great concern for the extreme persecutions being brought on the Thessalonian church causes him to send Timothy to Thessalonica while he remains alone at Athens.

Now back to our consideration of Paul's work in Athens. If he has intended to wait for Silas and Timothy to arrive before beginning to invade Athens with the gospel, he doesn't continue to wait. He cannot wait, for his spirit is stirred deeply as he, a Jewish Christian, beholds the abundance of idolatry on every hand in this famous Greek city (v. 16). He cannot contain himself but begins by disputing with the Jews in the synagogue on the sabbath and in the marketplace daily with people there.

Paul is not a preacher who works only one day a week. The Lord's work is an every day matter with him. Nor does he limit himself to the public service of the Jews but goes to the marketplace daily (compare Acts 20:20). His approach in Athens is one of "disputing". Just to be a nice person or to visit among the Athenians is not sufficient. The "reasoning" he did in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2) must have given way to "disputing" as the gospel runs head-on with deep-rooted error. The "Epicureans" and "Stoicks" who encounter him are opposing Greek philosophical groups who both find themselves in opposition to the gospel just as the Pharisees and Sadducees who opposed each other theologically (see Acts 23:8) found a common enemy in Jesus (Matt. 16:1,6). The Stoics believe in suppressing all emotion (both sorrow and joy) while the Epicureans believe in "living it up", doing whatever gives them pleasure. Their basis for mutual opposition to Paul is his belief in life after death, which they both deny.

Some call Paul a "babbling". Vine's Greek dictionary says the word translated "babbling" signifies a bird picking up seeds, and that metaphorically it has come to be used of a man who picks up scraps of information here and there and passes them off as his own. Such a name hardly fits the apostle Paul who is far from a collector of religious ideas which he peddles to whoever will listen. It shows they either don't understand Paul as yet, or they intend merely to smear his name and discredit his preaching.

Others are saying Paul is a setter forth of "strange gods" upon which McGarvey remarks as follows: "The prevalence he gave to the name of Jesus, a man who had died and risen again, suggested the idea of demon-worship, because the demons worshiped by the Greeks were dead men deified." The Greek for "strange" really means "foreign" and has to do with the "foreign" ideas being taught by Paul. Since Athens is a center for new ideas, people from many areas come here to tell or to hear such. It is this fact that gives Paul his opportunity to be heard on Mars Hill, a hill above the noise of the marketplace to its north. Mars Hill is so called "because a temple of Mars once stood on its summit" (McGarvey). The name "Aeropagus" means "Area's Hill". The god "Area" was called "Mars" by the Romans. This smooth, white, treeless, granite hill is noticeably dwarfed by the sizable and famous temple-studded "acropolis" hill from which it is separated by only a small depression.

To begin with, the issue with the Athenians is not "Jesus is the Son of God" but who "God" is. Paul has noticed an altar in Athens inscribed to "The Unknown God". It seems to this writer that since Athens worshiped so many different gods, they realize there may be additional gods whom they know not, and to be on the safe side they have erected this altar so any additional god may think he is being worshiped by those who bow before it. Paul finds this an ideal be-

ginning place, telling them it is this "Unknown God" that he will tell them about (v. 23).

He first affirms that the God whom he is preaching "made the world and all things therein" and is therefore "Lord of heaven and earth" and as such cannot be contained in "temples made with hands" (v. 24) (compare Acts 7:47-50). On "neither is worshipped with men's hands," Boles observes, "The heathen clothed their gods with costly garments, overlaid them with silver and gold, carried them in state, installed them at banquets, and brought them costly offerings of food and drink," which seems to be borne out by Luke's statement, "As though he needeth anything" (v. 25). Quite the contrary Paul says God gives to all of us "life, and breath, and all things" (v. 25).

This one God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (v. 26). This is contrary to Greek thinking who think themselves to be "a super race in origin, character and destiny" (Boles). In confirmation of Paul's teaching that regardless of where people live, what language they speak, or what their skin-color may be, they can cross and reproduce--they all descend from the same parents (Adam and Eve)--they are all of "one blood". The opposite is true of man and animals--they cannot cross and reproduce, for they are not of the same blood.

When Paul speaks of God's having "determined" for the nations "the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (v. 26), it appears he is saying the same thing Daniel said in the following passages: "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings" (Dan. 2:21); "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25). It is difficult for us finite beings to comprehend at all times what part God has in the poli-

tical affairs of the world, but according to these passages of Scripture, both Old Testament and New, we must conclude that some of the changes brought about have His hand in them. When Daniel so vividly foretold the fall of Babylon, the rise of Medo-Persia, the overthrow of Persia by Alexander the Great, and the ultimate coming of the Roman Empire, it is admittedly easier for us to comprehend His great hand in those transpirings than it is in our present war-torn world. But let us not limit God to our grasp of the situation.

On the other hand when Job speaks of man's life on earth, he says, "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14:5), and it almost sounds like Paul has human-life in mind in v. 26 rather than nations. Both considerations are true. Commentators generally consider Paul to be talking about "nations" rather than "mankind".

Because God is the Creator and the Lord, men should seek Him (v. 27): God does reward those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). The purpose of seeking God is to "find" Him. Through the Athenians' idolatry they have been feeling for God much like blind men feeling around for that which they are seeking. For all man's futile seeking God is really not far from each of us (v. 27), for it is "in him we live, and move, and have our being" (v. 28). How much closer can God be? Yet even in philosophical Athens "the world by wisdom knew not God" (I Cor. 1:21). The close connection between God and His creation set forth in Paul's message is also borne out by one of their own poets (Aratus writing in 270 B.C.) who wrote, "We are also his offspring" (v. 28). Paul reasons if we are the offspring of God, and we are not made by man out of gold or silver or stone, we should not think God is any of the idols they are worshiping (v. 29).

As Paul stands on Mars Hill adjacent to the Acropolis with its many marble temples and especially its

beautiful Parthenon and 40-foot-tall golden statue of Athena, goddess of wisdom, he speaks of all idolatry as "ignorance" (v. 30) and says, "The times of this ignorance God winked at" ("overlooked"--ASV). Reiterating what he preached in Lystra, "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (14:16). But it is different now, for in New Testament times He is dealing with all nations (Matt. 28:19), and He "commandeth all men every where to repent" (v. 30). The urgency of repentance is based on the fact that God has "appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness," and here Paul makes his first reference to Jesus in this message even though he does not mention Him by name when he says God will judge the world "by that man whom he hath ordained (see John 5:22; Rom. 2:16; Acts 10:40-42; II Tim. 4:1); whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (v. 31).

They have been an attentive audience through all Paul has said until he now speaks of a resurrection. This is a sore-spot with both the Epicureans and Stoics. Mention of the subject causes them to mock (v. 32). They likely get that opportunity, for as we have seen from I Thess. 3:1,2 Paul remains here at Athens longer than we would conclude if we had only the information in Acts.

As "Paul departed from among them" (v. 33), it is the same that he will do in Corinth when some will reject the message there (18:6,7). Yet some do believe, two being mentioned by name: "Dionysius the Areopagite" (one of the judges on Mars Hill) "and a woman named Damaris" (v. 34).

QUESTIONS: 1. Who escort Paul to Athens? 2. Is Athens a relative new or an ancient city? 3. Whom does Paul desire to come to him? 4. When Timothy comes

to Athens, why does he not stay with Paul? 5. What causes Paul's spirit to be stirred? 6. In what 2 places does Paul dispute here? 7. How do the Stoics and Epicureans differ? 8. What doctrine causes both of them to oppose Paul? 9. Why does "babbler" not fit Paul? 10. What is the relationship between the words "Areopagus" and "Mars Hill"? 11. What more famous and much larger hill is very close to Mars Hill? 12. To what Athenian altar does Paul make mention? 13. What does he say about God and their temples? 14. How can we confirm Paul's statement that God has made of one blood all people who are on earth? 15. What does Paul call "ignorance"? 16. What does God command all men everywhere to do now? 17. What day has God appointed? 18. Who will be the judge? 18. How do the hearers react when Paul speaks of the resurrection? 19. What 2 believers are mentioned by name?

J. Corinth.
(Study Acts 18:1-18)

Having given Athens ample opportunity to respond to the gospel, Paul now makes his way forty miles across the Corinthian Isthmus between the Ionian and the Adriatic Seas to the great commercial city Corinth (v. 1). Both of these great cities in Achaia (southern half of Greece) must hear the gospel. His experience at Athens and the wicked reputation of Corinth have made him fearful as he later narrates in I Cor. 2:1-3: "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." But God was with him, for he went on to relate, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor. 2:4).

V. 2 introduces us to a Jewish couple (Aquila and Priscilla). He was born in "Pontus" (a province in the upper part of Asia Minor) but had gone to Rome from which he and his wife, along with all other Jews, have been driven out by the emperor (Claudius Caesar). In Corinth they are making tents. Paul resides with them.

We read of Paul's working occupationally in several places (Acts 20:34; I Thess. 2:9). V. 3 tells us what he did when he worked occupationally: he made tents. From your author's work, "Simple, Stimulating Studies in the Life of Paul": "The rule among Jews was that every boy, regardless of what profession he might follow in life, should be taught a trade as a resort in time of trouble. Saul had been trained in the most common trade in Tarsus, that of making tents (Acts 18:3). Little did he or his parents realize the great importance that this trade was to mean to him in later life when at times it became necessary for him to make tents as a livelihood because financial support was lacking."

Sometimes congregations that can fully support a preacher will cite Paul's working with his hands in justification for their not providing a living for those preaching to them, but they need to read Matt. 10:9,10; I Cor. 9:1-14; Gal. 6:6. And sometimes preachers who really don't want to give churches the leadership they can provide will cite Paul's example of working as justification for their working occupationally. But you should notice Paul did not always work to provide his own living--only in a few places and often when he first arrived on a new field until he could get a church established and underway.

The question comes up whether Aquila and Priscilla are already Christians when Paul comes to Corinth. Your writer thinks not. Paul abides with them "because he was of the same craft" (v. 3)--not because they are all Christians. We, therefore, cite this as an example of converting those with whom one lives and also con-

verting those with whom one works occupationally. Every later reference in the Bible to this couple shows them to be an ideal Christian couple fully dedicated to the Lord's work (Acts 18:24-26; I Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3,4).

The first phase of Paul's eighteen months in Corinth (v. 11) finds him, as usual, reasoning every sabbath in the synagogue where he is able to persuade some of the Jews and Greeks. The next phase is when Silas and Timothy come from Macedonia (Silas from Berea and Timothy from Thessalonica) and join him. Their coming greatly encourages him in his labor to be even more urgent in his declaring Jesus to be the Messiah (v. 5). His more insistent presentation incites a more vocal opposition to his message ("They...blasphemed," v. 6)--as it always does. Whether we like it or not, whether it is natural for us or not, we must face the fact that confrontation is indeed involved in spreading the gospel. We cannot preach the gospel to every creature without running into opposition from some people. Nor can we hope to convert some people without crossing swords with them. When Paul "reasons" in the synagogue, he is using the II Tim. 2:24-26 method of gentle, patient teaching that works best with most people, but when he urgently testifies concerning Jesus and stirs up hostile opposition he is using the Jude 3 method of "earnestly contending for the faith" in an attempt to reach that element that will never respond apart from gospel confrontation.

The element that resists Paul's message is said to oppose themselves (v. 6). The Greek construction is middle voice, allowing a choice of translation: either "oppose themselves" or "set themselves in opposition to". In actuality they are doing both. They are also blaspheming (speaking against, opposing verbally).

This opposition puts an end to Paul's participation in the synagogue services ("he departed thence," v. 7), but not without telling them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will

go unto the Gentiles" (v. 6). It shows that the Old Testament principle of responsibility for preaching to the wicked set forth in Eze. 3:18,19 ("When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning...to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul") is still in effect. Paul constantly keeps this principle in mind, for to the Ephesians he later says, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26,27). Paul utters these words with strong feelings for he "shook his raiment" as he speaks to them (v. 6).

When Paul "entered into a certain man's house name Justus" (v. 7), was it a new place to stay or a base for future operations? The fact that he departs from the synagogue and enters Justus's house seems to imply it will become the new meeting place for those who wish to hear Paul. The description of Justus as "one that worshippeth God" would not be necessary if he were a Jew. Bearing a Roman name we conclude he is a Gentile who so welcomes Paul's desire to go to the Gentiles that he makes his house available for Paul's use. His house is surely large enough for the role it is to play, evidently making him a wealthy man. Fortunately it is next to the synagogue. Since the ruler of the synagogue (Crispus) gets converted (v. 8), Paul has not lost contact with given Jews. Later when Paul writes back to the Corinthians, he recalls the baptism of Crispus--I Cor. 1:14. Crispus's successor as synagogue-ruler is Sosthenes (v. 17). He too gets converted, for he is with Paul when he writes I Corinthians (I Cor. 1:1). Converting two successive synagogue-rulers is no small accomplishment in itself.

In contrast to the few converts in Athens "many

of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (v. 8). Reece observes, "Among the converts we may count the household of Chloe (I Cor. 1:11), Quartus and Erastus, the treasurer of the city (Rom. 16:23), and many of the lower and middle classes of society (I Cor. 1:26)." And don't forget the low-down and immoral (I Cor. 6:9-11). Notice the connection between the (1) hearing, (2) believing, and (3) baptism of v. 8 with Mark's account of the Great Commission: "Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (16:15,16). John Sweeney in his book, "Sweeney's Sermons," in writing on Acts' coverage of the various cases of conversion notes, "Acts 2 contains not only the first, but the fullest report of apostolic preaching and of details generally of making disciples to Christ, to be found in the whole book. And how very natural, and how very reasonable, that, being the first, it should also be the fullest; that is, that in this report of the opening meeting of the campaign the writer should enter more into the details of the preaching of the apostle, of the effect of the sermon, of the instructions of the apostle to enquiring sinners, and of the whole matter of making disciples to Christ under the great commission...Luke, like other sensible reporters... made his first report...a pretty full one; and thereafter contented himself, when reporting meetings and sermons, with abridged and general statements."

When Paul writes in I Cor. 1:17, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name...for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel," some use it to belittle the divine importance of baptism as if there are only a few baptized. How can we blend v. 8 ("many of the Corinthians...were baptized") with I Cor. 1:14,16 ("I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius...also the household of Stephanas")? Most of the "many" were baptized by

somebody else (probably Silas or Timothy).

No doubt the great success of the gospel in Corinth has really stirred up Paul's opposition, for the Lord speaks to him in a night vision, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall sit on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (v. 9,10). And Paul does continue (v. 11). The opposition does arise against him, and he is brought before the judgment seat ("Bema" in Greek). Today when you visit the ruins of Corinth, you are shown the "Bema". The Jews' charge against Paul ("This fellow persuadest men to worship God contrary to the law") does not solicit the civil ruler's interest. He says, "I will be no judge of such matters" (v. 15). Augustine tells us that Gallio is not fond of the Jews, so it is not surprising that he drives them from the judgment seat. The vision's message that "no man shall...hurt thee" is fulfilled. The Greeks present take Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue (this is before he is converted), and "beat him before the judgment seat," showing their distaste for the Jews in this setting where Gallio's attitude assures he will do nothing to them for it. And he doesn't (v. 17). If this is the Sosthenes later associated with Paul (I Cor. 1:1), and we think it is, no doubt they both vividly recall this incident in which they are adversaries and not associates.

McGarvey in commenting on v. 9,10 earlier and on v. 17 now very ably discusses Paul's writing I Thessalonians and II Thessalonians at different times during this stay here at Corinth.

After the Jews' failure to get Paul condemned in Gallio's court, he stays on in Corinth for a short while (v. 18). McGarvey's very observant mind notices and remarks, "Thanks to Gallio, this was the only church in Macedonia and Greece in which he was permitted to remain as long as he thought proper." On his departure for Syria (where Antioch is) he takes with

him Priscilla and Aquila (the first of several moves they will make in connection with the Lord's work).

QUESTIONS: 1. How far is Corinth from Athens? 2. With whom does Paul stay while in Corinth? 3. What is the background of this couple? 4. What trade has Paul learned as a young man? 5. Why did Paul work with his hands here and a few other places? 6. From what city does Silas come to Paul at Corinth? 7. From what city does Timothy come? 8. What is meant by "your blood be upon your own heads"? 9. What points toward Justus being a Gentile? 10. What 2 synagogue-rulers get converted here at Corinth? 11. How many of the Corinthians hear, believe, and are baptized? 12. How do we know Paul does not baptize very many of these personally? 13. What message does God give to Paul in a night vision? 14. Does the ruler Gallio fall in with the Jews' desire to condemn Paul? 15. What happens to poor Sosthenes? 16. Who leaves Corinth when Paul departs?

K. Cenchrea
(Study Acts 18:18)

Check the map and you will note that Cenchrea is close to Corinth.

The vow mentioned here is a Jewish vow, and Paul's connection with it is in harmony with his statement in I Cor. 9:20. A fuller discussion of Paul's doing some things of the law is found in our comments on Acts 21:18-26.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where is Cenchrea?* 2. *What does Paul do here?*

L. Ephesus
(Study Acts 18:19-21)

This is Paul's first visit to Ephesus, the principle city on Asia Minor's west coast. On the First Tour they were not this far west. On the Second Tour going out they were always north and east of this while on the large peninsula, but on their trip back to Antioch they are now here.

His reasoning in their synagogue is favorably received--so different from the usual. In fact the Jews beg him to remain longer than he is able to do. What a welcome change from having to leave because of danger to his life! Most translations do not include, "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem."

Leaving Priscilla and Aquila with them he departs promising to return if God so wills. See Jas. 4:13-15 for his meaning of this statement. Boles: "'If the Lord will' was a common expression among the early Christians (Rom. 1:10; 15:32; I Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Heb. 6:3)."

QUESTIONS: 1. *How is Paul received in the Ephesian synagogue?* 2. *Whom does he leave here in Ephesus?*

M. To Antioch via Caesarea and maybe Jerusalem
(Study Acts 18:22)

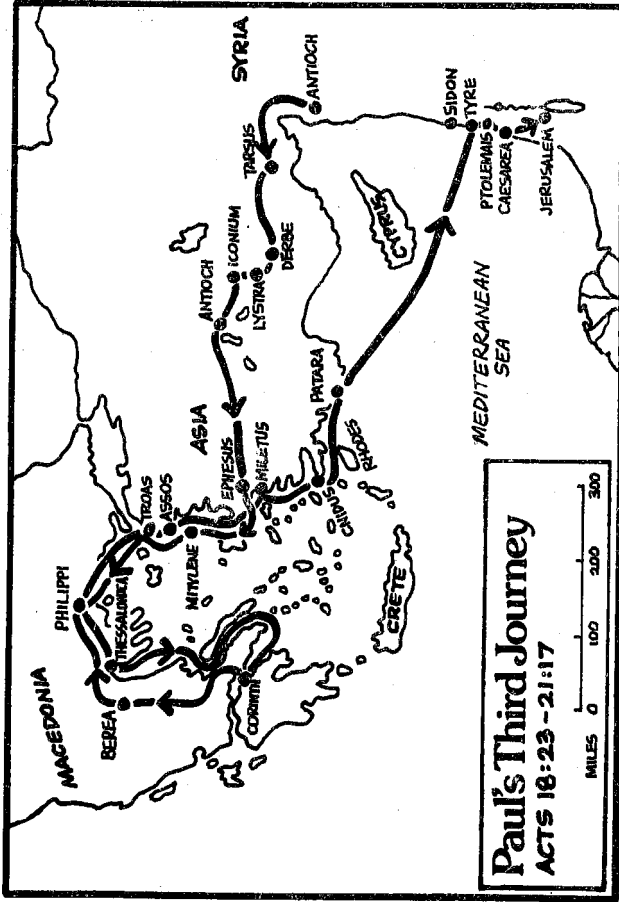
He is on the ship from Ephesus to Caesarea many days. Landing at Caesarea it says he went "up" and saluted the church and then went "down" to Antioch. This

statement gives trouble to all versions that do not indicate in v. 21 that Paul is bound for Jerusalem, for there is no way that going from the seaport Caesarea to Antioch is "down". If the disputed statement in v. 21 is not genuine, its inclusion by someone was probably based on a fact known at the time, and if he does go to Jerusalem to that feast, he is going "up" from Caesarea and then "down" to Antioch. I, therefore, lean to the idea that he goes to a feast at Jerusalem, which also explains why he could not accept Ephesus's invitation to stay longer.

His arrival at Antioch terminates his Second Tour, a tour covering many miles, a tour originally planned for visiting the churches established on the First Tour but one that broadened out and lengthened into a great church-planting tour particularly in Macedonia and Achaia.

QUESTIONS: 1. *At what Palestine port does Paul land?* 2. *Geographically how does Paul go "up" from Caesarea to salute the church and then go "down" to Antioch?*

THE GREAT BOOK OF ACTS



CHAPTER 10

The Third Tour

A. *Through Galatia and Phrygia* (Study Acts 18:23)

Luke is getting briefer and briefer in his coverage of certain events. Whatever time Paul has spent at Antioch and what he did while there are condensed into the simple statement, "After he had spent some time there, he departed." Nor does he bother to tell us who, if anybody, accompanies him on this Third Tour. Nor does he tell us of any setting-apart service they had in sending him forth on this final Antioch-based tour even though they likely had such a service.

In going through Galatia and Phrygia, places he went on his Second Tour (Acts 16:6), he has likely taken the land-way north from Antioch and then west into Galatia. Again we can see his love for those whom he has evangelized and his concern for their continued development, for he strengthens "all the disciples" in these parts.

QUESTIONS: 1. *What does Luke tell us about Paul's stay at Antioch between his Second and Third Tours?*
2. *Who accompanies him as he leaves Antioch on this Third Tour?* 3. *Through what districts does he go?*

B. A Parenthetical Event at Ephesus
(Study Acts 18:24-28)

Sometime after Paul left Ephesus on the Second Tour and before he returns here on this tour, the event involving Apollos takes place.

Apollos has some admirable attributes and advantages mentioned in v. 24,25: "born at Alexandria" (great Jewish educational center); "eloquent" (a master of words and expression); "mighty in the scriptures" (so informed in the Old Testament Scriptures that he has an able use of them at his command); "fervent in the spirit" (his soul is aglow with what he is preaching).

This outstanding Jewish speaker has come to Ephesus, and Aquila and Priscilla hear his bold messages in the synagogue (v. 26). What a refreshing speaker to listen to! What a sincere man to meet! Part of his boldness is because he is presenting one divine step farther than his Jewish hearers have gone (though John the Baptist is dead, Apollos is carrying on as one of John's distant disciples). Yet he himself does not know the final divine step (that the Messiah whom John preached about has actually come) (v. 25). It is as puzzling to your writer as to yourself how one so well informed otherwise would be so uninformed concerning the coming of Jesus. Hardly can this happen if Apollos is living in Palestine instead of Africa.

Enter, Christian couple Aquila and Priscilla. They are quick to assist Apollos to a fuller understanding--to an update in the matter. This is not done publicly but privately, for "they took him unto them" (v. 26). This gives them a better opportunity to communicate with him, and it also makes it more favorable for him to be approached successfully. Aquila and Priscilla expound to him "the way of God more perfectly" (v. 26), the very thing still needed in many cases today of people who love the Lord and

believe in Him but who have not really been taught the plan of salvation, the plan of New Testament Christianity, etc. To these honest souls we should not be afraid to do as Aquila and Priscilla are doing--we should be afraid not to! And from the verses that follow it is evident Apollos gratefully receives this greater understanding.

When Apollos desires to cross the Aegean Sea to Achaia (specifically Corinth--Acts 19:1; I Cor. 3:6), the Ephesian "brethren" (Aquila, Priscilla, and whom ever else they may have converted before Paul returns) write a letter for him to carry to Corinth exhorting the congregation to receive him (v. 27). He is a great encouragement to the Corinthian brethren as he mightily and publicly convinces many more Jews by the use of the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus is indeed the Christ (v. 27,28).

QUESTIONS: 1. What are some of Apollos's attributes and advantages? 2. Where is Apollos speaking in Ephesus? 3. What baptism is he preaching to the Jews? 4. Who explains the way of the Lord more perfectly to him? 5. From here where does Apollos go? 6. Who recommends him to the church there?

C. Paul at Ephesus
(Study Acts 19:1--20:1)

Apollos has left for Corinth while Paul is passing through the "upper coasts" on his way to Ephesus. Paul can come to Ephesus through the low-country route, coming from the east through the Lycus and Meander River valleys. Instead he comes by the upper route (through the highlands to the north of the Lycus

and Meander valleys) (v. 1).

Upon arrival he finds twelve men whom he asks, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (v. 2). These are men baptized by Apollos before he was straightened out. Paul likely knows their situation either by revelation as an apostle or through Aquila and Priscilla. Your writer considers his question to be a "door-opening" question. And it works: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (v. 2). If they have been baptized with New Testament baptism, they have had at least two opportunities to hear about the Holy Spirit: (1) when they were baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19); and (2) when promised the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38,39). The conversation continues: "Unto what then were ye baptized?" (v. 3). Their answer: "Unto John's baptism" (v. 3).

There was a time when John's baptism was valid but not now. It has been replaced by New Testament baptism. There are at least two contrasts between the two baptisms: (1) John's baptism looked forward to the coming Saviour (v. 4) while New Testament baptism is commanded by the Saviour Himself into whose death people are now baptized (Rom. 6:3,4); and (2) John's baptism carried no promise of the indwelling Spirit as New Testament baptism does (Acts 2:38). Seeing the difference they are now baptized according to the baptism Christ commands (v. 5).

Here is a Scriptural example that if people have not been baptized properly, they should have it done correctly. This applies to people baptized in infancy, people baptized by sprinkling or pouring, people baptized as a mere form (not really believing, not really repenting, not really loving the Lord), and people baptized for the wrong reason (to demonstrate that one is already saved, to get a wife, to gain votes in one's political bid for office, to please parents

without any further personal significance, etc.).

We might wonder why Apollos did not stay and baptize them properly. We can only conjecture, for there is no inspired explanation, but if these twelve began as Jews and Apollos persuaded them to be baptized with John's baptism, it is probably best that he move on and let somebody else (like Paul) come in and tell them they need to be baptized properly. Had Apollos tried to tell them, they might have said to him, "Won't you please make up your mind?"

There are those who claim these men are baptized with the Holy Spirit, contending that any baptism "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is Holy Spirit baptism (citing Matt. 3:11 as proof). But when Peter commanded Cornelius and his people to be baptized "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48), it was "water" baptism (see v. 47). Also, if Acts 19:5 is Holy Spirit baptism, why does the Holy Spirit not come on them until Paul lays his hands on them afterwards? (v. 6).

V. 7 is another instance in Acts of an apostle conferring miraculous powers through the laying on of his hands.

The "reasoning" Paul did in the Ephesian synagogue on his earlier visit (18:19) is now replaced by bold disputing and persuading (v. 8). The topic of discussion and dispute is the "kingdom of God" (v. 8), a subject of Jewish prophecies in Dan. 2, Dan. 7, Isa. 9, and others. Three months of this (v. 8) not only result in converts ("disciples"--v. 9) but in others strongly opposing what he is saying. The opposition is so strong that Paul withdraws the disciples from the synagogue (he "separated the disciples"--v. 9) and takes the opportunity to dispute "daily in the school of one Tyrannus" (v. 9). Obviously this man Tyrannus is more cordial to Paul than are the Jews, or he would not be making his school facility available to Paul on a daily basis. A footnote in the Revised Standard Version indicates that some ancient Greek copies read, "Daily from the fifth hour to the tenth." Possibly

Paul has use of it when Tyrannus is not using it. Ramsay indicates that ancient work hours, which would include school, ran from early morning until 10:00 A.M. So possibly Paul uses it afterwards (from 11:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M.). From Acts 20:33,34 we learn that Paul is also working with his hands while here in Ephesus to supply the necessities for himself and these with him. He likely does this work during the early morning work hours and then utilizes the Tyrannus facility during the afternoon. Whatever the procedure is, v. 10 shows how effective it is--all in the province of Asia (both Jews and Greeks) hear the Word!

Obviously this is not done by Paul alone. Ephesus is the principle city of the province of Asia, is the seat of government, and sea-borne merchandise going east unloads in Ephesus harbor for land-travel to all points east and to Africa. People converted while in Ephesus carry the message with them while disciples from Ephesus likely go throughout the province with the gospel. These two years are tremendous in their accomplishment! Very likely some of the seven churches of Asia addressed by John in the book of Revelation come into existence at this time.

V. 11,12 give particular attention to the miracles Paul is performing here and how they contribute to the fame of Jesus in Ephesus. The "special" miracles are the ones performed by merely taking handkerchiefs and aprons that have touched Paul's body to the sick; causing both diseases and evil spirits to depart. These miracles attract so much attention and widespread comment that certain vagabond ("strolling" --A.S.V.) Jews who practice exorcism decide to see what they can do by using the name of Jesus in their incantations. McGarvey points out that in their incantations Jewish exorcists "uttered certain unmeaning words that they claimed to have derived from Solomon, and they naturally supposed that the secret of Paul's power was something of the same kind; so they watched him as he cast out demons to see if they could disco-

ver his talismanic word. They were not long in observing that in every instance he used the name of Jesus; and they concluded that the charm was in that word." They decide to try that name. They say to a demon-possessed case, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth" (v. 13). And the evil spirit in the man answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" (v. 15). And the demon-possessed man leaps on them, overcoming them and prevailing against them so that they flee out of the house naked and wounded (v. 16).

This really makes news among all the Jews and Greeks of Ephesus, and the name of Jesus is both feared and magnified (v. 17). What a victory for the gospel over sorcery and witchcraft as people come confessing their involvement in such and bringing their books on sorcery for a great public bonfire (v. 18-20)! "This whole account fully confirms the reputation assigned to Ephesus by ancient writers as the chief center of magical arts in the whole Roman empire" (McGarvey).

Paul wishes to include a trek through Macedonia and Achaia (northern and southern Greece) before going to Jerusalem and after that to Rome (v. 21), and from his I Corinthian epistle written at this time, the tour is also to raise a sizable offering from the Gentile congregations to help their Jewish brethren at Jerusalem. For a long while he has also wanted to go to Rome but has been hindered because of labors elsewhere (Rom. 1:13). He decides to send Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia while he remains at Ephesus (v. 22).

The great book-burning causes him to write, "I will tarry at Ephesus...for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (I Cor. 16:8,9). From what follows in the Acts' account we can understand what he means by "many adversaries". for at "the same time there arose no small stir about that way" (v. 23). This stir is led by the silversmith Demetrius. The success of the gospel is taking its

toll on his business of making and selling small, household-size shrines of Diana (Artemis) and her temple (v. 24,25). In addressing his fellow-craftsmen Demetrius unwittingly pays a great tribute to Paul and the success of the gospel in many places (see v. 26, 27). While there is no less than 32 other temples of Diana scattered throughout the world, Ephesus is the very center of Diana-worship, and its temple is the greatest and the most magnificent of them all (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world). It is so tremendous in Paul's day that some said, "If you have seen this temple, you need not see any of the other six wonders." After 800 years of continuous Diana-worship it went out, and it was the preaching of Christianity that began it on its downward course. Today the place where the temple once stood is only a frog-marsh with only a few remnants of its once-mighty pillars left to mark its location. Later on Christianity did the same to the pagan gods worshiped in Europe. The great Pantheon in Rome was built to honor the gods of the Roman Empire, but today its niches where the gods once stood are vacant because of the victory of Christianity. Praise the Lord, for we who are of European descent are recipients of this change from pagan gods to the true and living god!

Demetrius's words stir up the populace causing them to cry out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (v. 28). Two of Paul's companions (Gaius of Derbe and Aristarchus of Thessalonica--Acts 20:4) are caught and rushed into the vast theater (the largest stadium in the ancient world--now restored) (v. 29). Learning of their danger Paul is about to go into the theater, but the disciples and some of his friends among the ruling class persuade him not to (v. 30,31). The Jews put forth one of their number (Alexander) to speak and show they have nothing to do with Paul and his party (v. 33), but Diana-worshippers have no more love for the Jews than they do for the Christians, and they

will not give Alexander a chance to be heard. And for two whole hours they chant, chant, chant, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" (v. 34).

The Ephesian townclerk, taking a mild view of Paul's effect on Diana-worship and knowing he cannot silence the people for awhile has let them chant on until they are weary. Then he speaks, assuring them of the stability of their religious institution (v. 35, 36). He points out that any opposition brought to their religion by these men is legal (v. 37), and if Demetrius and the craftsmen wish to bring charges against them they may do so in the court (v. 38). He then urges that any further proceedings be determined in a lawful assembly rather than an unlawful riot such as they have been involved in which could bring the city into trouble with Rome (v. 39,40). And the hoarse, worn-out people of Ephesus trudge to their homes (v. 41). It is possible that Paul refers to the dangers and deliverance of this day when he wrote II Cor. 1:8-10.

When Timothy and Erastus departed for Macedonia carrying the I Corinthian letter, Paul was expecting to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost (I Cor. 16:8). But the "open door" he wrote about then is now closed by the silversmith-inspired riot. So he embraces the disciples and departs for Macedonia himself (20:1).

QUESTIONS: 1. What is meant by Paul's coming to Ephesus by the "upper coasts"? 2. List at least 2 contrasts between John's baptism and New Testament baptism? 3. Prove that the baptism these 12 men now receive is not Holy Spirit baptism? 4. What subject does Paul dispute about in the synagogue? 5. How long does he speak in the synagogue till forced out? 6. In whose school does he carry on his disputations? 7. What statement indicates this to be a time of great evangelism in Asia? 8. Tell of Sceva's sons and the

demon-possessed man? 9. Tell of the great bonfire in Ephesus? 10. What 2 men does Paul send into Macedonia? 11. Who cause a great stir to be made in Ephesus? 12. What great temple is in Ephesus? 13. What do the Ephesians cry out concerning Diana? 14. What 2 companions of Paul are rushed into the vast theater? 15. Who keeps Paul from rushing into the theater? 16. Who finally puts an end to the people's chanting? 17. What has this riot done to Paul's "open door" at Ephesus?

D. Greece
(Study Acts 20:2-5)

Why Acts' coverage of this period is so brief is unknown to this writer. From II Cor. we gain several details of this time: (1) Paul is still waiting to see how Corinth has responded to the many corrections ordered in his I Corinthian epistle; and (2) he is working on the Gentile offering for the saints at Jerusalem. Concerning the first, Titus has been in Corinth to help them accept the instructions in I Cor. This is no small job. Likely going by land to Troas Paul hopes to meet Titus there with a report on Corinth. But Titus is not there when Paul arrives. To Paul this can mean only one thing--Titus has been detained in Corinth because of the situation. Another "open door" seems to be possible for Paul's labor here at Troas, but he is so uneasy about Corinth that he cannot bring himself to remain at Troas and take advantage of it. Listen to his own words about the matter: "When I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking leave of them, I went from there into Macedonia" (II Cor. 2:12,13).

Now we are again ready to follow Luke's coverage

in Acts. "When he had gone through those parts" (v. 2), where Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea are, he finds the Macedonia churches very generous in their contribution for the Jerusalem offering: "We make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints" (II Cor. 8:1-4 ASV).

While Paul is here in Macedonia, Titus arrives with great news from Corinth! Listen to Paul again: "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more" (II Cor. 7:5-7).

From Titus's coming Paul also learns of an element in Corinth slandering him: "His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (II Cor. 10:10). Commentators usually think that in II Cor. 1:15ff Paul is replying to a charge made by his critics that he was afraid to come directly to Corinth from Ephesus as he had originally proposed following his writing of I Corinthians (see I Cor. 4:18,19; 11:34; 16:1). In II Cor. 1:23 Paul explains why he did not carry out his original proposal: "I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet into Corinth."

Earlier Paul had boasted to the Macedonians of the generosity of the Corinthians (II Cor. 9:1,2). As

we have seen, Macedonia has come through with a tremendous offering, so Paul is sending Titus back to Corinth to be sure they will have their offering ready when Paul and those with him arrive (II Cor. 8:6; 9:3-5). He sits down and writes II Corinthians here to send with Titus.

Finishing up his work in Macedonia after some time, Paul is said to enter "Greece" (where Corinth is) (v. 2) where he spends three months (v. 3). While Luke gives us no particulars, reason would say Paul is following up matters raised in I Corinthians and II Corinthians and is getting everything ready for both safely and honorably transporting the churches' great offering to Jerusalem. Different brethren will accompany Paul with the money both to safeguard it from potential robbers along the way ("perils of robbers"--II Cor. 11:26) and to keep any of Paul's critics from saying he did not administer it properly (see I Cor. 16:3,4 and II Cor. 8:16-23). The actual men who will go with him and the places they represent are listed in v. 4. These men, chosen by their respective congregations, are nearly all known to us through other references to them in the New Testament. "Sopater" is taken to be a shortened form of "Sosipater" mentioned in Rom. 16:21. "Aristarchus" is mentioned in Acts 19:29; Phm. 24; and Acts 27:2. "Timothy" is the best known to us. "Tychicus" is mentioned in Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; II Tim. 4:12; and Tit. 3:12. "Trophimus" is mentioned in Acts 21:29 and II Tim. 4:20. "Gaius of Derbe" is not to be confused with the Macedonian "Gaius" of Acts 19:29, but he may be the "Gaius" mentioned in Rom. 16:23 or the "Gaius" mentioned in III John 1. We have no other reference to "Secundus"; but his name simply means "Second" (probably the second child in his family). Reece observes that such numerical names were common among slave families.

Now that it is time to sail from Corinth with the offering, Paul learns of a plot among some Jews against him (v. 3)--maybe to get the money as well as

destroy him and his work. He foils their attempt by not sailing from Corinth but sending these messengers and the money on ahead of him to Troas, thus taking a different route to Jerusalem (v. 5). Paul makes his way north by land to Philippi (v. 6).

As generous as the Philippian church has always been, it is hard to think it will not be represented with an offering and a messenger. Luke joins the trip to Jerusalem here at Philippi (notice the "we" in v. 6). McGarvey: "Luke's 'us', here introduced once more implies that he too joined the company at Philippi. It was here on the First Tour that this pronoun was dropped, and the presumption is that Luke has remained at Philippi ever since the departure of Paul and Silas therefrom six or seven years previous." He then is Philippi's representative on this money-tour.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Why does Paul not stay in Troas and take advantage of the "open door" that is here?* 2. *Does he find the Macedonian congregations' offering generous or small?* 3. *What news does Titus bring to Paul here in Macedonia?* 4. *What are Paul's critics at Corinth saying about him at this time?* 5. *Why is Paul sending Titus back to Corinth?* 6. *What does he write and send with Titus?* 7. *Why will Paul have men accompany him and the churches' offering?* 8. *Name the men who will go with Paul to Jerusalem?* 9. *How does Paul foil a plot against him?* 10. *Who becomes Philippi's representative with the money?*

E. Troas

(Study Acts 20:6-12)

Paul departs from Macedonia and Philippi when he and Luke take ship (v. 6) to go across the Aegean Sea

to meet up with Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus at Troas. Time-wise their departure from Philippi is right after Jerusalem's Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover time) (v. 6). This is to keep us informed as to the time of year it is, for Paul is endeavoring to get this offering to Jerusalem by the coming Feast of Pentecost (see Acts 20:16). Time is becoming a factor. The plot against him at Corinth that has forced him to reroute his course to Jerusalem has thrown him to the north. As they sail away from Philippi, it is but a few weeks until Pentecost. Landing at Troas he decides to spend a few days here where he found an open door a few months before but chose not to develop it then because of his concern for the Corinth case (II Cor. 2:12,13).

His seven-day stop here includes a Lord's day. It is interesting to note the disciples do not come together on the Jewish sabbath (the seventh day of the week) but on the first day of the week (v. 7). The same is seen in I Cor. 16:2. Seventh Day Adventists claim the emperor Constantine changed the day of worship from the sabbath to Sunday. He became emperor in the early 300's. The following quotations from church history all antedate Constantine's time and also give us insight as to why the early church met on the first day instead of the seventh: "We solemnize the day after Saturday in contradiction to those who call this day their sabbath" (Tertullian, A.D. 200); "On one day, the first of the week, we assemble ourselves together" (Bardesanes A.D. 180); "Sunday is the day which we all hold our common assembly, because Jesus Christ, our Savior, on the same day rose from the dead" (Justin Martyr A.D. 140); "We keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead" (Barnabas A.D. 120). What Constantine did was make Sunday a legal holiday throughout his empire. Adventists represent Constantine changing the day of worship and the church accepting his change whereas church history shows the church was

already meeting on that day and he merely legalized that day as one of several steps in Christianizing his vast empire.

Grammatically the independent clause in v. 7 is, "Upon the first day of the week...Paul preached unto them." The dependent clause ("when the disciples came together to break bread") is a non-restrictive clause grammatically (telling us something about the "first day of the week"--that it is the day when the disciples come together to break bread). Campbell says, "All antiquity concurs in evincing that for the first three centuries all the churches broke bread once a week...It was the universal practice in all the weekly assemblies of the brethren." Klingman in his "Church History for Busy People" says, "Many authorities could be quoted to prove the truthfulness of this statement, but it is not called in question by any one who has carefully investigated the subject." Congregations today seeking to be New Testament congregations have the Lord's supper each week.

What a privilege it is for the Troas congregation to have the great apostle with them as it gathers for the weekly communion and to have him preach to them! It is an evening meeting. In congregations where there are slaves, as is often the case in Gentile country, the slaves cannot assemble in daytime. The evening hour enables them to meet after the day's work is over.

The "upper chamber" (v. 8) ("third loft" or third story--v. 9) where the meeting is being held is the top floor of a well-to-do member's house, or it may be rented. With a large crowd in the room and Paul preaching a longer-than-usual message, and with the many lights both burning up the oxygen in the air and creating heat, it is no wonder that young man Eutychus sitting in the window falls asleep and tumbles out to his death (v. 9). This emergency stops the meeting, and Paul and the group rush down where his lifeless body is lying. But this is not the end of the young

man, for Paul miraculously restores him to life (v. 10,12). In so doing he joins that select group who have exercised resurrection-power (Elijah, Elisha, Jesus and Peter).

Since it is after midnight when Paul returns to the meeting hall and breaks bread (v. 10) makes it the next day and not the first day of the week. Is this communion not on the first day of the week? If they are using Jewish time, it is still the first day of the week after midnight, for Jewish days run from sundown to sundown. If it is Roman time (the time that we use), there are two possible solutions to the problem: (1) They have been so engrossed with Paul's preaching that they have forgotten the time and thus unwittingly partake of it after the first day of the week is over; or (2) They have already broken bread in the sense of the Lord's supper, and this breaking of bread in v. 11 is the other use of that expression--the eating of food (see Luke 24:30,35). Luke is employing Roman time, for it says the reason Paul speaks so long (until midnight) is that he is expecting to depart "on the morrow". The next morning would only be "on the morrow" by Roman time.

After the raising of Eutychus it appears the service is ended, and Paul eats and visits with them until his daybreak departure.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where will Paul and Luke meet up with the other men?* 2. *What feast has just passed?* 3. *By which feast is Paul endeavoring to get to Jerusalem?* 4. *Why do Christians meet on the first day of the week instead of the seventh?* 5. *Did Constantine change the day of worship from the seventh to the first day of the week, or did he merely legalize the first day of the week already being observed?* 6. *What do the Christians come together on the first day of*

the week to do? 7. What special privilege does the Troas congregation have this first day of the week? 8. Who goes to sleep and falls out of a window? 9. Is the breaking of bread done after midnight the Lord's supper or an earthly meal? 10. When does Paul depart from Troas?

F. Trip South to Miletus
(Study Acts 20:13-16)

Paul chooses to walk the first leg of this journey--from Troas to Assos (v. 13). It will be twenty miles by land but forty by sea as the ship will have to circumvent Cape Lectum. This in spite of no sleep the night before. It is his own doing (v. 13), evidently wishing to be alone for the day. All he has been through and that which is before him make a day alone with God a most welcome opportunity. Since the ship will not be obligated to wait for him, he is likely at the Assos harbor a short time before its arrival. The ship and Paul's travel companions welcome him aboard (v. 14), and they continue south to the city of Mitylene, capital of the island of Lesbos. Our word "lesbianism" (homosexuality among females) comes from this island's name where this practice became popular just as "sodomy" (homosexuality among men) comes from Sodom where it was practiced. The next day's sailing brings them as far as the island of Chios and the next day to Samos (ASV) or at Trogyllium near Samos (KJV). Samos is the name of both an island and a city on the island. Trogyllium is a peninsula from the mainland that comes within a mile of the isle of Samos. Another day brings them to Miletus, an important seaport on the west coast of Asia Minor. Paul has purposely gotten on a ship that is not stopping at Ephesus, which they have by-passed on their way to Miletus, for he is still hurrying to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost (v. 16).

If you look at the map covering this Third Tour, you will see Paul has been sailing south just off the western shoreline of Asia Minor and between its coast and the Greek islands Lesbos, Chios, and Samos just off that coast.

QUESTIONS: 1. *To what town has Paul chosen to walk?* 2. *How long a trip is it for him?* 3. *Sailing from Assos to Miletus takes them south down the western coast of what land?* 4. *What Greek islands are just to the west of their route?*

G. Miletus
(Study Acts 20:17-38)

Having the elders come from Ephesus (about 30 miles) while the ship is stopped in Miletus harbor means Paul will be ready to go to Jerusalem whenever the ship pulls out.

The words of Paul to the Ephesian elders coming up are among the greatest in all the New Testament. The words recorded in v. 18-35 are worthy of anybody's memorization. Preachers especially will find valuable thoughts in them. Bruce says, "This speech is quite distinctive among all the speeches reported in Acts. It is the only Pauline speech delivered to Christians which Luke has recorded."

First, Paul says they know that from the first day he came into their province the faithful life of service he has lived among them (v. 18), serving the Lord humbly amid both tears and temptations (v. 19), holding back nothing from them that would be helpful to them, for he exemplified his teaching ("shewed you") and taught them publicly (in the synagogue) and from house to house (v. 20) as he sought to get both

Jews and Gentiles to repent toward God and believe in the Lord Jesus (v. 21). In the foregoing we note an emphasis on stability in spite of hardships to be suffered in serving God. Through the centuries God's servants have shown themselves to be made out of the right material. Among the many contrasts so often observable in people who profess to be church leaders and Paul are the humble attitude of Paul, his tears of concern, and the lying in wait of his fellow-countrymen for him. We note too that Paul not only taught but lived what he preached. And he was not only willing to speak publicly but to go into the homes of the lost with the message of Christ. And finally we note he went to both Jews and Gentiles and carried the same message to both.

Turning from his past among them Paul now turns to his uncertain future. Paul tells them that in each city where he has been the Holy Spirit has delivered to him through an inspired man that "bonds and afflictions" await him at Jerusalem (v. 22,23). But we see the strength of Paul's faith and dedication to God when he says, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry" of preaching the gospel of God's grace (v. 24). This same spirit came to characterize the many martyrs who willingly laid down their lives for the Lord Jesus, and every Christian needs this same immoveableness.

At this time Paul is heading for Jerusalem where he will be taken prisoner for a number of years (first at Jerusalem, then at Caesarea, and finally at Rome). After he is released at Rome, it seems obvious that he does revisit Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3) as well as Troas above Ephesus (II Tim. 4:13) and Miletus below Ephesus (II Tim. 4:20). This poses a problem when in v. 25 he is confident he will never see the Ephesian brethren again. In possible solution of the problem "Expositor's Greek New Testament" says Paul's statement here in v. 25 is "no infallible presentiment or prophetic

inspiration but a personal conviction based on human probabilities, which was overruled by subsequent events. The word cannot fairly be taken to mean more than this, for in the same context the Apostle himself had distinctly disclaimed a full knowledge of the future, v. 23." The same source goes on to say, "If 'oida' (the Greek word translated 'know' in v. 25) is to be pressed here into a claim of infallible knowledge, it is difficult to see why it should not be also so pressed in Phil. 1:25 where the Apostle expresses his sure conviction of a release from his Roman imprisonment. Compare also Acts 26:27 where Paul uses the same verb in expressing his firm persuasion of Agrippa's belief but surely not any infallible knowledge of Agrippa's heart."

Just as the aged prophet Samuel declared his service to Israel to be free from covetousness and dishonesty (I Sam. 12:1-5), so does Paul declare his faithfulness in proclaiming "all the counsel of God" to them (v. 26,27). For a background understanding of being "pure from the blood of all men" see both Eze. 3:17-19 and our comment on Acts 18:6. Preachers are not called to preach part of the counsel of God but all of it (Matt. 28:20), not what people want to hear but what Christ commands to be preached (Gal. 1:10 and II Tim. 4:2-4). Such obedience to this divine calling demands conviction, dedication, and reverence and godly fear. Because of this Jas. 3:1 says, "Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment" (ASV).

Having spoken about himself Paul now addresses the elders with reference to themselves and their work, calling on them to take heed (1) to themselves, and (2) to the flock over which they have been divinely placed as overseers (v. 28). All persons must take heed to themselves before they do their work, for without this they are not spiritually fit to be doing any work for God. Beams must be extracted from our eyes before we can see clearly to extract notes from

others' eyes (Matt. 7:5). Unless attention is paid to one's own spiritual life, in time he will not want to do any work for God. Of course, leaders must take heed to the work they have been given to do, for they will be called to render an account in judgment (Heb. 13:17) just like any Christian will be called to account (Matt. 25:14-30). The seriousness of the elders' work is seen when it is not merely "a church" that they are to oversee but "the church of God", and that "purchased with his own blood".

V. 28 points out the Holy Spirit as the great Architect of the church. He has made the elders the overseers of the congregation. They should therefore do that work, and people should recognize their responsibility to be the overseers. As shepherds they are not only to oversee the flock but to "feed" it. This they do by providing the spiritual food (particularly God's Word) that each sheep needs. I Pet. 5:1-4 is a fuller statement of their role.

Note that the "church" is called the "flock" in v. 28 just as it is called a "body" in Col. 1:18, a "house" (temple) in I Tim. 3:15, a "kingdom" in Matt. 16:18,19, and other designations in other passages.

In their overseeing the flock the elders are to be on guard against two likely enemies: (1) wolves from the outside, and (2) leaders from within the congregation (maybe some of the elders themselves, Boles thinks) who will lead away disciples after them (v. 29,30). The wolves who will not spare the flock but ravage it will be false teachers (compare Matt. 7:15). It is sad, but they will adversely affect some of the very people whom Paul has won to Christ. Between Paul's two imprisonments at Rome Timothy is later left at Ephesus to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (I Tim. 1:3). Such a concentrated effort to keep false teachers out of Ephesus must have paid off, for when John wrote the book of Revelation Jesus said to the church at Ephesus, "Thou canst not bear them that are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they

are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2). However that western part of Asia Minor later became the scene of many endless religious controversies so that most of the ecumenical church councils of the early centuries were convened within reasonable proximity of Ephesus including the Council of Ephesus itself in 431: Council of Nicea (325), Council of Constantinople (381), Council of Chalcedon (451), Council of Constantinople (553), Council of Constantinople (680,681), and Council of Nicea (787). Even those who would arise from the congregation itself would be "speaking perverse things" and would "draw away disciples after them" (v. 30). Boles remarks, "The church at Ephesus became notorious in after days as a seat of a great Gnostic heresy. Even in the New Testament writings not fewer than six of the pioneers of these false teachers are mentioned as belonging to Ephesus; they are Hymanaeus and Alexander (I Tim. 1:20), Phygelus and Hermogenes (II Tim. 1:15), and Philetus. In III John 9 we read of Diotrophes who lived at Ephesus."

It is a grave responsibility Paul is laying on the elders when he tells them to "watch" for these things, reminding them that during the three years he was in Ephesus he warned them about this "night and day with tears" (v. 31). As you can see, Paul is no dry theologian doling out deep thoughts without concern for the people themselves. Not only has he warned with "tears" in Ephesus, but "out of much affliction and anguish of heart" he wrote to the Corinthians (II Cor. 2:4); he has warned the Philippian church with weeping about those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18); and he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow" in his heart over the lostness of his people Israel (Rom. 9:1,2; 10:1).

With v. 32 Paul begins to enter into his parting thoughts to these to whom he has committed grave responsibilities. He says, "I commend you to God"--I speak well of you to God, asking His blessing to be

upon you, something they will really need in the task before them. But he also says he commends them "to the word of his grace". But how can he commend them to something impersonal? It seems to this writer he is necessarily personifying God's Word so that just as he is asking God to bless these elders, he is also asking God's gracious Word to build them up and make them strong for their work and also to keep them so they will be partakers of the divine inheritance along with others who are sanctified.

"Sanctified" is a Greek verb used 29 times in the New Testament which in its noun forms (sanctification or holiness) is used another 14 times and which in its adjective form (holy) or noun form (saint) is used, would you believe, another 234 times. That makes it used in one form or another 277 times in the New Testament! And yet it is a word seldom heard today in teaching and preaching and in the conversations of religious people. Note that the "inheritance" (heaven) is for those who are "sanctified". Without holiness ('sanctification'--ASV) no man will get to see God (Heb. 12:14). A worldly person is not sanctified nor is an unconsecrated person. We must be separated from the evil of the world and be set apart to the service and transforming power of God!

His parting reference is that they will financially support those who are in dire circumstances ("laboring ye ought to support the weak"--v. 35; compare Eph. 4:28 and I John 3:17,18) in which he reminds them of his own toil while in Ephesus to provide not only for himself but for those who were with him (v. 34 plus "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel"--v. 33) and also recalls an evidently well known statement of Jesus though it is not found in either of our gospel accounts ("It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v. 35). Jesus subscribed to this truth himself, for He received little but gave much and was helped seldom but helped frequently, for He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). And yet you hear people saying they are taking care of No. 1 (themselves) as an excuse for not doing more for others or the Lord's work. How unlike Christ!

It is time to get to the ship before it pulls out. They all kneel down and pray and cry and hug him and kiss him (v. 36,37). It is an extremely emotional parting for both him and them, for they don't expect to see each other any more on this earth (v. 38). And you can be sure that nobody leaves, but they all accompany him to the ship (v. 38).

QUESTIONS: 1. Who comes to Paul at Miletus while the ship is stopped? 2. Tell some of the things Paul says about his past labors in Ephesus? 3. What problem does he tell them awaits him at Jerusalem? 4. Does he expect ever to be back at Ephesus? 5. Does it appear that he did eventually get back to Ephesus? 6. To what 2 matters does Paul tell the elders to take heed? 7. Who has designed the elders to be "overseers" in the congregation? 8. They are warned to be on guard against what 2 likely enemies to the congregation? 9. What proof does Church History later present that western Asia did become a hotbed of false teachings? 10. How many times is some form of the Greek word "sanctify" used in the New Testament? 11. What instruction does Paul give them concerning helping those who are in dire need in Ephesus? 12. In so doing what well known statement of Jesus does he quote which is not found in any of the gospel accounts but only here? 13. Tell of their parting.

H. Voyage to Tyre (Study Acts 21:1-6)

Sailing is favorable, for they go *a* "straight course unto Coos" (v. 1), a distance of about 40 miles

south of Miletus. Coos is the island where Hippocrates (the father of medicine) lived some four hundred years before Christ. Another day of sailing brings them to the famous harbor of Rhodes--famous for the one-time location of the Colossus of Rhodes, a gigantic statue of Helios made out of brass that was so tall that ships entered and left the harbor by sailing between its legs. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and was destroyed by an earthquake in 224 B.C.

Their next stop is at Patara where Paul gets on a ship sailing to Phenicia (v. 2). This ship circles around Cyprus and heads for Tyre where it is to unload (v. 3).

Now that Paul is on land, he can better control his arrival-time at Jerusalem with reference to the coming Feast of Pentecost, for he can either go to Jerusalem by foot or part way by ship and the rest by foot. He will go by ship and even have time to spend seven days with the church here at Tyre (v. 4). Here also trouble is foretold for him at Jerusalem (v. 4). Again as he departs from brethren for Jerusalem, there is prayer with him--this time "on the shore", kneeling, and every age is there (men, women, and children). No doubt they continue waving to him until the ship finally disappears from sight.

QUESTIONS: 1. What famous man once lived at Coos? 2. What once graced the harbor of Rhodes? 3. At Patara Paul gets on a ship going to what place? 4. How many days does Paul get to spend with the church at Tyre? 5. Tell of his parting from the Christians at Tyre.

I. Ptolemais
(Study Acts 21:7)

Ptolemais is on the north side of the big bay on the Mediterranean. It is a later name for Accho (Acre) of Old Testament times. It is one of the world's oldest cities, occupying the important position of "gateway city" from the Mediterranean to the interior of Palestine via the Plain of Esdraelon east of it. He spends but one day here before continuing his journey southward to Caesarea.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Where is Ptolemais?* 2. *What was its Old Testament name?* 3. *How did its geographical location make it an important city?* 4. *How long is Paul at Ptolemais?*

J. Caesarea
(Study Acts 21:8-14)

Paul is back in the city where years ago he took ship for his hometown Tarsus when the Lord warned him to get out of Jerusalem (Acts 9:28-30) and where he will later spend two years as a prisoner. This stop finds him a guest in the good home of Philip the evangelist. This is not Philip the apostle but the Philip who preached to the Ethiopian years back and preached his way north until he came here to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). Our supposition is that Philip has made this his base of evangelistic operations ever since. Special mention is made of Philip's four virgin daughters all

of whom possess the gift of prophecy (v. 9). While prolonging his visit with Philip's family for several days, the Judean prophet Agabus, who earlier prophesied at Antioch the famine that caused the Antioch church to send an offering to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30), comes where Paul is and likewise predicts the coming imprisonment of Paul at Jerusalem (v. 10,11). Both Paul's party and Philip's family earnestly beg Paul not to continue his trip to Jerusalem under the conditions (v. 12). But Paul remains undisturbed by the prediction and unaffected by the brethren's pleadings (v. 13). Finally the brethren just say, "The will of the Lord be done" (v. 14).

QUESTIONS: 1. In whose home in Caesarea is Paul a guest? 2. What is said about his 4 daughters? 3. Tell of Agabus's visit and prophecy? 4. Who urges Paul not to continue his journey to Jerusalem?

K. To Jerusalem
(Study Acts 21:15-19)

Accompanying Paul and party from Caesarea to Jerusalem is Mnason from the isle of Cyprus called "an old disciple" by the King James but "an early disciple" by the American Standard (v. 16). Like Barnabas from Cyprus he evidently accepted the gospel at very early time. At Jerusalem they are to lodge with him, so he must own some property there.

At Jerusalem Paul is warmly welcomed by the brethren (v. 17), and at a meeting of James (the

Lord's brother and prominent Jerusalem apostle) and the elders he reports to them on his God-blessed work among the Gentiles (v. 18,19). In the later years of the apostles, history tells us of their scattering to different sections for their final years of service. With only James mentioned here, we wonder if that scattering has not already taken place.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Who accompanies Paul and his party the rest of the way to Jerusalem?* 2. *Which apostle is mentioned as being in Jerusalem when Paul arrives and reports his labors among the Gentiles?*

PART FOUR

**PAUL'S
IMPRISONMENT
YEARS**

CHAPTER 11

Prisoner at Jerusalem*A. Paul Narrowly Escapes Death*
(Study Acts 21:20--22:29)

The way Luke reports v. 20 it sounds as if James and the elders do not spend a lot of time glorifying God over Paul's report on his Gentile work but quickly inform him of the strong attitude of some of the Jerusalem members against him. It is hard to understand why they are still so "zealous of the law" when its authority has ceased. Their description here resembles the Ebionite sect of church history that blended Jewish and Christian thought. If these are like the Ebionites (or are the early Ebionites) why should they be coddled instead of corrected? As to the non-efficacy of circumcision in the Christian age Paul has written that it now has no efficacy (I Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:6; Gal.6:15). Yet as a matter of expediency while evangelizing among Jews he has had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1-3). Probably in the same way Paul is willing to conform to certain Jewish customs (see I Cor. 9:20) while at the same time declaring that as a system it cannot save (Acts 13:39). So in order to quiet this element against him and his ministry (v. 21) he accepts the advice of James and the Jerusalem elders to do here (v. 22-24,26) what we have seen that he has already done at Cenchrea on the Second Tour (see Acts 18:18). In so advising Paul they recognize that their decree to the Gentiles in Acts 15 dealt with Gentiles who had never been involved with circumcision and who had never been under the law of Moses (v. 25).

But even though Paul has "bent over backwards" to mellow their attitude toward him, he still ends up in

trouble. In fact the trouble grows out of what certain Jews think they see when he is in the temple purifying himself. But the trouble does not come through the Jerusalem Jews he is seeking to appease but from certain Jews of the province of Asia who are also in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They had seen a Greek (Trophimus from Ephesus of their province) on the streets of Jerusalem with him, and when they see Paul in the temple they suppose he has brought Trophimus into the temple too, thus polluting the temple (v. 27-29). And as they cry, "Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place," it gets the results wished by their anti-Paul minds, for "all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple" (v. 30) and "went about to kill him" (v. 31), he being saved only because the Roman captain hears the uproar, sees what is happening, and goes out with "soldiers and centurions" to rescue him (v. 31,32). Their sudden and unexpected appearance puts an end to the Jews beating of Paul (v. 32). To safeguard him and yet to give his opponents an opportunity to bring their case against him before the Roman authorities, the chief captain orders Paul bound and carried into the castle (v. 33).

When this incident breaks on Paul, he is aware that this is what was divinely predicted in each place to befall him. For awhile it surely looked like it was going to be "death" for him instead of going to "prison" (see his words in v. 13). And thus for him begins a full four years of imprisonment in jails in three different cities (Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome), and it all begins with false supposition and misrepresentation. It is all related to his evangelizing the Gentiles; consequently he later wrote, "I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles" (Eph. 3:1), and since he wrote those words to the Ephesian church

he might well have pointed out that his association with Trophimus (an Ephesian) was really what triggered the trouble in Jerusalem.

The chief captain is interested in finding out who Paul is and what he has done (33), but he can't find out from what he is hearing, for "some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude" (v. 34), so he orders him carried into the castle (v. 34), and as they do so the people follow and cry out, "Away with him" (v. 36), so bitter is their hatred toward him.

As they are carrying Paul up the stairs (v. 35), he asks the chief captain if he may speak with him (v. 37). The captain is surprised that he can speak Greek, thinking he is an Egyptian who sometime ago headed up a band of several thousand murderers (v. 38). Josephus mentions one who fits the description in several ways.

Poor Paul--charged with bringing Greeks into the temple (which he hadn't) and now supposed to be a gagg-leader (which he isn't)! He has asked to speak to the people, but first he speaks to the chief captain to tell him who he is: a "Jew" (not an Egyptian), "of Tarsus" in Cilicia, a "citizen" (not a gang-leader) of "no mean" or insignificant city (Tarsus was a prominent, honorable city of the day) (v. 39), and when he further asks permission to speak to the people (v. 39) the chief captain is agreeable (v. 40), expecting by what Paul will say to learn what the problem is between him and the people. So standing on the stairs above the mob in the court below, Paul beckons with his hand for their attention (compare Acts 13:16 and Acts 26:1), which under the conditions they give him (v. 40). Paul can not only speak Greek, but the chief captain learns he can speak Hebrew also (v. 40), confirming Paul's statement to him that he is a Jew.

Have you found any other chapter of the Bible besides this one ending with a comma?

"Hear ye my defense" (22:1) lets us know why he has asked for permission to speak to them. His wisdom

in choosing the Hebrew language in which to speak to them is seen in their being very quiet to hear what he says (v. 2).

He gives them the same background information concerning himself he has already given the chief captain but proceeds to inform them of his participation in the Jewish religion: (1) "brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel," the great Jewish teacher who himself is mentioned in Acts 5:34ff; (2) "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers;" and (3) "was zealous toward God" in persecuting Christians "as ye all are this day" (v. 3,4). The high priest and the elders can vouch for this, for they are the ones who issued him letters to the Damascus synagogue authorizing him to bring disciples of Jesus from there to Jerusalem for punishment (v. 5).

Then he begins to unfold the divine events that led to his change of mind and life. He speaks of the great light that shone around him as well as those with him and the voice of Jesus asking him why he was persecuting Him (v. 3-9). He told of being sent into Damascus for special instructions and of being led there because of being blinded by the great light (v. 10,11). And who was sent to him with those instructions? "One Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews who dwelt there" (v. 12).

The audience continues to listen as he tells them of Ananias's instructions to him ("Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord") (v. 13-16). (For a fuller treatment of his conversion see comments on Acts 9:3-18.)

He next tells them of coming back to Jerusalem some three years later (Gal. 1:18) and of his trance while praying in the temple in which Christ told him, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me" (v. 17,18). From v. 19,20 it is obvious that Paul tried to persuade the Lord to let him stay on in Jeru-

salem, being sure they would listen to him. But he was told, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (v. 21). They are patient listeners until he mentions "Gentiles" ("They gave him audience unto this word"--v. 22). But they will listen to him no longer. They tear off their clothes, throw dust into the air, and cry out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live" (v. 22,23). It is probably impossible for us to realize how anti-Gentile their Jewish-exclusiveness has made them. Immediately the chief captain has Paul brought into the castle for safe-keeping (v. 24).

Failing to learn what the actual charges are against Paul, the Roman official is going to have Paul "examined by scourging" (v. 24). "It was quite a common practice among Roman provincial rulers to scourge into a confession of their crimes men whom they held as criminals and against whom suitable evidence was not at hand" (McGarvey). As they are tying him with leather thongs in preparation for scourging, Paul says something that changes the whole picture: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (v. 25). The "Porcian Law" forbade scourging a Roman citizen. Immediately the centurion directing the ordered-scourging conveys Paul's startling information to the chief captain (v. 26), who asks Paul directly, "Art thou a Roman?" When he affirms he is, the chief captain says he became a Roman citizen by paying a large sum of money (v. 27,28) and wonders how Paul, a poor and persecuted man, would have the means of becoming a Roman citizen (Barnes). Paul shows it was not a matter of money with him but of being born a Roman citizen (v. 28). How was he "born" a Roman citizen? Some think his being born in Tarsus made him "free born". Rome made some cities "free cities" because of some meritorious act of those cities. Julius Caesar was the first to make Tarsus a free city for its help to him in his war with Egypt. Mark Antony recognized it as a free city as did his successor August-

tus. "Free cities were permitted... to use their own laws and customs, to have their own magistrates, and they were free from being subject to Roman guards" (Barnes), but it did not make people born in them automatic Roman citizens (Robertson). People in Roman provinces were automatically Roman citizens, but people of free cities were citizens of their own city (and such is Paul by his own words--21:39). It is thought, therefore, that Paul is a descendant of some man made a Roman citizen because of some meritorious deed or by having purchased that right like the chief captain.

The reason they depart from Paul with fear, having already bound him (v. 29), is found in a statement by Cicero: "It is a misdeed to bind a Roman citizen--a crime to scourge him--almost parricide to put him to death." Paul is now completely left unmanacled (v. 30).

QUESTIONS: 1. Of what do the leaders inform Paul? 2. What advice does James give him? 3. How do you explain Paul's doing this when he knows the authority of the law has ceased? 4. Does it end the way James intended? 5. Whom do they suppose Paul has actually brought into the temple? 6. Who rescues Paul from the irate Jews? 7. This is actually the beginning of how many years of imprisonment for Paul? 8. In what 3 places? 9. What surprises the chief captain when he hears Paul speaking Hebrew? 10. What request does he make of the chief captain? 11. In what language does he speak to the people? 12. What 3 things does he tell about his life before his conversion to Christianity? 13. How does he describe the Ananias who came to him in Damascus? 14. How long was it before he returned to Jerusalem? 15. Why did he stay in Jerusalem such a short time? 16. What word that Paul says really stirs up his hearers? 17. Why did the chief captain call off scourging Paul? 18. Discuss how Paul might have been "free born".

*B. Paul and His Jewish Accusers Appear
before the Chief Captain
(Study Acts 22:30--23:11)*

The chief captain has been thwarted in every previous attempt to find out what Paul has done. He decides to call in the chief priests and Jewish council along with Paul to find out (22:30).

The first thing stated is Paul's "earnestly beholding the council" (v. 1). He is probably seeing if any of his former colleagues are still a part of the council. A few may be. If poor eyesight is the "thorn in the flesh" mentioned in II Cor. 12:7-9, his "earnestly beholding" the council members is an apt picture of his attempt to analyze the present council.

His statement to have "lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (v. 1) is not contradicted by his having persecuted Christians earlier (see Acts 26:9). To him his action had been an indication of his zeal for God (Phil. 3:6). Such a claim indicates his change from Judaism to Christianity has been sincerely and conscientiously made. It is obvious the high priest Ananias deplores such a statement coming from a man looked on as an apostate and who they consider a criminal, so he commands Paul to be smitten on the mouth for so speaking (v. 1). Robertson says that smiting the mouth or the cheek is an irritating offense and an act seen among Jews from time to time (see Luke 6:29). With personal feelings riled by this blow on the mouth Paul does not remember Jesus' instruction to turn the other cheek (apostles are human) but pronounces him a judicial hypocrite (white-washed wall) for smiting him for making a true statement (v. 3). The council members who are not accustomed to hearing their high priest so reviled reprimand Paul for his words (v. 4). Josephus's history of this Ananias lends the thought that Paul is speaking with sarcasm when he says, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest" (v. 5). He had been high

priest when Quadratus was the Roman ruler. Quadratus had sent him bound to Rome to stand trial for his behavior over certain difficulties between the Jews and Samaritans, and even though Claudius Caesar dismissed Ananias and returned him to Jerusalem he had not restored him to the office of high priest. Jonathan became the new high priest, whose recent murder had left the high priest's office vacant for a time. Barnes remarks, "It was during this interval...that the events which are here recorded take place," and he sees Ananias as merely a fill-in (functioning as high priest without actually being high priest). If he were indeed the high priest, Paul recognizes his obligation to respect the office even if he cannot respect the man occupying it ("It is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people") (v. 5).

Paul, having once been a member of the Sanhedrin, knew that part were Sadducees (who do not believe in any resurrection--v. 8) and part were Pharisees (who do believe in life after death--v. 8) and so decides to say something that will turn that body into a state of conflict within itself. Theologically he has been a Pharisee and so says, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (v. 6). This achieves Paul's purpose, for the two parties break out into theological strife once more finally resulting in this statement from the Pharisees: "We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him (the Sadducees don't believe in spirits or angels either--v. 8), let us not fight against God" (v. 9). At this point the Sadducees are so stirred up and so vindictive against Paul they are going to take matters into their own hands to inflict punishment on him which they see will not otherwise be given Paul, and in protection of Paul the Pharisees take hold of him too in order to rescue him out of their hands. At this point the chief captain (who still hasn't learned what the charge against Paul is) steps in to rescue him a-

gain and has him brought back into the castle (v. 10).

At the time of Paul's baptism Ananias of Damascus mentioned the many things Paul would have to suffer. II Cor. has already been written, so Paul's narration of numerous sufferings in II Cor. 11:23-27 shows he has already suffered much. He is again going through a suffering period, and even though he has affirmed his willingness to go to prison or to death for the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13) God sends an angel this night to stand by him and say, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (v. 11). Paul will not forget this assurance, for he has wanted for a long time to go to Rome (Rom. 1:9-15).

QUESTIONS: 1. *Why might Paul be looking the council over so earnestly?* 2. *What does Paul say that causes him to be smitten on the mouth?* 3. *What does Paul say that really turns the Sadducees against him?* 4. *What does an angel tell Paul this night?*

C. Paul is Transferred to Caesarea
(Study Acts 23:12-35)

McGarvey is again observant when he says, "Notwithstanding the gleam of hope granted to Paul in the night, his prospects grew darker than ever the next morning." The Jews who have been defeated in their purpose to kill Paul in the courtyard (Acts 21:31,32), in their anger at his speech from the stairs (Acts 22:22-24), and in seeing the council's getting nowhere

the day before in the hearing before the chief captain (v. 10) so determine they are to end Paul's life that forty of them enter into an agreement bound by an oath that they will kill him before they eat another bite of food or drink another swallow of liquid (v. 12,13), which means they not only intend to kill him but to do it immediately. And how do they plan to do it? By having the council get the unsuspecting chief captain to bring Paul back out as if to make only a brief inquiry about a matter, and at that instant when he is brought forth they will mob him and kill him before any soldier or soldiers can be ordered to protect him (v. 15).

Probably the chief captain would have granted their request and unknowingly would have played into their hands, but God has promised Paul he will yet get to Rome. How will His providence work to carry it out?

Such a plot involving so many people is hard to keep in absolute secrecy. Somehow a young nephew of Paul overhears somebody and reports it to Paul (v. 16) who in turn requests that his nephew get to deliver a message to the chief captain (v. 17,18). As the chief captain takes him by the hand as they go to a private place to talk (v. 19), it is easy to picture the nephew as of a very young age (a lad). Here he reveals the plot (v. 20,21) and is solemnly charged by the chief captain not to tell anybody he has revealed this to him (22).

Now Providence must move the chief captain to quick action. He is going to transfer Paul out of Jerusalem down to Caesarea to the custody of Felix, the ruler of the land. To do this successfully we note (1) a full military escort consisting of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, is to be provided, and (2) the movement is to be made in the privacy of night (v. 23). He charges the two centurions responsible for the movement to "provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe.

unto Felix the governor" (v. 24). He then hastily writes a letter of explanation to be taken to Felix (v. 25-30). From the letter we learn the chief captain's name (Claudius Lysias) (v. 26).

The full escort goes as far as Antipatris, a city about halfway to Caesarea. The seventy horsemen will be ample escort the rest of the way, so the others return to Jerusalem (v. 31,32). The prisoner is brought to the governor as well as the letter from Lysias, and since Paul is from far-away Cilicia he will be kept at Caesarea until his accusers are summoned from Jerusalem (v. 33-35).

QUESTIONS: 1. How determined to kill Paul are 40 men? 2. Who learns of their plot? 3. To what other city will Paul be moved? 4. Tell of the number in his escort.

CHAPTER 12

Prisoner At Caesarea*A. Paul Appears before the Governor Felix*
(Study Acts 24:1-23)

It is only a few days (five) until Paul's accusers are in Caesarea to testify against him. Paul's case is more important to the Jewish leadership than we can imagine, for the trip will consume two days each way (four days traveling) plus whatever time the hearing will require. We note also that the priest Ananias and the Jerusalem elders come, and they bring a polished orator Tertullus along by whose words of accusation they hope to convince the governor against Paul.

Tertullus begins by laudatory words for the governor concerning the peace enjoyed by his reign about which McGarvey remarks, "While Felix was guilty of much corruption in his administration of affairs, the complimentary words with which Tertullus opened his speech were not undeserved, for he had restored tranquility to the country when it was disturbed first by bands of robbers, second by organized assassins, and lastly by that Egyptian for whom Lysias at first mistook Paul (21:38)."

Tertullus's four charges are either too general ("a pestilent fellow") or concern the Jews and their religion and not the Roman government ("a mover of sedition among...the Jews," "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes," one who went about to profane their temple) (v. 5-8), and as to be expected "the Jews also

assented, saying that these things were so" (v. 9).

Paul is called on to speak next, and he pays Felix an honorable tribute (v. 10) but less ostentatious than that of Tertullus whose words bordered on flattery. The governor listens as Paul tells of having gone to Jerusalem but a few days ago to worship (v. 11). He says nobody found him disputing with any man or stirring up any agitation in the temple or in any of the synagogues or anywhere in the city (v. 12), flatly denying the charges Tertullus brought against him (v. 13). As to his being a ringleader of a religious sect (a charge that means little to this political leader) Paul says he worships "the God of their fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (v. 14, 15). He affirms his conscientiousness toward both God and man (v. 16) (what a tremendous verse v. 16 is!) and tells how he brought alms to his nation (v. 17), referring to the offering he raised from the Gentile churches. He tells that the Asiatic Jews who first accused him are not even present to testify against him (v. 18, 19), and that these who are present really have no accusation to bring unless it be by those who do not believe in the resurrection (v. 20, 21).

In spite of the oratory of Tertullus Felix defers any judgment until the chief captain Lysias comes from Jerusalem with whom he wishes to confer about the case (v. 22). From the freedom he enables Paul to have until Lysias comes, it is evident that Paul has "won the first round" here at Caesarea.

QUESTIONS: 1. Who is Tertullus? 2. What charges are brought against Paul before Felix? 3. Summarize Paul's reply to these charges.

*B. Felix and His Wife Drusilla Hear Paul
concerning Christ
(Study Acts 24:24,25)*

Felix is married to a Jewess Drusilla. The writings of Josephus supply us with historical information concerning her. Her father was the Herod of Acts 12 who killed the apostle James, imprisoned Peter, and delivered the speech that brought about his death (see Acts 12). Drusilla was only six years old when her father died. She was rightfully the wife of Aziz, king of Emesa, but her beauty enamored Felix who induced her to leave Aziz and go with him. She is but twenty at this time.

There is something about Paul that makes him an unusual prisoner to Felix, and he wishes Paul to inform Drusilla and him concerning the faith of Christ (v. 24). There are many aspects of the gospel that Paul can present to them, but he chooses that having to do with human behavior and coming judgment ("he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (v. 25). What a selection for this adulterous couple: "righteousness" of which they fall so far short; "temperance" or self-control by which they have not lived; "judgment to come" for which they are not ready. And the governor trembles as he considers Paul's reasoning about these matters (v. 25) and says to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (25). We are not told what effect Paul's words have on Drusilla. It is too bad Felix sends Paul away at a time when conviction might turn him to Christ, but he can probably see the involvements of repentance that he is not ready to accept.

QUESTIONS: 1. *Who is Felix's wife?* 2. *Who was her father?* 3. *Whose wife had she once been?* 4. *Of what 3 things does Paul reason with them?* 5. *What immediate effect does it have on Felix?*

C. The Next Two Years
(Study Acts 24:26,27)

Evidently realizing it was a vast amount of money Paul gathered from the churches and took to Jerusalem, the thought comes to Felix of Paul's buying his way out of jail (v. 26)--possibly by getting this money from the churches. But Paul is not going to use the Lord's money like this, so he remains a prisoner throughout the rest of Felix's years at Caesarea (two years) (v. 27). But just as Herod Antipas had a high respect for John the Baptist (Mark 6:20), so does Felix for Paul, "wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him" (v. 26). Since Paul does not put up his release-money, he leaves Paul bound to please the Jews (v. 27). It is only two years until, according to Josephus, Felix is banished from his governorship, and he dies. He is succeeded by Festus (v. 27).

QUESTIONS: 1. On what basis will Felix immediately release Paul? 2. How long does Paul remain a prisoner here at Caesarea? 3. Does Felix ever call for Paul and talk with him?

D. Paul Appears before Festus
(Study Acts 25:1-12)

It has been two years since Paul's last recorded appearance (before Felix and Drusilla), and the only mentioned activity of Paul from then to his present appearance before the new governor at Caesarea (Fes-

tus) is that Felix communed with him from time to time. McGarvey mentions, "These two years of imprisonment in Caesarea, if we may judge from the silence of history, were the most inactive of Paul's career. There are no epistles which bear this date; and though his brethren and others had free access to him, we have no recorded effects of their interviews with him."

One of the first things Festus does upon becoming governor is to go to Jerusalem (v. 1) where Paul's enemies have not given up their fight to "get him" (v. 2). What they want is for the governor to summon him to Jerusalem, but if their request is granted Paul will never get to Jerusalem for they will have men hidden someplace between the two cities to jump out and kill him (v. 3). Festus is willing to reopen the case and hear their testimony against Paul, but he will not have him brought to Jerusalem (v. 4)--Providence again at work in Paul's behalf!

After eight or ten days of seeing about matters in Jerusalem Festus returns to his capital (v. 6), accompanied by those being sent to make the accusations against Paul. The next day Paul is brought from the prison to be tried before the new governor (v. 6).

Though there are several accusers and "many and grievous charges" brought by them, Luke says of those charges, "They could not prove" them (v. 7). And Paul himself denies their charges when he says, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar have I offended any thing at all" (v. 8).

Festus can see that Paul should be set free, yet like Felix before him he is wanting to please the Jews, and knowing they want him to go to Jerusalem, he says to Paul, "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of those things before me?" (v. 9). Paul having escaped from there through the help of a great escort is not wishing to go back and so decides to call upon his Roman citizenship again by saying, "I

stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged" (v. 10). (Every Roman Citizen had the right to appeal his case to Caesar's court in Rome.)

We cannot help but appreciate Paul's honesty and commitment to the law of the land when he says, "If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar" (v. 11). Festus and the council both see that Paul has rightly spoken, for after their conferring with each other Festus says to Paul, "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go" (v. 12).

QUESTIONS: 1. *Who is governor after Felix?*
 2. *What do Paul's enemies at Jerusalem want the new governor to do?* 3. *What is their intention?* 4. *What does Paul say when the governor asks him if he will go to Jerusalem and there be tried?*

E. Paul Appears before the Visiting King Agrippa
 (Study Acts 25:13--26:32)

There are no vessels plying the Mediterranean on a regular schedule between Caesarea and Rome, so it is another time of waiting for Paul until a ship comes to Caesarea that will be heading toward Rome. During this waiting-period the brother and sister (Agrippa and Bernice) of Drusilla (Festus's wife) come to Caesarea to congratulate Festus on his appointment as governor (v. 13). This Agrippa is actually Herod Agrippa II, and he along with Bernice and Drusilla are all child-

ren of Herod Agrippa I, the Herod of Acts 12 who was smitten of God. This Agrippa II is ruling east of the Jordan with his residence at Caesarea Philippi. Bernice's history shows that she got around romantically. She was married to Marcus, and after his death married her uncle (king of Chalcis). Since his death she has been living incestuously with her brother Agrippa II. Later she will have a short marriage to the king of Sicily after which she will return and live again with Agrippa II. Her final involvements will be to be mistress to both Vespasian and Titus of Rome. There seems to be very little virtuous blood in the Herod family--all descendants of Herod the Great or Herod I who was ruling when Jesus was born.

During this visit Festus tells Agrippa II about Paul's case (v. 14-21). V. 9 tells us practically nothing of Festus's own thoughts about the Paul-case after Paul's defense before him. Now in the verses being presently considered we can see what he is thinking. Note first that Paul's accusers brought no pertinent charges against him (v. 18). Note also his statement in v. 19 reflecting no personal knowledge about Jesus.

Agrippa II says he would like to hear Paul personally (v. 22). He is more informed about Jesus than Festus. Consider McGarvey's thought: "Being the son of Herod who tried to suppress the Christian faith by killing the apostle James, and imprisoning Peter with the purpose of killing him; a nephew of the Herod who had killed John the Baptist, and mocked Jesus on the day of His crucifixion; and a great grandson of the one who attempted to kill Jesus in His cradle at Bethlehem, the names of Jesus and His apostles had been household words in his family for generations back. The name of Paul was doubtless less familiar than those of the original apostles, but of him he could not have been ignorant. He would not have deigned, as would none of his ancestors, to visit a congregation for the purpose of hearing an apostle, but in the pri-

vacy of the praetorium in which Paul was a prisoner he could gratify his curiosity by hearing him and at the same time render some assistance to Festus." Festus promises him that opportunity on the morrow (v. 22).

You suppose Paul's case will be heard privately by Agrippa II accompanied by Festus. Instead Festus has turned the hearing into a great occasion attended not only by Agrippa II and Bernice, who come in with their royal best ("great pomp"), and Festus but by the "chief captains" (Greek: "chiliarchs"--leader of one thousand soldiers) and the "principal men" of Caesarea (y. 23). Paul, who has already made his appeal to Caesar's court, is brought in before this august group not for a legal hearing but for King Agrippa to hear his story and be able to advise Festus as to what the real accusations are against Paul for Festus's formal report to Caesar when he sends Paul to him (v. 24-27). It is interesting to note that with no Jewish accusers present, it is easy for Festus to say, "I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death" (v. 25) even though his accusers had said, "He ought not to live any longer" (v. 24).

From this point forth it is Agrippa who gives Paul permission to speak (26:1). As Paul prepares to speak to all these of the ruling class (v. 1), we are reminded of what Jesus said earlier about the preaching career of Paul: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before...kings" (Acts 9:15).

It is a relief to Paul to get to be heard by one who is so knowledgeable on questions concerning the Jews and their religion, for Agrippa himself professes the Jewish religion and is Rome's representative with reference to the Jewish temple and priesthood. No wonder Paul speaks as he does in v. 2,3.

After telling the king that his early life was well known by the Jerusalem Jews (referring to when he was a student under Gamaliel in Jerusalem) and a strict Pharisee (v. 4,5), he shows that all that has befallen him grows out of his belief in a resurrec-

tion, for since Acts 23:6-9 the Pharisees of the Jewish council have been willing to release him, and only the Sadducees and their fellow-member (the priest Ananias) have persisted in their attempt to destroy him. In what Paul says in v. 6,7 it is evident he sees Jesus as the obvious fulfillment of the divine promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The resurrection of Jesus is the crowning proof of His deity, which Paul has been proclaiming. He now asks those assembled (the "you" in v. 8 is plural in Greek), "Why should it be thought a thing incredible" (unbelievable) "with you that God should raise the dead?" After all, if God could create the heavens and the earth and everything in them, a belief held by the Jews, why couldn't He raise somebody from the dead? Obviously He could.

Paul shows he has not always believed in Jesus--far from it (consider his words in v. 9-12). And then he tells again the story of his experience near Damascus (v. 13-15). He relates how at this appearance of Jesus he was commissioned by Jesus to go forth with a message that would (1) open people's eyes, (2) turn them from darkness to light, (3) and turn them from the power of Satan unto God so that they might receive (4) forgiveness of sins and (5) inheritance among those who are sanctified through faith in Jesus (v. 16-18). How earnest he is as he tells the king, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (v. 19,20), and he adds, "For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me" (v. 21).

He says it is by the help of God he has been allowed to continue living and witnessing to both small and great in which he states only those things Moses and the other prophets said were to come (v. 22); namely, that the Messiah should suffer and arise from the dead and then show light to the Jews and to the

Gentiles (v. 23).

Paul is waxing too eloquent for the governor Festus, and he interrupts Paul with this loud comment: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" (v. 24). In other words Paul has become so obsessed with this Jesus-matter he has "gone off his rocker". It is interesting that the words, "Thou art beside thyself," are all translated from only one word in the Greek, a word from which we get "maniac". And when he says, "Much learning doth make thee mad," the Greek word for "mad" is the same word again. Paul refuses to accept such a conclusion but solemnly states he is speaking forth "the words of truth and soberness" (v. 25). The word "soberness" in Greek denotes a sound mind (Vine), just the opposite of Festus's representation.

Now lest this interruption should derail Paul's hope of reaching King Agrippa, he says, "The king knoweth of these things...None of these things are hidden from him," for the career of Jesus was well known among the Jews (v. 26). And turning to the king himself Paul speaks to him personally for the fifth time in this appearance ("King Agrippa," v. 2; "King Agrippa," v. 7; "O king," v. 13; "O king Agrippa," v. 19; and "King Agrippa," v. 27). He says, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" As a Jew he does, and Paul doesn't want to give him an opportunity to be timid about his faith in the presence of the objecting-Festus, so Paul immediately adds, "I know that thou believest" (v. 27). At the same time Paul wishes, like a successful salesman, to elicit an agreement from him with what he is saying, hoping for a favorable decision on the king's part of lining up with the Christians. Agrippa can see the bent of Paul's intentions, and not wishing to go the way Paul is hoping says something that begins to draw the hearing to a quick close: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (v. 28). The American Standard reads, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Chris-

tian." Even though all the words in the Greek sentence are simple, it is still not easy to be dogmatically sure about how the king's statement is to be taken. If we could actually hear him say it, his tone of voice (which we do not have) would be most helpful in the matter. The fact that the king himself stops the hearing after Paul makes but one more utterance (and that utterance being another attempt on Paul's part to convert the king to his cause), along with the fact that Acts does not say Agrippa communed again with Paul like Felix did (24:26), causes this writer to conclude Agrippa's statement is not to be taken that he is about to become a Christian.

Before giving you our personal studied conclusion here is the Greek sentence itself to aid you in studying the matter out for yourself: *En oligo* ("in a little" or "with a little") *me* ("me") *peitheis* ("thou persuadest" or "persuadest thou?") *Christianon* ("Christian" or "a Christian") *genesthai* ("to become"). In view of the several possibilities and when taking many things into account, we see it as a question designed to slow Paul's thought of getting a decision from him ("In so little or with so little, persuadest thou me to become a Christian?").

Agrippa's use of the name "Christian" shows that the followers of Christ are known even to outsiders by that divine name that was first given at Antioch (Acts 11:26).

Paul's desire for everyone to be a Christian reflects itself in his remark to the king: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" ("I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds"--ASV) (v. 29). What a change would be brought over the land if Agrippa, Festus, Bernice, the chief captains, and the principal men of Caesarea all become Christians! His "bonds", of course, he is

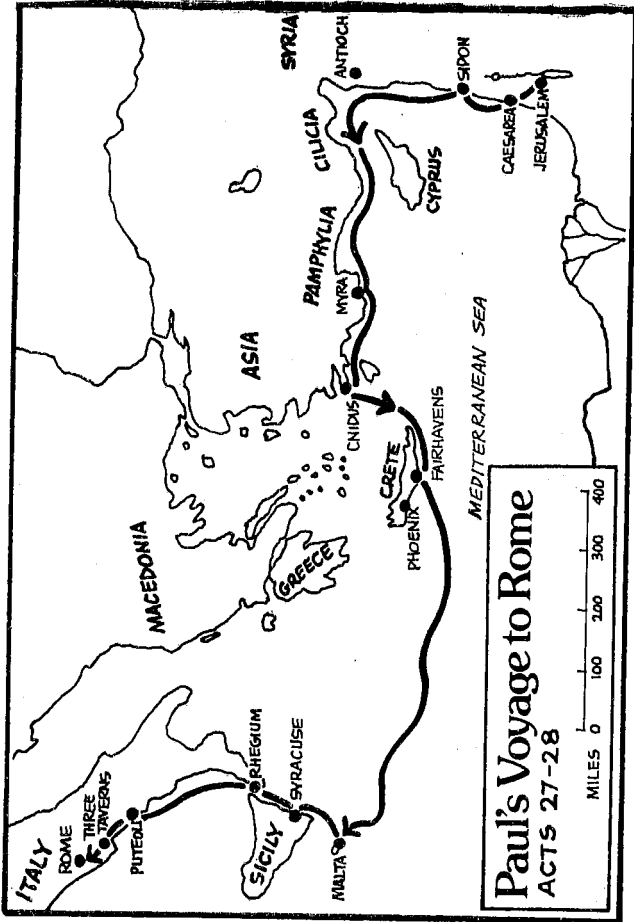
not wishing off on any person.

The king wishes to pursue the matter no further. He rises to signify the hearing is over, and the room is soon empty of its prominent people (v. 30), and Paul is returned to the prison. As the notables confer among themselves in Paul's absence, they say, "This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds" (v. 31), and Agrippa agrees, for he says to Festus, "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar" (v. 32). The legal process having been set in motion when Paul, the Roman citizen, said, "I appeal unto Caesar" (Acts 25:11), it appears he cannot even be set free now without appearing before Caesar.

QUESTIONS: 1. What is the relationship of Drusilla, Bernice, and this Agrippa? 2. Where is this Agrippa ruling? 3. What is the purpose of Paul's case being heard by Agrippa? 4. Who all are present at the hearing? 5. Summarize the material that Paul presents on this occasion? 6. When commissioning Paul what 5 things did Jesus say his preaching would accomplish? 7. What does Festus interrupt Paul to say? 8. What does Paul say in reply? 9. Does Agrippa believe the Old Testament prophets? 10. Give your understanding of the King James's statement, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

CHAPTER 13

Transferred To Rome



A. *The Safe Part of the Trip*
(Study Acts 27:1-12)

Festus not only has Paul to move to Rome but also a whole group of other prisoners. V. 37 places the number of people on board at 276, probably mostly these prisoners (some would be the crew and the guards). They are being transferred under the watchful eye of the centurion Julius and his soldiers (later mentioned in v. 42). When he finds a ship going in the direction of Rome, he puts Paul and the other prisoners aboard. Paul anticipates the trip as he has every reason to be confident of his release at Rome where he has long wanted to go anyway. But the other prisoners probably have a different outlook about the trip. Lardner says it was common to send prisoners from the various Roman provinces to Rome either for punishment or for fighting in the arena.

Notice the "we" and "us" in v. 2--indicating Luke, the author of Acts, is with him as is Aristarchus of Thessalonica. You will remember from Acts 20 that both of these men accompanied Paul and the Gentile offering to Jerusalem. It is likely they have remained with him through the trials of his imprisonment. It is commonly conjectured that it is while Luke was with Paul during his two years at Caesarea that he wrote the Gospel of Luke. This is a plausible conjecture, for from the prison at Rome two years later he will write Acts (Acts 28:30,31), and his Gospel account was written prior to his Acts history (see Acts 1:1). In his Gospel account Luke mentions personal contact with eye-witnesses to the life of Jesus (Luke 1:1-3). This he surely would have had in Palestine better than in Troas where he originally joined Paul's party or in Philippi where he rejoined it. Had he been a Jew he would of course have been in Jerusalem numerous times, but since he is a Greek this may have been his first time in Jerusalem. Aristarchus is still with Paul when he writes Colossians from his Roman prison

(Col. 4:10).

The ship they are on is going to Adramyttium, a city on the west coast of Mysia. Mysia is a province in northwestern Asia Minor. Since it is getting late to sail on the open sea, the ship will parallel the coast as much as possible (v. 2). The first stop is at Sidon, ancient Phoenician city on the Mediterranean. There is enough stop-over here that Paul can visit with friends here. This fact indicates there is a congregation here (v. 3). Luke's mentioning that Julius courteously allows Paul liberty to leave the ship to visit his friends shows he is fully trusted by the centurion and is looked on as an innocent prisoner. As we shall see, Julius will respect Paul even more as the trip progresses.

Because of the high and contrary winds at sea as the ship leaves Sidon, it sails "under Cyrus" (between the island of Cyprus and the mainland) over the "sea of Cilicia" (Paul's native province where Tarsus is) "and Pamphylia" until coming to the city of Myra in extreme southwest Asia Minor (v. 5). Here they leave the ship since it will continue its journey northward to Adramyttium, and the centurion puts the prisoners aboard a ship hauling wheat (v. 38) out of Egypt (Alexandria) to Italy (v. 6).

It is slow sailing between Myra and Cnidus ("many days" for the 130-mile trip) (v. 7). At Cnidus the ship turns south and sails between the east end of Crete and the island of Salmone (v. 7). The ship docks at Fair Havens near the city of Lasea midway east-west on Crete's south shore (v. 8).

It is obvious that they cannot make it to Rome before winter hits. Calendar-wise they really should not leave Fair Havens, but it is not as commodious to winter in as Phenice (Phoenix) to the west (v. 12). The "much time" at Fair Havens (v. 9) is likely spent waiting for the proper wind-condition to prevail that will enable them to go on to Phenice. Luke tells us how late in the year it is getting to be ("the fast

was now already past"--v. 9). This is a Jewish expression for the Day of Atonement (October). This makes it late for sailing. The more part advised to depart thence...if by any means they might attain to Phenice (Phoenix)" (v. 12). The owner of the ship is willing to risk the voyage (v. 11) in order to have the safer port for his vessel during the winter storms. But Paul admonishes them, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives" (v. 9,10). This is no doubt an inspired utterance that will prove to be true. The centurion favors taking the ship-owner's advice (v. 11), and so when a gentle breeze comes up they head for the desired port (v. 13). But trouble is ahead!

QUESTIONS: 1. How many are on board the ship?
 2. Why are they going to Rome? 3. What is the centurion's name? 4. What 2 Christian men are on the ship as well as Paul? 5. Why does the ship sail close to the coast line? 6. Why do they not want to winter at Fair Havens? 7. Where do they want to winter? 8. What advice does Paul give the centurion?

B. The Dangerous Part of the Trip
 (Study Acts 27:13-44)

From Fair Havens it is only five miles to Cape Matala and then thirty-five more on to Phenice. This movement to the better harbor should be accomplished in about four hours. But soon the soft south wind is

replaced by a violent wind from the northeast (v. 14). This is not good news. These mariners know of this wind and have a name for it ("Euroclydon," meaning "northeast wind"). They are trying to sail to the northwest since they have passed the cape, and this northeasterly wind is striking them broadside (v. 15). The ship gets blown off-course, and instead of keeping close to the shore of Crete as they started out to do (v. 13) they go south of the island Clauda instead of between it and Crete (v. 16). Now look at your map--they will never see Phenice, for they are blown out into the open sea and will ultimately be wrecked on the island Melita many miles west several weeks later.

Necessity forces them to work hard to do what they can do. "We had much work to come by the boat" in v. 16 is translated, "We were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat," in the American Standard. This is a boat normally towed by a ship during good weather but hoisted onto deck in bad weather. Their difficulty in raising it is probably due to its being considerably filled with water from the storm. Next "they used helps, undergirding the ship" (v. 17). McGarvey's comment many years ago, "The undergirding consisted in passing cables around the hull of the vessel and drawing them tight by the capstan so as to prevent her timbers from parting," is borne out by the New American Standard's rendering that they employed supporting cables to undergird the ship.

The "quicksands" of v. 17 are called "Syrtis" in the American Standard and were well known to those shipping on the Mediterranean. They were to the southwest of Crete, the very direction Euroclydon is blowing them. Their situation, already desperate, is growing worse. To do something against being blown further southwest they "strake sail" ("lowered the gear"--ASV) (v. 17) or lowered part of the sails. This does keep them from being driven into the feared Syrtis (see map). However, the storm continues to beat on them, and they are "exceedingly tossed with the tempest" (v.

18). What next can they do? They throw some of the cargo overboard (v. 18), maybe some of the wheat mentioned in v. 38 or maybe other cargo being hauled to Italy. The ship is riding too deep in being pitched up and down. Luke and others ("we") get involved in throwing the "tackling" out next (v. 19). Scholars have not agreed on what is meant by this word, but it has to do with those items of the ship that can be dispensed with under these conditions.

All we can say for the situation of the crew and passengers is that they are still alive, but they have given up all expectation of ever setting foot on land again (v. 20). Their incapacitated vessel is now at the mercy of the sea and the elements. The storm has allowed neither sun to shine on them by day nor stars by night for "many days" (v. 20). They are out on the open sea, and they don't know where they are: "As the mariners of the age were dependent on the sun and the stars exclusively for a knowledge of the direction in which they were sailing, when they had seen neither for many days and the storm was unabated, they had no definite idea as to where they were and hence their despair of being saved" (McGarvey).

Many days have gone by, and nobody has had any appetite to eat (v. 21). God has revealed a heartening message to Paul which he shares with those on board. In order to get them to believe what he is about to say, he reminds them they would be in a different situation now if they had believed him before (v. 21). His statement that they will lose the ship but that none of them will perish seems impossible to be true (v. 22). On what is his statement based? "An angel of God" stood by Paul in the night and said, "Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Caesar; and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with me" (v. 23). Since Paul belongs to God and serves Him (v. 23), he says to his comrades, "Sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me" (v. 25). This is the confidence of all

who implicitly believe on God's Word: "God said it...I believe it...That settles it." As Jesus said to God, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Mystery is added to their imaginations as Paul next says, "Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island" (v. 26), and they will be.

It has been two weeks since leaving the peaceful Fair Havens on Crete (v. 27). During this time they have been "driven to and fro in the sea of Adria" (v. 27). "Adria" is short for "Adriatic", and its use here shows that name to be used for more sea then than now.

About midnight the crew members are of the opinion they are nearing some land (v. 27). They sound for depth and find it is twenty fathoms (one hundred twenty feet deep) (v. 28). A little later they find the depth to be ninety feet. They are losing depth fast enough that they decide to anchor the ship with four anchors from the stern (back part of the ship) until daylight (v. 29). At this point the crew decides to trust their fate to the emergency boat aboard. They begin letting it down as if they are going to use it for putting anchors out the front part of the ship (v. 30) while their real intention is to get in it, escape to land, and leave the battered ship to whatever fate awaits it. But Paul sees what is happening and says to the centurion and to his soldiers to stop the crew from abandoning the ship, saying, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (v. 31). The soldiers cut the ropes, causing the boat to fall to the water below before the crew can get into it (v. 32).

It is obvious that Paul is more and more taking a leading role in the prevailing situation. As daytime nears, he urges them all to take some food since it has been so long since they have eaten (v. 33) and especially since "there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you" (v. 34). This man of God is in no way ashamed but in the presence of them all "he took bread, and gave thanks to God" and began to eat (v. 35), and they did likewise (v. 36). Other examples of

returning thanks before eating: Luke 24:30; Matt. 14:19; I Tim. 4:3-5. We who have prayed for our "daily bread" (Matt. 6:11) should not forget to thank the Father when He sends it. Food and something social like a meal are cheering (v. 36). It is in conjunction with this meal that Luke tells us how many are on the ship (two hundred seventy-six) (v.37), mentioned here because this is possibly the first time they have all gathered together in a common meeting.

Since they are anchored and awaiting the day when they hope to proceed to whatever land they are near they "lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea" (v. 38). This will allow them to proceed into shallower waters as the ship will ride higher.

As daylight comes, they can see they are in reality near some land, but nobody recognizes the place (v. 39). However, they are glad to see land once more regardless of what land it is! Noticing a creek running into the sea, their plan is to let the nose of the ship enter the creek (v. 39). A slightly different setting is portrayed by the American Standard: "They perceived a certain bay with a beach, and they took counsel whether they could drive the ship upon it." No mention is made of the storm continuing. Since no mention is made of the storm, evidently they are through with it. Being ready to try for shore, they take up the anchors ("casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea"--ASV), lower the rudders that had been raised out of the water while the anchors were out, and raised up a sail (v. 40). To one who knows the general geography of where they are, a very clear picture comes to mind by the expression, "Where two seas meet" (v. 41). What "two seas"? Barnes: "Greek: Into a place of a double sea (*dithakassa*). That is, a place which is washed on both sides by the sea. It refers properly to an isthmus, tongue of land, and which was washed on both sides by the waves. It is evident that this was not properly an isthmus that was above the waves, but was probably a long sand-bar that stretched

far out into the sea, and which they did not perceive. In endeavoring to make the harbor they ran on this bar or sand-bank." McGarvey says in speaking of the two currents striking the free end of the stuck-boat that they are in sailor's phraseology "two seas". He goes on to say that they strike the stern so that the timbers, already under great strain, immediately give way so that the ship is actually breaking up, and that if those on board are going to escape they must do something immediately. Sensing what is about to happen, "the soldiers' counsel wasto kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape" (v. 42). The lone stated reason for the centurion's not accepting the soldier's counsel (he wants to spare Paul) (v. 43) shows the high regard this Roman official Julius has developed for his unusual prisoner. He tells those who can swim to jump off the wreckage and get to land and the rest to jump into the water, hold onto broken boards from the wrecked ship, and be washed ashore by the waves (43,44). And they all make it safe to land (v. 44) just as Paul earlier predicted: "Be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship" (v. 22).

QUESTIONS: 1. What does "Euroclydon" mean? 2. What does it mean when it says "they used helps, undergirding the ship"? 3. What do they do to keep from being blown southwest on to the quicksands? 4. In the midst of their despair what heartening message does Paul bring to them? 5. How do the crew members try to make their escape from the ship? 6. What does Paul do before they eat? 7. How does their ship become wrecked? 8. In what 2 ways do the members of the group get to shore safely?

C. Wintering on Melita
(Study Acts 28:1-10)

The prisoners make no attempt to escape, for where will they go (they are on an island)? And how can they get anywhere else?

"Luke calls the islanders barbarians" (v. 2) "because thus the Greeks and Romans styled all people except themselves. The term bore less of reproach than it does with us. These barbarians were very far from being savages" (McGarvey). A ship aground just off their shore in the early morning is excitement to the island-people who gather near the shore to watch the happenings. It is from them that the stranded travelers learn they are on the island of "Melita" (Malta today south of Italy) (v. 1). The men can hardly believe they are actually on land again for at one time this seemed absolutely impossible (27:20). We have not yet mentioned the fact that this is not the first time Paul has been involved in a shipwreck. When he earlier wrote II Corinthians he then had already been shipwrecked three times (II Cor. 11:25) and according to that verse on one of them had spent "a night and a day...in the deep".

Providence has brought them to an island-people of a compassionate nature, for Luke says they "shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold" (v. 2). The early winter rains of this coastal area make it a most disagreeable time to be washed ashore water-soaked. It has to be a large bonfire to enable nearly three hundred men to crowd around it.

It is while putting wood on the fire that God uses miracle-power to gain further hospitality for the abandoned men and also to enable Paul to be an influential man during their winter here. And more and more Julius realizes how valuable Paul is to the group. What a sight when the hard-working Paul has a

viper come out of the fire's smoke and fasten itself on his hand (v. 3)! The islanders have no doubt picked up by this time the fact that their "guests" are actually prisoners bound for Rome. When they see the viper hanging on Paul's hand, they say among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live" (v. 4). Thus the stage is set for the great miracle. When Paul shakes off the venomous beast into the fire and still hours later has suffered no harm from it, the curious onlookers are so changed in their conclusion concerning Paul that they now think he is a god (v. 5,6).

Until other arrangements can be made Publius, a Roman ruler ("chief man of the island"), hospitably cares for the group for three days (v. 7). His goodness to so large a group is more than repaid when Paul miraculously heals his very sick father (v. 8). Word spreads, and others locally and throughout the island do not miss the opportunity to bring their sick to Paul to heal (v. 9). Paul's kindness to them will also be well repaid when the island-people graciously outfit them with many things for their departure for Rome later.

McGarvey wisely observes, "We cannot suppose that Paul healed diseases among the islanders so generally without mentioning the name of Jesus. On the contrary, though Luke makes no mention of it, we must think that from the palace of the governor to the remotest hamlet of the island the name and power of Jesus were fully made known during the three months of his stay."

QUESTIONS: 1. *In what sense are the islanders "Barbarians"?* 2. *On what island are they?* 3. *Tell about the weather.* 4. *What happens as Paul is putting wood on the fire?* 5. *What do the islanders think when they*

see this? 6. *When no harm follows, what do they think now?* 7. *What miracles does Paul perform?*

D. On to Rome
(Study Acts 28:11-16a)

Shipping resumes on the Mediterranean as the worst of winter ends. A ship of Alexandria, Egypt that has also wintered at Melita is ready to sail northward (v. 11). "Castor and Pollux" (v. 11) were twin sons of Jupiter in mythology and were held to be the special guardians of sailors. Authorities tell us their images often graced such vessels.

There are varying attitudes about their departure from Melita. The island-people are no doubt reluctant to see them go. Paul is eager to get on his way to Rome, the brethren there, and freedom. The centurion will be glad to see his mission of transporting so many prisoners under such adverse conditions completed. Those prisoners who will not be acquitted at Rome and those who will be made to fight wild animals in the arena would much prefer remaining on the island. Farewells are bidden as the ship sails out of port on its way north. We wonder if their shipwreck experience has made them skeptical of boarding another ship?

Their first stop is at Syracuse on the famous island of Sicily (just off the toe of Italy's boot-shaped peninsula) where the ship stops for three days (v. 12). Instead of "from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium" (v. 13), the American Standard reads, "From thence we made a circuit, and arrived at Regium," suggesting that the winds blew them off the straight course between the two cities. At Rhegium

they are actually in Italy (on the toe of the boot). After one day at Rhegium the wind is very desirable for continuing the journey (v. 13) enabling them to make the one hundred eighty mile trip to Puteoli in only a day (v. 13). "Puteoli" means "the wells". Barnes says, "It was celebrated for its warm baths, and from these and its springs it is supposed to have derived its name." The gospel has been preached here by somebody, for they find "brethren" here (v. 14). Seven days are spent here (v. 14) during which time word about Paul gets to the church at Rome. When the tipp toward Rome is resumed certain brethren from Rome meet Paul at Appii Forum, and still others meet him ten miles north at Three Taverns (v. 15). Barnes says of Appii Forum, "This was a city 56 miles from Rome... The city was built on the celebrated Appian way, or road from Rome to Capua. The road was made by Appius Claudius and probably the city also. It was called the 'forum' or 'market-place' of Appius because it was a convenient place for travelers on the Appian way to trip for purposes of refreshment. It was also a famous resort for pedlars and merchants." Three Taverns was another such rest-and-refreshment place on the road to Rome.

These brethren coming to meet him means much to Paul: "He thanked God, and took courage" (v. 15). After being denied the fellowship of Christians (except for Luke and Aristarchus) for several months, his joy over their coming to meet him is quite understandable.

- QUESTIONS: 1. Comment on "Castor and Pollus".
2. Who come to Appii Forum and Three Taverns? 3. How does their coming affect Paul?

CHAPTER 14

Prisoner At Rome*A. Acts' Account*
(Study Acts 28:16-31)

The centurion Julius bids an adieu to Paul as he delivers him to the captain of the guard who permits him to dwell by himself with a soldier responsible for him (v. 16). Paul's privileged condition as a prisoner is further indicated by the fact that after he has been in Rome only three days he can call the chief of the Jews together to talk to them (v. 17). He rehearses his case with them (v. 17-20). The Jerusalem Jews evidently dropped any hope in his case when at Caesarea he made his appeal to Caesar, for these Jews here at Rome say to him, "We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee" (v. 21).

These Jews welcome the opportunity to talk with somebody of the Christian faith like Paul, for they say, "We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against" (v. 22), so they set a day when they and others can come to his lodging to hear him about the matter (v. 23). We catch from their comment what we would expect--that among the Jews Christianity is universally spoken against.

The appointed day arrives, and Paul welcomes the opportunity to speak to his own Jewish brethren "from morning till evening" (v. 23). Earlier when writing to his Christian brethren in Rome concerning the Jews, he said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1).

Notice also what he wrote in Rom. 9:1-4. What Paul presents on this occasion is material in the law of Moses and the prophets that has to do with the kingdom of God and with the career of Jesus (v. 23). How much those of us who teach courses in Old Testament Prophets would be treated by being present to hear what Paul expounds and testifies (v. 23)!

The day has been profitable, for some are made believers by the things Paul has spoken, but not all (v. 24). From "they agreed not among themselves" (v. 25), you can see that serious discussion has broken out among those Jews who believe and those who don't. Before they depart at the end of day, Paul quotes from their venerated prophet Isaiah concerning their willful disregard of the convincing evidence presented to them (v. 25-27 refers to Isa. 6:9,10). Paul also tells them what he has told stubborn Jews elsewhere: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (v. 28). As the Jews leave Paul's place, they are still carrying on their heated discussion over what Paul has taught (v. 28).

As we come to the last two verses of Acts, there is something we are still waiting for--his hearing before Caesar! Why is he held a prisoner at Rome "two whole years" when he should be set free? In his Introduction Reece ably shows that if a person's accusers do not show up within two years to testify against him, he is automatically released. So Paul is detained until that time expires. During this time Paul is given every liberty of "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 31) to "all that came in unto him" (v. 30). It is at the end of these two years that Luke writes this great book to his fellow-Greek Theophilus.

QUESTIONS: 1. *How is Paul's imprisonment in Rome different from most prisoners' imprisonment?* 2. *What have the Jews in Rome heard about Paul's case?*

3. Why are they interested in hearing what Paul has to say about Christianity? 4. Tell what happens when they hear him. 5. How long is Paul a prisoner in Rome?

B. Gleanings from His "Prison Epistles"

As we have noted, these two years have been busy years for Paul. Besides teaching many people in Rome, he has written four epistles now a part of our New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. These are commonly referred to as Paul's "prison epistles". From them we can glean bits of information concerning these two years.

The church at Philippi sends Epaphroditus to Paul with a generous gift (Phil. 4:10,18). While he is staying on to minister to Paul, Epaphroditus becomes deathly ill and almost dies (Phil. 2:27,30). After he recovers, he returns to Philippi carrying Paul's Philippians epistle with him. Other gleanings from Philippians: (1) Some of "Caesar's household" (probably servants) have been converted (Phil. 4:22); (2) Paul's bonds in Christ being manifest in the palace have emboldened many brethren of Rome to be bolder in their evangelizing for Christ (Phil. 1:13,14), causing Paul to say, "The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12); (3) Sometime during these two years Timothy has come to be with Paul at Rome (Phil. 2:19).

Also during these years Paul is able to convert a slave Onesimus, who had run away from his master Philemon, a member of the Colossian church (Phm. 10, 11). Paul now sends him back to his master (Phm. 12, 15-19). Accompanying Onesimus to Colosse is Tychicus of Asia bearing both the Colossian and the Philemon epistles (Col. 4:7-9). They will go by ship to Ephesus and by land from Ephesus to Colosse. Paul also sends the Ephesian epistle by Tychicus to drop off as they

go through Ephesus (Eph. 6:21,22). From Col. 4:12 we learn that Epaphras of Colosse is also with Paul when he writes Colossians while from Phm. 23 we see that Mark and Demas are also with Paul at the time of writing.

From Paul's later and final epistles (I and II Timothy and Titus) we conclude that he gets released from the Jewish charge against him to accomplish some of the aspirations he has had while being detained at Rome.

We cannot conclude our study of Acts without remarking that we are so indebted to this inspired account for our knowledge of what happened during the first third of a century of the church. May we say that we selfishly lament that we do not have a similar book of history covering the happenings from the end of Acts to the death of the last apostle (John)? Being denied such a chronological coverage, we are forced to piece together fragments of information from several epistles to know what little we do about the last portion of the apostolic age.

As a parting tribute to the great apostle Paul, let us say that from the time he is introduced to us at the stoning of Stephen (chapter 7), there is very little recorded in the rest of the book of Acts that is not related to him in some way either directly or indirectly. His conversion and fruitful labors thereafter forever stand as a testimony to the truth of the gospel, to the power of it, and to the victory of it!

QUESTIONS: 1. What epistles does Paul write during his Roman imprisonment? 2. What man from Philippi becomes deathly ill while ministering to Paul? 3. Who is Onesimus? 4. Who is his master at Colosse? 5. What epistles tell us bits and pieces of Paul's life after he is released from this imprisonment?

SUGGESTED VERSES TO MEMORIZE

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Acts 1:8 | 27. Acts 16:9 |
| 2. Acts 1:11 | 28. Acts 16:25 |
| 3. Acts 2:36 | 29. Acts 17:2 |
| 4. Acts 2:38 | 30. Acts 17:6 |
| 5. Acts 2:42 | 31. Acts 17:11 |
| 6. Acts 2:47 | 32. Acts 17:16 |
| 7. Acts 4:11 | 33. Acts 17:30 |
| 8. Acts 4:12 | 34. Acts 17:31 |
| 9. Acts 5:28 | 35. Acts 18:8 |
| 10. Acts 5:29 | 36. Acts 20:7 |
| 11. Acts 5:41 | 37. Acts 20:27 |
| 12. Acts 5:42 | 38. Acts 20:28 |
| 13. Acts 6:7 | 39. Acts 21:13 |
| 14. Acts 8:4 | 40. Acts 22:16 |
| 15. Acts 8:5 | 41. Acts 23:1 |
| 16. Acts 8:12 | 42. Acts 23:8 |
| 17. Acts 8:22 | 43. Acts 24:16 |
| 18. Acts 8:35 | 44. Acts 24:25 |
| 19. Acts 8:38 | 45. Acts 26:9 |
| 20. Acts 9:4 | 46. Acts 26:18 |
| 21. Acts 9:6 | 47. Acts 26:25 |
| 22. Acts 9:15 | 48. Acts 27:25 |
| 23. Acts 9:31 | 49. Acts 28:22 |
| 24. Acts 11:26 | 50. Acts 28:24 |
| 25. Acts 15:36 | 51. Acts 28:30 |
| 26. Acts 16:5 | 52. Acts 28:31 |

Comprehensive Examination over All of Acts

1. What was the "former treatise" written to Theophilus?
2. What does "Theophilus" mean?
3. How many days was it between Jesus' resurrection and ascension?
4. Give the miniature outline of Acts found in Acts 1:8.
5. What do 2 angels announce at the ascension?
6. The names of what mountain and town are connected with the ascension?
7. What is a "sabbath day's journey"?
8. Why do some think Matthias was not a real apostle?
9. Give an argument in favor of his apostleship.
10. In what sense was Judas the purchaser of the field of blood?
11. How do we know the Day of Pentecost was the first day of the week?
12. How do we know the apostles and not the 120 were baptized with the Holy Spirit?
13. What do the mockers say about the tongues-speaking apostles?
14. What Old Testament prophet predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit?
15. In what sense were Jesus' miracles (1) mighty works, (2) wonders, and (3) signs?
16. Who does Peter say were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus?
17. How did the Holy Spirit convict people on Pentecost?
18. What 2 things did Peter command the inquiring Jews of Pentecost to do?
19. What 2 blessings did he promise them if they obeyed?
20. What is the meaning of the Greek word "baptizo"?

21. How many were baptized on that day?
22. In what 4 things did the early converts continue?
23. What is a plausible reason why the Jerusalem members sold possessions and gave to those among them?
24. In what 2 ways is "breaking of bread" used in the Bible?
25. What time of day was the Jewish hour of prayer?
26. What was the priest doing in the temple at the same time?
27. What apostle healed the lame man at the temple gate?
28. What doctrine particularly grieved the temple-leaders and why?
29. What great statement about the name of Jesus and salvation does Peter make to Jewish leaders?
30. What was Barnabas's name originally?
31. What island was his native home?
32. Was Ananias and Sapphira's sin lying or holding back some of the sale-money?
33. What was said about Peter's shadow?
34. What famous Jewish teacher saved the apostles from the council's wrath?
35. In what 2 places do the apostles continue teaching and preaching after dismissed by the council?
36. Who are Grecian Jews?
37. How many men were to look after the Grecian Jewish widows?
38. Which 2 of those men are the best known to us?
39. Discuss whether these men were deacons or not.
40. How were these men set apart to their work?
41. What lie did they tell about Stephen?
42. Comment on Stephen's face being like an angel's.
43. Why does Stephen call his hearers "brethren" when they are obviously not followers of Christ?
44. Name at least 1 fact of Old Testament history in Stephen's message not found in the Old Testament.
45. What personal charge does Stephen make against his listeners?

46. What does Stephen see in heaven?
47. What was Saul of Tarsus' part in this event?
48. What happens to the Jerusalem congregation after Stephen's death?
49. To what city does Philip go with the gospel?
50. What sorcerer had long bewitched the people of that city?
51. What success does Philip's work there result in?
52. What 2 apostles come to confer the Holy Spirit?
53. Discuss the ex-sorcerer's financial offer and what followed.
54. Tell of the man in the chariot to whom Philip is next sent.
55. Tell of his baptism.
56. How do the 2 men part?
57. Near what city does Saul of Tarsus see a great light?
58. What does a voice ask him?
59. What does Saul want to know about the voice?
60. What does the voice then tell him?
61. Where is Saul led?
62. Who is sent to Saul?
63. What 2 things does he do for Saul?
64. How does Saul escape when he later came back to preach in that city?
65. What problem did Saul find when he tried to be a part of the Jerusalem church?
66. Who vouched for the sincerity of his conversion?
67. What shortens his stay in Jerusalem?
68. Where does he go at this time?
69. How many years had Aeneas been bedfast?
70. What good woman did Peter raise at Joppa?
71. With whom does Peter stay at Joppa?
72. What centurion was stationed at Caesarea?
73. What does an angel tell him to do?
74. Tell of Peter's vision on the housetop.
75. What measure of the Holy Spirit came on the centurion as Peter preached in his house?

76. Why did God send the Holy Spirit upon him in the way He did?
77. How do the other apostles criticize Peter when he gets back to Jerusalem?
78. What convinces them that Peter has done the right thing?
79. What was the first congregation to have both Jews and Gentiles in it?
80. Who brings Saul to Antioch?
81. How long did they labor at Antioch at that time?
82. What divine name was revealed at Antioch at that time?
83. What prophet predicted the coming of a great famine?
84. What did the Antioch church do in response?
85. What tragedy befalls the Jerusalem church about the time that Barnabas and Saul arrive?
86. In whose house were many gathered for prayer?
87. Who answered the door when Peter knocked?
88. Who went to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul?
89. Name the 5 prophets and teachers working together at Antioch.
90. What plan does the Holy Spirit have for Barnabas and Saul?
91. At what 2 places on the island of Cyprus do they preach?
92. Tell of Elymas the sorcerer.
93. Who departs from Barnabas and Saul at Perga?
94. Who becomes the more prominent of these two men?
95. What is Saul's better known name?
96. What were some of the other cities where they went on this First Tour?
97. Whom did they heal at Lystra?
98. What happened to Paul before they left Lystra?
99. What did they do on their return trip to Antioch?
100. What dissension broke out in Antioch?
101. Where do Paul and Barnabas go about the matter?
102. What was the apostles' decision in the matter?
103. About 4 temptations did the apostolic letter warn the Gentile Christians?

104. Who suggested the Second Tour?
105. What problem arose before the tour got started?
106. Whom did Paul take with him on the Second Tour?
107. Who joined their party at Lystra?
108. Who joined their party at Troas?
109. What is meant by the "Macedonian Call"?
110. What 2 persons and their households were baptized at Philippi?
111. Tell of Paul at Thessalonica.
112. Tell of Paul at Berea.
113. Tell of Paul at Athens.
114. Tell of Paul at Corinth.
115. Tell of Apollos
116. Tell of Paul in Ephesus.
117. What offering was Paul collecting on this Third Tour?
118. Who were some of the men accompanying him with the offering?
119. In what city do we see them breaking bread with the church on the first day of the week?
120. What young man fell out of a window there?
121. What did Paul say to the elders from Ephesus when he talked with them at Miletus?
122. Who advised Paul to try to appease some of the Jewish hostility against him?
123. On what basis did the Jews take him out of the temple with the intention of killing him?
124. Who rescued him from the Jews?
125. They listened to Paul's message from the steps until he said what word?
126. What did Paul say that caused the high priest to order him smitten on the mouth?
127. What 2 sects of Jews dominated the council?
128. What were some of their theological differences?
129. What did Paul say that put them at odds with one another?
130. What vow did 40 Jews make?
131. Tell of Paul's great escort as he was moved from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

132. Before what 3 rulers did Paul appear at Caesarea?
133. Which one trembled when Paul reasoned with him?
134. Which one said Paul was beside himself?
135. To whom did Paul appeal his case?
136. What 2 Christian men are with Paul on the trip to Rome?
137. Where did Paul advise them to winter?
138. What place did the ship owner want to winter?
139. Tell of the storm and the shipwreck?
140. On what island did they finally land?
141. Tell of Paul and the big bonfire.
142. At what 2 places south of Rome did Christian brethren come to meet Paul?
145. Did the prominent Jews at Rome know anything about Paul's case?
146. Why did they want to hear what he was preaching?
147. Tell of the day Paul preached to them.
148. How long was Paul detained in Rome?
149. How did he spend his time?
150. Where was he held as a prisoner?

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